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Contents

An Invitation to…an Extraordinary Life .......... 7

Part I: At the Heart of It All—
Managing Your Spiritual Life
1. You and God’s Word ................................. 11
2. Developing a Passion for God’s Word ............ 23
3. Developing a Passion for Prayer .................. 35

Part II: Taking Care of God’s Temple—
Managing Your Physical Life
4. You and Your Body ................................. 47
5. Managing Your Body, Part 1 ....................... 55

Part III: Creating a Heaven on Earth—
Managing Your Home Life
A Word of Testimony ................................. 75
7. You and Your Marriage .............................. 79
8. You and Your Children .............................. 87
9. You and Your Home ................................. 97
Part IV: Taking Care of Business—
  Managing Your Financial Life
  10. You and Your Money ......................... 107
  11. Managing Your Money ......................... 117

Part V: Being a Friend—
  Managing Your Social Life
  12. You and Your Friendships .................... 129
  13. Managing Your Friendships ................... 141

Part VI: Minding Your Mind—
  Managing Your Mental Life
  14. You and Your Mind .......................... 155
  15. Managing Your Mind ......................... 165

Part VII: Serving the Lord—
  Managing Your Ministry Life
  16. You and Your Ministry ....................... 177
  17. Managing Your Ministry ...................... 185

Part VIII: Managing Your Time... and Your Life
  18. Managing Your Time... and Your Life ........ 195

Study Guide ........................................... 201
Quiet Times Calendar ............................. 224
Notes .................................................. 227
An Invitation to...
an Extraordinary Life

Do you ever wonder what the purpose of your life is? And do you ever feel like life is piling up on you faster than you can push your way forward? That your days are doomed before dawn? That you’ll never get it all done? That there has to be more to life than this?

Well, we can both thank God that there is hope for our busy days and answers to our heart-cries. Our lives were created by God…and He knows what His purposes for us are and how He wants us to live them out. Indeed, our years, our days, and even our minutes belong to Him.

I’m so glad God has brought us together through this book. As you and I, two extremely busy women, head into this book about managing a life of purpose and some of the disciplines needed to fuel such a life, I want…

• To bring you some of God’s key guidelines for seven major areas of a woman’s life.
• To direct you to disciplines that will help you manage each of these seven areas of your life.
• To list a handful of how-to’s so you can make progress right away on managing your time and your life.
• To point you to the beauty—and power—of a life lived according to God’s principles and purposes.

• To help you speed up improvements through some study questions, a closer look at key scriptures, and a few practical exercises that will assist you (and others in a group setting) in following God’s blueprint for your life.

There’s no doubt that the forever principles shared in this book can sculpt and remold your life. Believe me, I praise God they have ignited a fire not only in my soul but also in my entire approach to each day and its 1440 minutes!

My desire for you as you read this book is that you will “walk in wisdom” and “make the most of your time” and your life (Colossians 4:5 and Ephesians 5:15). May you always remember that you live life one day at a time…but you are living for eternity in that one day!

Elizabeth George
Part I:

At the Heart of It All
Managing Your Spiritual Life
Chapter 1

You and God’s Word

Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

—Isaiah 40:31

As a busy woman, your natural tendency at the sound of the alarm each morning is probably to hit the floor running (like me!). And for many women, each day also includes hitting the road at some point as they head off to a job. At the dreaded sound of the alarm (or of a crying baby!), we are tempted to emote, “Oh, no! Not another day! I have so much to do!” The blare coming from your clock reminds you (once again!) that you are faced with a life full of responsibilities.

And if we look a little deeper into our hearts, we also find thoughts like these—“I’ll never get it all done…especially if I take time out of my hectic schedule to read my Bible and pray!”

But the exact opposite is true for you as one of God’s busy
women. As our Lord Himself said, “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Because you are reading this book, I’m thinking you don’t want to be a “nothing” woman. No, I’m guessing you want to be a “something” woman, even the “everything” woman—the “all things” woman! So where in the world is the strength and dedication and endurance for such a goal going to come from? Read on.

