

Foreword by *New York Times* bestselling author,

Bob Goff

LOOK

THE LIES WE BELIEVE

WHAT

AND THE TRUTH

YOU'VE

THAT SETS US FREE

DONE

TASHA LAYTON

Praise for *Look What You've Done*

“I love Tasha and her honesty, vulnerability, and absolute fire for Jesus. *Look What You've Done* will deepen your understanding of God and how he works in our lives. Grab one for you and anyone who needs a reminder that God uses each person's story for His glory!”

—Christy Nockels, worship leader and bestselling author of *The Life You Long For*

“I've come to know and love Tasha like a sister. Not only have we had the privilege of sharing messages of hope through music to our audiences on stage, but also laughter and deep heart conversations off stage. Tasha is the real deal, and the more I've learned about her story, the more inspired I am by her incredible faith. The way that God has always been working in her life, challenges me to look at my own journey with new eyes. This is her story to honor what God has done, and I know it will inspire and challenge you, too!”

—Danny Gokey, Grammy and Dove Award-winning Christian music artist, and author of *Hope in Front of Me*

“Life is full of many battles. For my friend Tasha Layton, she has battled comparison, self-image, and the uncertainty of finding her purpose. She has fought with courage

and that has been a huge encouragement to me. Through this journey, she has acquired so much wisdom to be passed down. This book is a testament to what God has done through her and her family.

—Jordan Feliz, Award-winning musician and Singer-songwriter of #1 hit song, “Jesus is Coming Back”

“My friend Tasha loves Jesus in such a beautiful way. You will love her new book *Look What You’ve Done*, she shares some of the most powerful stories and provides intimate self-reflections on what God was doing along the way. God is at work in Tasha so hang in there on the ride to better see what God is doing in your life!”

—Jon Reddick, Dove Award-nominated worship singer

“When we worship, we are meant to suspend our desires and give them to Jesus. This is what my friend, Tasha Layton, does in the way she sings and lives her life. She has lived quite a dramatic life. In *Look What You’ve Done*, her first full-length book, you’ll see new ways to worship Jesus in your life.”

—Chris McClarney, worship leader and songwriter of the chart topping song, “Your Love Never Fails”

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TASHA LAYTON
with Jocelyn Bailey

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*To the God who rescued me and turned my ashes to beauty—
May I always place my trust in You*

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i> . . . . .	.xi
<i>Introduction</i>	1
1. Less-Than	9
2. Wild & Free.	17
3. Tambourines	23
4. Chia Pet	29
5. Derailed.	37
6. The Search.	45
7. The Return	55
8. Seminary	65
9. The Plan.	75
10. <i>American Idol</i>	83
11. Salt	91
12. On the Road	99
13. Africa	107
14. Sabbatical	117

CONTENTS

15. Colorado . . . . .	.123
16. Nashville . . . . .	.135
17. Songwriting . . . . .	.143
18. Voice . . . . .	.151
19. Hope . . . . .	.161
20. Birth Pains . . . . .	.173
21. Mama Bear . . . . .	.181
22. Lyla . . . . .	.191
23. Balance . . . . .	.201
24. Look What You've Done . . . . .	.213
<i>Acknowledgments</i> . . . . .	.221
<i>About the Author</i> . . . . .	.223

FOREWORD

I have sailed across the Pacific a couple times. I'm not sure why I do it because I spend most of the time over the rail hurling. There are some positives of course—each trip is usually good for eliminating twenty to thirty pounds from around my waist. The hard part is watching other people eat real food you can't keep down and having to sleep below deck with a bunch of guys who haven't showered for a couple weeks. The trick to getting across the ocean is not only to fill your sails with wind, but to keep the kelp from wrapping around the keel. A strand of kelp can be hundreds of feet long and when it wraps around the keel it can slow you down to a crawl.

We all have certain beliefs and some of us play host to a few lies as well. Some beliefs and lies are our creations and others are borrowed. Lies are kelp; borrowed beliefs steal your wind. Together they conspire to slow you down and will take you off course. During our short lives, we have the opportunity to sort out the return address about

FOREWORD

things we have come to believe about ourselves, our friends, and our faith. We also can separate the lies we have believed from the truths we have held. If we don't do this important and courageous work, we will be left professing things we are not fully convinced of and acting certain about things we are only guessing about.

