

*What Happens
When Young Women
Say Yes to God*

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As You Set Out on Your Yes Journey

We are about to discover how God's love shapes our hearts and our individual paths of purpose. It's an amazing journey. We won't want to miss any of the messages He has for us. In this book you will discover the following features. Each is created to make the truths and wonders of faith more three-dimensional in your life.

Yes Factor

The gifts of the yes journey are plentiful. The Yes Factors highlight some of the most amazing treasures you'll discover along the way. They are ready to tweet so you can share with your friends, classmates, and online communities to encourage them.

You're Invited

Each chapter has a special invitation to say yes to God in a new way. Take time with these and pray about how you'll respond to the call to embrace God's best.

God's Word for You

God speaks to us through the Bible. Scripture is not a gathering of material meant for people ages ago. It was written *for you*. This feature includes questions for group or personal study, reflection points, and verse explorations to get God's Word from the page to your heart.

Living Y.E.S. (Your Extraordinary Story)

Only you can live your extraordinary story. No one else is designed by God to live this moment and all of your tomorrows. These insights and journal questions will help you understand the uniqueness, incredible value, and power of having a yes heart for God.

Yes in Action: A Note from Hope's Yes Journey

My teenage daughter Hope shares four personal accounts of listening to God and following His lead. My prayer is that these glimpses of another young woman facing the difficulties and delights of obedience will encourage you to put your yes into action daily.

My Yes Journey Notes

At the back of this book are several note pages so you have a convenient place to write down the ideas, challenges, special verses, prayer needs, and discoveries you experience while starting your yes journey.



Ready for Something Better

Most of us long for something better. Different. Special.

Extraordinary.

We desire something more meaningful than day-to-day survival.

And the amazing thing is that even before we can name this desire, God has placed it within us and is drawing us closer to Him through that desire. Our hunger to be special and to do special things is our spiritual hunger to have an extraordinary relationship with God.

But how do we leave normal behind and head toward extraordinary?

We start a journey! It's the amazing, transforming, anything-but-normal journey you'll begin the day you say yes to God and to the amazing faith life He has planned for you.

Let's begin at the starting place—right here, right now. Imagine with me that this is your day.

Beep. Beep. The notification of a text message wakes you up before your alarm. It's a friend reminding you to bring money for the school fund-raiser and asking if you will make signs during

lunch. As you sneak into the kitchen hoping to grab a bagel and glass of cranberry juice without being spoken to, your parents greet you with good-mornings and then insist you walk the dog before school.

You get to school with only a second to wave to friends. You settle into the assigned seat of the first class and do a mental happy dance because you finished your project early. The celebration is squelched because the teacher asks you to help a student who doesn't understand yesterday's assignment.

During lunch you finally get a chance to catch up with your best friend, but she still wants to talk through every event leading to her breakup with her boyfriend—five months ago. You listen for a while and pat her on the back for consolation, but you're thinking, *At least you had a boyfriend. My parents won't even let me date.*

The list goes on, right? A regular, ordinary day includes a lot of requests from a lot of people in your life. There are expectations. And even when you know the right thing to do, you don't have much joy when you follow through. *What's the point?* you think. *It's all so ordinary and leading nowhere.*

Even if people want good things from you and of you, it's tempting to say no. Nope. Uh-uh. No, thank you. I helped yesterday. Ask so-and-so. The dog ate my homework and my backpack and my computer.

There are lots of ways to say no.

When God asks you to do something, it can spark the desire to act as if you didn't hear Him. It's tempting to rattle off your memorized top five excuses for getting out of something that might be challenging, humbling, or out of your comfort zone.

In fact, sometimes God asks us to do things that seem a bit crazy at the time. We can't see the big picture the way He does. We

can't imagine how our one yes during an ordinary day can become something extraordinary when He uses it for His purposes.

But, you see, this is where we get confused. When we say yes to God, our days are no longer ordinary or normal. In fact, there is no such thing as a typical day. Once you make the leap of faith to say yes to God, you will discover the power that answer holds in your relationship with Him, others, and yourself. There's *nothing* ordinary about what's ahead for you. Are you nervous? Are you looking around you and thinking, *Maybe normal is okay? What is God going to ask of me when I say yes?*

Believe me, I understand this as well as anyone. I can be stubborn. I can be resistant to being told what to do. And I've had plenty of times when I wanted to do *anything* but what God was asking me to do. In fact, I was someone who never left home without having my top five excuses list handy. This *was* me...that is, until God opened my eyes to the incredible, blow-my-socks-off power of saying yes to Him.

It all started the day He told me to give away my Bible.

