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Chapter One

WHAT WILL A LIFE PLAN DO FOR ME?

*D*o you ever feel as though you just don't have enough time? There is no changing the fact that there are sixty minutes in an hour, twenty-four hours in a day, and seven days in a week. However, in this age of dot-com everything, time rarely stands still. We have instant messages, instant dinners, instant coffee, and even instant grits. You can shop on-line, make friends on-line, and even take classes on-line with a virtual teacher. Kids are expected to grow up faster, the highway speed limit signs now allow us to drive faster, and everyone seems to have bought into the notion that faster is better. But is it?

Think about all we are doing. We wake up to *alarm* clocks. We *run* our errands. We get stuck in *rush*-hour traffic. We now meet friends in chat rooms and keep up with each other through voice-mail and E-mail. It's no wonder many of us start our days with a cereal appropriately



named *Cheerios*; otherwise we might all go *Grape-Nuts*!

I'm not sure when all of this struck me. Maybe it was right after I drove off and left my groceries in the store parking lot. Or maybe it was the day I wore two completely different shoes and never noticed it until a friend was brave enough to tell me. Let's face it, we are all busy, but I just can't buy into the notion that we don't have time to do things that are really important. Take exercise, for example. All of us know we need to do it. We know the benefits, both physical and mental. Yet, the number one excuse people have for not exercising is lack of time. Another example is prayer. It's our direct connection to the God of the Universe, who longs to spend time with each of us, and yet we find ourselves too busy. I am just as guilty as anyone. What's the solution? I think it's found in writing out a plan and scheduling time to make it happen.

Have you ever noticed how focused you are and how much more you get accomplished right before you leave to go on a vacation? Why do you seem to be more energetic and focused? Why are you able to get a lot done in a short period of time? It's because you develop a plan with a goal in mind. Incidentally, did you know that most people give more thought and planning for vacations than planning their lives? Wouldn't it be great if you could live your life with that same passion and focus? Wouldn't it be awesome to have a plan that would enable you to get more accomplished during your day, meet your goals, realize your dreams, and live in peace knowing that you are living out the purpose for which you were created? For me, a Life Plan did this and much more.

A Life Plan Helps Add Value to My Life

Saint Augustine said, "People travel to wonder at the height of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of rivers, at the circular motion of the stars—and they pass by themselves without wondering." A Life Plan will enable you to wonder at one of God's most amazing creations: you. You are a unique creation of God and He says you are wonderfully made. Your life is worth living on purpose! Developing your own Life Plan will help you ponder your purpose, discover your dreams, go for your goals, and realize firsthand that God has good



things in store for you. It will help you organize priorities according to your purpose and put a value on the tasks you are spending your life accomplishing. The small investment of time that it takes you to develop and maintain this plan will pale in comparison to the amount of time you will gain. You will feel motivated to make every minute count as you get excited about where you are headed.

A Life Plan Helps Me See Life from an Eternal Perspective

Having a Life Plan has helped me to keep my focus where it needs to be. I can see the eternal significance of spending time with my Lord, loving my husband, caring for my children, being a keeper of my home, using my resources wisely, developing godly friendships, and reaching out to others. Then on those days when I start doubting whether or not I'm doing the right thing, I can look at my plan and get a quick reminder that there is an eternal perspective to be kept. When I cringe at how much baby-sitters cost, I remember how important my marriage is and consider the money spent a wise investment. Instead of looking at the diaper pail full of dirty diapers and seeing trash, I see a child whose physical needs have been met. When I'm cooking meals that I know will quickly be consumed and forgotten, I think about the value of family conversation and the lifelong memories made around our dinner table. You see, I am much more than a housekeeper, nanny, wife, friend, cook, chauffeur, decorator, businesswoman, family historian, events coordinator, coach, lover, exterminator, nurse, counselor, teacher, and personal playmate. I am a woman with a purpose, who has been created by God to fulfill a special calling. No one else is as uniquely qualified to fulfill my purpose as I am.