What Tasha has written in the pages that follow is an honest account of the events that shaped her, the faith she discovered, and the doubts she got real with. This book is an account of clearing the kelp from the keel on a journey worth taking. This is a tender and honest book about the power of truth and Jesus to displace the lies, mistruths, and false narratives we all have adopted to some degree along the way. As you turn the last page, you will realize that this book is your invitation to set sail with Jesus and actively participate in the adventure He has invited you to join, if you're willing to show up for it.

—*New York Times* bestselling author, Bob Goff

INTRODUCTION

I stood in a clearing, my eyes trained on the sun setting behind the Rocky Mountains in the distance. The colors swirling in the sky competed with the warmth of the sun's glare. I took a deep breath. Exhaled. The crisp Colorado air moved across my skin, sending goosebumps up and down my bare arms.

God, how did I get here?

I heard my counselor, Pete, rustling in the grass nearby. I had almost forgotten that he was the one who brought me up here.

“Is that not the most beautiful sunset you’ve ever seen?” he asked.

I nodded in response. As the sun inched ever closer to the horizon line, the colors continued to shift and deepen, an ever-moving landscape.

“As beautiful as that sunset is,” Pete continued, “God thinks you are even more beautiful than that.”

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE

I took in his words and held them close for a moment. Then he asked me the crucial question:

“Do you believe it?”

His voice was calm and kind.

A lump swelled in my throat. *Did I believe it? Was Pete right in saying I was beautiful to God? I knew what the scriptures said, but did I feel them in my heart? I wanted to see myself as God’s beautiful child, a creature beloved and cherished by Him. But so many years of pain and lies had locked me up like a vault.*

Do you believe it, Tasha?

I closed my eyes and prayed. *God, is it true? Am I beautiful in Your sight? This time, can I really and truly trust You? Am I worthy of Your love?*

My eyes opened. And as the sun’s final glowing edge dipped below the mountain, something clicked into place.

* * *

That day in Colorado was a turning point for me, but so much had led up to it. I’d gone from faithful to fallen, successful to shamed, and all the way back again in a matter of years. We’re talking low lows and really high highs. I’d traveled all over the world, met more people than I could count, and tried out almost every religion in the

INTRODUCTION

book. By the time I went to get help in Colorado, I'd exhausted my body and my mental resources. I believed I had nowhere else to go.

God intervened.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

My name is Tasha, and you may already know me as a singer and a songwriter. Other people know me as a worship leader. Or you may not know me at all, and that's okay! I'm thrilled to meet you either way. In the last fifteen years, I've lived more than I ever thought I would and had unique experiences I couldn't have dreamed up for myself. I've also felt shame heavy enough to bury a soul and begged God to save me from the depths of despair.

These days, it's my great honor to sing and worship God and meet incredible people whose hearts long for healing. Some feel frustrated and constrained in their lives. Perhaps they've lived in the same zip code for years, or they feel like they're being held captive by an unrealized dream they carry in the unseen part of their soul. Their deepest desires are not met, and they are painfully aware of that fact.

Believe me when I say I've been there too.

Some people have trouble believing that God loves them or that His promises are available to them. Maybe they're battling fears, doubts, or suffering of their own.

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE

For a long time, I wondered why God was withholding good things from me. I was confused and frustrated, and I couldn't hear His voice or understand what He was doing. Little did I know that He was working behind the scenes, accomplishing everything in His good and perfect time. As I've looked back at the turning points of my life, I can now see what He was up to—and I can only marvel at His powerful, precious plan for me.

A couple years ago, I released a song called “Look What You've Done,” which inspired the title of this book. Like every song I write, it reflects my heart, and in many ways, it's the theme of my life so far. While the words at first confess the shame I've felt, the redeeming message is what God has done with the brokenness in my life. No matter what *I* do, God can turn it around. He's taken the things that once made me feel weak and turned them into my greatest strengths. I could never have done these things on my own; only God could have healed me from the inside out.

When I set out to write this book, I wanted to talk about what God had done in my life. Though I didn't even know it during my years of wandering, God was busy writing a beautiful story for me—and I am confident that God has an amazing adventure planned for each and every soul.