My ministry as a writer and a speaker gives me the chance to visit churches, women's groups, and conferences. On this particular day, I was heading home after a long schedule of speaking and I was wiped out. All I wanted was to get to my assigned seat on the plane and settle in for a nap. Imagine my absolute delight at being the only person seated in my row. I was just about to close my eyes when two last-minute passengers made their way to my row and took their seats.

Reluctantly, I decided to skip my nap. The last thing I wanted was to fall asleep and snore, drool, or, worse yet, wake up with my head resting on the guy's shoulder beside me. I did not need

another most embarrassing moment, so I pulled a manuscript out of my bag and started reading.

“What are you working on?” the guy asked. I told him I was a Christian writer. He smiled and said he thought God was a very interesting topic. I agreed and asked him a few questions about his beliefs. Before long I found myself reaching into my bag and pulling out my Bible, walking him through some key verses that dealt with the issues he was facing. He kept asking questions, and I kept praying God would give me answers.

All of a sudden I felt God tugging at my heart to give this man my Bible. Now, this was not just any Bible. This was my everyday, highlighted, underlined, written in, and tearstained Bible. I hesitated, but God’s message was clear. I was to give away my Bible.

I pulled out old church bulletins and other papers I had tucked inside the covers, took a deep breath, sighed, and placed it in the man’s hands. “I’d like for you to have my Bible,” I said.

Astonished, he started to hand it back to me, saying he couldn’t possibly accept such a gift. “God told me to give it to you,” I insisted. “Sometimes the God of the universe pauses in the midst of all His creation to touch the heart of one person. Today, He paused for you.”

The man took my Bible and made two promises. First, he said he would read it, and, second, someday he would pass it on, doing for someone else what I’d done for him.

Before I knew it, the plane landed and we were saying our goodbyes. As I stepped into the aisle preparing to disembark, the women on the other side of the businessman reached out and grabbed my arm. She’d been staring out the window the entire time we were flying, and I thought she’d been ignoring us. But her tearstained face told a different story. In a tone so hushed I could barely hear her, she whispered, “Thank you. What you shared

today has changed my life.” I put my hand on hers and whispered back, “You’re welcome.” Then a knot caught in my throat as tears welled up in my eyes. I didn’t have another Bible to give away, so I gave her one of my books and hugged her goodbye. It has been said that we are to tell the whole world about Jesus, using words only if necessary. I saw this powerful truth come to life. Though I never spoke to this lady about Jesus, she saw Him through my obedience. How humbling. How profound.

As I got off the plane that day, I could barely hold back my tears. Three people’s hearts were radically changed. I believe the businessman came to know Jesus as his Lord and Savior. I believe the same is true for the lady. But my heart was changed in a dramatic way as well. I was overjoyed at what God had done, but I was also brokenhearted by the flood of thoughts that came to mind recounting times I’d told God no. How tragic to miss His divine appointments.

I kept wondering, *How many times have I told You no, God? How many times have I walked right past an extraordinary moment You had shaped for me because I was too tired, too insecure, too caught up in drama, or too selfish? How often do I miss out on experiencing You?* I lifted up my heart to the Lord and whispered, “Please forgive me for all those noes. Right now I say yes, Lord. I say yes to You before I even know what You might ask me to do. I simply want You to see a yes-heart in me.”

Several minutes after exiting the plane, I was heading toward my connecting gate when I spotted the businessman again. He stopped me to tell me he’d been praying and thanking God for

Yes Factor

Open your heart to
God’s love. Open your
life to His calling. Open
your mouth to praise
Him.

what happened on the plane. We swapped business cards, and, though we lived several states apart, I knew we'd stay in touch.

About a month later he called to tell me his life had totally changed. He'd taken a week off from work to read the Bible, and he'd already shared his testimony with numerous people. God was definitely pursuing this man in a serious way! When I asked him what his favorite verse was, he said it was Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." I thought to myself, *Wow! Look at how God has already answered that for my new friend.*

He also told me that after reading the Bible he knew he needed to get involved in a church, so he'd decided to visit a large church in his town. On his way there he passed another church, and a strong feeling came over him to turn his car around and go back. So he did. When he got to his seat in the sanctuary, he opened up his bulletin and gasped. Inside the bulletin he saw an announcement that I was to be the speaker at an upcoming women's conference. He said he felt as though, once again, God was confirming His active presence.

That day on the plane, when God impressed on my heart to give this man my Bible, I did not know what would happen. This man might have thrown my Bible into the nearest airport trash can for all I knew. Normally, I would've come up with a hundred reasons *not* to give my Bible away, but that day something changed in me. That day, for the first time, I truly heard the call of a woman who says yes to God: "Live your extraordinary story of faith."

This journey we are taking together is life changing.

