

PRAISE FOR *THE GOD DARE*

“*The God Dare* will challenge your heart and soul. But more than that, it will encourage you to walk closer with Jesus. And all of us need that!”

—Karen Kingsbury, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author

“Several years ago, God dared me to walk away from all I knew and start my own online company. I didn’t call it a dare at the time, but after reading, *The God Dare*, I can see that’s exactly what it was. Through her own personal stories and exploring the lives of biblical heroes, Kate will inspire you to discover the path God’s chosen for you at this time in history and just where you fit into His cosmic plan.”

—Dr. Josh Axe DNM, DC, CNS and author of the bestselling *Keto Diet* and *Eat Dirt*

“Kate Battistelli’s new book, *The God Dare*, is filled with practical wisdom and heart-wrenching, personal stories of failure and loss, faith and hope, mistakes and milestones. This book is for anyone who is willing to believe that God can turn your pain into passion, your tragedy into triumph, and take you from mess to messenger.”

—Jordan Rubin, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Maker’s Diet* Founder, Garden of Life, Beyond Organic and Ancient Nutrition

“What I love about Kate’s stories is how they show that God doesn’t just dare us, He also equips us and takes the leap right alongside us! Her testimonies of this truth are a welcome encouragement to those of us who are nervous about putting a toe over the edge of the unknown. This book offers a friend and a God who will both be beside you as you dare to dare.”

—Lisa-Jo Baker, bestselling author of *Never Unfriended* and Co-Host of the *Out of the Ordinary* Podcast

“Frustrated with a complacent walk with Christ? Kate tells us that age, gender, anxiety, past failures, etc. are no excuse for staying where we are. *The God Dare* provides examples of how trustworthy He is—in surprising and supernatural ways! Become a world changer...I dare you...no, God dares you!”

—Pastor Steve Berger, Grace Chapel

“You’re braver than you feel, stronger than you know, and loved more than you can even imagine. Kate Battistelli will remind you why all of this is true. She offers the encouragement of a friend, wisdom of a mentor, and contagious courage of someone who has walked with Jesus to places far beyond where she once thought she could go.”

—Holley Gerth, *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author of *You’re Already Amazing* and *Fiercehearted*

“*The God Dare* teaches us that obedience brings blessings, and that if God has called us, He will also equip us! This book is such a great reminder of what the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 11:4—if we wait for perfect conditions, we will never get anything done. I dare you to read, *The God Dare*, because it will give you the faith you need to take the first step into your God-given destiny.”

—Nancy Alcorn, Founder & President of Mercy Multiplied

“We ALL tend to waver when we aren’t sure where and what we’re being called to. Sometimes the questions seem many and the answers seem few. But if we’re being honest, it is often our fear that is holding us back. With personal testimonies of God’s faithfulness and encouragement deeply rooted in scripture, *The God Dare* is a stirring invitation to put your trust in the One who has promised to be faithful and walk boldly wherever He leads!”

—Ruth Schwenk, Founder of *TheBetterLifeMinistry.com* & author of *Settle My Soul*

“With real and raw honesty, *The God Dare* will call you to the radical belief that God wants to use you in His big plans for the world. Kate Battistelli invites you to say YES to God’s work in your life, even when it might include a lions’ den or a raging sea. You won’t find any curated perfection in these pages, only the candid true stories of broken people who, against all odds, decided to take God at His Word.”

—Jamie Erickson, author of *Homeschool Bravely: How to Squash Doubt, Trust God, and Teach Your Child with Confidence*

“*The God Dare* is a rare beauty of wisdom and courage, all fortified with God’s Word and filled with tested God Dare secrets. Kate has brought back my own dreams, buried once in defeat. *The God Dare* is a gift to the defeated, discouraged, confused, and distracted. Every reader will finish this book, set it down and say, ‘Amen. I am here Lord. What’s next?’”

—September McCarthy, author of *{Why} Motherhood Matters*,
Podcaster @Mom to Mom Podcast and Speaker

“An invitation to the great and wonderfully risky story God is telling, *The God Dare* will nudge you to put feet to your faith. Personally, I was deeply moved and divinely challenged as I read Kate Battistelli’s beautifully-rendered book. Take the God Dare; you will never regret it!”

—Allison Allen, author and speaker, books include *Thirsty for More* and *Shine*

“Dares are bold. Triple-dog dares are risky. But a God Dare, the most epic of them all, is life-changing. Kate’s wisdom and encouragement pour out on each page of *The God Dare* as she shares God’s truth for our lives. More powerful than a ‘how-to’ book, reading *The God Dare* is like having a mentor sitting right beside you as you navigate the path God created especially for YOU.”

—Kristin Schell, author and Founder of *The Turquoise Table*

“Filled with wisdom and grace, *The God Dare* invites the reader on a journey of faith—the kind of faith that trusts in the unseen hand of a faithful God. Kate Battistelli beautifully weaves scripture and stories to guide us as we live out the purpose God has designed for each of us. *The God Dare* is a treasure you’ll want to savor.”

