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Carol Travilla and  
Joan C. Webb

the  
*I*ntentional *W*oman

A Guide to  
Experiencing  
the Power of  
Your Story



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# *Dedication*

We lovingly dedicate this book  
to our daughters, Karen and Lynnette, and daughters-in-law, Jill and Anne.  
You are intentional women with hearts for God.  
You bring joy and love into our lives.  
We feel blessed.

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## *Appreciation*

The possibility for this book began that day we met for lunch in 1988. Our common desire to share how God has worked in our lives fueled our friendship. God has repeatedly surprised us by giving us opportunities to work together. Along the way God brought men and women into our lives who have supported us, believed in us, and prayed for us.

First we thank our loving and patient husbands, Ken and Richard. They have gone the extra mile supporting us in practical ways such as running errands, grocery shopping, providing meals, praying, and giving us freedom to complete this project.

Thank you to our friends, our LifePlan and coaching clients, the women in our workshops, and all the intentional women who gave us permission to share their powerful stories. You are too numerous to mention by name. Yet we want you to know that your encouragement and prayers have inspired us and kept us going.

Also we thank the capable team at NavPress that has guided us through this writing and publishing process.

# Prep Steps

## PART A.

### HOW CAN I DISCOVER THE POWER OF MY LIFE STORY?



**Key Verse:** *We pray for you all the time—pray that our God will make you fit for what he’s called you to be, pray that he’ll fill your good ideas and acts of faith with his own energy so that it all amounts to something.*  
(2 Thessalonians 1:11, MSG)

### Living Intentionally

If I live intentionally, being true to my own personality, serving out of my God-given giftedness and calling, I no longer feel a need to envy anyone else's career, marriage, ministry, talents, or mission.

The day I (Joan) jotted these liberating words into my journal, I sighed with relief. I was forty years old. Believing this truth gradually changed my life. Although I rarely voiced envy, I was secretly disappointed that others had fulfilled their dreams but I had not. I longed to live out the purposes and desires that God had planted deep within my heart. Yet I was afraid.

Would God (and others) think I was selfish if I took the time to nurture my interests and gifts? Could God use my past experiences and accomplishments (even though some were not what I had wanted to do) to help me determine how to live more effectively today? Could I be certain that it was God who was encouraging me to make changes in my life?

During this questioning time in my life I watched Carol Travilla teach a Sunday school class at Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. I stepped beyond my apprehension about what she might think of me and telephoned her, asking her to meet me for lunch. She agreed. Although she did not know me, she listened intently to my story. I told her about my

recent decision to walk away from my business and shared how burnout had left me feeling empty and confused. I shared my desire to escape from the people-pleasing and action-obsessed lifestyle that was so familiar to me. I told her that I wanted to live for God—courageously and intentionally.

### FRIENDS MENTORING FRIENDS

Several days later Carol telephoned to ask me to do some interior design work at her office. Our relationship began. As weeks turned into months and years, I learned that Carol had experienced difficult growing times, also. She identified with my passion to live “on-purpose” for God. Our connection grew into a friendship that Carol describes as “iron sharpening iron.” We have a stimulating, motivating effect on one another. Carol is an extrovert, energized by interaction with others. I am an introvert, gaining strength and vitality from my alone times. We mentor and sharpen one another and therefore have become wiser, more intentional women.

We believe women can help each other develop into the persons God designed them to be. We have witnessed and experienced this exciting mentoring phenomenon in our own rela-

tionship and in the relationships of other women. We have come to understand that many women want to learn, share, and live intentionally, but feel too busy with their jobs, families, homes, church, and volunteer work to become involved in programs to develop lengthy life-purpose plans.

*As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend.*

(Proverbs 27:17, NLT)

### A REUSABLE FIVE-STEP PROCESS

In response to this obvious need, we have developed a process for helping one another learn to live meaningful, intentional, and God-honoring lives. You now hold this process tool in your hands. We hope to reduce the mystery and intimidation that often accompany trying to determine what to do with your life. Our interactive workbook offers you an inviting, practical, and reusable five-step method for:

- Recognizing the power of your personal life story and God's goodness in developing your story
- Discovering a next-step action focus for intentional living right now—in your current life stage

You may have the desire and time to delve more deeply into the topic of designing your personal life goals. If so, you may use this workbook in conjunction with other helpful manuals and technical books on the subject.

We wish we could share with each of you personally, but because that is impossible, we

designed a way for us to work together. In the pages of this interactive workbook we share our own experiences, as well as the stories of friends. We will guide you as you gain clarification about:

- Who you are now: your present roles, temperament, and life stage.
- Where you have been: your past experiences and accomplishments.
- How knowing who you are and where you have been helps you experience the power of your life story, develop a current life focus, and become intentional about your personal and spiritual growth.
- How learning to appreciate God's goodness in producing your unique life script can help you love Him more.

It is our prayer that you will find joy and direction for living intentionally at each season of your life.

### *What to Expect*

Each time you complete the exercises in this workbook, you will gain new insight about your current life stage and help in making wise choices for right now. There is no limit to the number of times you can work through this process. Here's what you can expect to do as you work through this reusable five-step process:

#### STEP ONE: COME AS YOU ARE TODAY

In this step, you will complete exercises that help you answer the following questions:

- What is good about my life today?
- What concerns me about my life right now?
- What is lacking in my life?
- How do I want God to help me?

#### STEP TWO: CELEBRATE YOUR YESTERDAYS

In step two, you will complete exercises that help you answer these questions:

- Is there power in *my* life story?
- What have I enjoyed throughout my life?
- Who has influenced me during my life?
- How have my past experiences shaped me?

#### STEP THREE: COMMIT IT ALL TO GOD

In this step, you will complete exercises that help you answer these questions:

- What are my unique characteristics and preferences?
- What is God teaching me about myself?
- How can I commit it all to God?

## STEP FOUR: CONSIDER YOUR CHOICES

In step four, you will complete exercises that help you answer these questions:

- What are my opportunities and options?
- What are my current roles?
- What are my unique stressors and supports?

## STEP FIVE: CLARIFY YOUR NEXT STEPS

In the final step of this process, you will answer these questions:

- What holds me back?
- How can I join God in living out of the power of my life story?
- What action step will I take?

