

# Youniquely Woman

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## YOUNIQUELY WOMAN

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# Contents

1. Living Intentionally	
A Goal and a Legacy— <i>Kay</i> .....	9
The Uncommon Path— <i>Donna</i> .....	15
2. A Vision For Home	
Holy Ground— <i>Donna</i> .....	25
A Pattern for Success— <i>Kay</i> .....	33
A Spirit of Welcome— <i>Emilie</i> .....	51
3. Modeling a Balanced Life	
7 Subtle Time Traps— <i>Donna</i> .....	61
Me, Get Organized?— <i>Emilie</i> .....	73
Reaching Out with Love— <i>Emilie</i> .....	87
4. Building a Marriage Without Regrets	
Relating to Superman— <i>Emilie</i> .....	97
Younique Helper— <i>Kay</i> .....	107
5. Parenting with Purpose	
The Art of Motherhood— <i>Donna</i> .....	119
Children!— <i>Kay</i> .....	131
6. Nurturing Your Spiritual Life	
Making Time for Prayer— <i>Donna</i> .....	151
Attaching Your Children to God's Word— <i>Kay</i> .....	161
Ask, Seek, Knock...and Never Stop!— <i>Emilie</i> .....	171

7. IF We Could Do It All Again...	
I Would Trust God More— <i>Emilie</i> . . . . .	185
I Would Be More Purposeful as a Parent— <i>Kay</i> . . . . .	189
I Would Spend More Time with My Children— <i>Emilie</i> . . .	191
I Would Treasure God's Word More— <i>Donna</i> . . . . .	193
I Would Slow Down— <i>Kay</i> . . . . .	197
8. Continuing the Adventure	
Never Stop Growing— <i>Donna</i> . . . . .	203
A Spirit of Loveliness— <i>Emilie</i> . . . . .	213
"Unless the LORD Builds the House..."— <i>Kay</i> . . . . .	217
Young Woman, Come Home	
An Urgent Appeal— <i>Kay</i> . . . . .	223
Notes . . . . .	233



**One**

# Living Intentionally



# A Goal and a Legacy

*Kay*

“Knowing what I know now...” Have you heard older people talk like that? “Knowing what I know now...”

- I would have done things better...
- I would have grabbed that opportunity...
- I would have reacted differently...
- I would have run from that place as fast as I could...
- I would have stayed in school...
- I would have married someone else...
- I would have been more patient and kind...
- I would have spent more time with my son...my daughter.”

Certainly there are many things I would like to do over and years I'd like to live over:

- I would shun those destructive paths I allowed myself to walk.
- I would hold my tongue and not speak those unloving words.
- I would guard my thoughts and rein in my dreams.
- I wouldn't have divorced my husband.

- I would have asked my sons how they were feeling and focused more on them than on trying to find a husband.

I've often thought I would write a book and title it *Hindsights for Insight*. But that's life, isn't it, dear one? Once the days and hours and moments have slipped through our fingers, we can't go back and alter anything—as much as we long to do that. All the wishing, wanting, and daydreaming in the world can't change that fact. We can't do any-

thing about “then,” but we can do something about “now.”

---

*From Donna*

Abraham was the Father/  
leader of the Hebrew Family/  
nation. He helped God change  
history. Is God calling you  
to be the Abraham of your  
Family by implementing  
changes in the present that  
will positively impact the  
Future for your Family?

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That's why Donna, Emilie, and I put together our *You-niquely Woman* events, and that's why we've written this book. We can't return to those years of young womanhood. We can't recapture those seasons when we were young wives and mothers with little ones. But God is so good, so kind, that He's given us *this* opportunity to share with you what we've

learned (sometimes through hard experience) and what we would do differently. In other words, the book you hold in your hands can literally save you from years of regret.

Actually, it's even more personal for me.

I've always wanted a daughter. Now, I love my sons and wouldn't trade them for anything. But I've always longed for the joy and companionship of a daughter, for the privilege of discipling a daughter to become a godly woman. And now I have that opportunity...with you! (Thank You, Lord, for Your incredible kindness!)

I was something of a free-spirited woman who can, as the expression goes, fly by the seat of her pants. I could...and I did...but I wish I hadn't. A divorced mother of two sons and longing for love, I

fell into immorality. But then I was gloriously saved by Jesus Christ at age 29. Eventually I remarried after my first husband committed suicide. And now that I am an older woman (with a young woman trapped inside my body!), I wish I'd been far more intentional as a wife, mother, and grandmother.

I'm deliberately using the word "intentional." It's not a word you see very often. When I speak of living in an intentional way, I mean *living on purpose*. Living a life directed by goals and principles and precepts so I will get the most out of life and have few regrets in the years to come. And that's what this book is all about.

