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CAITLYN SCAGGS

WORTH IT

&

WONDERFUL

**INSPIRATION FOR CHRISTIAN WOMEN
TO LIVE BRAVELY AND BOLDLY**

 **Morehouse Publishing**
NEW YORK

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CHAPTER 2

IT'S TIME TO BE BRAVE AND BOLD

How did you get here? How would you describe your journey to this exact place and time?

One of my favorite aspects of getting to know people is learning about how their story has evolved in both expected and unexpected ways. I'm so curious about the twists and turns that have informed who you have become over the course of your life. Think about them and consider what some of your major milestone moments have been.

As I reflect on my own path, I realize that my commitment to embracing self-ownership and personal complexities is largely due to the variety of distinct roles I have taken on over my lifetime. Brace yourself, there have been many!

I'm a wife, a mother, a friend, but I've also been a police officer, an entrepreneur, and a business leader across different industries. I regularly appear on the news and work for a non-profit that helps fight human trafficking. There has been so much change running through the narrative of my life that

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I have periodically wondered—am I really the same person who went to the police academy all those years ago?

I wonder if you ever feel the same way—like life has gone in such unexpected directions that you have to squint and stare really hard in the mirror to even recognize yourself anymore? Finding myself in that position (more than once) has made me think hard—really hard—about what has been consistent across all of those seasons and roles. Reflecting on the twists and turns, ups and downs, and joys and hardships of my journey has resulted in clarity about what exactly has led me to a place of authentic living.

Would you like to know what my big “Ah-ha” has been?

It’s the wonderful truth that I get to be who God made me to be, not who the world says I am! That may sound overly simple, but let me invite you into the light bulb moment that made it all so clear!

I’m a bookworm so it’s no surprise to me that reading helped flip the switch! In the iconic business book, “Built to Last” by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras,¹ the authors share their extensive study of companies that have been wildly successful across time. Those winning companies were then contrasted with others from the same industry that were good but not great. The core differentiating factors were shared, discussed, and explored.

One of the factors they uncovered, that helped the great rise above the good, was rejecting the “tyranny of the or” and embracing the “genius of the and.” An example of this is a business that embraces both low-price and high-quality products; they don’t choose one or the other. At the time I

1. Collins, J. C., & Porras, J. I. (1997). *Built to last: Successful habits of visionary companies*. New York: HarperBusiness.

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read these words I was an entrepreneur who was nurturing my startup marketing agency. The concept felt important as I dreamed about what the future of our company would look like. But I also realized Collins and Porras were on to something that applies not just to successful corporations but also to each of us as individuals.

There is genius in your personal “ands”—when you can embrace realities that others might argue are opposite and exclusive qualities. For example, there is power in your ability to be both lovely and fierce at the same time. You don’t need to feel compelled to be one or the other, which would be the “tyranny of the or.” It’s possible for you to lean into both.

It isn’t just these iconic business leaders who are suggesting you should reject limiting exclusivities. The Bible itself is full of paradox and contrast that are used to illustrate the transformative power of a life deeply rooted in God’s truth.

The first shall be last and the last shall be first.
—Matthew 20:16

In our weakness we are made strong.
—2 Corinthians 12:10

The light shines in the darkness.
—John 1:5

Live in the world but not of the world.
—John 17:14–18

The old is made new.
—2 Corinthians 5:17

Beauty for ashes.
—Isaiah 61:3

Having nothing, yet possessing everything.
—2 Corinthians 6:10b

It's clear that contrast and complexities are woven throughout scripture as a means of affirming our innate value, underscoring God's deep love for us, and helping us better understand who we were made to be. The powerful paradoxes found throughout scripture affirm that we were created for a life of purpose.

The powerful paradoxes found throughout scripture affirm that we were created for a life of purpose.

And yet, it seems that women largely live feeling pressure to simplify themselves. We experience too many choices that are stark in contrast, one or the other, either/or. In response to this forced decision-making, we inevitably wrestle with wanting to have it all. Then we can feel guilt and shame for wanting to have it all. We pursue all the things the world tells us we should, then we enter a place of feeling burnt out, overworked, and underutilized. Our days may feel devoid of joy and in our hearts we remain hungry.

I wonder if instead of choosing what feels true to who you are, you instead choose what the world tells you that you should choose. Or do you feel guilty because deep within yourself you sense that God has more for you and you know you aren't pursuing it?

It could be that you are choosing between what you perceive to be mutually exclusive options. Could it be that you are settling? Are you allowing your decisions to be made by pressure instead of your purpose? You can't forget that God promises He has more in mind for you than you could ever imagine.²

2. Ephesians 3:20

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With that realization in mind, I suggest you ask yourself why you would spend your time on Earth settling for a mediocre and “going through the motions” type of living when you could instead choose vibrant and purpose-driven living.

A key to pursuing an outstanding life marked by lasting impact is rooting your identity in God’s definition of who you are, rather than a worldly definition of who you are. This will propel you forward with purpose and joy. Living authentically with faith as your compass enables you to leave the maximum impact.