Committing to one action step at a time leads to an entire lifetime of purposeful living. It helps you take personal responsibility for your own growth and assists you in deciding how to spend your time and energy right now.

Throughout this workbook, each time you are asked to finish a sentence, respond to a question, or complete an exercise, you will see the following symbol: ☞

☞ 1. As you anticipate working through these steps, begin by completing this sentence: I am interested in becoming focused and intentional because. . .

☞ 2. Complete this sentence: At this stage in my life, I look forward to. . .

## Lifelong Adventure

We suggest that you ask another woman to join you in experiencing this five-step method for becoming an intentional woman who lives out of the power of her story. You might meet for breakfast (before work) or during your lunch hour to share your answers and inspiration. Or you could start a women's focus group at your church, with your neighbors, or with the mothers of your child's classmates. If it's impossible to meet face-to-face, you might consider doing the exercises on your own and then connecting for interaction with another woman on the telephone or via e-mail.

We have designed the exercises and tools in this workbook to be flexible. Perhaps you or your group would like to do one step per week for a six-week study. Or maybe you would like to use the book in a Sunday school class or weeknight setting. In this case, you may wish to spend two weeks on each step, making it a twelve-week program. Or you and your friends might choose to do all the steps during a weekend retreat. We encourage you to come just as you are today and join us on this lifelong adventure of becoming an intentional woman.

If you're using this workbook on your own, you're still not alone. Throughout the book you'll find boxes containing the real-life IW (Intentional Woman) stories of others who are traveling with you on this road.

## PART B.

### WHAT IS INTENTIONAL LIVING, ANYWAY?

"I feel so unfocused and disorganized!" said Laura. She had just been downsized from her job, moved to a new city, and was trying to decide whether to get married again. "How can I manage all this change in my life and still commit to a new relationship?" she asked. "It's hard for me to be intentional. I wonder what in the world that is, anyway."

Perhaps, like Laura, you wonder what we mean by the term "intentional woman." An intentional woman works at becoming proactive instead of just letting life happen to her. The opposite of being intentional is being haphazard or purposeless about your thoughts, decisions, and actions—merely *reacting* to life's unexpected circumstances.

*For a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. People like that should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. They can't make up their minds. They waver back and forth in everything they do.*

(James 1:6-8, NLT)

The intentional woman with a heart for God has a sense of God's purpose for her and is living true to her personality and giftedness. She accepts what she cannot change about her season and circumstances, making courageous and deliberate decisions about the things she can change. She is not self-absorbed to the point of leaving others out of her life, nor does

she live her life through or for others. The attitudes and pressures of other people do not unduly influence her. She is focused and directed, not floundering or driven.

Because today's Christian woman is too busy just to keep adding to her already overwhelming to-do list, it's understandable that she might ask the questions, *Why should I spend energy trying to live intentionally? Why is it important for a woman to clarify her aspirations, discover and develop her God-given abilities, and make intentional plans about her next steps?*

### *The Key Reason for Living Intentionally*

The key reason for living intentionally is to glorify God as the person He created you to be. In honoring your uniqueness, you come before your Creator and Savior with freedom and integrity. When I (Carol) was a child, I remember being taught that the "chief end of man" is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. I sensed that my Sunday school teachers thought this was an important principle, yet it was confusing to me. What did they mean? And how was I supposed to accomplish this directive?

*The Scotch catechism says that man's chief end is "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.*

(C. S. Lewis)

As I matured in my faith, I realized these instructors were trying to tell me that the ultimate purpose of every human being—man, woman, or child—is to praise and honor God with the life he or she is given. Gradually, this principle made more sense to me. It meant accepting my uniqueness—the way God created me—and pulling out all the stops to develop my gifts and use them deliberately to serve God here on earth.

Integrity grows as you allow God to guide you in becoming more honest with yourself, others, and God. Then you can live each new day to enjoy, honor, and worship God as the person He designed you to be.

*It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for.*

(Ephesians 1:11, MSG)

### *Four Benefits of Living Intentionally*

#### **BENEFIT ONE: DEVELOP CONFIDENCE AND SELF-RESPECT.**

Many women long to connect with their possibilities. Because you are reading this book, you are probably one of these women. God created you with unique temperament traits,

interests, and gifts. You have past experiences and potential accomplishments like no one else.

As you cooperate with God and accept responsibility for your adult choices, emotions, and behavior, you take positive steps toward living intentionally. Once you believe that you can change the things about your life over which you have control—in addition to accepting the things you cannot change—you are on the way to increasing self-respect. You gain renewed self-worth when you stop blaming your circumstances, family, or friends and start making on-purpose decisions about your immediate and long-range future. When you stay committed to the lifelong pursuit of knowing God and yourself better, you can enter each new day with confidence.

## IW STORY: FOCUSING MY ENERGY

When I was young, I assumed I had unlimited energy. I could work all day and into the night, get a few hours of rest, and be ready to start again the next morning. Then one day, I came to the end of my strength. I learned a valuable lesson. Energy is *not* unlimited.

I needed to make some important choices about where to focus my energy. I noticed that my energy dissipated when I felt conflicted about what I was doing. So I began to prioritize my activities. I searched the Scripture for my own set of basic values. These values became a

steadying influence for me when making choices.

To me, living intentionally means clinging tenaciously to these three primary concepts:

- My energy is limited, therefore I must focus.
- I can focus my energy by concentrating on the personal values I have chosen from Scripture.
- My focused energy powerfully fuels my consistent daily choices, so that I can live intentionally.

HOLLY DELHOUSAYE, FOUNDER OF  
PRICKLY PERSPECTIVES

### BENEFIT TWO: GAIN FOCUS AND DIRECTION.

I (Carol) felt anxious and overwhelmed until I understood the positive aspects of my high-energy and divergent (scattered) way of thinking and living. I felt I was not good enough, not organized enough, and never

*My business is not to remake myself, but  
make the absolute best of what God made.*

(Robert Browning)

accomplished enough. When I began to appreciate and accept my fun-loving, people-oriented personality, I gained focus and purpose. I became intentional about using my style to glorify God and serve others.

### BENEFIT THREE: CONCENTRATE ON GOD'S IDEA FOR ME, NOT SOMEONE ELSE'S.

It's important for a woman to discover who God created her to *be*, and consequently, what He designed her to *do*, because if she doesn't learn and act on that knowledge, then she will probably end up living someone else's intent for her. It might please the other person, but it will leave her feeling restless, dull, and unfulfilled—disconnected from herself and maybe even from God.