—Denise J. Hughes, author of *Deeper Waters* and General Editor
for CSB (in)courage Devotional Bible

“In *The God Dare*, Kate shares her own journey of spiritual surrender. As you read her story of learning how to trust God, you’ll find yourself in the story—whether it’s through the taking of giant, future-altering steps of obedience, experiencing heart-breaking losses, the life-long journey of healing from a past failure, or the everyday learning to live like Jesus. Kate lays her heart out to us in hopes that we too will take a sovereign, faithful, merciful God at His Word.”

—Katie Orr, Bible teacher, creator of the FOCUSed15 Bible studies, and author
of *Secrets of the Happy Soul: Experience the Deep Delight You Were Made for*

“As one who often struggles with fear, I am so grateful to Kate Battistelli for writing this book! *The God Dare* is about saying no to fear and yes to God—yes to His calling, yes to His power, and yes to who He says we are.”

—Jennifer Bleakley, author of *JOEY: How a Blind Rescue Horse Helped Others Learn to See*

“Kate Battistelli brings new life to familiar stories of people in the Bible, presenting them parallel to her own experiences. *The God Dare* reminds us that we have the opportunity to ‘choose to be chosen.’”

—Anna LeBaron, author of *The Polygamist’s Daughter*

"I love the grace-filled challenge Kate Battistelli lays out for us in *The God Dare*—to trust God with our biggest dreams and hopes. It is Word-driven and promising, defying the world's call to self-help. *Yes* to this message, again and again."

—Lisa Whittle, author of *5 Word Prayers*, Ministry Leader,
Podcast Host of *Jesus Over Everything*

"You know what *The God Dare* really is? Because this is much more than a book. It's more like a burning match, lighting a wildfire under your faith. Kate will tell you about her incredible journey with Jesus. But even more, she is inviting you into *yours*—this one wild and beautiful journey that begins with an audacious dare from the One who created you."

—Jennifer Dukes Lee, author of *It's All Under Control* and *The Happiness Dare*

"I remember sitting on the edge of my seat hearing Kate tell her story to a room full of women doing the same. She graciously and boldly invited the women in the room to accept the God Dare. One by one, they did and like me, were changed by it. Let that same invitation to believe God stir your own heart. You will be changed in the best way."

—Stacey Thacker, author of *Fresh Out of Amazing*

"As a friend and mentor, Kate has been encouraging and challenging me to live out the very principles in this book for as long as I have known her. Her passion for walking out *The God Dare* in her own life is contagious. Every word in this book is an invitation, not simply to join her, but to live that overflowing, abundant life God has for each one of us. What a gift Kate and her words are to all of us!"

—Teri Lynne Underwood, author of *Praying for Girls:
Asking God for the Things They Need Most*

"*The God Dare* provoked within me a genuine 'yes' to the invitation of God to live boldly in His calling on my life, no matter what the cost. I was encouraged by Kate's authenticity not only to offer us a peek at her 'mountain top moments,' but her willingness to let us walk into her 'valley moments' as well, so that we can clearly see the faithfulness of God at work in it all and believe Him to be faithful in our own journeys also."

—Francie Winslow, wife, mother of six, speaker

"God dares each one of us to daily pick up our cross and follow Him, so that we can live an extraordinary life for His glory. While this is easier said than done, Kate Battistelli's words will empower you to push fear aside, believe the impossible, and let God transform you as you say yes to every Kingdom dare He puts in front of you."

—Lauren Gaskill, author of *Into the Deep*, speaker, and President of *She Found Joy*

"In this inspiring book, Kate Battistelli weaves personal, intimate stories from her own life with stories of characters in the Bible who accepted God's Dares. Through Kate's examples, practical application questions, and further scriptures to ponder, each chapter is filled with encouragement to step out of our comfort zones and into God's amazing purposes for us. I finished the book with my own *YES!*"

—Rachel Anne Ridge, author of several books including *Flash the Homeless Donkey Who Taught Me about Life, Faith, and Second Chances*, and her newest release, *Walking with Henry*

"Kate has lived a life of wild obedience and that is evident in the pages of *The God Dare*. She shows us how to do the same and to trust God with our whole hearts even if it looks like we are leaving our dreams behind. Ultimately, saying yes to our God Dare is the pathway to the greatest joy and most fulfilled life."

—Kristin Lemus, Founder of *Brave Moms*

“Kate Battistelli has thrown down a challenge we don’t want to miss. *The God Dare* walks the reader through their own personal step into the Jordan. Whatever that looks like in your story and at this juncture, *The God Dare* has your next steps and a place to process what God is calling you toward for the glory of His Kingdom. Kate puts it best when she reminds us that it’s really up to us, but ‘It’s God’s offer to each of us to choose to be chosen.’”

—Shontell Brewer, author of *Missionary Mom*

“In *The God Dare*, Kate Battistelli not only encourages us to take the dares God sends our way, but she also empowers us to say yes by showing us what a God Dare looks like. This book is a wonderful resource to help you place your confidence in God alone and take that first step!”