INTRODUCTION

With God as the Master Planner, we can each have confidence in His unimaginably good plans. As Ephesians 2:10 reminds us, “We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” How special are we that God not only made us but has dreams of His own for us? People who are really living life to the fullest are not angsty about their dreams; they are living in the belief that God is the Source of their hope.

As such, I hope you will step forward in the belief that your dreams are worthy of passion and courage. There’s a special kind of alignment that happens when we listen for God and ask Him to show us the way. When our dreams sync up with His, amazing things will happen. If God can do it for me, He can do it for you. It was only when I loosened my stubborn grip that God was able to work in ways I never could have dreamed.

Your path is unique—beautiful and different from everyone’s else’s. My hope is that the stories I tell here will create points of connection between us, serving as reminders that we are all looking for freedom, hope, and joy. At the end of each chapter, I’ve also included a scripture and questions for reflection. I encourage you to make some quiet time for yourself because that’s an effective way to listen for the Lord’s voice. Perhaps as we walk through

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE

these stories together, you'll hear Him in the silence and realize He is near.

At the same time, I understand that sometimes God seems far away. I want to talk about those moments too—the moments when you're crying in your car and throwing out your plans and feeling like your life is never going to start. I'm not going to sugarcoat anything in these chapters because that never helped anyone. We need to be honest with ourselves and each other about our low moments too.

You're not alone in this world. You're not the only one who feels stuck. For so many years, I didn't see a path to freedom. But over time, I have come to see that God is with me on this journey. And guess what. He is with you too. Every single person's life can be a testament to God's power and love. He has done amazing things through the people who have entrusted their lives to Him. As God's children, we can all be creative and free.

My prayer is that you will find encouragement and strength in these pages. Together, let's discover a sense of God's presence and revel in the joy He provides. This book is not a how-to guide or a manual for living. What it is, however, is an example of a journey with all its challenges and triumphs. I like to think of it as bits and pieces of wisdom about navigating our paths while looking to God

INTRODUCTION

for direction. We learn about ourselves and God through every mountain and every valley.

God is good to everyone and has compassion on what He has made (Psalm 145:9). That includes you and me. Let's experience Him in a genuine way together. I can't wait to show you what God has already done and what He can still do.

Chapter I

LESS-THAN

I grew up in a small, Southern town in South Carolina. We had a post office, a volunteer fire station, and one flashing light. Technically, the light belonged to the neighboring town, but we claimed it. It was the kind of place some people might call “backwoods.” To me, it was just home.

My family was of humble means, and I had few friends at the time. This was in large part because my family couldn’t afford sports teams, dance classes, or other social activities where kids tend to meet and make friends. We also lived in a trailer on acreage out in the country, far away from a neighborhood, and I never felt comfortable asking classmates over because I knew our house wasn’t as nice as theirs. You probably won’t be surprised to hear that I was called “trailer trash” more than once in my life.

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE

At a young age, I learned—or decided—that people in “normal” houses were better than me. It’s truly amazing how even little children can accept these damaging ideas as truth. The reality was, I grew up in a mostly loving environment and Christian home—much healthier than some of my peers—and my family was trying hard to be fiscally responsible. My parents are both extremely hard workers who did their best, and I would not change a thing about my early life. But those facts did not stop people from judging or stop me from feeling less-than.

Like so many girls, I also thought I wasn’t pretty enough. Specifically, I didn’t have the right hairstyle and hairbows. When I look back at old yearbooks, I can’t help but laugh at how silly these trendy hairstyles were, but you couldn’t have explained that to me then. All I knew was that I didn’t own a single hairbow, and I had a mom who didn’t know how to braid.

My mom was a bit of a tomboy type back then. Instead of making brownies for PTA bake sales, she spent her time taking me trail riding and target shooting in her jeep. Instead of fetching me from cheerleading practice in a minivan, she picked me up from the art club on a motorcycle. Some of the kids and teachers may have thought this was cool, but I was mortified! What I wanted was a

mom who flew under the radar—someone who looked and acted like everyone else.