It is sad when we women think and behave as though God's creative idea for us is not enough. We can become more influenced by what another person thinks or wants than by what God purposed. The subtle message is, *God, You must be wrong about this. I just can't trust You to do what is best for me.*

A woman who lives to please another person may think she has valid reasons for doing so. I (Joan) certainly did. One of my motives for living this way was that I thought God

wanted this from me. I read the Bible and knew it directed me to be loving, kind, accepting, and giving. I wanted to obey the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. (See Matthew 7:12.) I did not want to act selfishly or appear unloving. So I hid what I liked, what I really wanted, and what I believed to be right for me when it did not coincide with my husband's ideas.

*Once you accept responsibility for yourself, other people are powerless to impose their agendas and expectations on you. That is freedom and power. Freedom to choose consistent with your purpose.*

(Kevin W. McCarthy, *The On-Purpose Person: Make Your Life Make Sense*)

### BENEFIT FOUR: AVOID BURNOUT.

Eventually, this way of life led me into burnout. I felt dead inside. Still, I tried so hard to make everyone happy. I wanted to please God, but my actions proved that someone else was more important to me than God.

I slipped deeper into depression, overwork, and exhaustion until I reluctantly admitted, "I do not want to live this way any longer." Although uncertain about just what to do, I began to be honest with God about my thoughts, emotions, and needs. In turn, God slowly started revealing myself to me. I found I had some misconstrued ideas about how to be a loving and giving person. For the sake of peace I had ignored what God had showed me about myself and instead had adopted my mate's concept for me. I ended up where I didn't want to be.

It startled me to realize that someone else's opinion and agenda pulled more weight with me than God's did. I was hurt and sad that I had unintentionally treated God so poorly. However, my genuine pain gave me the motivation and courage I needed to change my direction and pursue God's intention for me. This is what He had wanted from me all along.

*You are either living your mission or you are living someone else's. Which shall it be?*

*(Laurie Beth Jones, *The Path*)*

#### A BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: PETER'S PURPOSE

We can avoid burnout by focusing on God's purpose for us as individuals. Jesus' interaction with Peter helps us understand this truth.

☞ 1. Read John 21:17-21 (printed here). In the third paragraph of this passage, what did Jesus ask Peter to do?

*The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"*

*Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."*

*Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"*

☞ 2. What was Peter's final response to Jesus in the last paragraph?

*Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"*

*(John 21:17-21)*

Jesus cooked breakfast for Peter, James, John, and a few other disciples. After they finished eating, Jesus started a one-on-one conversation with Peter. "Peter, do you care about me more than all the other important things in your life?" asked Jesus.


"Oh, yes, Lord," answered Peter. "You know I do."

"I have a special plan and purpose for you, Peter," continued Jesus. "I'm calling you to supervise, guide, and nurture those who choose to believe in Me after I'm gone."

Jesus based this calling for Peter on several factors: Peter's temperament, who God had created him to be, Peter's past experiences, and what Peter had learned about his own accomplishments and weaknesses. Jesus delivered a multifaceted life direction for a uniquely created person to be lived out to the glory of God and the good of others. Jesus gave Peter an awesome life mission. It fit him perfectly.

Yet, Peter's immediate response to this amazing and intimate moment with his Lord was: "But what is Your plan for him?" And Peter pointed toward his friend John.

Some of us, like Peter, are so concerned with how someone else is responding to God's call that we neglect to deal honestly with our own purpose from God. We actually honor Him when we allow Him to show us who we are and what we can become.



*People who exercise their embryonic freedom day after day will, little by little, expand that freedom. People who do not will find that it withers until they are literally "being lived." They are acting out the scripts written by parents, associates, and society.*

(Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*)

## LIVING INTENTIONALLY MEANS...

### *Becoming Free*

You are personally responsible for who you are and what you decide before God. God doesn't expect you to make the spiritual or moral decisions for other people. Neither does God expect you to give up your own gifts, talents, personality, and heart passion just to please another. Placating another person (such as saying yes, no matter what you think or feel) seems like the unselfish thing to do because it brings an initial calm in the relationship. However, inauthentic harmony is not the kind of love God speaks about when He says to serve one another.

Accepting responsibility for your own choices, listening to what God has to say about you, and living out your own life purpose allows those around you to discover God's design

for them. This freedom is one of the most significant gifts you can give those closest to you—the ones you influence daily. Then you and those you love can relax and enjoy serving God intentionally, each with your unique gifts and potential. This is God's plan. And it works.

*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

(Ephesians 2:10, NLT)

☞ 3. Read Ephesians 2:10 (printed above). According to this verse, what does God have planned for you to do?

☞ 4. You are God's masterpiece. What does that mean to you?

☞ 5. Read Philippians 1:6 (printed here). Describe the work God has started in you.

*Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

(Philippians 1:6)

☪ 6. How long will God continue to do a good work in and through you?

God is the most creative, capable, and committed artist you could ever imagine. He takes joy in painting masterpieces. You are His living masterpiece and He longs for you to cooperate with His ongoing creative work.

### *Accepting the Process*

Living according to God's plan and purpose for you is an important key to glorifying God and enjoying Him forever. But it doesn't happen overnight. It is a step-by-step process.

Perhaps it puzzles you that you might need to address this purpose issue repeatedly. Like many women, perhaps you like to do something once, do it well, and move on to the next goal. However, if you can accept the fact that you will not be able to have your entire life mission and implementation strategy figured out perfectly, you can actually experience a sense of relief. God invites you to enjoy your journey with Him.

*We detect rather than invent our mission in life.*

(Victor Frankl)

### **IW STORY: RELAXING WITH THE PROCESS**

I was fifty-five years old, still struggling with what I wanted to be when I grew up, and feeling old and unusable. Then I sensed God urging me to go back to school. I enrolled in a Master of Divinity program.

My focused and purposeful goal: To make rapid progress. At my age, I felt I couldn't waste any more time. I had always felt one step behind, learning today what I should have known years before. After reminding the Lord that I was older now and hopefully wiser, I

asked Him to skip the baby steps and get on to the big stuff.

