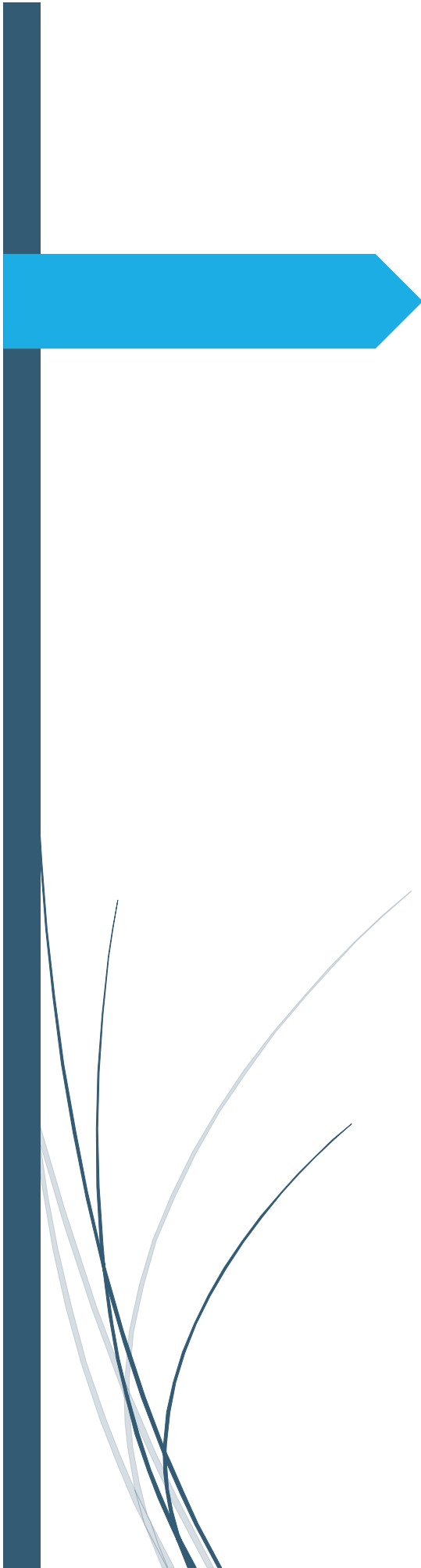




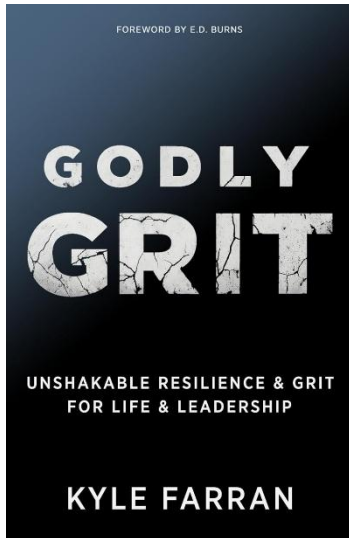
Leader's Edge Summary

May 2026 Summaries

Missio Nexus

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*** Leadership ***



Godly Grit: Unshakable Resilience & Grit for Life & Leadership

By: Kyle Farran

Overflowing Ministry Publishing, 2026

299 pages

[Find it on Amazon*](#)

*As an Amazon Associate Missio Nexus earns from qualifying purchases.

Summary

Kyle Farran has served for two decades in leadership in fourteen countries across Africa and Europe. He has opened an HIV/AIDS hospice care home in South Africa, trained Zulu pastors, and currently serves as a Regional Director of ABWE (Association of Baptists for World Evangelization), coaching mission staff and other leaders to live out their calling with resilience and impact.

The author rightly stresses that life, leadership, and ministry are hard, providing challenges that can drain joy and tempt one to quit. He argues that when one's perspective is "rooted in God," hardship doesn't have to shake us. The book does not argue for greater willpower or mental toughness, rather a perspective anchored in the truth of Scripture. The book seeks to help readers endure hardship, resist discouragement, and lead with greater courage, steadiness, and faith.

Best Idea

"Drought and storms are pictures of life's challenges. Challenges show what I am relying on. They reveal the depth of my roots. If I am deeply rooted in God, I will endure. But if my roots are shallow, resting in abilities, possessions, comfort, popularity, or power, I will wither when trials come. As Jeremiah wrote: "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7, 8). Kindle location 19

Best Illustration

"When we lived in South Africa, our family often drove to the game park. One day, we spotted a black rhino about forty yards away. They are well known for being aggressive and this one lived up to the reputation. With no warning, he charged. As the rhino charged us at a full sprint, I remembered something I had read in a motorcycle safety book. When a dog chases a motorcycle, you don't speed up or the dog will adjust and intercept you. Instead, you slow down, let it commit to a path, and then accelerate at the last second. The dog can't adjust in time. I thought: Thirty-pound dog. Three-thousand-pound rhino. Same trigonometry. I very

slowly eased the vehicle forward, drawing the rhino in. He was charging at full steam. Thirty yards, twenty yards. My family—still in the car—was freaking out. The kids were jumping over seats, trying to get to the far side of the vehicle, away from the impending impact. My wife pounded my arm, shouting: ‘Go! Go! Go!’ There wasn’t time to explain the plan. All I said was, ‘I’ve got this.’ I kept putzing along. When the rhino was ten yards out, I hit the gas. The rhino blew past the back of the vehicle, skidded, and rolled down a hill. We were safe. My calm came from knowing the plan. My family didn’t know the plan, so they were terrified. So many times, we want to know the plan, but God doesn’t explain it to us. He wants us to trust Him, not approve His plan. God has got this.” Kindle location 64

Best Take Away

“Fear and doubt insult God’s character by questioning His goodness and power. Not trusting God makes God look small before others. Trusting anything other than God rejects God and His blessing. Consider Those Who Trust God: Peace characterizes their life. They are fearless in obeying God. Their faith glorifies God. They don’t fear bad news. ‘For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries’ (Psalm 112:6-8). They are unshakable.” Kindle location 27-28

Our Recommendation

Sometimes, Christians can benefit from being reminded of simple Scriptural truths that are nonetheless not so easy to fully grasp and apply. This book effectively reviews important lessons of faith, obedience, courage and resilience in the face of difficulty. It includes numerous illustrations from Scripture – Moses, Joseph, Gideon... as well as simple illustrations from the author’s own life and experience. Definitely a helpful read for those desiring a review of some of the basic principles of Christian living and endurance.