God has taught the three of us—Donna, Emilie, and me—much from His Word through the years. Yes, we've experienced heartache and tribulation in our lives, just as Jesus told us clearly we would. At times the hurt has run deep, but His grace has been lavish...altogether sufficient—no, beyond sufficient...extravagant! How I love the words of the apostle Peter:

His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence (2 Peter 1:3).

When it comes to being a woman, a daughter of the living God, we are called to excellence. And this is our desire for you. We want you to be like the woman described in Proverbs 31:29: "Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all." And how do you achieve excellence? By living intentionally. And by remembering that God's divine power makes it possible.

Yes, I would be less than honest if I didn't admit I was oblivious to

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### *From Emilie*

My growing up years weren't lived intentionally. My family was happy if we had money to buy food because my father died when I was 11. It was very hard for my mama. Even when Daddy was living, he was gone 90 percent of the time. I praise God for protecting me from going in an unhealthy direction. Live intentionally for Christ!

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the powerful concept of living intentionally for a long time. The years slipped by, and I was so caught up with the daily pressures of “just living” that I never took a long look at where my habits and my ways were leading me. There’s an old saying, “What I am to be, I am now becoming.” As with many such sayings, it contains truth and error. What it’s really saying is that the choices I am making *today* will have a direct bearing on the shape of my life down the road. The path I choose *now* leads to where I’m going. That’s so true. The apostle Paul says much the same thing in Galatians 6:7-8:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

But it’s also true that there is both immediate and long-term benefits of choosing the right paths, the right sources of wisdom...*and these choices can absolutely flood our lives with the grace, kindness, mercy, and bounty of our God who loves us with all His great heart.*

Donna, Emilie, and I are going to admit our wrong turns and unwise choices...so you don’t have to repeat them. So please listen carefully, dear one. Check what we teach you with the precepts of God’s Word, and see if it lines up with truth. Then live accordingly. And when you stumble, get back up, ask God’s forgiveness, and keep moving forward.

### Amelia and Susanna: Their Legacy

Just for a paragraph or two, I want to reach back into history to tell you of two ordinary women who lived intentionally. By fearing God—respecting Him, trusting Him, and ordering their lives accordingly—these women left all of us a rich legacy.

Listen to the intentionality of Amelia Hudson Boomhall, who lived in 1875:

I made it a rule to take my children one at a time into my room, and having been careful to see that they were comfortably

seated, I would say, “I am going to talk to Jesus.” And then before my child, I would pour out my soul to Him. Oh how precious are the memories of little pinafores lifted to wipe my eyes, or the sound of sweet little voices saying, “Don’t cry, Mother.”<sup>1</sup>

If God said, “Kay, you can have a ‘do-over,’” I would pray more purposefully for my children and my husband. But you and I can’t go back. We can only do from this point on.

The second woman who comes to mind is Susanna Wesley, who lived in the 1700s. Susanna’s husband was a God-fearing man and a pastor. He never earned very much money, and the little he did earn he mismanaged. At one point he was even threatened with being thrown into debtors’ prison.

And his was no modern family with 2.1 children. In the course of their marriage, Susanna gave birth to *19 children*, 9 of whom died as infants, including two sets of twins. Because her husband traveled so much on church business, Susanna was often left to care for her large family alone. She raised her children with strong intentionality.

Although her marriage wasn’t what women would dream of and some of her children didn’t follow the Lord, Susanna raised two sons whose names will forever be remembered in the annals of Christian history. Generations have sung the doctrines of the Christian faith set to music in the hymns of John and Charles Wesley. Do you recognize this one written in 1739 by Charles?

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*From Donna*

It is never too late to change. You always have the present! The opportunity to harvest wisdom from your past is a golden gift to be prized.

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O for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer’s praise,  
The glories of my God and King,  
The triumphs of His grace!

The Wesley brothers were bellows in the hands of God and ignited the smoldering embers of Christendom, bringing revival fires to a church languishing in dead religious traditions. Their followers became known as “Methodists,” and their influence shaped the history of England and the United States.

How did this happen? Their mother, Susanna, raised them with intentionality, making the priorities of God and family paramount in her life and her children’s lives.

A married woman can have no higher callings than being a godly wife and mother. The world will tell you that driving race cars, piloting jumbo jets, climbing the corporate ladder, and earning piles of money will bring the most satisfaction. And for a single woman those goals may certainly be within reach. But a married woman who loves her husband, raises her children to know the Lord, and makes her home into a beautiful, peaceful sanctuary in this hostile world...that, my daughter, is the best of the best.