—Lynn Cowell, speaker and author of *Make Your Move*

“Join Kate as she opens the door for all of us to come in, sit for a while, ignore our excuses, and quiet the shouts of ‘should’ the world yells at us so we can hear what God is saying. I triple-dog-dare you to possess your possible and choose the narrow path that says no to what the world expects us to do, pursue, and achieve. With *The God Dare*, you’ll discover the actual life Jesus has called you to—with less fear and more serving. The impossible is God’s comfort zone.”

—Crystal Stine, speaker and author of *Holy Hustle: Embracing a Work-Hard, Rest-Well Life*

“There is something special about this book! Power-packed with rich biblical accounts, Kate’s compelling story—and an invitation you can’t afford to miss—*The God Dare* is for everyone who is ready to leave behind complacent living and respond to God’s call to a courageous, faith-filled life. It will be worth it!”

—Katie M. Reid, author of *Made Like Martha: Good News for the Woman Who Gets Things Done*, national speaker, and songwriter

“Through fresh authenticity and passion, Kate Battistelli will inspire and challenge you. She will delight and encourage you with her wisdom. This book breathed new life into my faith. I am undone by Kate’s writing and this God who loves and invites us to grand challenges—challenges He fully equips us for.”

—Jami Amerine, author of *Stolen Jesus* and *Sacred Ground Sticky Floors*

“*The God Dare* is like a motivational speech in book form. It’s your own personal cheerleader in your book bag or purse. The pages will scream out, ‘chase that dream’ and cast all doubt aside. Kate writes with such passion. Her words give you practical ways to fulfill your own personal God Dare. You will end this book feeling like you can accomplish any task God sets in front of you.”

—Lovelie Myers, speaker and contributing author of *A Moment to Breathe: 365 Devotions that Meet You in Your Everyday Mess* and the *(in)courage Devotional Bible*

Foreword by Grammy Award-Winning Artist
FRANCESCA BATTISTELLI

THE

Will You Choose to

GOD

Believe the Impossible?

DARE

Kate Battistelli

SHILOH RUN  PRESS

An Imprint of Barbour Publishing, Inc.

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Print ISBN 978-1-68322-985-8

eBook Editions:

Adobe Digital Edition (.epub) 978-1-64352-145-9

Kindle and MobiPocket Edition (.prc) 978-1-64352-146-6

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Cover photo by Jonatan Pie on Unsplash

Published in association with Jessica Kirkland and the literary agency of Kirkland Media Management, LLC. P.O. Box 1539, Liberty, Texas 77575.

Published by Shiloh Run Press, an imprint of Barbour Publishing, Inc., 1810 Barbour Drive, Uhrichsville, Ohio 44683, www.shilohrunpress.com

Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.



Printed in the United States of America.

DEDICATION

To my incredible husband, Michael. You encouraged me to keep writing this book even when the enemy of my soul did everything he could to stop me. Mike, you are now and always have been my “puzzle part,” the one who knows me best and loves me anyway. No one but you and me will ever know how hard we fought to bring this book to life. We paid a deep price, but it was worth every hard day. Thank you for being so much more than I will *ever* deserve.

To my beautiful daughter, Francesca. You are the God Dare in the flesh and you inspire me and everyone who knows you to go a little further, love a little deeper, work a little harder, and be a little braver. Franny, your heart for God and your devotion to your husband and children is an example to us all. I love you with all my heart, and I’m honored God chose *me* to be your mom.

To Eli, Audrey, Isaac, and Wyatt: The four of you give me more joy than you will ever know. I’m excited to see how God dares each of you as you grow. You are here to change the world, and I don’t doubt for one second that you will. I am honored to be your “Mimi.”

And to our dear friend, June Stone. You never gave up on two jaded New York theatre kids, but you invited us over and over to go to church with you. We finally went and our lives were eternally changed. I shudder to imagine what life would be like today if we’d turned you down. Your faithfulness changed our lives and leaves a legacy we won’t fully understand until we get to heaven. We love you!

Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

GENESIS 15:5-6

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to everyone at Barbour Publishing especially Kelly, Shalyn, Faith, and Liesl for all your hard work on my behalf!

A big thank-you to my agent Jessica Kirkland of Kirkland Media Management. You fought hard for *The God Dare* from the beginning and went above and beyond to get it out in the world. Thank you for believing in me and my message.

Thank you to all my Hope*Writer friends for your encouragement and prayers along the way.

Also, a big thank-you to Lona Fraser and all the members of Heartprint Writer's Group from my church, Grace Chapel in Franklin, Tennessee. You guys let me read almost every word of this book to you over the last two years, and you offered wonderful encouragement and advice that I took to heart. Thank you for being excellent midwives!

Thank you to my dear friend Maureen Eha. You are the first one who encouraged me that my blog post called "The God Dare" could be a book. I knew you were right, and this book is the result. Thank you, sweet friend, we've known each other for decades and been through all the ups and downs together. *The God Dare* owes its existence to you.

Father God, we've walked together for thirty-five years and You continue to love me, deal gently with me, encourage me and surprise me. Since I don't believe in retirement, I look forward to all the ways You will dare me in the years ahead! I love You most of all.