One day as I prayed, I thought, *What if Jesus had come with this hurry up attitude?* I envisioned Him saying to His Father, "OK, let's get busy. I have the whole world to save in just over three years. For starters, I'll need more than these twelve men." However, Jesus kept God's perspective. He stayed connected to His Father and accomplished everything that needed to be done.

I began to relax when I realized that my

Heavenly Father accepts and enjoys the process as well as the result. At one time, I felt I had wasted too many years by not recognizing my God-given purpose and pursuing it intentionally. But

now I realize that God has been there all along, giving meaning to each of my life experiences.

REBECCA ANDERSON, STUDENT AT  
PHOENIX SEMINARY

## *Reducing Confusion*

“It is not so important to have the perfect mission statement,” says Lynnette Rasmussen, with Summit Advantage Training and Coaching. “In fact, I encourage my clients not to wait for that moment [in order] to start living with direction. I like to think of it as having an overall umbrella of purpose for your life, so that you can walk forward intentionally. This umbrella helps you decide what to say no to and what to say yes to.”

There are many worthwhile opportunities available to women today. It is confusing trying to decipher what to do. However, by choosing to live within the guidelines of your unique God-given design and purpose, you can make more reasonable yes and no decisions.

## *MOVING ON*

The primary reason for intentional living is to glorify God as the person He intended you to be and to live out the good deeds He planned for you to do. In addition, living intentionally helps you:

- Reduce stress and daily anxiety
- Develop confidence and self-respect
- Gain direction for making decisions
- Establish healthy relationships
- Avoid burnout

☞ 7. Which benefit of intentional living interests you right now?

*God is not greater if you reverence Him,  
but you are greater if you serve Him.*

(St. Augustine)

*“My purpose is to give life in all its  
fullness.”*

(John 10:10, NLT)

- ☞ 8. What can you do during this next week to remind yourself that you want to experience this benefit?

This adventure starts where you are *today*. Reading and completing the exercises in step one will help you understand your current life situation—your reality, needs, and desires. You might discover you would like more space for answering the questions or completing the exercises in this workbook. If so, we suggest you keep an Intentional Woman notebook or journal to record your additional thoughts and insights.

# *Step One: Come as You Are Today*

## *PART 1:*

### WHERE AM I RIGHT NOW?



**Key Verse:** *The LORD says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you." (Psalm 32:8, NLT)*

#### *God's Promise to Guide*

*I* (Carol) was a nineteen-year-old college student, struggling with what classes to take, who to be, and what to do with the rest of my life. I felt disoriented and alone. One weekend I went home to visit, and during a meeting at my home church, a friend's father gave a short testimony. He quoted Psalm 32:8, and immediately I claimed it as my special promise from God. I sensed God saying, "Carol, I will teach you. I will help you with what to do with your life. Watch me. I will guide you with my eye."

Through the following years when I had no idea which way to turn, I believed the promise in Psalm 32:8. God assured me that He would instruct me and help me with my decisions. The phrase in the Bible version I read—"I will guide you with My eye"—fascinated me. Gradually, I realized that although God said He would watch over me, I could not decipher what He wanted me to do unless I kept my eye on Him. How could He show me anything or direct me about my future if I was not looking at Him?

I have learned the value of focusing on the Lord through prayer and Bible reading—depending on His Spirit for insight, courage, and power to act on what I learn. Even today, after the decades of many moves, blessings, and disappointments, this special verse remains God's distinct assurance to me. We have chosen Psalm 32:8 as our key verse for the first step in this process of becoming an intentional woman.

- ☞ 1. Read Psalm 32:8 (printed on page 25). Using your own words, rewrite this verse as if God were speaking it directly to you.

As He has done for me (Carol), God longs to protect and guide you. He wants to help you make wise decisions in the midst of your sometimes confusing circumstances and busy schedules.

### *Finding Balance*

Airplanes, fax machines, microwaves, cell telephones, and computers encourage us to hurry up and accomplish more. How can we find a wise balance in this frantic world?

Deciding what you want most from life and weeding out activities that detract from your goals will help you feel more balanced.

Our Creator gives you one earthly life. He doesn't push you to fill every moment of your life with planned activity or service. God is happy for you to slow down in order to determine where you want to go, what you want to do, and who you want to be. He wants—even expects—you to take responsibility for each area of your life.

Yet perhaps you've been conditioned to believe that God is not concerned with certain areas, so you should not be, either. Maybe you talk with Him about your spiritual needs and goals but minimize your other needs.

- ☞ 2. Read Luke 2:52 (printed here). Why do you think this verse is included in the Bible?

*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

(1 Corinthians 10:31)

*And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

(Luke 2:52)

Jesus grew relationally, physically, and spiritually. He also developed prudence in handling life's varied circumstances. By His Son's example, God affirms that He is interested and concerned with the total person. He wants all His children to be balanced individuals, continually maturing in every way.

*Just as nature needs balance, people need balance. We need time to be whole persons, and this means balance.*

(Anne Wilson Schaefer, *Meditations for Women Who Do Too Much*)

The next exercise is designed to help you gain a clearer picture of where you are right now—not yesterday—but *today* as you face tomorrow. Maybe the concerns and duties of one life area are overpowering the other areas. Getting an overall view of your life can help you identify the areas that need specific attention. Then you can make adjustments to regain balance.

Balance itself has no specific objective. It is a constant state of motion. To help understand this, imagine that you have just completed the following exercise:

- You stood up and twirled around several times.
- You ran in place for several minutes and skipped to the corner of the room and back.
- You twirled around twice more.
- Then you immediately tried to balance on one foot.

Imagine the subtle adjustments you had to make in your foot and body to maintain equilibrium. This imaginary activity is designed to give you a picture of what you are attempting to do in balancing the different aspects and roles of your life during any given day. Developing balance is a skill.

### *Wheel of Life*

To help you assess your life as a whole and see which areas are currently out of balance, we offer the Wheel of Life inventory exercise. The Wheel assesses eight areas of your life.

