

You Were Born for More

Harry R. Jackson Jr.

Chosen Books

Bishop Harry R. Jackson Jr. urges readers to tear through the hindrances that hold them back from reaching their fullest potential in his newest release, *You Were Born for More: Six Steps to Breaking Through to Your Destiny*.

Through personal anecdotes and biblical illustrations, Jackson, who pastors Hope Christian Church just outside the nation's capital and founded the High Impact Leadership Coalition, determines that a humble and willing spirit, coupled with trusting God and being trustworthy, allows God's love to overflow in difficult times. He also emphasizes that faithfulness and a commitment to personal purity pave the pathway to godly success.

For those who long to embrace change in their lives and in their relationships and to live out their purpose, these six guaranteed principles assist you on a journey to restoration and transformation. Born out of God's promise of mercy and grace, new life awaits those willing to cooperate with Him.

Jackson's raw experience with this same grace faithfully drives the message in his latest book. Divine purpose brims with expectancy as it waits to be discovered.

With a clear vision and a refusal to settle for anything less than God's best propelling us forward, our future selves are within reach.

When People Are Mean

The comments flickered on my computer screen, one after the next, each one seeming more mean-spirited than the last. My stomach hurt. I like to be liked. I like people to admire my work, and this feedback could in no way be construed as admiration.

A small piece I had written years ago on my old blog had been repurposed by a popular website, and readers were not happy with it. I shut my laptop and went for a little walk, spinning the questions through my head. I debated my faceless critics and formed a brilliant argument in my brain.

The argument went like this: *You're right. My theology was thin on this one, but it wasn't written to convince anyone. It was written as a small bite to get people to dig deeper and figure out what they believe themselves. But also, you're picking out splinters and missing big planks of truth ... and I frankly think you're being a little mean about it.*

That was pretty much my whole argument. And I thought that, as arguments go, it was quite contrite.

But then I stopped talking and started listening, and I heard in my heart the kind voice of the Holy Spirit, saying, "This? This whole moment of angst and anger and frustration? This is not about them. It's about you. It's not about 10 people who don't know you and never will. This is about humility ... and all it can produce in your life."

Yeah, my life message is that even though we like to avoid suffering, it can produce amazing things in us if we'll let it. So, apparently, can humility. Shoot.

It's hard to stay silent and let it work. But work it does. And it is—I can feel it. It's making me more soft and more committed to the law of kindness in the way I communicate with people. It's digging deep into the soft ground of my identity and taking out the weeds of pride and perfection that choke out better fruit.

And most of all, it's making me understand yet again that one of the most beautiful parts of life with Jesus is the unconditional love He offers ... love that wraps around us on the days we feel awesome and on the days we feel disastrous.

It's good love, strong love, and I'm so grateful for it. And I'm not defending mean-spirited people or a dog-eat-dog mindset on the Internet (which I believe I addressed here). I also won't go back and re-read, just to make myself really humble, because I'm not that cool and I don't think He's requiring it of me. But I am learning a lot from my little battle ... which just goes to show: Even the battle for humility can be beautiful (shameless book tie-in here).

Bo Stern is a blogger and author of the newly-released Beautiful Battlegrounds (NavPress). She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they are still fighting with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Ore.

Discover God's Strength to Live

Have you read or watched *Amazing Grace*? It is the story of William Wilberforce's efforts to abolish slavery. His efforts to make slavery illegal failed in the courts repeatedly. Finally, he tricks some of the upper class into taking a pleasant boat ride—right past the slave ships. The conditions on those ships are so appalling (it makes me gag to even think of it) that these fine people are nauseated by the smell of

human filth and waste.

Slavery has a certain smell about it.

And what I smell is the enslavement that comes when we try to live in our own strength. So yesterday's blog post was about our need to recognize we are powerless and to lean heavily and completely on the force of God to transform our lives.

For six hours, it was write-delete-write-delete-write-delete-write-delete. My heart cried out, "What can I say to them, Lord? How can I phrase this so they'll know to stop working so hard in their own strength? What words will convince them to cry out their powerlessness to You?"

Paul says, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6, NIV).