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FOREWORD

I've come to learn that most scary things are really only scary the first time. Of course, there are exceptions (ain't nobody gonna pay me to go on another rollercoaster), but most of the things we're scared to try are things that will make us stronger, happier, better versions of ourselves. They are the things that will change our lives and the lives of others.

I remember when my mom first told me the title of her new book. It was years ago, but I knew then that it would be special. I knew it would change lives because I knew she had a story to tell. A story of walking the walk—of taking the God Dare again and again in so many ways all her life. She always taught me to “do it afraid.” Whatever it was—a ballet audition, telling a friend about Jesus at school, playing my guitar for the first time in front of an audience, moving across the country to Nashville to follow a dream—I heard her voice in my head saying, *You can do this*.

In this amazing gift you're holding in your hands, she lays her soul bare. She lets us in on her past—the good, the bad, and the broken—and she gives us a simple choice: will we take God at His word or not? As I read these pages, I remembered the countless times we sat together, coffee in hand, talking about these epic stories and heroes from God's Word and how they all had one thing in common—they were not afraid to take the God Dare.

So what stops us so often from taking the God Dare? Several things, I'm sure, but at their core, I believe the answer is fear. Fear—that small seed of doubt that can turn into a tidal wave of paralyzing dread. The enemy uses it against us constantly, and it's time we recognize it for what it is: an act.

You see, the enemy can't create anything; he can only twist what's real. He's so good at it, though, that we often misinterpret it as truth. Except any thought that doesn't come from Jesus is a lie, so if the voice you're hearing tells you "You are not good enough," the truth is exactly the opposite: "You are worthy." If the lie is, "You can't do (fill in the blank)," the truth is "You can do all things through Christ who gives you strength." We must learn to walk in the opposite spirit. We must learn to take the God Dare—the dare to simply believe the truth about who we are as children of God.

What if we started this journey with open hands and an open heart? With a prayer that goes something like, "Lord, help me identify the lies that the enemy has been speaking to me, so that I can come out of agreement with them and can clearly hear what You say about me. As I read, let Your truth wash over me. Let Your Word cleanse me from the lies I've been believing. Let this be the beginning of a wildly beautiful adventure with You. Wherever You want to take me, I am Yours!"

So, what about you, friend? Are you ready to go adventuring with Jesus? Are you ready to let Him decide what is best for your life? Remember that your thoughts are not His thoughts.

Your timetable is not His timetable. Your plans are not nearly as fantastic as His are for you. I encourage you to open your hands and let go of what's holding you back, or what you're holding on to, so that He can take you somewhere you've never dreamed. I encourage you to take the God Dare!

—Francesca Battistelli Goodwin

Introduction

What's the crazy dream God has dropped in your heart? The wild adventure He's inviting you to join? What is He asking you to do that you know you couldn't possibly do on your own? In fact, if you try to do it on your own you're pretty much guaranteed to fall flat on your face? Has He given you a wild, preposterous, secret, scary, or enchanting dream or idea? That's what I call a God Dare. Because with God *anything* is possible.

I bet that's why you picked up this book. I have a feeling you've been sensing it for a while now. It might wake you up in the night or come out of nowhere as a random thought you know didn't come from your brain. Or it called to you in a dream or you sensed it some other way. But as soon as you sensed it (if you're anything like me) the excuses flooded in:

“Who am I?” you ask. “I'm not equipped.”

“What can I possibly do to change the world? It's not in me.”

“I've messed up way too much. God couldn't possibly use me.”

“I'm too old. There's no way. I missed my chance.”

“I'm too young. I don't understand any of this.”

“God doesn't even know I exist. Why would He use *me*?”

“I'm too tired.”

. . .and a million other excuses, fears, and insecurities we use to excuse ourselves from God's divine nudge.

A God Dare is simple, really. It's God's *yes*. His gigantic smile and nod of the head, His holy high five beckoning you to believe. Begging you to take Him at His word, and to once and for all let go

of fear, doubt, guilt, and pride, and say yes to *His* yes. It's God's offer to each of us *to choose to be chosen*—to say *yes* to His magnificent plan for your life. Your part is to trust Him and step into the unknown place He's been asking you to consider for some time. . . maybe years. But fear and doubt have stopped you.

The God Dare Is Trusting That God Will Equip You to Accomplish What He's Called You to Do

Could God be daring you to keep holding on to that long-held dream you barely recall? Is He daring you to let go of that false view of yourself you've believed far too long? Perhaps He's daring you to step out in faith and do something completely impossible and outside your comfort zone. But you can take this truth to the bank: the impossible *is* God's comfort zone.

What is God daring you to do? It likely won't look like you think it should. It *will* cause you to trust Him in a way you haven't before. Know this: when the God of the universe dares you to follow Him into the bottomless ocean of trust, He'll equip you with everything you need. He is well aware you can't *begin* to accomplish a God Dare without His help.