- Fun and Recreation (time-out, hobbies, exploring, re-creation)
- Self-care (physical well-being, health issues, exercise, soul-care, journaling)
- Finances (stewardship and money management)

*From time to time, On-Purpose Persons may choose to be out of balance. Perhaps there's a major project that's essential to our purpose—then we go out of balance on a temporary basis. Giving ourselves consent to be off-balance tempers the ideal with the real—life, after all has surprises. A few words of caution are appropriate: Constant out-of-balance activity leads to being off-purpose.*

(Kevin W. McCarthy, *The On-Purpose Person: Making Your Life Make Sense*)

- Life Work (vocation, career—including full-time mother or homemaker)
- Family Life (children, in-laws, grandchildren, extended family)
- Marriage/Romance (spouse, dating)
- Friends/Relationships (neighbors, coworkers, friends, fellow church members)
- Spiritual Life (faith, relationship with God, service, church work)

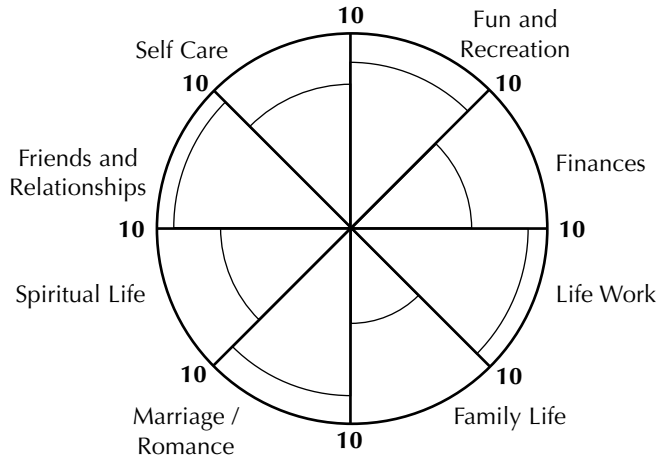
The Wheel of Life tool registers your perceptions of your current satisfaction in each of the eight areas of your life. As you contemplate your satisfaction level in each life area, you may encounter some surprises—or confusion. You might be a single woman and have little romance in your life right now, yet you are satisfied with that. Consider this when you mark your wheel. Or perhaps you just left a job and have not started a new position yet, but you are pleased with your situation. Maybe you quit your outside job to stay home with your new baby and this decision necessitated a reduction in your family budget, but you are content with that reality. Perhaps you have a chronic medical condition but have learned good coping skills and are pleased with your situation at the current time. In that case, you would register your physical well-being with a higher number than one might expect. Resist completing your wheel according to how you think someone else might register your level of satisfaction.

*Much of the dissatisfaction among Christian women today is, I believe, due to our choosing God as the center of our lives (being) but not lining up with the purposes God has put within us (doing).*

(Jan Johnson, *Living a Purpose-Full Life*)

3. With the center of the wheel as 0 and the outer edge as 10, rank your *level of satisfaction* with each life area by drawing a curved line to create a new outer edge (see example). The new perimeter of the circle represents your Wheel of Life.

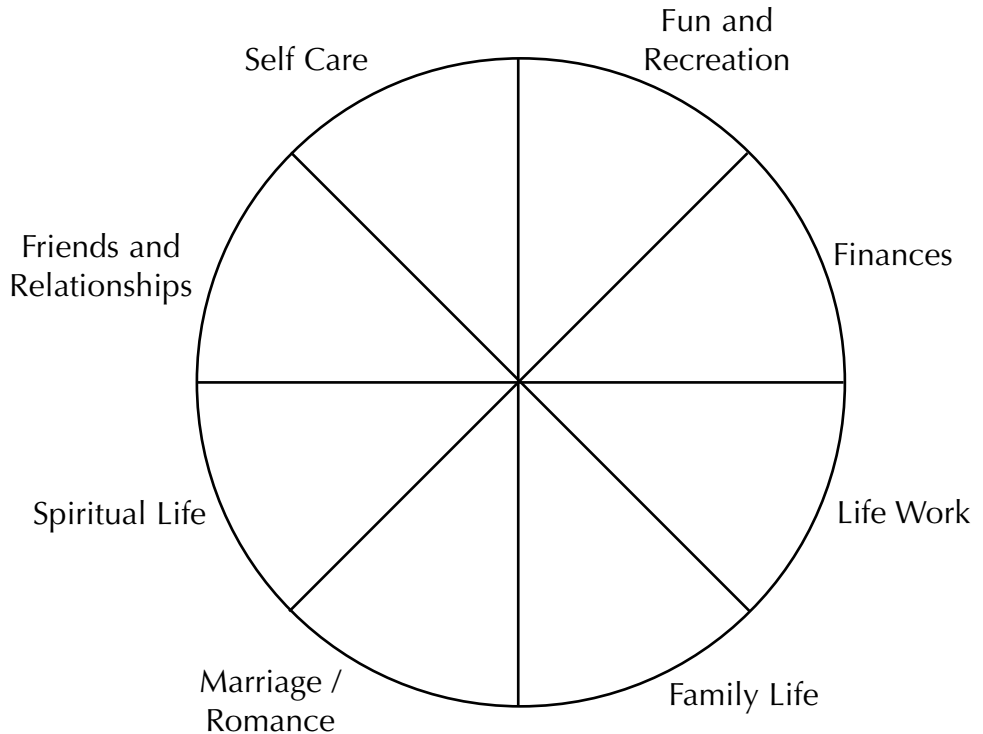
## HOW BUMPY IS MY RIDE?



### EXAMPLE

The eight sections in the Wheel of Life represent eight areas of your daily life. Look over the example and then complete your wheel.

### MY WHEEL



☞ 4. How bumpy would your ride be if this were a real wheel?

☞ 5. What is one thing you learned from your Wheel of Life inventory?

### NO PERFECT WHEEL

When I (Joan) first drew my wheel, it represented how bumpy my life was at the time. The second time I did it, there was not such a huge disparity between each area. The one who guided me through this exercise said the objective was not necessarily to have all 9s or 10s. The aim was to gain a visual aid that would assist me in making choices that lead to a more satisfied life. She assured me that I could have all 7s and 8s and still feel balanced.

We're unlikely to have all 10s all the time because life here on this earth will never be perfect and our lives are in a constant state of flux. Any time you feel overwhelmed, this simple exercise can help you evaluate your life situation and make adjustments to raise your satisfaction level. It gives you a base from which to work, helping you make proactive decisions instead of just letting life happen to you. Often, when you make necessary changes in one aspect of your life, it positively affects the other areas and raises your overall satisfaction level.