Best Quotes

“Our purpose is the same as the Apostle Paul’s: ‘I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God’” (Acts 20:24). Kindle location 24

“When we accept that life is difficult, it transforms us. Our problems become possibilities. Obstacles become opportunities. Trials become triumphs. Having the proper perspective increases our joy and strength in everything we do. It gives us hope.” Kindle location 25

“Godly Grit makes God look great. It helps us fulfill our purpose. Without Godly Grit, we live under the rule of fear, worry, anxiety, discontent, anger, and pride. Each of these makes God look small, weak, and incompetent.” Kindle location 26

“This book intentionally focuses on Strength, Courage, Resilience, and Grit because they build on each other: Strength forms the foundation of Courage, Courage develops Resilience, and Resilience produces Grit. To endure the challenges of life and leadership, you need all four.” Kindle location 29

“Courage is conquering inner fear and acting. It is the ability to do something that frightens you. It’s not just the absence of fear but overcoming fear with faith.” Kindle location 30

“Resilience is quick recovery and adaptation. It is the ability to bounce back quickly from problems, setbacks, or challenges. Resilience means handling stress or difficulties in a way that helps us recover and keep going. It allows us to stay strong and adapt, even in hard times.” Kindle location 30

“Grit is long-term commitment and effort. It is staying committed and working hard for a long time, even when facing challenges or setbacks. People with grit keep on going despite obstacles to achieve their long-term goals. Grit keeps going, no matter what. Grit doesn’t quit.” Kindle location 30

“Discipline is daily decisions toward long-term goals. Discipline is another building block to grit. Though this book doesn’t fully explore discipline, I include it here because it shows yet another way grit is formed. It is choosing to do hard but necessary things and building them into your habits and rhythms.” Kindle location 31

“Summary of Differences • Discipline is about immediate self-control and daily habits. • Strength is about endurance in hard situations. • Courage is about overcoming inner fear and acting despite fear. • Resilience is about recovery and adaptability. • Grit is about long-term perseverance and effort toward a goal, despite challenges and slow progress.” Kindle location 31

“What we set our mind on shapes our perspectives. God tells us to ‘set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth’ (Colossians 3:2). But our heart is equally important. What we set our heart on shapes what we love and trust.” Kindle location 43

“Our perspective doesn’t change the situation—it changes us. Changing our thinking changes us from the inside out. Speaking truth to ourselves frees us from despair by reminding us to hope in God. Fixing our mind on God produces deep peace, even in uncertainty. Seeing temporary suffering through the lens of eternity renews our heart. Choosing thankfulness overcomes anxious emotions. Dwelling on truth is foundational to our life. Setting our mind on God’s purposes for trials enables us to endure and grow. Changed perspective realigns our heart to seek eternal things.” Kindle location 45-47

“Our heart is an idol factory. Idols promise satisfaction but leave us empty. Only Christ satisfies. In Him we find true, lasting satisfaction. ‘Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever’ (Psalm 73:25, 26). What do I desire besides God? Challenges reveal the answer. They show what our heart loves.” Kindle location 50

“To help you find your way, the perspectives are grouped in four easy-to-remember themes. I encourage you to commit the themes to memory. Remembering them can bring clarity in the storm: •God is at work AROUND you •God is at work IN you •God is at work THROUGH you •God is at work FOR you.” Kindle location 55

“Godly Grit begins by seeing that God is at work around us. He is sovereign over every circumstance we face. Our weakness and trials aren’t wasted; they become the stage for His power and glory.” Kindle location 58

“God perfectly plans both the intensity and duration of our trials. He gives strength to endure. Challenges must take us to the end of our strength so we will trust in His strength alone. Because of this, trials will always feel impossible. They feel impossible because they are impossible in our strength. That’s their design.” Kindle location 62

“The sovereignty of God isn’t just a doctrine. It is your foundation when life feels out of control! It also humbles us, reminding us of our smallness.” Kindle location 80

“‘Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases’ (Psalm 115:3). God is in complete control of all that has or will come to pass. His plan is what happens. ‘Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps’ (Psalm 135:6). Our God isn’t up in heaven wringing His hands, worrying about what is going to happen or hoping that things will turn out the way He planned.” Kindle location 80

“If you can embrace the sovereignty of God over everything—it changes everything. You will be able to face each challenge with calm confidence that God is in control.” Kindle location 83

“If God is our strength, we don’t need to fear. Fear usually takes two forms: 1. Fear that God is not in control of something. 2. Fear that God’s will is not best for our eternal good.” Kindle location 85

“As I look back over the last twenty years, I wouldn’t be who I am without the difficulties I’ve faced. They made me who I am. Without the challenges, I wouldn’t have grown stronger. I often say about trials: Never chosen, but never traded. I probably wouldn’t choose them, but after walking through them, I would never trade them because of what God did in me.” Kindle location 96

“I’ve exercised regularly since I was thirteen. But exercise isn’t always fun. To become stronger, you must push yourself. You have to stress your body to the point where it says, ‘That was too hard, I need to grow stronger for next time.’ Physical exercise is uncomfortable because it pushes your limits, but it makes you stronger. Challenges are like God’s gym. They prepare us for His plan. If we want an easier life or ministry, we don’t need fewer challenges. We need greater strength.” Kindle location 96

“In our mind and emotions, we may carry countless ‘problems’ that will never exist in reality. We’re told to cast ‘all [our] anxieties on him’ (1 Peter 5:7). Most things we worry about never happen—except in our mind and body, which still live the stress. Mark Twain reportedly said, ‘I’ve suffered a great many catastrophes in my life. Most of them never happened.’” Kindle location 107

“What is our real purpose? Not what we say we pursue, but what we really pursue. We pursue the things our heart loves and treasures. Sometimes, we don’t even know the depth of our heart. Only God truly does. Our heart can be divided. This is why the Psalmist prays, ‘unite my heart to fear your name’ (Psalm 86:11). What does our heart treasure? Do we long to be comfortable or for the comfort of God? Do we long to know comfort or know Christ?” Kindle location 115