**Like an Eagle**

The Bible teaches us that *with Him* we can “mount up with wings like eagles” (Isaiah 40:31). Can you imagine…soaring through your pressured days like an eagle?! Every morning Jim (my wonderful husband) and I watch and wait for “our” white-headed, white-tailed, American bald eagle to fly by our home in Washington. And sure enough, today at 5:47 am (right on schedule) it flew at eye level past the window where we sit each day to write. The sight is so magnificent that we celebrate each and every time our eagle graces us with its presence. Our eagle sightings have given me a firsthand visual aid for understanding Isaiah’s imagery of strength and endurance.

Since realizing that Jim and I have our own private eagle (or two), I’ve learned a lot more about eagles. For instance, an eagle…

…has a wingspan of up to seven feet (how majestic!)

…flies higher than almost any other bird, up to 10,000 feet (how awesome!)

…glides easily at up to 2400 feet altitude (oh, for the ability to rise above life’s demands and difficulties!)

…moves up to 150 miles an hour (and oh, for the ability to speed through our daily work!) and
…can carry objects equal to its body weight (no task is too daunting!).

With such grandeur available to our imagination it’s clear that even with our multitude of responsibilities, we must be women who wait on the Lord. In spite of the busyness of life, you and I must learn to look to Him each new morning. We must realize that life management is really spiritual life management. So we must pay attention to a handful of daily disciplines that are sure to ignite in us a passion for the Lord and equip us for living out His plan each day.

Three Small Steps

Here’s a little three-step method that helps you tend to first things first…no matter how busy you are.

1. *Time* is first on the list. Your time is always well spent when you spend it looking to the Lord through His Word.

2. *First* time. Aim at giving the first minutes of each day to reading the Bible. Proverbs 3:9 instructs us to “honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase.” Then comes the promise—“so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine” (verse 10). This proverb is speaking of the blessings that follow the offering of a tithe to God of the first crops from the harvest.

But the same results occur in the spiritual realm. You are blessed in your spirit and in your practical life when you make it a point to give God the first
portion of time from the harvest of each fresh new day, of each new measure of 1440 minutes.

3. Early time. David wrote these expressive words from the core of his heart—“O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You” (Psalm 63:1). Many of the great heroes of the faith sincerely sought communion with God early and earnestly in their day. For instance,

— Abraham rose up early in the morning and went to the place where he met with the Lord (Genesis 19:27).

— David wrote of morning worship with these utterances: “My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up” (Psalm 5:3). I particularly love the translation that reads, “At dawn I hold myself in readiness for you, I watch for you.”

— And our Lord Jesus rose up early, while it was still night, literally a long while before daylight, to converse in solitude with His heavenly Father (Mark 1:35).

Three small steps. And three simple steps any woman can take! A time, the first time, and an early time. As I’m thinking back to my eagle and its daily visit, I realize that the eagle comes for a purpose—to get food for the day. And it comes as the first act of its day, taking care of first things first, the priority of ensuring sustenance, nutrition, and energy. And it comes early—at the first hint of daybreak, as soon as it can see, at 5:47 am.

Like the eagle, this discipline has got to become ours too! You and I need the spiritual food only the Word of God can provide…and that takes time. And we need to gather that food
first thing each day, before life presents its daily demands on our hours and our energy. And we need to do it early, before the rush and clamor of the day begin. Otherwise, just as the eagle knows, it’s too late. The brief opening for obtaining the prized and necessary food for the day is gone. The sun rises, the tide turns, the heat is on, and other predators come to compete for our precious time and energy. Gone is the small window of a handful of minutes that was ours for the taking…when we were alone…when all was quiet.