An Extraordinary Life Awaits



The amazing adventure of living your life and faith in extraordinary ways is up ahead. Here is the most wonderful truth: God designed it for *you*. And this journey cannot be lived out by anyone else. God made you as a special, nobody-else-like-you young woman, and He has a plan for your life. Do you feel it? Do you believe it? When you get up in the morning, do you think about how your day can only be lived out by the incredible you? Your family knows you and your quirky habits, and your friends share common interests, but nobody else is taking your steps through your day.

The extraordinary faith journey begins the moment you say yes to God and yes to the story He is creating through your heart, abilities, dreams, and faithfulness. It's not just a special story—it's an extraordinary one you and God experience together.

When we feel a tug on our heart and a stirring in our soul for more, we are often afraid to venture past our comfort zone. Outside our comfort zone, however, is where we experience the true awesomeness of God. But you have to take the plunge. How ready are you?

Notice that I didn't ask "How perfect are you?" Perfection is highly overrated. I think at this point it is important for me to

paint an accurate picture of what my life looks like before you imagine me as this super calm, amazingly organized and disciplined person who spends hours on her knees in prayer. Truth? My to-do list rarely gets accomplished. My emotions have been known to run wild, and my patience can run thin. I get pushed to the limit by everyday aggravations, such as a summer's worth of pictures getting erased from my digital camera. Or a dog who runs away at the most inconvenient times. And I've had times when I step outside my comfort zone and fear causes me to second-guess myself and God's plan.

Can you relate? Great! No matter what your life is like, you're a young woman made to say yes to God. Even if you're juggling all the craziness life can throw your way, when you simply whisper yes, you are equipped to start your extraordinary story of following God. "Yes, Lord. I want Your patience to override my desire to fly off the handle." "Yes, Lord. I want Your strength to keep my emotions in check when my family and friends drive me nuts." "Yes, Lord. I want Your courage to accept challenges that intimidate me." "Yes, Lord. I want to see my great value as Your daughter so I don't worry about what other people think."

You don't need perfect circumstances to say yes to God. You don't need the perfect religious attitude or all the answers to religious questions. You simply have to give to God all of the thoughts, worries, people, drama, and struggles that occupy your attention and your heart. You simply have to speak the answer God is longing to hear spill from your lips. "Yes, God."

The Daily Yes Prayer

Each day when I wake up, I pray a very simple prayer before my feet even hit the floor. I encourage you to write your own or

use this prayer so you can experience your extraordinary God in extraordinary ways.

God, I want to see You.

God, I want to hear You.

God, I want to know You.

God, I want to follow hard after You.

And even before I know what I will face today, I say yes to You.

This simple act of surrender each morning will prepare your eyes to see Him, your ears to hear Him, your mind to perceive Him, and your heart to receive Him. This is how to live expecting to experience God.

You see, we have become so familiar with God and yet still so unaware of Him. We turn the mysterious into something ordinary, even boring. We construct careful reasons for our rules and sensible whys for our behavior. All the while our soul is longing for a richer experience—one that allows us to escape the limits of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell and journey to a place of wild, wonder, and passion.

Young women who say yes to God will see life like few others.

And you will be drawn in and embraced by a love like no other. You don't have to wait until the next time you're in church to experience God because you can sense God's presence all around you, all through your day. Instead of going through the motions of life, you'll pursue the adventure of the moment-by-moment divine story and lessons God is unfolding.

When you say yes, you can *expect* to see God, to hear from Him, and to be absolutely filled by His peace and joy.

The Holy and the Ordinary

Embracing a holy God in the middle of life's everyday activities will change your life. God's surprises of good and wondrous experiences will take your breath away, but you might not always feel happy about the changes. I can't let you think that being a young woman who says yes to God means everything is always easy. There will be times when you experience the sting of heartache, frustration, uncertainty, failure, and loss, but now there will be new ways of dealing with those hard times. A holy way.

I had one of those experiences recently. I simply wanted to throw my hands in the air, throw my computer out the window, and cry out to God, "You have hurt my feelings, and I'm just a little unnerved and upset!"

I was at a friend's lake house to devote three days to a writing project. After the first night of working hard, I had gone to bed excited about all I'd accomplished. I awakened the next morning ready to have the same kind of success. But as I opened up my document folder with great anticipation, I saw...nothing. Nothing! The project was nowhere to be found.

Refusing to panic, I asked for my friends' help. After two hours of searching, one of my friends gently looked at me and verbalized the truth we'd all come to know. "It's gone, Lysa. You are going to have to start over."

What!