Let me be honest and tell you up front, friend: this is a book about faith. Big faith, pure faith, reluctant faith, miraculous faith, risky faith, relentless faith, crazy dangerous faith, biblical faith—but ultimately the unseen faith that comes from one source only: God. If you want a sure thing, you don't want a God Dare, because all trust and all faith requires risk. It requires believing in something you cannot see.

When the “Not Yet” Becomes the “Will Be”

Faith is actual substance and true evidence, but you can neither see nor touch it; you can only apprehend it. Faith knows beyond the shadow of a doubt that over time the “not yet” turns into the “will

be.” It’s the tangible assurance that what we’re hoping for will really and truly come to pass.

Our lack of faith quenches the supernatural. It has the audacity to deny God’s character, power, and ability to do what He says He will do. Honestly, it’s much easier to live your life with no faith. Life without faith is undemanding, unexceptional, complacent, and comfortable but undeniably stodgy and boring. And those living that way end up exiting this world exactly as they entered it. Surprisingly, few are willing to sacrifice the good in order to attain the best. But God invites each and every one of us to believe and to walk by faith. However, there’s a caveat He reveals in His Word: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.” (Hebrews 10:23 *ESV*).

It’s *our* choice whether or not we will choose to be chosen. It’s *our* choice to risk everything in order to change the world.

The God Dare is a perspective shift, a realization that God created you, yes *you*, for a divine reason. You’re not some random clump of cells casually dropped onto this planet. No. You’re on this planet for a reason, and maybe you haven’t figured that reason out yet, but I’m hopeful this book will help you do just that.

No matter who you are, how old you are, what you’ve done, or what’s been done *to* you, you are not disqualified. You are here *on* purpose and *for* a purpose. You might not know what that purpose is yet (Moses didn’t know till he was eighty), but that doesn’t matter. What matters, and what I hope you glean as you keep reading, is that you are on God’s mind. You can’t begin to number the thoughts He thinks toward you. God calls you His masterpiece, His poem, His treasured possession. The God of the universe has His eye on *you*.

You might be thinking, *You don’t know what I’ve done, or I have a checkered past and I’ve done things I’m ashamed of, or I don’t deserve*

anything good. I can promise you this: *my* past is so checkered you could play chess with it and still have pieces left over! I don't deserve a single thing I've been given. But that's the cool thing about God. He sees us according to our destiny, not our history. He never lets our past hinder our future if we've repented and asked for forgiveness. He still forgives, and He still heals, and I'll make it crystal clear as you keep reading.

When Jesus called the disciples, He didn't beg, plead, or cajole. As He walked the dusty road, He merely said, "Follow Me." Following was *their* choice. It was up to *them* whether they would choose to follow, choose to obey. What does a God Dare feel like? *Like a cosmic bungee jump into God's fascinating, incredible, and world-changing future.*

I think we have it all wrong. We search desperately for the very thing pursuing *us*. We search, we dig, we look. We fret and question, wonder and worry, and all along it's right there in front of us, right under our noses.

Can you smell the intoxicating fragrance, seductive in its beauty, frightening and overwhelming your senses with power and possibility. . .drawing you, reminding you of something you used to believe but have forgotten somewhere along the way? The God Dare surrounds us, pregnant in our every day, infusing profound purpose into each moment small or large, ordinary or awesome.

The God Dare will challenge you to go further than you believed possible. It will cause you to take God at His word, to believe and obey, to say yes even when the yes might cost you. God is looking for world-changers, the ones willing to fling it all out on Him in one gigantic leap of faith. All He asks in return is for you to trust Him to the end. I promise you, His dreams for you are bigger than you could ever imagine!

I won't sugarcoat it. Taking a God Dare can be hard and full of

doubt and difficulty, but at the same time its world-transforming power is miraculous and saturated with wonder! You're called to this because you are worth it, my friend.

If you're anything like me, you may not feel equipped to change the world *at all*. I've come a long way in my walk with the Lord after thirty-five years, but you know what? I still have a long way to go. I've wrestled with fear like nobody's business. Just in the last few years I've experienced crippling anxiety and then seizures that hit me out of nowhere. I've been crabby and critical, jealous and easily offended. I've even thought my ideas and agenda were more important than anyone else's in my world. If you don't believe me, just ask my husband.

I've wrongly believed my ways, my wants, my wounds, and my worries were the most important of all. I've been reluctant to accept how the God of the universe sees me. I've failed miserably and given in to the lie that I'm not important to God. . .that my story doesn't matter. I've failed way more than once.

I've not been brave lately. And I desperately want to be brave. I don't like to fly, I won't go on roller coasters, I wouldn't be caught dead bungee jumping. But I'm asking God to make me brave, to make me fear-LESS. Do you track with me? I'm a wimp and a chicken, and I'm over it. The Bible doesn't say we will never fear, but it does tell us how to fight when fear attacks: "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You" (Psalm 56:3).

Maybe you've failed and been afraid too. Maybe you think you've missed His purpose for your life or you've blown it too badly to ever be forgiven or used by God. Trust me, you haven't. God will use *anyone* (even a donkey) if they're willing to be used.