## IW STORY: COURAGE TO BE INTENTIONAL

As soon as I was given the instructions for doing the Wheel of Life inventory tool, I knew right away there would be at least one area that I would register a low number and make my wheel of life very lopsided.

Consequently, I considered fudging a little to make it appear more in balance. After all, I reasoned, no one would know. I wanted to look good to my new friends. However, I also knew that I wanted to

gain as much as I could from this IW process, so I concluded that I would be honest.

Then I faced an entirely different dilemma. Being honest about my current dissatisfaction in these life areas meant I would be faced with the need to take stock and *do* something tangible so I would not feel so out of balance.

AUDREY THORKELSON,  
LEADERSHIP TRAINER

## IW STORY: I CAN DO THAT!

I marked each spoke of the Wheel of Life with an 8, 9, or 10 and felt pleased. However, when I came to the Self Care area, I said, "I marked it a 5, because I have Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and there is nothing I can do about it." Another area was lower also, so my friend and I discussed ways to raise my satisfaction level there. I committed to begin working on it the next day. Then we went back to the Self Care area. She said, "What could you do to raise the 5 to a 6?"

"Don't have time to exercise right now," I answered. "But maybe I could go

to sleep fifteen minutes earlier each night. Yes, I can do that."

"Will doing that change your 5 to a 6?" asked my friend.

"Yes, it will," I admitted with surprise. Then I realized that my "there is nothing I can do about it" comment was not entirely honest. I acknowledge my medical problems are ongoing. Yet, I now know (more fully than before) that I do have options and choices even in these areas where I thought I had no control.

LYNN SMITH (NAME CHANGED),  
WORKING WIFE AND MOTHER

## PART B.

### WHAT IS GOING ON IN MY LIFE?

#### *What Is Good about My Life Today?*

Recently, when I (Carol) paused to answer the question *What is good about my life right now?* I realized anew how my life is filled with many positive circumstances.

- I am experiencing the results of consistently working through the five steps we recommend in this book.
- I do a better job of accepting my limitations and strengths now.
- I have developed a more contented heart since I began to understand the importance of having realistic expectations in each area of my life.
- I have a solid marriage. I feel I have been blessed by having a mate like my husband, Ken. He values glorifying God with his uniqueness, too. Still, it hasn't always been smooth sailing. Early in our marriage I depended on Ken to meet all my intimacy needs. I now know that this is impossible for any human being to do.
- I have wonderful children, grandchildren, and extended family. I enjoy living near some of my family.
- My work as a LifePlan facilitator is rewarding.
- Through the years in ministry and business, I have developed a strong network of caring friends and colleagues.

I am pleased with what I call my personal capital account. You have such an account as well. The assets in your account may include your history, abilities, gifts, pain, forgiven sins, accomplishments, friendships, family, network, spiritual growth, and reputation.

- ☞ 1. To help you determine what is in your personal capital account, answer this question: *What is good about my life right now?*

*I have the privilege and opportunity to optimize my personal capital.*

## *What Concerns Me about My Life Right Now?*

Some of you may have current life concerns that include dealing with life-threatening illnesses, divorce, difficult children, financial loss, singleness, or career disappointment. Your concerns will vary depending on your season and current circumstances. This exercise is geared to help you be realistic about your struggles and determine what is troubling you today.

A continual concern for me (Carol) is how to maintain my health, which has been a lifelong roller coaster experience. I struggle staying committed to living a balanced life. I have a tendency to overdo as soon as I feel good physically.

Also, I have noticed that with each passing year I gain more relationships. For example, I gain more family members as relatives marry and have children. Also, as I meet new friends and clients, I still want to remain in contact with my former associates and friends. Consequently, another concern is that I will be wise about knowing what to subtract so that I can experience the blessings that come with each new season of my life.

*Honor your feelings. They tell the truth about how you really experience the world. No one really benefits from your pretending. You can only see others as clearly as you see yourself.*

*(Stephen C. Paul, Illuminations: Visions for Change, Growth and Self-Acceptance)*

☪ 2. To help you determine what has a tendency to preoccupy your thoughts right now, answer the question, *What concerns me about my life at the current time?*

*My concerns are an opportunity to identify focus for growth.*

## *What Is Lacking in My Life Right Now?*


When your job, environment, or a relationship changes, or you feel restless and confused about a situation, pause to answer this question: *What is lacking in my life right now?* Stay quiet long enough to recognize your honest responses. These responses can help you recognize potential solutions for filling the voids in your life.

For example, a while back, I (Carol) asked myself, *What is lacking in my life right now?* I realized I lacked a sense of teamwork. I missed working with the staff at my clinic in Minnesota. Since moving to Arizona, I have worked from my home office and at times felt isolated.

I knew I could not go back to the previous way I worked. Still, I realized I had the opportunity to fill the void in a different way. I talked with God about my desire and considered my options. As a result, during the last year I have become more involved with the women on the ministry team at church. Then God surprised me by moving Joan here to Arizona from Minnesota. We have the opportunity to work together. I chuckle when I think about how different I feel now than I did before.

In fact, the other day as I was doing this exercise, I realized that a void in my life right now is “time-outs.” I need some respite—time away for renewal. This is a void I can fill by saying no to a few requests and scheduling some alone time on my calendar.

- ☞ 3. To help determine what you are missing in your life, answer the question, *What is lacking in my life right now?*

  
*Intentionality and self-discipline are crucial in implementing hoped-for changes.*  
(Jeannette Bakke, *Holy Invitations*)

You can work through these exercises again at different intervals in your life. Even next week you may respond differently to these three questions. These exercises take a snapshot of your life—at the moment.

*My felt “lacks” are an opportunity to make decisions that fill the void.*

## IW STORY: I LIKE WHERE I AM RIGHT NOW

A little over a year ago, I was faced with the question, *What concerns me right now?* Immediately, I knew my major concern was my job. Every morning as I looked into the mirror, I saw a depressed woman staring back at me. Ironically, I enjoyed what I was doing. Yet for months I had been doubting my competency to do a job I had performed for over twenty years. My boss was—in the opinion of my friends—abusive. I felt trapped because my generous salary made it difficult for me to leave.