Crushing Contrast

Just as Porras and Collins identified the tyranny of the or as a threat to exceptional businesses, I’ve noticed that crushing contrast is a threat to exceptional living.

People like clearly-defined categories because it creates order for how we experience the world. It helps make sense of the flood of information we process each and every day, from the weather to marketing messages and our schedules for the day. That’s just barely scratching the surface! Think about all the Instagram posts, Facebook messages, emails, and texts you are also reading and considering as your day unfolds. Your brain needs to simplify somewhere, and categories are a way to do exactly that. It makes sense.

Often, clearly defined categories and simplification aren’t such a bad thing. On the surface, they appear to make life easier. Are you a coffee or tea kind of girl? Morning or night person? Do you like vacations in the mountains or by the ocean? All of those categories are totally innocuous and a

fun way to boil you down to an either/or existence. However, when the oversimplification is regarding the core of who you are, and who God made you to be it becomes a problem, a big problem.

There is a good chance you are complicit in your own categorization and oversimplification. This can happen without you even being consciously aware of what you are doing. After all, opposites and contrast are a core part of our reality from the earliest days of education. Before you even started kindergarten, I imagine you were learning about opposites: up or down, happy or sad, big or small. As you aged and matured, the opposites grew in complexity and in implication: family or career, responsible or joyful, strategic or spontaneous.

These qualities are often regarded as impossible to coexist within one person. But guess what? You are a beautiful, complex, and dynamic masterpiece. You can occupy seemingly opposite attributes and embrace the outcomes of joy, meaning and depth that emerge. In doing so, your authentic and honest-to-goodness self will emerge.

You are a beautiful, complex, and dynamic masterpiece.

It may seem that society and culture want you to choose between invisible yet powerful forces. But why pick sides? Why not pick all of it? It's worth embracing complexities and rejecting oversimplified categories. When you allow yourself to be both, to occupy the opposites, you can shift your focus to the truth about who you are and all that you were created to be—by God Himself. Doesn't it make sense that you would trust your Creator to explain who you are—rather than your co-creation?

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I'm not suggesting that you compromise between two ends of the spectrum. Rather, I'm saying that you can choose to be fully family-focused and career-driven. You can choose to be responsible and joyful, independent and supported by others, lovely and fierce. When it comes to the qualities we embody, you can be it all.

Choosing to embrace our complexities and this type of paradoxical living takes perseverance, persistence, and a strong backbone. It's up to you to battle for the vibrant life you were

It's up to you to own and embrace the wonderful complexities of who God made you to be. Remember, you are a masterpiece!

created to live. It's up to you to own and embrace the wonderful complexities of who God made you to be. Remember, you are a masterpiece!

I personally love Psalm 139:14, a verse written by King David, "Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it."³ Are you smiling right now? I am! The Bible affirms how wonderfully complex we each are. It's in the black and white text that we are marvelous—that you are marvelous. How's that for some encouraging and powerful truth?

Yet, I see so many women who have not let this truth wash over them and impact their everyday living, and this breaks my heart. When thinking about the pressure to pick between opposites, and live in an oversimplified way, I find it to be a harsh expectation. The contrast becomes crushing when we feel forced to choose. I have met many women who feel inadequate, not enough, and just not right. It's a tiring and weary

3. Psalm 139:14 (NLT)

state of being. It's a broken record of discouragement. It's not the joyful life that we are invited into by God Himself.

This begs the question as to why we do this to ourselves? Why do we succumb to patterns and expectations that reduce us to an oversimplified shadow of the brilliance we were made to embody? I believe that in part it's because of how much easier it is to keep things simple! When things get more complicated, well, they are more complicated!

It's easier to say, "She's a real career woman!" It's more cumbersome to say, "She's really dedicated to her career, but, wow, she has such a great family life too!" Assuming that she really is a woman who embraces both her career and her family, isn't it a more generous and truthful description to describe her in that way? Doesn't it paint a more holistic picture? Yes, but it also requires more qualifying, additional words and additional intention. But it's worth it because she's worth it.

It's time to insist the rules and mindsets change! You must be comfortable challenging deeply rooted behavior patterns and age-old narratives. Armed with your faith and rooted in God's truth, this becomes possible. Prepare yourself to put in the work required to think differently and introspectively. Consider the fundamental faith foundation you know to be true and whether you are aligning that truth with your self-assessment and worth. It matters that you step into all that you are and all you were made to be. It matters that you live a life of vibrancy.

Consider the fundamental faith foundation you know to be true and whether you are aligning that truth with your self-assessment and worth.

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As you allow yourself to consider how you are worth it and wonderful, you will enjoy a journey of self-discovery and biblical empowerment that is fruitful in depth, joy, and meaning.

While you turn the pages of this book you are going to spend time exploring the paradoxes many of us face over the course of our lifetime, the opposites that compete for who we are and threaten to steal our abundance. These mutually exclusive options leave you not just feeling pulled in multiple directions but truly pulled apart.

You will also learn to identify the characteristics needed to pursue a life that is lived fully and rooted in faith convictions. It isn't easy and it doesn't happen overnight. It also isn't something that is one-and-done. It takes care, commitment, growth, and refinement to live a life marked by this kind of abundance.