“Angela Duckworth’s excellent book *Grit*, describe grit using the words ‘passion’ and ‘perseverance.’ She writes: ‘The highly successful had a kind of ferocious determination that played out in two ways. First, these exemplars were unusually resilient and hardworking. Second, they knew in a very, very deep way what it was they wanted.’” Kindle location 120

“In every situation, we can usually grow. In interpersonal matters, even if we are not entirely at fault, we can usually take responsibility for at least 5% of the outcome. Leadership expert Stephen R. Covey is often credited with saying, ‘You can learn great things from your mistakes when you aren’t busy denying them.’” Kindle location 127

“Holiness requires grit because we must endure the daily war with sin. We can’t let up; we must fight day by day. Paul highlights this battle when he said, ‘For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.’ (Romans 8:13). Puritan pastor John Owen warned, ‘Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.’” Kindle location 132

“Practical Steps To Battle Sin: 1. Identify the things you struggle with most. 2. Memorize a few key verses that combat the lie Satan tells you. 3. Whenever the tempting thought enters your mind, immediately replace it with the verse. Don’t let the thought stay. 4. Use The Acronym STRESS To Check Your Battle Readiness. **Set** your mind on God, Scripture, the things above, and this truth: sin is a mirage and wants to destroy you. **Thankfulness** for God’s character, His gifts, and His promises will guard your heart. **Rely** on God’s strength to battle

sin. **Engage** the help of others (accountability). **Submit** fully to God—body, mind, and heart. **Satisfaction** in God and His promises is crucial.” Kindle location 140-141

“Consider a few of God’s servants and leaders in the Bible: Joseph, David, Moses, Daniel, Noah, Isaiah, and Paul. • Joseph was sold as a slave and then imprisoned before becoming the second ruler of Egypt, saving the nation and his family. • David was anointed as the future king as a teenager, but endured years of running for his life before sitting on the throne. • Moses was a shepherd for 40 years before shepherding God’s people. • Daniel was taken captive as a youth and thrown to lions as an old man, but he magnified God before kings. • Noah spent 120 years building an ark while being ridiculed before God brought the flood. • Isaiah endured rejection and opposition from kings and people but was God’s mouthpiece for His message. • Paul endured beatings, shipwrecks, and prison as God used him to spread the gospel. God’s servants all had to endure incredible problems, which both prepared them personally and also prepared the path.” Kindle location 187

“I have found these ten lessons helpful in learning to lead with grit and climb the mountains of challenges: 1. Move Toward The Vision. 2. Adapt. 3. Collaborate 4. Give Emotional Support. 5. Abide In Christ. 6. Simplify. 7. Delegate. 8 Coach, Don’t Command. 9. Prioritize Prayer. 10. Think Ahead. 11. Model.” Kindle location 199-207

“Challenges Are An Opportunity To Glorify God Through Our Faith. Challenges Are An Opportunity For Unshakable Courage. Challenges Are An Opportunity For Unshakable Joy.” Kindle location 213

“D. L. Moody is attributed with this powerful saying: ‘Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at something that doesn’t really matter.’” Kindle location 232

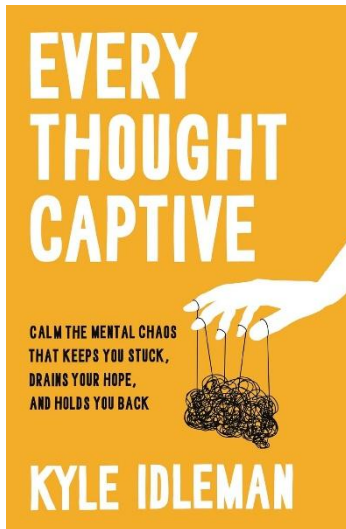
“Principles For Hard Work From Nehemiah: Discover God’s Leading. Prayer. Focus. Plan. Create Systems. Simplify. Eliminate. Overcome Fear. Decide.” Kindle location 235

“Questions to ask in tough decisions: • What honors God in this situation? • Am I valuing the right thing? • What are the others? If none of my current ideas worked, what else could be done? • What does faith look like as I face this problem? • What is the next step I need to take? • What role do emotions play (mine or others’)? • How is this ‘another one of those’ situations that is a repeating issue? • How can I prepare for or prevent similar problems later? • What is God teaching me about Himself through this problem? About myself? • What is behind that emotion? (fear, doubt, anger, frustration, etc.) • Am I basing my decision on fear—or faith and courage? • Am I holding people accountable and addressing problems? • Is the story I’m telling myself based on God’s truth and facts, or have I filled in the gaps?” Kindle location 245

“Perspectives on Challenges & Memory Verses: God is at work AROUND us • Challenges reveal our weakness and God’s glory. (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10) • Challenges are never faced alone. (Psalm 23:4) • Challenges are part of God’s plan. (Isaiah 55:8, 9) • Challenges are already solved in God’s mind, but they test our faith. (John 6:6) God is at work IN us • Challenges make us stronger. (James 1:2-4) • Challenges aren’t our biggest problems. (Joshua 1:9) • Challenges disrupt false peace to bring true peace. (Isaiah 40:29) • Challenges are faced one day at a time. (Lamentations 3:21-23) • Challenges are sometimes just in our mind. (1 Peter 5:7) • Challenges shrink with time. (Revelation 21:4) • Challenges reveal weakness. (Colossians 3:15) • Challenges reveal our real purpose. (Philippians 1:21) • Challenges are a daily battleground for holiness. (1 Peter 1:13-16) • Challenges are designed to grow our character. (Joshua 1:6, 7) • Challenges affect our bodies. (1 Corinthians 10:31) God is at work THROUGH us • Challenges are the path. (John 16:33) • Challenges aren’t in our control, but our response is. (Philippians 2:14, 15) • Challenges aren’t just about us; they are for the good of others. (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) •

Challenges advance the gospel. (Philippians 1:18) • Challenges might be spiritual warfare. (1 Peter 5:8-9) • Challenges are an opportunity to prove that God is an unshakable foundation. (Psalm 16:8) • Challenges are an opportunity to glorify God through our faith. (Psalm 112:6-8) • Challenges are an opportunity for unshakable courage. (2 Samuel 10:12) • Challenges are an opportunity for unshakable joy. (Philippians 4:4) • Challenges require hard work. (Colossians 3:23, 24) God is at work FOR us • Challenges are a gift. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) • Challenges are an opportunity to worship. (Psalm 118:14)” Kindle location 277

***** Spiritual Formation *****



Every Thought Captive: Calm the Mental Chaos That Keeps You Stuck, Drains Your Hope, and Holds You Back

By: Kyle Idleman

Zondervan, 2025

256 pages

[Find it on Amazon*](#)

*As an Amazon Associate Missio Nexus earns from qualifying purchases.