The Bible tells us it’s possible to live life with excellence, to live an uncommon life, and to be used of God beyond our expectations and dreams. Let’s explore and experience those things!



# The Uncommon Path

*Donna*

In these days of “please yourself at any cost,” living with intentionality might be called “choosing an uncommon path.” Writer Fredrick Buechner once said, “My assumption is that the story of any one of us is, in some measure, the story of all of us.” Our stories as Christian women—daughters, wives, mothers, aunts, and grandmothers—have common elements. In a broad sense, each life is like another. At different points in our lives, most of us have had similar hopes, goals, and dreams.

All of us begin our journeys with aspirations and desires. But somewhere along the way the trails separate. The common woman moves into a common life. The uncommon woman, however, takes another path and becomes all that *God* intended her to be. “The common begin, but the uncommon finish.” That’s one of the thoughts I’ve repeated to myself through the years. And what is the reason paths separate? What causes one woman to accept an ordinary path into an ordinary life and another to end her story with great fulfillment and joy?

The path divider is courage.

Courageous choices at the crossroads of life separate uncommon life stories from everyday ones. I’m not talking about people living perfect lives. That’s impossible. My own story includes a devastating

divorce. And while it is still the most painful part of my life (because I know God hates divorce), it's become the driving force behind my passion and my ministry. None of us want to be wounded, hurt, or

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*From Emilie*

Women, put your  
life in the hands of  
God and allow Him to  
walk with you each  
step of the way.

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crushed by circumstances. But the positive side is that we have a God so big and mighty He can and will use even hurtful things to accomplish His purposes.

It's safe to conclude that God has allowed your pain—your most difficult circumstances—to stir passion in your heart and refine His purposes for your life. My pain motivated me to seek God, who gave me the courage to look beyond

the pain and find something positive to do with the lessons I learned. I've spent more than 25 years of my adult life teaching, training, and leading young women through an organization I founded called "Homemakers By Choice." The concepts of courage and commitment weave their way through everything I teach.

For instance, I continually emphasize the need to be women of our word. When we say yes to something, we need to stand behind that choice. When a woman marries and pledges herself to remain faithful in sickness and in health, till death separates her from her husband, I encourage her to keep that pledge. The pain I endured through my divorce has made me passionate about committing to a marriage relationship through thick and thin.

Staying true to our promises and commitments takes courage. But guess what? So does making needed changes in our lives. Most of us enjoy a feeling of security, and we like to surround ourselves with the comfort of familiar places and things. There's nothing wrong with such desires...unless the Lord is calling you to take a step of growth, a step of faith, a step into the unknown. Only an abiding trust in the Lord Jesus allows us to leap confidently across a chasm of the unknown so we can jump into His waiting arms.

Just recently I learned a bit about leaping.

## A Jump in the Jungle

Adventure is second nature to my husband. For him, the very word means charging into daunting, uncharted territory. The riskier the adventure the better. These exploits have included arduous hikes of 60 miles or more over wet and uneven terrain, dangerous climbs along steep cliffs, and even having a boat capsize in the Pacific Ocean!

So guess whose idea it was to travel to Costa Rica for our vacation? (What's wrong with Maui?) I have to admit, however, that the land was truly beautiful with its amazing array of exotic animals.

One morning my husband persuaded me to experience something called a “zip line” out in the rain forest. Knowing my husband, I was pretty sure the experience was going to stretch me. I just didn't realize how far!

The day began with a climb up a five-story staircase until we were in the highest treetops. That seemed like plenty of adventure for me...I could have turned back right then and headed to the hotel for a cup of tea and been perfectly content. But it was just the beginning. I soon found myself being strapped into a harness attached to a cable that stretched so far into the distance I couldn't see the end of it. As soon as this was completed, I was escorted to the edge of a platform (*plataforma* in Costa Rica).

The next thing I heard was “Jump!”

*Jump? Jump where? Landing on what?* I thought. *Not me! I'm not about to leave this platform—plataforma—or whatever it is.*

After a few minutes of protests, I discovered there was no way down or out until I left that platform. It was jump or nothing. So I jumped. Well, actually I agreed to be pushed. The animal kingdom has never before or since heard a louder or more piercing scream than I delivered that day zipping over the treetops. After what seemed a lifetime, I found myself landing on another platform.

*Whew!* I thought. *That's that. I did it!* I jumped into nothing and zipped down the line. Not wanting to offend my grinning Costa Rican guide, I politely said, “Thank you, that was nice” and looked for the

exit. He shook his head, still smiling. “No, senora,” he said. “Fourteen more plataformas!”

Eventually (since I lived to tell this story) I successfully completed the jungle zip line experience. And do you want to know something funny? After the sheer terror of the first four or five plataformas, I actually began to enjoy myself!