A Life Plan Helps Me Move Past My Mistakes

I wish you and I could sit down over lunch and share a heart-to-heart "girl talk." Since we may never get that chance, I want to share something from my heart with you. Every woman has messed up at some point in her life and done things she regrets. I used to think I was the only one with secrets from my past. This was Satan's bondage in my

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life and it made me think I could never be used of God. You see, I made a terrible mistake before I was married, and I got pregnant. I was terrified for anyone to find out because I knew all too well the sting of rejection. So I chose to go to an abortion clinic and ask for help. They told me that the procedure would be quick and that I would never have to think about this problem again. I bought their lie, and I have regretted it every day since. I long for that child and grieve over my tragic decision. Hardly a day goes by—even after all these years—that I don't think about it. However, God has set me free from the shame.

For me, answering the fundamental questions of life in my Life Plan helped me realize that I am not defined by my sin but rather by who God created me to be. I share this with you because I want you to know the hope that I have found. John 8:32 says, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." My friend, I pray that as you seek to develop your Life Plan, God's truth about who you are and how much He wants to use you for His glory will help set you free. I don't know what the circumstances of your life are, but I do know that nothing puts you beyond God's ability to forgive, heal, and restore.

A Life Plan Helps Me to See My Potential

A Life Plan helps bridge the gap between where I am today and where I want to see myself in the future. It gives me a place to start and helps reduce my regrets by measuring the progress I am making. I don't want to be complacent and give up hope of reaching my potential. I want to wake up every morning knowing that I am one step closer to hearing my Master say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." A Life Plan gives me a tangible reference point to remind me of the wonderful potential I have as a child of the King. Ephesians 3:20 says, "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us." As a child of God, I have His power working in me, which increases my potential beyond my wildest dreams and highest hopes.



A Life Plan Serves as a Filter for My Decisions

A well-thought-out and prayed-through Life Plan serves as a filter that helps keep my focus where it needs to be when decisions must be made. I can ask myself, “According to my Life Plan, is this opportunity something that will help me fulfill my purpose? Does it make sense in light of how God has equipped me? Does it conflict with any of the principles I’m committed to living my life by? Is this the right season of my life to participate in this particular activity?” Just because something sounds like a worthy cause does not mean it is part of God’s plan for me. There are and always will be thousands of good opportunities, but I am not searching for the *good*—I’m after God’s *best*. I only have one shot at this thing called life, and it’s worth it to give my best efforts.

A Life Plan Helps Point Me in the Right Direction

Whether you are married or single, with children or without, extroverted or introverted, rich or poor, young or old—you are a woman with a purpose and you were created by God for a divine reason. The key is to develop a plan clearly stating your foundation, purpose, mission, ministry, stage of life, and the principles by which you want to live. You will have your goals written down as well as the action steps and schedule that need to be implemented to insure your success. Then you will be headed down the right path and able to walk in confidence, knowing you have sought God and it is He who is directing you.

A Life Plan Will Help Me to Be Able to Give an Account on the Day of Judgment

First Corinthians 3:13 (LB) says, “There is going to come a time of testing at Christ’s Judgment Day to see what kind of material each builder has used. Everyone’s work will be put through the fire so that all can see whether or not it keeps its value, and what was really accomplished.” Verses 14 and 15 (NIV) go on to say, “If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss;



he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.” We will all be asked to give an account on the Day of Judgment of the life God entrusted us with. How sad it would be for God to ask what we did with our lives and for us to have no idea. Having a Life Plan will help you focus your efforts, make the most of the time you’re given, and live according to God’s purpose. Then you will hear your heavenly Father speak words that the heart of every one of His children longs to hear, “You did well, my child, with what I gave you and I am pleased.”

A Life Plan Helps Me Rest in My Father’s Arms

In the midst of all the craziness that sometimes surrounds us in life, there is a peaceful place to which we should often run. A place where we can find unconditional love. A place strong enough to hold any problem we are facing and gentle enough to wipe away our tears. This place is our Father’s arms. Because our Life Plans will be bathed in prayer, based on God’s Word, and filled with thoughts the Holy Spirit reveals to us, we will be able to rest in the fact that these plans are not our own. They will be what God chooses to reveal to you. It is because of His mercy and grace that we are able to do any of the things we write. Please do not ever think that these “works” are a way to earn salvation or your Father’s love. Salvation is a free gift, and God’s love is not based on what you do, but rather in the simple fact that you are His child. As His child, it should be your desire to please Him by being obedient to the Father’s call to fulfill His divine purpose for you. Having a Life Plan will help you discover your purpose, live every area of your life according to this purpose, and rest in the fact that you are honoring God with your life.