Summary

Whether we wrestle with anxiety, harmful thoughts about ourselves, or mental spirals that hold us back from spiritual growth and healthy relationships, many of us struggle to control our thoughts rather than let them control us. Bestselling author Kyle Idleman points us to the tools we need to get our thoughts into submission so we can live a fuller and more joy-filled life. This biblically rich, practical book will help you understand what transformed thinking looks like in the unique context of your life.

Best Illustration

“The key takeaway is this: Your mind is like a garden, and your thoughts are the seeds. What you choose to plant through your daily exposures will determine what grows. Every image you see, every word you hear, every interaction you have is planting something. The question is, are you cultivating weeds of negativity, fear, and doubt, or are you nurturing seeds of faith, hope, and love?” Kindle location 1032

Best Idea

“Breaking the insecurity loop isn’t about mustering up more self-confidence or repeating positive mantras; it’s about tuning our ears to hear the voice of our heavenly Father. It’s about allowing his words of love and affirmation to sink deep into our hearts and overwrite the lies of insecurity with the truth of our identity in him.” Kindle location 1260

Best Take Away

“But all kinds of studies, not just faith-based studies but also many secular ones, have shown there’s no quicker way to be unhappy than making our lives about happiness. It’s sometimes called the ‘pleasure paradox’ or the ‘happiness illusion.’ The harder we chase after happiness, the more elusive it becomes. Turns out trying to pursue pleasure makes us miserable. Joy Davidman, the wife of C. S. Lewis, said, ‘Our culture says happiness is found by pursuing pleasure; God says happiness is found by pursuing him.’” Kindle location 1914

Our Recommendation

This is a strong biblically based treatment of how to guard our hearts and minds so that we are pleasing to Jesus

in our thoughts and imaginations. Very practical in personal applications and insightful to how our brain works.

Best Quotes

“But there is an intricate relationship between our thoughts and our feelings. God created our brains with a limbic system, specifically the amygdala, which helps us process our emotional and behavioral responses. These responses are intimately connected to our ability to survive.” Kindle location 451

“MRI scans have demonstrated that when participants reframe negative images using intentional thinking, there is a reduction in negative and unwanted emotions. What does that mean? God has given us the tools to help shape our behavior.” Kindle location 456

“We like to think we can be in charge of our own direction and decisions in any given moment, but in reality, the thoughts we have been thinking have established neural pathways that will decide which direction we go. This is why we can all think of decisions we’ve made that don’t align with what we say we want. Our established thought patterns are guiding our behavior in ways we underestimate.” Kindle location 288

“Lasting change requires more than behavior modification; it requires intentional and consistent thought transformation.” Kindle location 497

“You really meant it when you said you were going to change, so why didn’t you? Because you focused on changing your behavior but not your thinking. And what you do is primarily determined not by your intentions but by your thoughts. Kindle location 503

“It’s also important to note that ‘be transformed’ uses the passive imperative tense. The word passive means we are not the ones who do it; it is done to us. God is the only one who can do this, and he wants to do it in you and me.” Kindle location 572

“In psychology there’s a principle called ‘the law of cognition.’ Simply stated, what you think about determines who you become. More specifically, what you think about determines what you believe; what you believe determines how you feel; how you feel determines what you do and how you live.” Kindle location 601

“A stronghold is a lie we believe and live by. Strongholds are formed by ingrained patterns of thinking that are opposed to God’s truth and wisdom. Thoughts become beliefs, beliefs become actions, and actions determine our lives, so we had better be sure our thoughts are true.” Kindle location 634

“A helpful way to identify a stronghold in your life is to think about an area in which you feel stuck. You’re not sure why you’re stuck; you just know you’re stuck. As you think about that area, ask yourself, Is there a lie I’m believing?” Kindle location 671

“When you believe a lie, you give it the power of truth in your life. The way you think determines how you live. Generational strongholds pass down broken thinking from one generation to the next.” Kindle location 687

“How do we bring down a stronghold? By taking our thoughts captive. By grabbing hold of every thought and submitting it to the light of truth.” Kindle location 728

“All things being equal, we will tend to become what we think. Our thoughts will determine which direction we go. Back that up and think it through: I can change the direction of my life by changing what I think about.” Kindle location 806

“So to sum up: What we are exposed to determines our thoughts. Our thoughts determine our beliefs. Our beliefs determine our behaviors. Our behaviors shape our lives.” Kindle location 822

“Subconscious and unintentional exposure will shape your thoughts and direct your life without requiring your permission.” Kindle location 829

“One simple equation that can be applied to these studies supporting the mere exposure effect: Input = Output. Input: the content we are repeatedly exposed to Output: the thoughts we have that shape our beliefs and behaviors.” Kindle location 842

“God in his infinite wisdom created our brains with this amazing capacity for change. This neuroplasticity isn’t a flaw or a vulnerability it’s a gift. It means that no matter what patterns have been established in your mind, no matter what negative influences have shaped your thinking in the past, your Creator has created you with the ability to change.” Kindle location 850

“When we seek change, we focus on output: I need to stop doing that. I want to stop thinking that. I shouldn’t talk like that anymore. Instead, we should focus on input. If we change our input, it will change our output.” Kindle location 941

“I’ve discovered something called ‘imposter syndrome.’ It describes thoughts that leaders often struggle with—feeling like a fraud, undeserving of the success they’ve had or the position they’re in. Those thoughts often lead them to be anxious that they’ll be revealed as an imposter. What’s interesting is that research indicates that the imposter syndrome is especially common among high achievers.” Kindle location 1112

“Insecure thoughts may come from being perfectionistic, catastrophizing, listening to hypercritical voices, or a number of other factors, but there’s no doubt that caring what others think is where a lot of our insecure thoughts begin.” Kindle location 1123

“The more caught up we are in what people think, the more self-conscious and egocentric we become, which only fuels further insecurity.” Kindle location 1142