I want to be open and transparent with my life so you don't have any preconceived notions about me. I've had some amazing experiences and triumphs, but the ugly truth is I've dealt with

impatience, self-pity, addiction to antidepressants, jealousy, anxiety, pride, and more. *Much* more.

God is not surprised by my capabilities *or* my many weaknesses. Just today I was crabby and impatient with bad drivers on the road, and I might have used one of those words that is *not* in the Bible. Yet as I trust God and walk into His purposes for my life, He grows my confidence and strengthens my faith. I'm coming to realize God still seeks the ones who will say yes even when it makes no sense, even when others will doubt you ever heard God, even when you feel unworthy, and even when saying yes will cost you.

I believe God gives each of us handpicked opportunities to choose to be used by Him to accomplish His holy purposes on the earth. Our free will allows us to say no if we want to, and sadly many of us—no, *most of us*—do. But imagine the possibilities when we say yes!

What does a God Dare look like? I see God daring folks all through the Bible. He might dare you to move away from your homeland like Abraham. Or He might ask you to risk your life in a hostile land to spread the Gospel like Jonah. Or maybe you'll be raised up as a great leader like Moses or Joseph or given favor and an exalted position to save your nation like Esther—or offered an opportunity to obey God in a thousand and one ways you *can't begin* to imagine.

God radically dares each of us every single day to humble ourselves, to forgive those who've harmed or offended us, to live generously, to pray for our enemies, to love the unlovable without judgment or offense, to wash another's dirty feet, and so much more. What if God dares you to give up your right to yourself, to turn the other cheek, to be defrauded, to walk the second mile, to be reconciled to your brother? He actually dares us to *live* according to what we read in the Bible. My friend, you can "*wash your face*" or, you can wash someone's feet.

The God Dare Is for Those Who Are Willing to Choose to Be Chosen to Make the Impossible Possible

I promise you, when God dares you to step out, the stepping won't be easy and it will cause you to question *everything* you think you know. But here's the thing: world-changers don't always know they're changing the world. Do you think Joseph, the beautiful dreamer, imagined he would one day become the number-two leader in all of Egypt, providing the nation of Israel a home to thrive and grow and multiply? I can't imagine Ruth (a pagan) or Rahab (a pagan prostitute) ever looked at their lives and assumed one day they would worship the God of the Israelites and find themselves in the lineage of Jesus Christ. When God called Esther to risk her life to present her petition to the king, there is no way she could have known her actions would save her nation from extinction.

Those willing to take a God Dare risk their lives, hide spies, kill giants, cast out demons, paint blood on doorposts, speak truth to power, touch the hem of His garment, waste costly ointment, stretch out their withered hand, lower friends through roofs, follow when they don't know where they'll end up, and obey what they might not fully understand. *The ones who take a God Dare fearlessly live out their faith.*

The God Dare will catch you off guard, shaking up everything you *think* you know about your future. Yet when you say yes, you'll suddenly find yourself positioned to change the world. When you say yes to the possible, watch God do the impossible.

The God Dare in its simplest form is knowing deep down inside that you're on this bedraggled planet for a reason. You're not simply taking up space, but God has a specific plan in mind *just for you*. In fact, He chose you for it before the foundation of the world. He designed you very specifically for this time and this place, and He will perfectly equip you to accomplish His purpose on the earth. Your job is to choose. It's the inkling, the drawing, the knowing that

gnaws. . .that's the God Dare!

We'll figure out this God Dare stuff together. Each chapter will include several relevant scriptures to ponder, discussion questions for yourself or a small group, and the many God Dare secrets I've learned over the years.

The God Dare is trusting that God will equip you to accomplish what He's called you to do.

The God Dare is God's offer to each of us to choose to be chosen.

The God Dare is a cosmic bungee jump into His fascinating, world-changing future.

The God Dare is realizing God created you for a reason.

The God Dare is doing it afraid.

Chapter 1

MY FIRST GOD DARE

The first time I heard the God Dare, it didn't have a name. I only knew this: I was heading one way, and God dared me and my husband to go in the *complete opposite* direction.

My husband, Mike, and I had gotten married just a couple of years earlier and at the time, we lived in a 720-square-foot condo in trendy Greenwich Village in Manhattan. Both of us were pursuing promising careers in the Broadway musical theater world—Mike as a conductor and musical director on Broadway and Radio City Music Hall and me as an aspiring Broadway actress and singer.

We'd met a couple of years earlier, in 1981, on the national tour of *The King and I* when I costarred opposite Yul Brynner. I'll share more of our story later, but I was blessed to perform as the leading lady on tour and Mike acted as associate conductor. . .and we really and truly fell in love across the footlights.

Two years earlier we'd become devout Christians, and a year later I gave birth to our daughter, Francesca. As we grew in our relationship with the Lord, an uneasy feeling about our chosen professions began to well up in us both, as the music and theater worlds are not typically known as God-honoring industries. I found it increasingly necessary to turn down auditions for morally questionable projects, and my theatrical agents were none too happy about it. I realize now God allowed deep testing in our lives by bringing sizable opportunities for fame and fortune to see where our hearts truly resided. Would we choose the narrow path? Would we follow our Good Shepherd? Would we lay down the life we loved?