Every one of us faces plataformas in life—and many more than 14! Are you standing on one right now? Yours will be different from mine, or your sister’s, or your mother’s, or your daughter’s. But the common element in all of them is the courage needed to trust our God and take those leaps.

The book you hold in your hands is a plataforma. You will learn things in these pages that offer you opportunities to make significant choices and changes. If you rise to the challenge, you’ll be on the road to becoming a “younique” woman of God. The easy choice is to simply read this book, file the information in your mind under “interesting thoughts,” and never do anything more. The difficult choice—the choice that will put you on an uncommon path—is trusting the Lord and taking the leaps we suggest.

## The Plataformas of Spiritual Discipline

“Discipline.” I make no apology for mentioning the “d” word here. My life is riddled with started and aborted attempts at spiritual disciplines. To follow through and actually incorporate these into your life will initiate wonderful changes that may positively shape and impact the rest of your days on this side of heaven. But no one is saying it will be easy. John W. Frye asks, “What is a spiritual discipline?” Then he answers, “It is simply a human activity that creates a space or setting for God to work.” A space or setting? Couldn’t we also say “platform”? To become an uncommon woman you want and need to create these spaces for God to work.

The spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, fasting, solitude, serving, and detachment (letting go of what keeps us from intimacy with Jesus) can become a way of life for a younique woman. As you

continue reading *Youniquely Woman*, you'll discover suggestions and specific helps for allowing and building spaces for God to work in your daily life.

Yes, it takes courage to be intentional in your life.

It takes courage to choose an uncommon path.

C.S. Lewis writes, "Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point." Courage is necessary to discover God's design for you.

It takes courage to stick to your commitments...and even more courage to choose additional commitments that will shape and change you.

It takes courage to stand up and stand out as a unique creation of God.

It takes courage to be the woman God created you to be as you live through each life season and seek to please God.

It takes courage not to compare yourself with women in movies, magazines, and books.

It takes courage to swim against the strong current of popular culture.

It takes courage not to base your life on competition or defensiveness.

Living a courageous, character-driven life is uncommon. There are thrills and excitements in being youniquely woman...a woman created in the image of God as His last, best, and surely most complex creation. I hope and pray you'll find and appreciate the specific nuances that make you different from any other woman in the world.

As older women, it is clear to Kay, Emilie, and me that God's specific plan can be known and lived out with individuality and freedom. As the authors of this book, we celebrate God's unique design and touch on your life.

## A Shining Example

Recently I attended the funeral of a courageous woman who lived to be 100 years old. Mildred was mother to 4, grandmother to 22,



and great-grandmother to 26. She also offered mother/grandmother relationships to many nonfamily members, including me.

One of 12 children, she lived in rural America during the early part of the twentieth century. Mildred's daily life was filled with hard work. Her husband died early in the marriage, leaving her a widow for more than 40 years.

At Mildred's funeral I watched and listened to a parade of multicultural, multigenerational men and women speak of her influence in their lives, of the legacy she left.

In the 1950s, when women like Donna Reed, Harriet Nelson, and Loretta Young were portrayed on TV wearing aprons and dusting coffee tables, Mildred was partnering with her husband in a business venture. She helped start, fund, and organize a mission in Korea that saved thousands of unwanted orphans. Her life was diverse. She wasn't afraid to pursue her special calling on this earth, no matter what the rest of her women friends were doing or thought. And I must add she wasn't always popular for taking such determined stands.

Mildred stood against the tide of her culture, welcoming change and transition. She worked hard without apology, lived frugally, and gave generously. She wasn't afraid to step into the gap to get things done, but at the same time she was regarded as a gracious, gentle, godly woman.

My friend Mildred had an uncommon life and finished well.

I want that too, don't you?

Each day life affords us opportunities to stand up and be counted, to do the unusual and unexpected. Many years ago, after I married David and took the name Otto, I began creating and adapting what I call "Otto's Mottoes." Clear, simple, memorable, credible sayings that help me stay on the course I've chosen. Here's one:

Right is always right no matter how few people are doing it, and wrong is always wrong no matter how many people are doing it.

In other words, don't bend the rules to fit *your* needs. There will be

many testing points, and with courage comes the willingness to seek and accept change. In his second letter to believers, the apostle Peter sets forth a life-changing concept: “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8-9).

“Increasing measure.” I understand this to mean that even up to the day before I die, I will accept the need for change and seek direction for that change, with the result that I am “ever increasing” in those areas of life that matter most.

Since you’ve read this far, I assume you have the same desire I have—a desire for sufficient courage to walk an uncommon road through life. So we’re on this platforma together! Are you ready to leap? Let’s go!