Paul instructs, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him" (Col. 2:6).

We received Christ when we were powerless, and we continue to be powerless. Paul also says, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:7). The power is from God and not from us.

I weary of these two words that come from the mouths of Christ followers: *I'm trying*. Trying not to be afraid. Trying to stop eating so much. Trying to forgive. In this phrase is personal effort. Personal strength. Personal will to change. It is the mantra of relying on self to transform self.

It would be good to hear, instead, "By the power of Christ, I will not be afraid. By the power of Christ, I will eat less. By the power of Christ, I will forgive."

Let me hear, "I cannot, but Christ can." Let's make this the new mantra of the redeemed: "The power is from God and not from us."

I've tried it. I've said to the Lord, "I cannot continue, I cannot love her, I cannot forgive him, I cannot control my tongue (definitely cannot!)." And in the power of Christ, I have continued, have loved, have forgiven, have shut up.

Powerlessness is like the key that hangs outside of Otis' jail cell in Mayberry. It is right within arm's reach—just grab it and be free.

Be free of yourself.

And when you are free from living in your own strength, you will not believe the joy that will bring me. You'll tell me your stories, maybe? Stories of living in the power of Christ?

Christy Fitzwater is the author of *A Study of Psalm 25: Seven Actions to Take When Life Gets Hard*. She is a blogger, pastor's wife and mom of two teenagers and resides in Montana. Visit for more information about her ministry.

How God Steps In After You Can't Go On

Editor's Note: *Bo Stern's husband, Steve, is fighting ALS, a rare terminal illness.*

"Happy are the people whose strength is in You, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca [weeping], they make it a source of spring water; even the autumn rain will cover it with blessings. They go from strength to strength; each appears before God in Zion." —Psalm 84:5-6

Oh, this is beautiful!

As we seem to be in a season of losing strength in the natural, I feel the strength we're gaining spiritually, and it's true—there's happiness in it. Against all odds, we are finding happiness we haven't had before, and that's a deeply beautiful thing. God is using this valley of weeping in our lives to produce a source of spring water, hopefully for many.

I wonder: Where is this pilgrimage leading? Ultimately, heaven. I know that one. But I also think that having a heart set on pilgrimage is an attitude or a lifestyle. The KJV says, "whose hearts are set on the way," and the word "way" means a highway or a viaduct—a passageway that we move through.

It's easy to get stuck and stay stuck. Some people get stuck because of something bad someone says to them. Some get stuck because of a broken relationship. Some get stuck because of an illness or a bankruptcy or whatever. But it seems to me here that if your heart is set on moving, on growing, on learning, on getting to the next place, that you *will* go from strength to strength instead of stuck to stuck.

Steve has a heart set on pilgrimage and not just heaven. His heart is set on becoming something internally that he has never been before. He's not stuck in ALS. He's moving.

In fact, he's moving fast! Our hearts are set on letting the hard stuff become launching points for the next move of God, the next season of discovery. In order to do that, we have to value His presence more than we value comfort and more than we value our victim status.

As we respond to His movement, He fills us with His strength to endure the things we never thought we could endure. The decision to keep moving and growing through the Valley of Weeping is morning by morning and sometimes even minute by minute, but it's always worth it.

Are you stuck? Set your heart on pilgrimage. You'll find happiness and strength along the way.

Bo Stern is a blogger and author of the newly-released Beautiful Battlefields (NavPress). She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they are still fighting with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Ore.

Repel the Dagger of Insults

I had just finished my little speech at the women's banquet and was trying to catch my breath before manning the book table at the back of the room. A well-dressed lady whose lips were smiling but whose eyes were not approached me, gushed a bit about how much she'd enjoyed the presentation, and then grabbed my arm like you would an old friend.

"Oh, Debbie," she said in an everybody-listen-to-me-now voice, "I thought what you said about losing 40 pounds was amazing. What do you plan to do to make the skin shrink back up?"

Gulp.

There's always one in every crowd. Someone who just can't find it within themselves to encourage rather than discourage. Someone who thinks their candle will shine brighter by blowing out yours.