“Cognitive biases are like mental shortcuts our brains use to navigate the complexity of choices and to help us understand how distractions form thought patterns that affect our emotions and influence our decisions.” Kindle location 1292

“The challenge now is that the more external input we receive, the less internal reflection takes place. There’s a connection between an excess of external input and an absence of internal reflection. We have more to think about, but we are thinking less about what matters.” Kindle location 1325

“All of these digital dopamine distractions are actually rewiring our brains. It’s getting harder to sit still and focus on one thing. The more we indulge in these quick digital hits, the more our brains need to feel that same buzz. It’s like needing extra sugar in our coffee to get the same kick.” Kindle location 1339

“We incur all kinds of costs from being distracted, but perhaps the most insidious (but often inconspicuous) cost is to our spiritual lives. Theologian Ronald Rolheiser wrote (back in 1999, before the onset of social media and streaming services) that we ‘are distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion.’” Kindle location 1406

“The commitment to defy distraction is ultimately a commitment to live more fully—to be more present, more intentional, and more aligned with God’s will for your life. It’s about creating space for the still small voice of God to be heard amidst the noise of our world.” Kindle location 1526

“When we are offended and get angry, the brain also releases stress hormones, such as cortisol, to respond to a situation that might be a threat. It’s a survival tactic that surely came in handy in past centuries when everyday life was a little more . . . stabby. Cortisol is a gift in the right situation, helping us respond quickly and decisively and activating our ability to fight or get the heck out of there.” Kindle location 1593

“But as if these chemicals aren’t enough, there’s more. When we share our offense with like-minded friends, it can increase our sense of social bonding with them, which leads the brain to release oxytocin—the ‘love hormone.’” Kindle location 1599

“What should we do when someone mistreats us and leaves us feeling offended? We don’t focus on the feeling. Instead we are challenged by the words of Jesus’ half-brother James: ‘My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires’ (James 1:19–20).” Kindle location 174

“Being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry may feel impossible in the moment, but it turns out that God gave us some biological help with this. When that fight-or-flight mechanism kicks in, a part of the orbital frontal cortex, a part of the brain just above our eyes, gets engaged and serves the purpose of putting the brakes on our fired-up emotions.” Kindle location 1692

“If you are a Christian living in the Western world, chances are that at some point along the way, the cultural thought of I deserve to be happy morphs into an even more dangerous thought: It’s God’s job to make me happy. This thought will almost certainly lead to your feeling unhappy with God. Eventually, you’ll think, I tried the God thing, but . . .” Kindle location 1949

“Choosing gratitude has also been shown to make us happy. Expressing gratitude caused subjects to experience an increase in dopamine hits, the reward neurotransmitter that makes the brain happy. In short, each time a subject expressed gratitude, the brain said, ‘Ooh! Do it again!’”

Kindle location 2011

“There’s a way of thinking that invariably weaves a pattern that leads to despair. It starts with distorted thinking. We view an event or situation in an inaccurate way that puts it in a negative light.” Kindle location 2068

“After distorted thinking comes discouragement. We begin to dwell on the negative thoughts without seeking a solution or positive way to look at it. We judge and blame ourselves, which causes us to lose confidence and enthusiasm.” Kindle location 2071

“Discouragement leads to disillusionment. As we spiral, we wonder if our expectations have been unrealistic and start to lose faith that things can be different or get better.” Kindle location 2073

“Disillusionment ushers us into despair. If any of us have ever been there, we know this is not a place we want to be. We feel like there is no solution or improvement possible and move into a state of resignation, helplessness, and hopelessness. We might feel trapped in our situation and come to the (false) conclusion that there’s no way out.” Kindle location 2075

“So when God invites us to cast our anxieties on him, he is not just offering spiritual comfort; he is inviting us into a practice that aligns with the way he designed our brains to function. By specifically naming our concerns in prayer, we’re taking these thoughts captive and partnering with God in the process of emotional regulation and healing.” Kindle location 2166

“David begins in a state of distress because he has enemies lining up against him. He is overwhelmed. But he prays honestly and specifically. He asks God to jump into the driver’s seat. Morning, noon, and night, he reminds himself who God is and what God has done. And what happens? He goes from worrying to worshipping.” Kindle location 2385

“When we consistently capture negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones, we create new neural pathways. Over time, this can break the mold of old thinking patterns and allow us to think in new and healthier ways.” Kindle location 2385

“The words we speak, whether we want them to or not, program our subconscious mind. We don’t always make the connection because there is time lag between when the seed is planted and the fruit of that seed shows up. But every time we speak, our ears are there to listen, and each word becomes a seed planted in our minds.” Kindle location 2921

‘If we can create worlds with our words, and we can, we need to be a lot more intentional about the words we speak, perhaps especially to ourselves.’ Kindle location 2928

“Every day that we speak words of truth and life, seeds are being planted in our minds. The words are watering the thoughts that will bring life.” Kindle location 2996

“How do we persevere when life seems too difficult? It starts by winning the morning. I can’t remember when I first heard the phrase ‘win the morning.’” Kindle location 3131

“Taking my thoughts captive and being intentional with my thinking in the morning has a way of setting the course for my day.” Kindle location 3135

“A morning routine is essential, but not just any morning routine. If you want to set yourself up for a day of distraction and ‘trigger your stress response’ so you are ‘on edge for the rest of the day,’ the best morning routine is to check your phone right after you wake up. It’s scientifically proven. Explaining why is a little above my pay grade, but it has to do with your brain.” Kindle location 3153

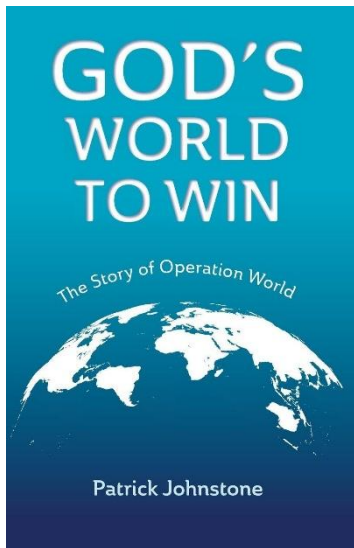
“Starting our day by intentionally taking our thoughts captive and setting our minds on what is true, good, lovely, excellent, and praiseworthy is the best way to set the course for our thinking. When we start the day by being transformed by the renewing of our minds, it makes it much less likely that we will be conformed to the patterns of this world as the day continues.” Kindle location 3179