The answer to the question, *What is lacking in my life right now?* was obvious, also. *Joy.* My job was stealing the joy from my life. I was unhappy on the job, unhappy in the morning, in the evening, and on the weekend. *Christians are supposed to be filled with joy,* I thought. However, I felt dead inside and I just didn't care.

I knew that my concern about my job was an opportunity for me to make a decision that would enhance my growth and that my lack of joy was an invitation

for me to fill the void. Still, it was difficult for me to make a move. Finally, after talking with friends and praying, I decided to resign. I grabbed what little courage I had left and answered job ads. The interview process renewed my confidence. Others *wanted* me to be part of their organization. By the end of February I had a nice job offer. Interestingly, when I told my employer, he created a different position for me in a more positive environment, so I stayed.

To the other question, *What is good about my life right now?* I can say that I now feel balanced and joyful. I am no longer overextending myself—for the sake of making peace at any cost. I can now say *no*. I no longer must be in a perpetual state of motion just to prove my value. I am learning that it is not what I do for God, but my *relationship* with Him that is most important. I like where I am right now.

JACKIE REED,  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

## THE GOOD, THE CONCERNS, AND THE VOIDS OVERLAP

While you were completing the Where Am I Right Now? exercise, you may have found that your responses overlapped. For example, I (Joan) can list the following good points about my life:

- I feel better since I discovered some treatments that help my fibromyalgia and menopausal symptoms.
- I have a loving husband, and we are learning to flex with the ongoing changes of our empty nest.
- I enjoy living near our son and daughter and their families.
- I delight in my new role as grandma to Annika and Max.
- I am fulfilling a ministry career dream through writing, coaching, and speaking.
- I live near Carol and we are able to work together.
- *And* after twenty years of experiencing cold winters, I now enjoy living where it's warm.

Some of my concerns are in direct relation to what is good in my life. We live in the Arizona warmth and sunshine now and I love it, but it was a major career shift that moved us here. With this change, I feel uncertain. I wonder what we will be doing this time next year and how the changes will affect us, our children, and my work.

The voids in my life seem to be a result of the uncertainties. In response to this question, *What are the voids in my life right now?* I listed the following:

- When we left Minnesota, I left several ministry connections, including the Bible study class I taught. Since moving, I need to make new connections.
- I miss my friend Sue. For ten years we studied and prayed together every Wednesday. Now we live almost 1,300 miles apart and I feel the loss.
- Previously I met with other writers regularly. I miss this critique group.
- When our family moved across the country, we downsized to one car. Although we have adjusted, I miss the freedom I felt when I could just “get up and go” without making prior arrangements.

*There is as much guidance in what does not and cannot happen in my life as there is in what can and does—maybe more.*

(Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*)


## *Partnering with God*

Occasionally I get discouraged about the uncertainties that the concerns and voids bring. When I think about my past disappointments, I'm tempted to pretend that nothing is amiss

or try to hide my feelings and thoughts. Then I remind myself that the areas of my perceived lack are opportunities for me to make choices that foster growth and propel me into new adventures with my heavenly Father.

“We don’t give God a chance to do ‘His thing’ when we run away,” says my friend Linda Linder, a women’s Bible teacher from Edina, Minnesota. Perhaps your circumstances are not exactly as you envisioned they would be at this time in your life. Yet when you make an intentional decision to partner with God, you can be assured that He is in the process of fulfilling His commitment to guide and produce good in you.


You will take a major step in the right direction when you identify your emotions, thoughts, and needs. You have just answered questions about the good, the concerns, and the voids in your life. You may be experiencing mixed emotions such as frustration and hopefulness. Walking through the questioning and discouragement—instead of retreating—will reap worthwhile benefits. No matter what your feelings or thoughts right now, hang in there—the process *is* the journey.



*The surest method of arriving at a knowledge of God’s eternal purposes about us is to be found in the right use of the present moment. God’s will does not come to us in the whole, but in fragments and generally in small fragments. It is our business to piece it together, and to live it as one orderly vocation.*

(F. W. Faber)

## PART C. HERE I AM, LORD.



*Come near to God and he will come near to you.*

James 4:8

### *Praying God’s Words*

Years ago, right before our family moved to Minnesota, I (Joan) read Psalm 27:4 during my alone time. My heart’s desire was to know God intimately, to live in constant awareness of His presence, and to enjoy His friendship every day. So, I paraphrased the psalmist’s words and prayed, *Lord, what I want most of all is the privilege of being with You every day of my life, delighting in who You are, and basking in Your majesty and greatness.*

As I wrote down this prayer in my journal, I sensed God urging me to read the next verse: “There I’ll be when troubles come. He will hide me” (TLB). I really didn’t want that part of the passage—with its hint of unpleasant things ahead—and told God so. Still, it seemed to me that God was prodding me to add it to my prayer. So I completed my above prayer with the following words: *When trouble comes, there I’ll be, safe in Your presence.*

*The one thing I ask of the LORD—  
the thing I seek most—  
is to live in the house of the LORD all the  
days of my life,  
delighting in the LORD’s perfections  
and meditating in his Temple.  
(Psalm 27:4, NLT)*

One week after we arrived in Minnesota (in weather that was 20 degrees below zero), I had premature labor pains, went into the hospital, and lost my baby. I was five months pregnant. It was a devastating time. My head felt like it was in a vice, yet I felt unexplainably safe. I had heard God’s promise to me, prayed God’s words back to Him, and relied on His trustworthy and loving character. He carried me through. In the midst of it all, I experienced the desire of my heart: to know God more intimately.

## PRAYER PREPARES

The next exercise is designed to help you develop a practical prayer tool for getting to know God better as you learn who He designed you to be and what He wants you to do. This tool is similar to one that Joan introduced at a writing seminar that I (Carol) attended. I had been in private practice as a psychologist in Minnesota for ten years. I loved what I was doing, and my practice was successful.

Yet I felt restless and I couldn’t understand why. *Do You want me to do something different, Lord? I hope You are not asking me to write. I really don’t want to do that again.* I was attending Joan’s writing seminar merely to encourage her. (I’m good at concentrating on someone else’s needs rather than my own.)

Driving to the workshop, I had a thought—God-given, I now believe. *Carol, why don’t you go for you? My initial response was, Go for me? Can’t I just go to help her?* Finally, I decided to change my focus and go expecting to gain something for myself.