I hope graciousness isn't becoming a relic. I value good manners and sincerely hope that a genteel countenance isn't just a cultural trait. Having been raised in the South, I have wonderful memories of two lovely white-haired ladies in floral

dresses sipping mint iced tea while gracing me with their undivided attention in a room full of adults—a true gift when one feels invisible and unworthy. They were blessed with the talent of making a person feel good about herself—even a shy, chubby 10-year-old with nothing much yet to offer.

Since I've circulated more among strangers as a speaker during the last two years, I've been insulted intentionally and unintentionally many times. Thankfully, early on I learned the value of Proverbs 10:19: "Where there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise."

A simple smile in response goes a long way toward learning not to take yourself so seriously. It really doesn't hurt a bit, and nobody's the better when bitterness is exchanged. Surprisingly enough, I've actually made inroads into lasting friendships when a foot-in-mouth comment or two were overlooked.

So, next time someone decides to point out that I'm a human river of wrinkles, I think I'll throw my arms up in the air and let my underarm Dumbo flaps speak for themselves.

Debora M. Coty is the author of 10 books and is a newspaper columnist, orthopedic occupational therapist and tennis addict. Follow Debora on Twitter @deboracoty.

Are We Still Silenced by an

Apple?

I recently read one theologian's viewpoint on why women should not teach, preach or pastor. Turns out, it all goes back to that crazy apple (1 Tim. 2:8-15). Eve was deceived and ate the apple and disqualified every other woman from ever having significant insight to impart to a man, henceforth and forever. Amen. So be it. Selah.

It's interesting to note how many other Scriptures have to be eliminated or reinvented in order to build a whole philosophy on 1 Timothy 2:14. These include Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 4:12 ("the" and "saint" are gender-inclusive words, so Paul is saying, "Equip men and women for the work of the ministry"), as well as all the biblical accounts of women who did amazing things, like Deborah, Jael, Miriam, Huldah, Esther, Phoebe and Priscilla. (This particular pastor mentioned these women but said they're too rare to establish a pattern. Sigh. Don't even get me started, Mr. Theologian.)

Anyway, I'm not here to duke this one out, just interested in how we arrive at our opinions. Most people I know who have disqualified women from leadership would not really be able to tell you why. They usually have picked a comfortable viewpoint without applying much muscle to analysis, and you'll generally discover a wide-load philosophy teetering on the tiny shoulders of 1 Timothy 2. (If you wonder how I know this, you're welcome to stand next to me on a Sunday after I speak and listen to the conversations that ensue.)

It's taken a long time for me to build a philosophy as well. I'm blessed to be married to a man who loves what God is doing in my life as much as he loves it in his own. I'm also grateful to have a pastor who frees me to speak without fear of reprisal or rebuke. If these human men in a fallen world want that much for me, wouldn't my Father in heaven want even more? Or am I—2000 years after the greatest act of redemption

and release in all of history—still silenced by an apple?

What do you think? Tell us on Facebook.

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5 Ways to Ruin a Talk With Your Husband

There are a lot of articles and blogs out there giving you tips on how to better communicate with your spouse. Today, I'd like to share with you these 5 Ways Not to Communicate With Your Husband.

1. With bad timing.

All of us can have tough days. And all of us have issues we need to address with our spouses. But there are certain times that your husband does not want you to unload problems on him or give him a list of things he needs to do. When he walks in the door after work, when he's eating dinner, when he's out on a date with you...all of these are examples of times that should be off limits.

2. With disrespect.

Not many things will anger a man more than someone being disrespectful to him. So, wives, respect his judgment. Don't constantly question his decisions. Respect his abilities. Give him a chance to fix the sink before you tell him you're going to call the plumber.

3. With abstract feelings, not concrete facts.

Of course, we all know that men and women aren't wired the same way. We also know that women communicate more with feelings and men with facts. Do you want your husband to "get it?" You can start by sharing your feelings, but then tell him exactly what you need him to do. For example, don't just say, "Sometimes you just don't get it" or, "I wish you would just be more understanding." Give him specific marching orders of what you want him to do that will help change those feelings. Men can't decipher feelings very well, but we are good at taking clear orders.