“How we start our day primes us for the rest of our day. Our first thoughts set the tone for the thoughts we’ll think until we go to sleep at night.” Kindle location 3190

“And unless we think about death, we won’t rightly be able to think about life. Death is just a door. This life is preparation for the next, and death is how you pass from one to the other. Avoiding thinking about death has made us think mostly about this life on earth.” Kindle location 3381

“Considering how short this life is and how long the next life is, the only thing that makes sense is to live with the end in mind. Think eternity. Most of us don’t. It’s easy not to.” Kindle location 3412

***** Missions/Ministry *****



[God's World to Win: The Story of Operation World](#)

By: Patrick Johnstone

Willaim Carey, 2026

204 pages

[Find it on Amazon*](#)

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Summary

The book narrates the personal journey of the author with the Lord and his sixty-year ministry, including the production of *Operation World*, a book that guides “Christians to pray for and reach the unevangelized peoples of the world” (p. 12). The book covers the integration of his relationship with the Lord, the story of his family, and his involvement in ministry with the Dorothea Mission in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), with Operation Mobilization (MV Logos), with WEC International (formerly World Evangelization Crusade), and in his writing six editions of *Operation World* (1964, 1974, 1978, 1986, 1993, and 2021). The author reveals his desire in writing the book through these words: “(M)y desire is to reveal what God has done in the nations and peoples of the world in recent years, as well as the contributions of many involved in producing successive editions of *Operation World*. This narrative also includes details of my own personal journey” (p. 1).

Best Illustration

“Helen Roseveare, a well-known WEC missionary-doctor who had written many books about her dramatic experiences during the civil war in Congo. She was imprisoned by rebel forces in 1964 and subjected to beatings and rape, but she astonished many by returning to the Congo to rebuild the nation, including reconstructing hospitals that had been destroyed in the conflict.” Page 83

Best Idea

“Often, people view the world through the lens of their own experiences, as if it revolves around them and their cultural norms. If we’re not careful, we can be deceived into thinking that if God isn’t moving in our local community, then he isn’t moving anywhere else.” Page 126

Best Take Away

“The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were marked by increasing globalization and world evangelization, reaching every nation and thousands of people groups. However, that era is now grinding to a halt. The remainder of the twenty-first century is likely to be very different and will require new tools, fresh ministry strategies and new recruits to complete the task Jesus entrusted to us.” Pages 188-189

Our Recommendation

We recommend this book to mission agency leaders and mission mobilizers who seek to faithfully fulfill God's call, just as the author has faithfully served God in mission for sixty years in different capacities across the world. These readers will find encouragement in the personal journey and ministry of the author.

Best Quotes

"(T)he global mission movement has become truly polycentric, emerging from the restricting chrysalis of Western colonialism." (Jason Mandryk) Page xv

"God never wastes any experience in our lives when we are fully committed to him." Page 12

"A dear South African friend and colleague said of apartheid's terrible psychological wounds: 'All of us South Africans of every race need something like a second conversion experience to be free from the effects of apartheid!'" Page 16

"In my estimation, the East African Revival was the purest and longest lasting of all the world's revivals in the twentieth century. It began in 1933 in Rwanda at an Anglican mission station and spread through the surrounding countries in the 1940s and 1950s—particularly Uganda and Kenya, but also into Tanzania, Congo, and South Sudan." Pages 20-21

"Africans would tell me, 'You Westerners have your clocks, but we have the time!'" Page 28

"Only prayer can prevent fast approaching chaos." Page 33

"I believe the tumult in the world provided fertile ground for the subsequent massive turning to God in Africa, China, parts of Central Asia, Iran, Algeria, and Indonesia." Page 34

"In 1969, the Ethnologue listed 4,493 languages, and by 2024, that number had grown to 7,164 languages in use worldwide." Page 35

"Team members often told me that Jill had humanized me!" Page 58

"I was a frontline missionary, driven by a desire to mobilize prayer and recruits to meet the real needs of every country in the world." Page 62

"One important lesson I learned is that research is an ever-changing process. It is better to publish figures that may be slightly inaccurate than to wait for perfection before publishing something—perfection is unobtainable in a fluid, imperfect world." Page 63

"I learned to engage with readers who criticized my books by inviting them to become helpers." Page 64

"In later editions, Operation World defined evangelicals as those who recognize these four main attributes of the faith: that the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole source of salvation through faith in faith; that personal faith and conversion are experienced with regeneration by the Holy Spirit; that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and the only basis for faith and Christian living; and that commitment to biblical witness, evangelism, and mission brings others to faith in Christ." Pages 65-66

"Identifying, mapping, and profiling the people groups of the world became the great new thrust of Christian research from 1980s to the present." Page 76

"It was a blessing to know that what had started as a little prayer booklet for a few thousand intercessors in 1964 had grown to a book that hundreds of thousands of Christians around the world were regularly using." Page 80

"World Evangelization Crusade was founded by C. T. Studd., who came from a wealthy family. He shocked British society by rejecting his privileged life as a famous cricket player for England to become a missionary to China with the China Inland Mission in 1885, joining the ranks of the 'Cambridge Seven.'" Page 84

"The MV Logos was the fulfillment of a dream of George Verwer, the founder and leader of Operation Mobilization." Page 90

"Only in recent years have mission agencies begun to address the challenges of not only the culture shock experienced by workers they send overseas but also the confusion of 'reverse culture shock' when missionaries return home after their time abroad." Page 99

"Looking back, I realize that the early 1980s was a kairos moment in missions, though it was not easy to discern at the time." Page 102

"It's much better to rest for three months and pull back from the edge of a cliff than to face decades of lasting damage." Page 104

"One conclusion we reached was that I was carrying a far too heavy workload for one man, and I needed a stronger support team to share the load." Page 105

"Every field and ministry set goals, and from this emerged some regional goals as well." Page 114

"I drew a set of four basic conclusions from my experiences with WEC's mega-shift, which I have sought to apply in every leadership role I have subsequently filled. They are: imposed visions do not work; those who implement the vision must be part of the decision-making process; the vision must be embraced by the whole organization; and the provision of resources will follow God's work." Page 116