*I ask—ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do [and]... the utter extravagance of his work in us who trust him—endless energy, boundless strength!  
(Ephesians 1:17-18, MSG)*

In one session, Joan explained how to write a devotional from a Bible passage. As I skimmed the list of suggested Bible verses, I stopped on Isaiah 43:18-19: “Forget the former

things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”

Immediately I knew this verse was God’s Word to me. However, the only part I really understood was the phrase “Do you not perceive it?” *No, Lord, I don’t perceive it*, I wrote in my notes. *I only feel restlessness. What do you mean by “forget the former things”?* I asked God these questions repeatedly for the next few weeks.

Four months after that workshop, my husband, Ken, received a telephone call inviting him to join the pastoral staff of a church in Arizona. *Lord, I get it now. You are making a way in the desert—literally.* Saying yes to the move meant I had to forget the former things because my counseling licenses in Minnesota were not reciprocal in Arizona. I was faced with adjusting the mental and emotional picture I had of myself as a practicing psychologist, meeting with clients daily in my clinic. While I adjusted to the move, I often felt isolated and out of step. Gradually, I accepted that God was doing a completely new thing in my life, and in His great kindness, He had given me the verse in preparation.

#### MY PERSONAL PRAYER

- ☞ 1. From the list of Scripture verses on pages 39-40, choose one or two that represent what you are asking God to do at this time or what you sense God is promising you. Then in the space provided, write your chosen verse or verses in the form of a prayer to God.

*The one thing I ask of the LORD—  
the thing I seek most—  
is to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,  
delighting in the LORD’s perfections  
and meditating in his Temple.  
For he will conceal me there when troubles come;  
he will hide me in his sanctuary.  
(Psalm 27:4-5, NLT)*

*The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever.  
(Psalm 138:8)*

*Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.  
(Psalm 143:8)*

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*

*(Proverbs 3:5-6)*

*“For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, ‘Do not fear; I will help you.’”*

*(Isaiah 41:13)*

*“I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.”*

*(Isaiah 42:16)*

*“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”*

*(Isaiah 43:18-19)*

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*

*(Matthew 11:28)*

*However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me.*

*(Acts 20:24)*

*Give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God.*

*(Romans 6:13, NLT)*

*I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*(Romans 8:38-39, NLT)*

*To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.*

*(Colossians 1:29)*

*God doesn't want us to be shy with his gifts, but bold and loving and sensible.*

*(2 Timothy 1:7, MSG)*

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)*

*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)*

Write your prayer here.

☪ 2. To what need in your life does this verse relate?

- ☞ 3. Write your prayer (or a phrase from it) on a sticky note and place it where you will notice it every day this week and remember to pray. (You might attach it to your computer, calendar, journal, bathroom mirror, or dashboard.) Where will you place your verse prayer?

## IW STORY: COMFORT FROM GOD'S WORD

I had been happily married for thirty-seven years when my husband, Bob, collapsed with a massive fatal heart attack while entering church for the evening service. Shocked, I hoped I would die, too; but I didn't.

Bob had provided a sense of security for me. I always felt surrounded by a circle of love. I operated freely and confidently within that safe circle. After his death, I still had a good job, so managing finances wasn't a problem for me. But the loneliness was nearly unbearable.

I made an intentional decision to do the necessary work of grief. I reached out to others, attended workshops, searched the Bible for comfort, and continued my everyday ritual of going to my job in education. When my initial shock subsided, I organized grief groups at my church. I found great consolation in helping others. Yet I found my greatest solace in the Scriptures.

My friend Carol Travilla taught me to journal. When I read a Bible passage, I

looked for a verse that had special meaning for me. In my journal I wrote the date and a prayer based on the verse, finishing with a statement of thanksgiving. I felt safe expressing my heartbreak on paper to God. Nine months after my husband's death, when my emotions were still raw, I wrote the following prayers:

JOURNAL ENTRY, SEPTEMBER 15

"But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented." (Psalm 106:44-45)

MY PRAYER: Lord, I am in distress. Forgive my impatience. Help me to learn what you have for me. I want to love others and to minister to them. This may be my happiness.

JOURNAL ENTRY, NOVEMBER 27

"If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction." (Psalm 119:92)

MY PRAYER: O Dear Lord, how I thank You for Your Word and the strength and courage it gives me. Help me stay focused, becoming soaked in Your guid-

ance—so I can help myself *and* others. My goal written on the cover of my journal: *To know God. To have Him be enough.*

JEANNETTE SNYDER, RETIRED EDUCATOR

### *Moving On*

In step one, you completed exercises designed to help you:

- Become more aware of your current circumstances and how you think and feel about them.
- Identify areas where you want to make adjustments.
- Talk to God about what is happening in your life right now.

In the next section, you will gain perspective on your unique past and how God is using those experiences in your life now.

## Authors

CAROL TRAVILLA, a certified LifePlan facilitator, has a deep passion to help women discover and clarify their purpose in life. Author of the workbook *Caring Without Wearing*, Carol has developed curriculum and facilitated classes on personal and spiritual growth. She has a B.A. in Christian education and an M.A. in counseling psychology. Carol and her husband, Ken, currently live in Tempe, Arizona, where they minister at Grace Community Church. They have two married children and four lively grandsons.

JOAN C. WEBB is presently a freelance writer and the Family to Family international director for Venture International, a Christian relief and development agency with projects in the Middle East and Central Asia. The author of seven books, Joan teaches writing and personal growth workshops. Her book credits include the four-book series *Devotions for Little Boys and Girls*, and study notes for four Old Testament books in the *Women of Faith Study Bible*. Joan and her husband, Richard, live in Arizona. They have two children and two grandchildren.

# FIND MEANING AND PURPOSE THAT LASTS.

## **Choosing Rest**

One of God's greatest gifts to us—rest—is also one of the most elusive. But Jesus wants to give us His rest right now, in the midst of our restlessness of heart. *Choosing Rest* will show you how to claim this amazing gift.

(Sally Breedlove)

## **Holy Habits**

This book will challenge you to live purposefully, regard each day with an eternal perspective, and allow God's character to impact your life in such a way that you reflect Him.

(Mimi Wilson and Shelly Cook Volkhardt)

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(Carol Kent)

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