I am grateful now for how my childhood shaped me, but back then, all I understood was what I *didn't* have. Rejection was painful, so I sought to never give anyone a reason to think I was inferior or less-than. This was when the seeds of perfectionism and performance were planted in me, and before long, they took root. I would pretend to be whatever I needed to be so people wouldn't think less of me—and as a result, I didn't feel safe to be myself around anyone.

I didn't yet understand that the real Tasha—the one God created—is the perfect original.

In one way or another, I think most children and adolescents experience this desire to fit in. But I remember losing total track of who I was. I didn't yet understand that the real Tasha—the one God created—is the perfect original. It has taken me years to get there. And sadly, some people never escape this mindset. They spend their lives trying to accommodate some phony ideal, never giving God a chance to celebrate them for who they are.

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE

Comparison is a disease in our world, maybe now more than ever. It robs people of identity, contentment, and joy. Focusing on what you *don't* have or what you *haven't* accomplished makes it nearly impossible to celebrate the things you *do* have. As we scroll through our social media feeds and take in photoshopped images of “perfect” lives, we forget to be grateful for the blessings already in our pockets. You can spend your whole life wanting to look better and have more things, but no one will find happiness in that sort of endless wanting.

When we spin our wheels trying to be someone else, it's usually because we haven't yet let God tell us who we are. We are so uniquely fashioned as humans, and no two people are exactly alike. Psalm 139:14 tells us we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” Our very fingerprints are physical reminders of our distinct individuality. And yet, we all have them—which speaks to our collective nature as God's beloved creation. The fact that we were made with care by the Creator of the universe should give us confidence beyond measure. How special does it make you feel to know that God crafted you and breathed life into you, and He will never do it the same way ever again?

I think back to my childhood and how lucky I was to have parents who loved and cared for me. Maybe *grateful* is a better word than *lucky*. To people who didn't know

any better, maybe I seemed like trailer trash. But I was deeply cherished and cared for. *That* was the truth of my identity—not some label put on me by judgmental outsiders. I'm so thankful now for what I know were blessings, even if I didn't fully understand it then. Yes, maybe my mother did me wrong by giving me a bowl cut in the second grade, but that's a story for another time. Despite that egregious offense, I know she loved me.

Until we start practicing gratitude for what we have and who God made us to be, we may never be able to truly accomplish what our hearts are made for. And yet, I know self-acceptance is an easy thing to talk about in theory but not an easy thing to actually do. If you're feeling like you've lost track of yourself and who you are in Christ, I encourage you to take a few moments now to talk to God. Ask Him to remind you who you are and what makes you special in His eyes. Ask Him to help you make gratitude your default perspective.

Until we start practicing gratitude for what we have and who God made us to be, we may never be able to truly accomplish what our hearts are made for.

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE

And after you've done that, spend a little time talking to Him about your dreams. What are the desires of your heart, and are they in alignment with what God wants for you? I believe these conversations with God are the only way we can break the chain of comparison and finally find peace in who He created us to be.

Together, let's stop trying to copy people who are putting on a performance rather than living their truest lives. Let's stop trying to squeeze ourselves into molds that weren't made for us—even the wonky-shaped molds we've fashioned for ourselves. Our beautiful, unique, handmade identities are in God alone, and may we never lose sight of Him as the One who carries our dreams. With Him as the Author of our lives, we will never fail by comparison.

*I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.*

—Jeremiah 31:3 ESV

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Can you remember a moment from your childhood when you were made to feel less-than? How did that experience carry over into your adult life?
2. What are some things you are especially grateful for today?
3. How does it feel to know that you are God's handiwork—and that no one who's ever lived can compare to you?

Chapter 2

WILD & FREE

When I was a teenager, my parents gave me a rescue horse named Lady for my birthday. Yes, it's true, I was a horse girl. It's practically a requirement for Southern girls to love horses.

Lady, a red horse with dark red hair and a white star on her forehead, was a Thoroughbred and quarter horse mix who had been severely abused. And let me tell you: she was feisty. She seemed to have an extra amount of fight in her, probably due to what she'd been through. Honestly, I think she might've been a little off, and she was known for bucking people off from time to time. She was wild and free and made her own rules—which was why I loved her but was afraid of her at the same time.