Wait a minute, I thought. *I have said yes to God today and had a great quiet time. I just know He can and will help me find this.* But for whatever reason, my document was gone and God had chosen not to bring it back. Tears filled my eyes as bitterness started to creep in my heart. Why would He allow this? My friend could sense my despair and gently replied, "Lysa, recently when something like this happened to me, someone told me to look at my loss as a

sacrifice of praise to God. It is so hard in today's abundance to give God a true sacrifice, but losing two thousand words and a whole day's work would qualify. Give this to Him without feeling bitter."

I resisted slapping my well-meaning friend as she then broke into singing praise songs. By the second stanza, I actually found myself joining in with a lighter heart and a resilient spirit.

Have you ever lost something that had required great effort and care on your part? Sometimes it isn't a school project or a writing assignment we've invested in; rather, it's a relationship. If you've ever said good-bye to a friend because of a move or because you find yourself taking a different path, you've experienced what felt like an unfair loss of time, effort, and heart. The loss of "what could've been" can be very disappointing. When you care about anything, it makes you more vulnerable. The risk is higher because more of your heart and soul is vested in the outcome. This is exactly why these times can be lifted up as a praise offering.

Being a young woman who says yes to God is about trusting Him even when you can't understand why He requires some of the things He does. It also means that once you've said yes to God, you refuse to turn back, even when things get hard.

This kind of obedience invites you to embrace a bigger vision for your life. When you look at your everyday circumstances with God's perspective, everything changes. You realize that He uses each circumstance, each person who crosses your path, and each encounter you have with Him as a divine appointment. Each day counts, and every action and reaction matters. God absolutely

Yes Factor

Saying yes to God isn't about perfect performance, but rather perfect surrender to Him.

loves to take ordinary people and do extraordinary things in them, through them, and with them.

It's a Party

Imagine that you've planned a wonderful surprise party for your best friend. The guests have all arrived. You've loaded the decorated dining room table with her favorite junk food and healthy preferences. Everything is ready for the guest of honor. You can barely wait for the big moment of "Surprise!" because you know your friend will feel so loved and celebrated.

Finally, the time has come. And gone. Your friend is late. Your other friends are whispering in the darkened living room and trying unsuccessfully to hold back waves of laughter. Suddenly, your cell phone rings. Your friend's image appears on the screen. "Shhh!" you say to the others just before answering the call.

"Hey, where are you?" you ask casually.

Instead of saying she's on her way, your friend says she's too tired to come over and has decided to watch the last two episodes of her favorite show online. She's already in her pajamas and will check out whatever you wanted to show her tomorrow. You try to convince her that tonight is so much better and you really want to share something with her. But with a friendly "See you tomorrow, I promise," she hangs up.

But by tomorrow the guests will be gone, the leftover food will be stored away, and the party that never started will be over.

How sad for the guest of honor, who missed her own surprise party! And how disappointing for you, the party planner who orchestrated the event with the hope of showing a friend how much she is loved.

God must feel the same way when we miss the "surprise parties" that await us each day. These are the divine appointments

sprinkled throughout our day for us to experience when we pay attention to God's leading. He must be so disappointed when we don't hear or don't listen to Him redirecting us to hang up the phone and show up at the event He has planned with great care. It must break His heart when we brush aside something that not only would make us feel special and noticed by God, but also would allow us to join Him in making life a little sweeter for others.

Which Invitation Will You Accept?

How many times have you missed your own surprise party?

God reveals Himself and His activity to all of us, but it takes a desire for the extraordinary to embrace these encounters because they can cause extreme changes in our plans, our perspectives, and our passions. I don't know about you, but I'm not a huge fan of change.

Yet, when we protect ourselves from change, we're saying no to God and yes to a life that leaves us unmotivated and directionless. Let's pause for a second and give that another look. You *are* accepting an invitation at any given moment, but are you saying yes to whims, desires, and random paths? Or are you accepting God's invitation to your purposed, powerful faith story?

I can think of several times when I let fear override my faith. I said yes to my insecurities and worries instead of God's strength and certainty. Has this happened to you? Maybe you felt God leading you to say yes to Him, yet you didn't go out for a play, you held back from introducing yourself to a new girl at school, or you resisted telling a guy you like about your faith. Every day has chances like these to step forward in God's leading, but we have to be prepared and ready to notice these opportunities from Him. When we are prepared and we do step out in faith, He will bless our yes!

You're Invited...
to Attend God's Surprise Party for You

WHAT:

The party you don't want to miss! This is a gathering of God's best for you...love, grace, hope, promises, and the joy of His wonder and will. All the great surprises of faith.

WHEN:

This moment. Forget the excuses. Get ready for something extraordinary.

WHERE:

On the other side of the door. Don't hesitate. Open the door. God and the incredible surprises of the yes journey are waiting for you.

WHAT TO BRING:

Everything is provided...so leave behind all that is ordinary. You'll want to be able to receive the extraordinary gifts God has chosen just for you.