"Instead of just wanting to plant churches or support work in unreached nations, we sought to establish entire mission agencies in those areas." Pages 116-117

"One of the main reasons for the existence of Operation World is to instigate strategic prayer for the church and the fallen world we live in." Page 121

"As an interdenominational mission, we had been good in planting congregations, but not so good in developing networks of churches that impacted whole nations." Page 123

"As a mission researcher, I would describe the 1990s as the 'decade of harvest.'" Page 125

"As the dynamic movement began to take shape, the catchphrase was modified to: 'A church for every people and the gospel for every person by the year 2000.'" Pages 138-139

“Ralph Winter, founder of the US Center for World Mission, called AD2000 ‘the largest and most pervasive global evangelical network ever to exist.’” Page 142

“After the closure of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement in 2001, the Joshua Project continued, and to this day, their small team continues to faithfully track the latest information, refining their data based on input from people on the field.” Page 145

“Mobilizing missionaries from a people group that shares those commonalities could potentially advance the kingdom of God more quickly than sending outsiders from completely different backgrounds.” Page 152

“The church is much larger than most Christians realize.” Page 165

“The global mission force of the twenty-first century is markedly different and needs to find innovative methods to effectively serve Jesus in more hostile and dangerous environments.” Page 168

“It became my ambition to disciple leaders to a fourth generation, and I desired to hand over as many of my ministry responsibilities to qualified, quality believers as the Lord revealed.” Page 178

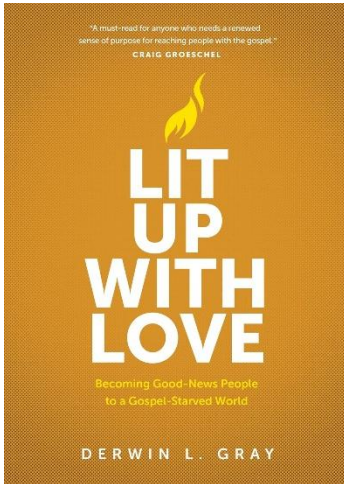
“My constant challenge to African leaders is to get ready, as Africa will be the only continent with a majority of young people by 2050, and inevitably, its very large and active church will play a leading role in missions as well as in the global church.” Page 183

“But the impact of the Russia-Ukraine War and the dismantling of seventy years of globalization have created a perfect storm that could result in the demise of Western democracy as a viable governmental system, the collapse of both the Russian Federation and Communist China, and the end of the United Nations.” Pages 185-186

“Despite the chaotic events orchestrated by sinful individuals and the nations they lead, the timetable of the King of kings remain completely on schedule to fulfill his perfect will!” Page 192

[Listen to the interview here.](#)

***** Church Mission Leadership*****



[*Lit Up with Love: Becoming Good-News People to a Gospel-Starved World*](#)

By: Derwin Gray

NavPress, 2025

171 pages

[Find it on Amazon*](#)

*As an Amazon Associate Missio Nexus earns from qualifying purchases.

Summary

Those of us involved in supporting missionaries overseas may sometimes need a reminder to do in our home country what missionaries are doing in other countries. *Lit Up with Love* by Derwin Gray explains the why and the how of evangelism in accessible and realistic terms without use of a formulaic approach. Gray reminds us that the root of evangelism is our love for God and our gratitude for his saving grace. From this starting point, he leads us through a discussion of how to reach our hurting world and overcome common barriers to evangelism such as our busyness and fear. He reminds us that the results of sharing the gospel are in God's hands, not ours. We take the long view, starting a conversation that may go on for many years before another person is ready to consider coming to faith. Throughout the book, the author returns to the theme being lit up with love. If we are lit up with love for God, sharing the gospel becomes a part of our daily lives.

Best Illustration

Throughout the book, the author tells the story of how he came to believe in Jesus. "After getting out of the shower, one of my teammates wrapped a towel around his waist, grabbed a Bible, and began to ask people in the locker room, 'Do you know Jesus?'" (p. 103). Although it took years of sharing, this teammate was eventually instrumental in leading Gray to God. "All this happened because the Naked Preacher took Jesus' words to go make disciples seriously" (p. 106). "The Naked Preacher was not ashamed of the gospel, nor did he allow fear of being made fun of silence him. My life is a testament to God's work and Steve's choice to be an everyday missionary" (p.108).

Best Idea

"This I know: the more we are lit up with love, the more we will share Christ. Those of us who know his love will not be able to contain it. We will burn brightly and catch others on fire." Page 25

Best Take Away

"Our friends and our enemies – even people we have yet to meet – are looking for what we have: Jesus, the light and life of humanity. They just may not know it yet! That's where we come into play." Page 24

Our Recommendation

This book is recommended for those on mission committees or in churches who need encouragement to live out in their own lives the commitment to share Jesus that missionaries overseas are living out every day. This book is an invitation to participate in the Great Commission.

Best Quotes

“When we remember our first love, when we experience and are motivated and energized by the love of God, we become people who want everyone else around us to experience that love too.” Page 14

“Love equips us to see people’s real needs and hear their honest pain. When we’re lit up with God’s love, we overflow with God’s goodness in ways that answer the deepest questions of the people around us.” Page 23

“Some nights its hard for me to sleep as I think about people who do not know Jesus and his life-transforming, soul-healing love.” Page 25

“When you’re lit up with love, you know that only God saves. You reach out to others in love and confidence, recognizing that the results are up to him. This is an incredibly freeing reality. As we join Jesus on his mission to reach lost people, he is the only One who saves.” Page 26

“...embrace evangelism as a process, not a onetime event. ...A farmer doesn’t just show up and reap a harvest. She knows there’s a process: preparing the soil, sowing seeds into it, and cultivating the soil so the seeds can flourish. Only after the Lord of creation brings life to the ground is there a harvest.” Page 27

“Often believers live as though we can take our homes, clothes, and money with us when we die. But we can only take the people we lead to Christ with us into the new heaven and new earth. The greatest investment we can make is sharing the gospel with people.” Page 28

“...Evangelism and discipleship must be integrated. Jesus commanded his followers to go and make disciples, not just converts.” Page 28

“It takes time for people to come to faith. Just because a person doesn’t believe today doesn’t mean they won’t believe in the future.” Page 30