When I rode Lady, I was mostly in control, but her stubbornness was hard for me to handle. (Have I

mentioned that I love being in charge? I've been this way a long time.) Yet part of me related to her nature. Like her, I was always up for an adventure. And while she was fighting her demons, I was fighting to figure out who my true self was. For someone who'd never had a real riding lesson in her life, I'd like to think I did a pretty good job holding my own with Lady.

We had many acres—part pasture, part creek, part yard, and part garden or land used for farming. I was a country girl, usually running around half-clothed in the dirt outside. Part of our land I was familiar with, and Lady and I had worn a path in the dirt from riding around the pastures. But my gutsy side always had a hankering to venture beyond the fence, and I longed to venture out yet was a little scared of what Lady might do.

Then one day, curiosity got hold of me and overpowered the fear. Maybe it got hold of us both. Anyway, I rode her past the boundaries of the property on our land. As we crossed the fence line onto untrodden paths, Lady seemed unsure. Her ears spun and her eyes bugged out as she took inventory of all the new territory around her. I let out the breath I'd been holding. We'd officially stepped out and ventured into the wild unknown.

What happened next caused my life to flash before my eyes. My whole body jolted, and we were off. Lady

decided she was free and started running as fast as she could. Any sort of control I'd thought I had was now officially gone, *adios*, goodbye. Not only did she tear past our property line, but she continued across a highway and into a neighboring pasture. Amid a stream of words I won't repeat, I cried out for God's mercy, thinking I was a goner. I think I have blocked some of this wild ride from my memory!

Yet I didn't block it *all* out. At some point my eyes refocused and landed on the pastures all around us—landscapes I had never seen. They were gorgeous and rolling and entirely new to me. For a few seconds the terror subsided, and I felt the thrill of the ride and the peace of total surrender. I no longer feared what she could do to me but gave in completely to the rush of the moment. Together, Lady and I were blazing a new trail.

Eventually, my soul returned to my body, and I realized we were slowing down. Maybe God was answering my prayer, or maybe Lady was just out of shape and needed to catch her breath. Either way, we both survived. I don't even remember how we made it back home; I just remember that we did. Something directed us back toward familiar fields and the trodden path of the home pasture.

This wild ride taught me a few things. For one, I knew for certain now that Lady was something I wasn't

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE

in charge of! But even more, the whole experience helped me to better understand that losing control isn't the worst thing in the world. In fact, fear of losing control can hold us back, preventing us from seeing the gorgeous green pastures beyond the gates of our known worlds. Horses are meant to run wild and free sometimes. And so are you and I.

Truth is, even when we stayed within the boundaries of our land, I never had full control over Lady. She was always her own girl, an untamed spirit. And though we may cling to the illusion of control in our own lives, it won't take long for God to remind us who's *really* holding

Losing control isn't
the worst thing
in the world.

the reins. Only the God of the heavens, who made "all the heavenly bodies by the breath of his mouth," decides what the future holds (Psalm 33:6 ISV).

Yet when we answer His call to freedom, handing over the reins and surrendering our plans to Him, we may just be opening the gate to the wildest, most exhilarating ride of our lives.

Over the years, I've learned to welcome thrills in the most literal sense. Lady's wild ride was only the start. People seem shocked when I tell them I've been bungee

jumping and skydiving multiple times—to the point that I was almost declined a life insurance policy. The first time I jumped out of a plane, it was on the Gold Coast of Australia. It was such a beautiful sight that I jumped out of another plane in Dubai. Then I took my now-husband, Keith, skydiving on a date. I've hang-glided, learned to scuba dive, and back-packed across countries on my own. And every time I embrace the uncertainty of a journey, I find myself encountering people, feelings, and experiences only God could have put in my path.

Loosening my grip (or giving up some control) is a lesson God is still teaching me every day. When I'm faced with misgivings or a situation that makes me feel vulnerable, my instinct is to try to manage God rather than trust Him. But every time I do step out in faith, even just a few steps beyond the boundary, I remember the thrill of surrender. It feels like peace and excitement all at once, knowing my God is big enough to steer my course. He's in charge of my relationships, my

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LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE

parenting, my career, and everything else in this big, wide universe. And though He may need to remind me of it sometimes, I know He's worthy of my trust.