These are just a few of the many ways you will benefit from developing a Life Plan. The best way to see how wonderful it could be for you is to simply get started and experience the benefits yourself. I remember the fear that I had when my husband first uttered the words *Life Plan*. It caused the same fear and panic I felt when I heard my OB doctor say the words *give birth*. All I could think of was pain and how much I



try to avoid pain at all costs. Then I had a brilliant idea. Why hadn't women thought of this before? I asked him if he could please put me to sleep and wake me up when the baby was about five or so. Let's just skip the labor, the sleepless nights, the terrible twos, the first trip to the emergency room for stitches, the everything is "No!" phase, and start this motherhood thing around the time of kindergarten. Needless to say, I was awake for it all—and you know what? I wouldn't trade a second of it for anything. Just like giving birth, the labor to develop your Life Plan may not seem appealing but the end result will be nothing short of wonderful.

Just so you can have a picture of where we will be headed from here, I've diagrammed the process we will be going through to develop your Life Plan (excluding this chapter).

Section 1. Understanding the Fundamental Questions of Life

Chapter 2: The Fundamentals of a Life Plan

Chapter 3: My Foundation: "Who Am I?"

Chapter 4: My Purpose: "Why Do I Exist?"

Chapter 5: My Mission: "What Am I to Do?"

Chapter 6: My Ministry: "Where Am I to Serve?"

Chapter 7: My Stages of Life: "When Am I to Do These Things?"

Chapter 8: My Principles: "How Am I to Live Out My Day-to-Day Life?"

During chapters 3–8 we will be writing Fundamental Life Statements that will answer the life questions and lay the groundwork for writing the rest of our Life Plan in Section 2.

Section 2. Live Every Area of My Living on Purpose

Chapter 9: Finding P.U.R.P.O.S.E. in Each of My Principles.

Chapter 10: The Holy Pursuit: Finding My Purpose as a Child of God

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Chapter 11: Making the Most of My Marriage: Finding My Purpose as a Wife

Chapter 12: The High Calling of Motherhood: Finding My Purpose as a Mother

Chapter 13: There's No Place Like Home: Finding My Purpose as a Keeper of the Home

Chapter 14: Time and Money: Finding My Purpose as a Faithful Steward

Chapter 15: The Gift of Godly Friendships: Finding My Purpose as a Godly Friend

Chapter 16: Reaching Out: Finding My Purpose as a Servant

Chapter 17: Let God Do Amazing Things with Your Life



WORKING ON YOUR JOURNAL

Throughout both sections of this book, we will be interacting with the companion workbook, *The Life Planning Journal for Women*. If you have this journal, you will benefit from the additional questions for a quick review of each chapter as well as plenty of space to journal and create your Life Plan. You will enjoy the ease of being able to record your prayers, thoughts, and plans on the beautifully designed pages. This easy-to-use journal will be an invaluable tool as you seek to apply what is discussed in *Living Life on Purpose*.

If you did not purchase *The Life Planning Journal for Women*, you will want to buy a three-ring binder and refer to the back of this book in Appendix A for directions on setting up your own journal. If you are making your own journal, transfer the questions given at the end of each chapter to that notebook and spend some time recording your answers.

Take time now to work on Section 1, Part 1, of your journal. Once you have completed your work in the journal, continue your reading by going on to chapter 2, "The Fundamentals of a Life Plan."



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN YOUR JOURNAL

1. Have you ever stopped to wonder at the amazing way God has created you? Write down ten wonderful things about yourself. Don't let this be difficult. If you have a hard time, ask God to reveal the things He would have you write down.
2. Write out a prayer of thanksgiving to God for creating you as His special child.
3. God says you are wonderfully made. Journal your thoughts.
4. Choose three ways that a Life Plan could change your life from those listed in chapter 1 and journal how each could impact you personally.
5. What do you hope to accomplish through this study?