“And if we do not live in God’s story, we will try to put God in or story. Instead of us worshipping God, God becomes a means to an end for our own glory.” Page 35

“I was really starving for hope with a big H. Hope that lasts. That hope has a name: Jesus.” Page 51

“Money can’t buy happiness. Money can’t heal trauma or generational pain. Money can’t forgive sins or make you stop sinning.” Page 53

“Often we equate feeling hopeful with feeling in charge of our lives. ... The more secure we feel, the more hope we have. And like a hamster on a wheel, we fight for control through wielding our power, thinking it will give us control so we can feel more secure, leading to hope.” Page 54

“When you are lit up with love, you know that hope is found in the achievements of Jesus: in his sinless life; his substitutionary, atoning death; and his resurrection.” Page 56

“In our modern world, soul fatigue is rampant. People are weary from their endless attempts to impress other

people, who themselves are too tired to notice. People are exhausted from the futile effort to living a double life – curating a perfect “my best life now” image on social media while finding themselves living in an unfulfilled reality. Worse, people are depleted from the vicious cycle of trying to save themselves from destructive patterns of behavior.” Page 61

“When you’re lit up with love, you can introduce the tired lost sheep to the Good Shepherd, who can bring them to a place of refreshment and restoration.” Page 62

“When you’re lit up with love, you’re not showing people a religion or an institution – you’re excited to introduce them to Jesus, the risen Shepherd.” Page 66

“We share the gospel because we know the Shepherd’s love. We’ve experienced his forgiveness and kindness – and we want others to know this Shepherd too.” Page 67

“Gordon was starving for the gospel even though he didn’t know it. His words and actions were symptoms of a wounded soul. Spiritually, he had tried to heal himself – Gordon’s faith was a combination of self-help guru and nation of Islam – but he didn’t want anything to do with Jesus or Christianity (or as he called it, ‘the White man’s religion’).” Page 76

“Grace-formed people have the eyes to see broken, hurting lost people who need Jesus’ grace as much as we do.” Page 84

“A healthy life lived at the pace of grace is an evangelistic strategy.” Page 84

“He wasn’t just a Christian who happened to be in that locker room; he saw that locker room as his mission field. Reaching his lost teammates was his priority.” Page 106

“We share Jesus with people to sow gospel seeds, not to get results. God handles the results.” Page 108

“A Christ-centered, everyday missionary begins the day praying to Jesus, thinking of Jesus, following Jesus, and listening for the Holy Spirit’s leading in the interactions that occur throughout the day.” Page 111

“Everyday missionaries are consistent. Their lives progressively mirror Jesus, regardless of who they’re talking to or what’s happening. They are consistent because they are spiritually and emotionally healthy. They know their lives may be the only Bible that someone reads, so they take their own discipleship seriously. A consistent public life is the fruit of a consistent private life of prayer, Scripture reading, and meditation on their identity in Christ.” Page 111

“Everyday missionaries are cross-cultural. When you’re lit up with love, you cross ethnic and class boundaries to proclaim the reconciling love of King Jesus. Because the Good News is for all people, it is critical that we learn how to be curious and intentional when connecting with people from diverse backgrounds.” Page 113

“Everyday missionaries, though, are on high alert for the needs of other human beings. They are praying and prepared to notice people in pain. Just slow down and ask God to give you eyes to see...” page 113

“When we get stuck on results (or lack thereof), we can create all sorts of internal barriers that keep us from sharing our faith.” Page 118

“If sharing the gospel with other people is meant to be a way of life for a disciple of Jesus, why do most of us not share our faith?” page 119

“Jesus isn’t a product we’re selling...” page 120

“The gospel is offensive because grace is offensive: The fact is we are sinners in need of a Savior, and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. When I first heard that I was a sinner in need of a Savior, I was offended. Like most people do, I said, ‘I’m a good person.’” Page 121

“Our fear of sharing the Good News is really about us focusing too much on ourselves. Instead of being absorbed in Jesus, we are absorbed in our own reputation, our self-image, the perception people have of us. But when we focus on Jesus, his perfect love overcomes fear.” Page 122

“As a follower of Jesus, I should ensure my time with other Christians encourages and equips me to be in relationships with the lost.” Page 127

“‘Yes,’ I said, ‘some people who say they follow Jesus have done some ugly, ungodly things. Some have done some beautiful, godly things. Ultimately, your salvation is not in people. Your salvation is in Jesus alone.’” Page 129

“Many of us feel we barely have the energy or margin to get through our busy days, much less prioritize relationships and conversations with people who don’t know Jesus. I’ve heard it said that ‘BUSY is an acronym for Being Under Satan’s Yoke.’” Page 129

“When we prioritize Jesus and his Kingdom, we increasingly find our time shaped by what matters most. We notice what is unnecessary – what has to do with our pressures rather than God’s priorities – and we begin to cut out those things.” Page 130

“They continued to worship Jesus alone, putting him before every idol – even those things that can become idols today, like nationalism, ethnic pride, and political affiliation.” Page 139

“We may not think of our modern political allegiances as idolatry, but too often the reality is that even (and sometimes especially) Christians conflate dependence on God with reliance on political positions, candidates or judicial decisions. As a result, people who don’t know God often think they must align with one political party or another to follow Jesus.” Page 141

“But our first priority should always be the heart of Jesus. We must not let any worldly thing distract us from joining Jesus on his mission of reaching lost people with the gospel.” Page 142

“If we want to reach future generations, we must tell the story of how the Cross of Jesus has crucified the sins of ethnocentrism, classism, and sexism.” Page 143

“A world that doesn’t know about God needs to see a robust, beautiful picture of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. ...Lost people are not looking for a puny, watered-down version of God. Give them the big, beautiful life-giving God of Scripture revealed in King Jesus.” Page 150

“Part of how we develop the heart and motivation to reach other people with Good News is by cultivating a missional imagination for what God might be up to and how he may want to express himself through us right

where we are. We do this by soaking in Scripture: reading it praying it, speaking it, and living it in Christian community.” Page 158

“We build missional relationships because people matter to us, and people matter to us because they matter to Jesus.” Page 162

“Evangelism is simply a former orphan telling other orphans about how they can be adopted by our good Father.” Page 166

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