The journey might steal your breath or even stop your heart—but you will never forget the rush of a life truly surrendered.

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the
Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*

—2 Corinthians 3:17

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Try to think of a time when you felt truly unbridled and free. What prompted the feeling, and what made that moment so special?
2. Describe something that scares you. Where do you think that fear came from? Is it a healthy fear, or is it a fear worth conquering?
3. Why is it so difficult to hand over the reins of our lives to God? What are we afraid of losing?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my husband—without your sacrifice I couldn't do what I do. You've encouraged my calling from the very beginning.

To Levi and Lyla—I pray you always know the God of this story and that He's ever present in your own. Everything in life up until this point has prepared me to be your mother, and I am grateful for you.

To the FCM family—Mike, Brandi, Dave, and Kacie—you figuratively keep my world spinning! You are a force full of heart, skill, and wisdom.

To the EMF family—thank you for helping reach the world with all you do.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

TASHA LAYTON is a contemporary Christian musician who finds her identity and purpose in her personal relationship with Jesus. Layton's musical career took off with her appearance on Season 9 of *American Idol* and during the four years she spent touring as a back-up vocalist for pop superstar Katy Perry.

In 2020, Layton was first named one of *Billboard's* Top 5 female Christian artists of the year on the heels of her breakthrough single "Into The Sea (It's Gonna Be OK)." Now, her 2021 smash hit "Look What You've Done" is testifying on radio stations across the country to the incredible transformation she's experienced after moving God's truth from her head to her heart.

Tasha has experienced the depths of suicidal thoughts, struggling with comparison and self-worth. But her God brought her through and set her course toward a life of joy, freedom, boldness, and eternal perspective. Today,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

she blesses people everywhere with her breathtaking talents and testimony.

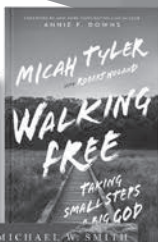
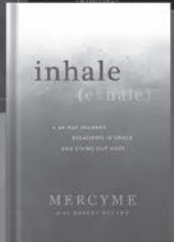
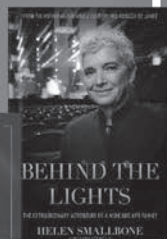
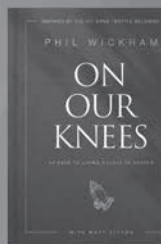
From humble beginnings in small-town South Carolina, to far off places on almost every continent, Tasha has experienced God's love every step of the way. In 2022, she launched her new online show, *Boundless*, with K-LOVE OnDemand. Publishing in 2023, *Look What You've Done: The Lies We Believe & The Truth That Sets Us Free* is her first book.



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**Dove Award–nominated contemporary
Christian artist Tasha Layton shares her personal
journey through a diverse collection of stories
and intimate self-reflections to encourage
readers to follow where God leads them.**

Inspired by her powerful hit song of the same name, *Look What You've Done* explores Tasha's journey of finding freedom in Jesus through life's twists and turns. Tasha takes readers through her early days in small-town South Carolina, to her big breakthrough as a singer for Katy Perry, to the mission field in Kenya.

Tasha's shares vulnerable reflections about the struggles she's faced in her faith and music. Readers will identify with Tasha as she describes the lies she allowed herself to believe as she battled with comparison, self-image, and the uncertainty of finding purpose. God continues to bring her wisdom and truth regarding who He is, and who she is meant to be.

“*Look What You've Done* will deepen your understanding of God and how he works in our lives. Grab one for you and anyone who needs a reminder that God uses each person's story for His glory!”

—**CHRISTY NOCKELS**, worship leader and bestselling author of *The Life You Long For*

“Life is full of many battles. For my friend Tasha Layton, she has battled comparison, self-image, and the uncertainty of finding her purpose. This book is a testament to what God has done through her and her family.”

—**JORDAN FELIZ**, Award-winning musician and Singer-songwriter of #1 hit song, “Jesus is Coming Back”

“Tasha is the real deal, and the more I've learned about her story, the more inspired I am by her incredible faith. This is her story to honor what God has done, and I know it will inspire and challenge you, too!”

—**DANNY GOKEY**, Grammy and Dove Award-winning Christian music artist, and author of *Hope in Front of Me*

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