I remember receiving an offer from a producer in South Africa to come and perform in *The King and I* for several months. And I'd just found out I was pregnant. He wanted to pay me a lot of money, but apartheid was at its height and I knew there was no way I was going to South Africa. He kept calling and sweetening the deal, but even with all his flattery, I stood firm, knowing there was no way, morally, I could go. Not to mention being pregnant. . .and wearing hoop skirts!

A rising and uncomfortable sense about our life choices continued to creep in. One rainy night as Mike and I watched a preacher on Christian TV, we felt as if he suddenly pointed right at us through the screen, saying something about "you actors and musicians who think you can live a hypocritical life. . .God is telling you to lay down your careers and *come out from among them!*" Whoa, Nelly, now that got our attention!

I don't typically make life-altering decisions based on what I see on television, but the TV preacher merely confirmed what Mike and I already sensed. The Broadway theater world, the lights, the fame, the backstage glow and glamour of New York City, no longer felt like home. Ultimately, we listened to that still, small voice nudging at our hearts and decided to make a major ninety-degree lifestyle shift.

I do believe many are called to the arts and the theater. However, as baby Christians, God knew our hearts and likely also knew temptation and compromise would rear their ugly heads. Our first God Dare required us to completely walk away from the music and theater worlds and lay down our hopes and dreams for fame and fortune.

Let me assure you, giving up your lifetime dream is no picnic. My husband and I worked *years* to bring our dreams to life, and now God, who we barely knew, asked us to trust Him and leave our dreams in the dust. It felt incredibly strange since our entire

identities were wrapped up in our careers. My husband has a doctorate in conducting for Pete's sake! How do you just walk away from *that*? We'd been utterly convinced our lives were destined for the Broadway theater. But God had a better plan, even though we couldn't quite see it at the time.

Walking away from everything familiar (like Abraham) is one of the most difficult God Dares but, ultimately, one of the most rewarding. If you sense God calling you to a different path than the one you are currently on, let me give you hope that it's for a bigger purpose than you can possibly know right now. I'm intimately acquainted with how difficult it is, but just know, the years *will* give the perspective you lack now. I promise.

For some of you reading this, He may be calling you *into* the theater world or the arts. I pray He will give you discernment and wisdom as to whether He wants you to shine His light in the darkness. The arts have grown incredibly bleak over the last few decades, and they desperately need strong believers to shine the light of truth!

Ninety-Degree Turns

God loves to challenge us with what I call “ninety-degree turns” in this life—the opportunity to go in a completely different direction—even when it makes no sense to the rest of the world. Of course, our theater friends thought we were crazy by walking away from established and growing careers. Had we stayed in our careers, I'm confident we would have continued to do well and experienced an even greater measure of success. But even as young and immature Christians, we knew there was only one viable choice for us—we *would* pick up our cross and follow.

We prayed about it, sought good counsel, and ended up buying a pretty little house in a small town outside Princeton, New Jersey, not far from where we'd grown up (and still only

forty-five minutes from Broadway!). We took God's crazy dare and laid down the glitz and glamour of New York City for a home business and homeschooling, taking God's ninety-degree turn and utterly altering the paths of our lives.

I'm quite certain God knew (even if we didn't) as we laid down our dreams in obedience to follow Him that He planned to pick those dreams back up in the next generation through our daughter, Francesca. In fact, as the years went on we were blessed to witness just how much *our ceiling would become her floor*.

God's economy is never wasteful, and He never wastes the training and experiences He gives you. When our daughter, Francesca (Franny), began expressing her gifts and talents in music, we were able, because of our backgrounds, to help her navigate the music world, instill in her the value of hard work and diligence, and remind her she could change the world with the gifts God had given her. Obeying God's leading by laying down our careers became our first God Dare.

When the “Not Yet” Becomes the “Will Be”

*Faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things not seen.*

HEBREWS 11:1

Let's take a quick look at Abraham. We'll take a deeper dive into his life in a few chapters, but for now let's just take a quick glance. At the advanced age of seventy-five, Abraham receives instructions from *God Himself* to walk away from everything he knows—his familiar country, his thriving business, his family, his father's house—and follow God to a land He would show him.

Abraham's free will allowed him to either say no to God or take the plunge and choose to follow. Of course, we know the outcome. And because of his faith, God granted Abraham incredible promises

including making him a great nation, making his name great, and that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed—all because he made the bold choice to trust and believe God, stepping out with Him into an uncharted and impossible-to-know future. Abraham was willing and prepared to do *anything* for God. What about you?

The silken thread connecting so many biblical heroes is this: God dropped in their laps the divine opportunity to choose to be chosen. Each of them could have turned God down, and I'm certain He would have offered the chance to change the world to someone who would say yes.