So often people ask me how I have been able to accomplish so much writing in such a short time. It’s these three small steps that I have faithfully taken for the past 30 years that have helped to develop a personal reservoir of God’s Word at the heart of my life. And now, in God’s timing, His principles that have guided my life have come flowing out to help and share with His women.

Time, first time, early time. It’s such a simple formula! And it sounds so easy, doesn’t it? It can be yours. All that’s required is a commitment to follow through on these three small steps.

The Power of God’s Word

Earlier I asked the question, Where in the world is the strength and dedication and endurance for living God’s way going to come from? The short answer is…from the Bible. Time in God’s Word is how we tap into the power it makes available to us—the power that assists us in mounting up with wings like an eagle!

I’ve spent many a Sunday morning listening to Jim preach from his favorite book of the Bible, 2 Timothy. It’s a short—but passionate—letter written by the apostle Paul to Timothy, Paul’s disciple and a “man of God.” It’s also a letter that contains a straightforward, heart-to-heart, hardline call to Timothy to live a hardened, tough-as-nails, disciplined life. Why? So that Timothy could glorify God with his life and his service…and so that he could stand up to the trials of life.
Toward the end of his epistle, Paul paints a masterful picture of what the Word of God is and what it does for those who make it a part of their active lives:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

*God’s Word is the heart of God*—Would you like to know God’s thoughts, to hear His heart, to have a little of the heavenly be a part of your everyday life? Then read God’s Word. Everything that God wants to say to you is recorded in your Bible…straight from His heart to yours. It is God-breathed, inspired by Him, and comes from Him (2 Timothy 3:16). And it contains the counsel of the Lord and the thoughts of His heart to all generations (Psalm 33:11). So, as the psalmist invites you, “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8).

*God’s Word is always a good use of your time*—You never have to worry about wasting your time if it’s being spent reading God’s good and useful and helpful Word. For instance,

If you are impatient, sit down quietly and commune with Job. If you are strong-headed, read of Moses and Peter. If you are weak-kneed, look at Elijah. If there is no song in your heart, listen to David sing. If you are a politician, read Daniel. If you are getting sordid, read Isaiah. If your heart is chilly, read of the beloved disciple, John. If your faith is low, read Paul. If you are getting lazy, watch James. If you are losing sight of the future, read in Revelation of the promised land. In joy and sorrow, in
health and in sickness, in poverty and in riches, in every condition of life, God has [something] stored up in His Word for you.²

So, do you need wisdom? You’ll find it in the Bible. Do you need encouragement? It, too, lies on the pages in your Bible. Do you need strength? Just reading God’s Word infuses you with strength—His strength—for today and hope—His hope—for tomorrow. Just pause, pick up your Bible, and do the best thing you can do with your time—take in the Word of the Lord! Again, as Paul explains, all Scripture is indeed “profitable” (2 Timothy 3:16).

God’s Word teaches you (2 Timothy 3:16)—Please don’t be like the women various Bible translations describe as “weak-willed” or “gullible” or “silly” who were “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (verses 6-7). Instead, grow in the knowledge of the Word. There’s no reason for your faith to be anything less than firmly grounded. Let God’s Word teach you doctrine, theology, practical how-to’s and do’s and don’ts.

God’s Word reproves you (2 Timothy 3:16 again)—Speaking of power, the Bible refers to itself as “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.” And it describes its action in our heart as “piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow,” and as “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). When you pore over the pages of Scripture, it speaks straight to your heart. It points to behaviors or attitudes or practices that don’t match up with God’s standard for His people. As Martin Luther put it,

The Bible is alive, it speaks to me;  
it has feet, it runs after me;  
it has hands, it lays hold on me.³
God’s Word corrects, mends, and instructs you (2 Timothy 3:16)—Have you been reproved by something you’ve read in your Bible? Well, cheer up. God’s Word also has the power to mend you and move you forward. After you’ve fallen and failed, God’s Word picks you up, brushes you off, straightens you out, and builds you up until you are restored to the condition God has in mind for you. As we seek to manage our life God’s way, His Word is constantly helping us to do so by correcting and resetting the direction of our lives, preparing us for living out His plan and purpose in future service.