4. With multiple issues.

Most men have a fairly good ability to process things you tell them, as long as it's one thing at a time and as long as they aren't doing anything else when you make the request. When you throw too many things at them at one time, they may not hear anything. So that you know he hears you and understands you, have him stop what he is doing and look at you. Then, tell him one thing and have him repeat it back to you. Then you'll know he got it.

5. With assumption.

Your husband really does want to please you. He wants to be your hero. But, he cannot read your mind. When you make assumptions and he does not come through, you'll probably get frustrated and say things like, "You should have remembered that I don't like pickles on my sandwich" or "Why did you buy that? You should have known that I wouldn't like it." Don't assume; be clear and tell him what's on your mind.

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Why Is Life So Much Harder for Some People Than Others?

Why does one woman suffer with diabetes her entire life while another is healthy?

Why does one woman lose her house in a fire while another woman's house stands?

Why does one woman wait longingly to see one positive pregnancy strip while another woman drives a van full of kids?

I made a discovery in the Bible recently that helped to answer this question for me.

David says to Solomon, "My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the Lord my God. But this word of the Lord came to me: 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign'" (1 Chron. 22:7-9, NIV).

David always had to fight for everything—for his sheep, his life, his kingdom—but through David, God poured out for all men the great songs of comfort.

Solomon was rich and lived in complete peace, and through Solomon God poured out for all men His great wisdom.

Two very different lives. Two flavors of rich contribution to the world.

God grants to some conflict and difficulty.

God grants to some peace and ease.

Of course, often life is hard because of our sinful choices, and we must own this if we know it's true.

But circumstance is not always by our choice. Sometimes it's a granting. To grant means to put upon, to entrust.

Solomon did not ask to be rich or to build a magnificent temple or to have no enemies. His wealth and construction assignment and peace were entrusted to him with a great purpose.

David did not ask for the lion and the bear and Goliath and crazy Saul and enemies on every side, but it seems those circumstances were entrusted to him with a great purpose.

We need to change our question. Instead of asking, "Why am I in this situation instead of in her situation?" we need to ask, "For what purpose has God entrusted me with this particular life?"

Christy Fitzwater is a blogger, pastor's wife and mom of two teenagers. She resides in Montana. Visit for more information about her ministry.

Zach Bonner: Born to Help The Homeless

When Hurricane Charley hit southwest Florida in 2004, Zach Bonner was 7 years old. After hearing the news that those affected by the storm needed food and water, Bonner went door to door with his little red wagon asking for help. That little red wagon, combined with assistance from friends and family, eventually filled 27 semitrucks with food and supplies.

What We Can Learn From Egypt

Those facing troubled times half a world away can teach us much about our own faith

The chaos facing Christians in Egypt underscores the common ground of all Christ's followers, says Fazil Khalil, assistant pastor of Kasr El Dohara Church in Cairo—that there is one Lord, one faith and one baptism that unites Christians worldwide. “I think the body of Christ needs one another so much,” Khalil says. “When we see what’s been going on and how Egyptian believers are now working with one another, it shows how we can work together as one, from different backgrounds and different languages.”

Father Joseph Boules, presbyter of St. Mary & St. Verena Coptic Orthodox Church in Anaheim, Calif., thinks the church in Egypt has much to teach other believers, including how to cross the divide between Christians and Muslims. In fact, the attacks on the church in Egypt have prompted unprecedented cooperation between the two groups, with the latter guarding the gates of churches so Christians can pray in peace.

Sometimes they scatter sentries around a church to ensure no bad elements are lurking there or planning despicable acts.

“The lesson that can be learned is how difficult it can be to be a Christian in some parts of the world, and how people struggle and fight for a simple thing,” he says.

Shaddy Soliman, pastor of Every Nation Church in Lake Mary, Fla., says Egyptian Christians can teach others the truth that hard times produce revival and that tough political times help break down idols and humanistic mind-sets.

“If we could learn one thing from the Christians in Egypt right now, it’s to seek God, cry out to Him and live according to His Word,” Soliman says. “Our hope needs to be in the kingdom of God, not political systems or loyalty to the nation. God’s kingdom needs to become the driving force of our hope.”