We like to think we know God's plan for our lives, don't we? I imagine Peter the apostle, dripping wet after a long day at sea on his creaky boat, or maybe mending old, worn nets in the harbor as he hears a voice calling him to "Follow Me." Perhaps Peter thought he had his life all figured out as he fished each day in the Sea of Galilee. I doubt in his wildest dreams he ever imagined he would walk away from a thriving business to follow a man he knew precious little about. Yet Peter must have sensed *something* extraordinary in the One who called him to follow that day, because ultimately he *did* walk away from everything familiar, leaving nets and boat behind, and in choosing to follow Christ, Peter ended up being chosen to change the world.

Self-righteous Paul certainly wasn't looking for Jesus. In fact, Paul had no problem allowing Christ's disciples to be murdered, chasing them down and persecuting those who followed The Way. One afternoon he traveled the dusty road to Damascus with a single focus: bring the followers of Christ bound to Jerusalem. Suddenly a heavenly light surrounded him, and he found himself knocked down on his blessed assurance, completely blind. Jesus Christ Himself offered Paul the divine opportunity to lay down everything he thought he knew and preach the Gospel to the

Gentiles. Paul, in choosing to follow Christ, wrote the majority of the New Testament, became a revered martyr for his faith, and utterly changed the world.

Will You Let Jesus Pick?

I had a fascinating dream recently. I was with some young generation X ladies my daughter's age, and we were talking and catching up. In the dream, one young lady told me about her recent marriage and how it was distinctly different from what the glitzy bridal magazines had led her to believe. Another gal, well into her thirties and still unmarried but desperate for a husband and children, shared her deep loneliness. As we talked, I knew in my dream I wanted to pray for them and share my heart and the perspective that comes with age. So I began to pray for the girl who wanted what most young women want—marriage and kids—and as I prayed in the dream, I sensed God say these remarkable words to me: “*She wants a husband and sons, but what she doesn't know is I want to give her a nation.*”

I was stunned, absolutely *stunned* by His remark. I'm not sure what God meant by that statement, but as I woke up, this realization hit me like a ton of bricks: He wants so much more for us than we can ever begin to dream up. We think we know what we want—it's what we're supposed to want, right? Doesn't our culture teach marriage and parenthood are our highest goals? They're absolutely worthy goals, but are they God's will for every person on the planet? *God's love can be frightening in the freedom it provides.*

Hmmm. Maybe we set our sights too low. Do we want what the world romanticizes because we don't set our sights on *Him*? Because we don't want *Him enough*? Don't we know the only thing in this world ever able to truly satisfy our deepest heart longing is *Him*?

We prove we don't know by whining, complaining, regretting, seeking everything to satisfy us *but* Him. I wanted so badly to ask

her in my dream, *What if God asked you to lay down your desires and risk your future on Him? Would you trust Him enough? What if He didn't have a husband and family for you but instead something entirely different yet completely wonderful you didn't plan on? Would you take Him at His word? What if God dares you to walk a narrow path, one that flies in the face of everything our culture says you should want; do you love Him enough to walk the unique path He chooses for you? Do you love Him enough to let Jesus pick?*

I'm believing that if you're reading this book, you're hungry for His will, for purpose, for destiny. What do we all desire? Significance. Living a life that matters. Leaving behind a legacy leading others to the truth.

Look at your dreams. They're good and righteous, I'm sure. But maybe, just maybe, He has a different path in mind for you, precious one. Maybe your God Dare doesn't look like you think it should. Don't forget, He created you before the foundation of the world, and He knows exactly where He wants to take you. It might look different than you think. In fact, *He might want to give you a nation.*

Scriptures to Think About

- *“Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.”* (Matthew 24:46 ESV)
- *Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* (Genesis 12:1–3)
- *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV)

- *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1)
- *“Many are called, but few are chosen.”* (Matthew 22:14)

God Dare Secrets

- If He calls you to it, He knows you can accomplish it. . .not in your strength but in His. You will have to step out and reach out for the help you need, but He’ll provide every element at the proper time.
- God wants more for you than you could ever dream up.
- Most people won’t take the God Dare because it can be uncomfortable, and in the Western world, we value comfort above all. As a result, most will ignore that still, small voice.
- There is an enemy called “average.” Each one of us has exactly what it takes to be average. Being average, remaining under the radar, and not making waves is *exactly* where the enemy wants to keep us.
- God’s economy is never wasteful, and He doesn’t waste the training He gives you.
- Sometimes your ceiling can become another’s floor.
- God’s love is frightening in the freedom it provides.
- We choose whether or not to be chosen.
- Our lack of faith quenches the supernatural.
- Few are willing to sacrifice the good to attain the best.

Discussion Questions

- What would your life look like if you took God at His word and believed you had world-changing potential?
- Do you believe you have the capacity to change the world?

- Do you believe there's a God Dare designed just for you?
What do you think it is?
- Are you willing to venture outside your comfort zone and bungee jump into your future?
- Are you willing to sacrifice the good to attain the best?
What will that require?
- What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind?
- Will you choose to be chosen? If not, why not?
- If God offers you a ninety-degree turn, will you take it?
- What's stopping you from taking your God Dare?
- Will you let Jesus pick?