God’s Word equips you (2 Timothy 3:17)—What is it you need to do today? Next week? Next year? What tasks, roles, projects, and ministries do you desire to manage? Whatever it is, God’s Word will more than adequately equip you to perform the work and the ministry God has for you at home and in the church. God’s Word will give you the power to meet the demands of serving the Lord and others.

God’s Word guides you—Have you ever been camping and had to walk at night from your car to your campsite or from one building to the next? Then you know how dark the path can be…and how indispensable and helpful and necessary your flashlight was! Even though its beam probably only lit the area where you would take your next step, that was enough for you to walk safely.

That’s how God’s Word guides you. We learn from Psalm 119:105 that God’s Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Its powerful beacon illuminates at least our next step, our next decision, our next activity. There’s no need for you to ever stumble through life or miss your way…if God’s Word is implemented to light up the next portion of the path. Be sure you turn to the Bible to show you the right way, to help you to avoid the wrong way, and to manage your life God’s way!


God’s Word cheers you—Is joy missing from your life? Are these sad days for you? Are there sorrows you must bear? Then look to God’s Word. That’s what the prophet Jeremiah did when he was in despair. And then he reported, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” (Jeremiah 15:16). What a joyous blessing!

As I write about this truth, my heart hurts as I recall being in Manhattan, New York, home from welcoming our daughter’s baby, Matthew, into this world. He was born just hours before the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on September 11—just 40 blocks away from the hospital. The two weeks we were delayed in Manhattan were sad ones, and our hearts were heavy. So where did (and do!) Jim and I go for joy at such a time? To the Word of God. Indeed, we rushed to it! Devoured it! Needed it! Relished it! The same joy and rejoicing of heart—along with God’s peace and perspective—is available to you when grief and sorrow and gloom are a part of each day.

Looking at Your Life

As we step into this book about managing our lives, we are immediately forced to realize that God has already given us the map for our venture. And that map is God’s Word, the Bible. It teaches us, reproves us, corrects us, mends us, instructs us, equips us, guides us, and cheers us all along the way! What more could we need as we trek through life?! And yet I’m sure you’ve heard testimonies like those below shared by Christians who said things about their journeys such as,

I wandered off the path…
I became like the prodigal son…
I fell away from the Lord…
I got sidetracked in sin…
I lost my first love…
I strayed from the truth…
I made some wrong decisions…
I went off the deep end…
I got in with the wrong crowd…

I always wonder, *What happened?* How does someone wander off the path? How does a prodigal become a prodigal? How do we become sidetracked? How does one lose his or her first love, stray from the truth, begin making wrong decisions and mistakes? What leads up to going off the deep end, leaving the flock of God, choosing a lifestyle of wallowing in the mire, and eating the husks meant for pigs?

We both know what happened, don’t we? Somehow, at some time, for some reason, God’s Word took a secondary place to other pursuits. The lesser choices were made regarding how time was spent, until time was not taken each day to discover and follow God’s plan.

When we fail to purposefully and willfully develop the habit of spending time in God’s Word, we begin to spend our precious time and days on lesser pursuits…which can lead to wandering off the path of God’s purpose for our life and out of His will.

Your life and living out God’s plan and purpose are at stake. And the lives of your loved ones—your marriage partner and your dear children, who are meant to be the next generation of Christians—are also at stake. And your witness at work and in the neighborhood is at stake. Why? Because what you do and don’t do to manage your life doesn’t only affect you. It affects everyone and everything!

Take a close look at your life and how you spend your time. Then do whatever it takes to commit to these three small steps:
Time, first time, early time. Think of these steps as your “secret discipline.” As someone has well said,

The study of God’s Word for the purpose of discovering God’s will is the secret discipline which has formed the greatest characters.