Abundance isn't about what you can hold in your hand. It's not financial prosperity or a smooth-sailing life. It's wonder,

An abundant life is a truly empowered life.

awe, gratitude and soul-satisfaction rolled up into one amazing feeling. An abundant life is a truly empowered life.

You have an opportunity to embrace your complexities instead of being crushed by contrast.

You can be strategic and spontaneous.

You can be broken and whole.

You can be career focused and family focused.

You can be responsible and joyful.

You can be lovely and fierce.

You can be confident and humble.

You can be independent and supported.

You can be ambitious and content.

You can be adventurous and wise.

You can live a life that reflects the beautiful reality that you are wonderful and worth it.

Ultimately, you can boldly pursue boundless living rooted in the truth of who you are and whose you are because of who Jesus is and what He has done. He is our ultimate hope and the reason we can live bold and brave lives that shine bright⁴.

Emboldened by Faith

Sometimes people I know describe me as brave and bold and every time it makes me laugh a bit nervously. That feedback makes me squirm a little bit because I'm so aware of the insecurities, doubts, and anxieties I fight. I know I'm not unique in carrying the weight of self-doubt. You might know what I mean?

However, when I take a step back and consider what others are seeing I can only attribute it to how I am emboldened by my faith.

Faith is an interesting word. It can mean something different to each person. I do think it can be used in a semi-secular sense to signal an optimistic belief that everything will work out just fine. I also think the word can nod to a generalized belief in some higher power who is at work and configuring circumstances and situations on our behalf. I'm not talking about either definition when I use the word.

My faith is in a living God who is engaged with humanity. I'm certain that I can trust Him no matter what and that what He says within the pages of the Bible is true. In the

4. John 12:46

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nooks and crannies of my soul there is a transformative truth that has found a home. The truth is that God loves me abundantly and because of that I can feel unshakable confidence in my worth and the possibilities for my life. It's not because I'm great that I can be bold, it's because of God's greatness.

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Growing up in a loving and Christian home provided me with a faith foundation and I was

blessed with two incredible parents who guided me as I grew. I watched what their faith meant to them and learned so much in those formative years. However, there came a day where I had to claim my faith personally and on my own two feet. I realized that I could not rely on other people to choose for me. I had to nurture and grow the seeds that had been planted.

Even if you have been a faithful person your whole life, you may need to grab onto your faith in a new way. It's a beautiful kind of empowerment when you realize your faith can be fully your own! You can pursue and determine where you will anchor you own life and what compass will guide you along your journey.

For me, the bold quality of my faith emerged when I was a police officer. I began that job fresh out of college and full of idealistic views of how I would change the world. I quickly became appalled at how sad, devastating, and heavy the world can be. I found myself staring at the brokenness of the world on each of my patrol shifts.

You might ask, what did I expect when I signed up for law enforcement? Great question! I dreamed of being a cop

because I wanted to positively impact others, but, in reality, I found each shift was a new opportunity to be disappointed.

Life can be like that sometimes, can't it? Disappointing and completely out of alignment with what we expect. There are Instagram-perfect snapshots in our mind of what it will all look like and then we are hit with an ugly reality that leaves us reeling. In one way or another, at one time or another, we all are faced with that harsh reality of disappointment and disillusionment.

My nights on midnight shift were riddled with mental health crises, domestic violence, abuse of children, and devastating car accidents. Each shift was a fresh opportunity to deal with heartache, pain, brokenness, and people at their very worst. There are still calls I can't unsee or forget. The man beaten within inches of his life who will never come out a vegetative state. The teenage girl who took her life—and how her mom couldn't stop screaming. The domestic violence call where the little girl was so afraid, she wet herself. Night after night, I was reminded of the tragedies of human life. I got to the point where I wondered who I was really helping. In my most honest moments I would have dejectedly whispered: nobody.

Does your story include moments marked by hopelessness? It doesn't take wearing a bulletproof vest and badge to encounter despair and darkness. It could be a profound personal disappointment you still carry. Or your community could have experienced major tragedy that left behind deep scars. It also could be feelings of overwhelm as you consume headlines that remind you just how sad this world can be. If hopelessness has been a part of your story—or is a reality you are living—I hope you will hold on. Let's keep exploring this

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together. Hopelessness doesn't need to be the conclusion; it wasn't for me, and I don't want it to be for you either.

Hopelessness doesn't need to be the conclusion; it wasn't for me, and I don't want it to be for you either.

My battle with hopelessness continued for a couple of years. It got to the point where I realized the brokenness I witnessed was encroaching

on my heart and spirit. It was nothing that anyone else could see. Life was generally bumping along just fine on the outside. But inside, a plague was destroying my joy and ravaging my heart. A dark cloud of cynicism was lingering, invisible to the outside world but tangible to me.

There came a day when I when I had a stark realization about what was going on within me. It was a very specific day with a specific situation and a specific moment. I can still see it all and feel it all. I was the first officer on scene at a suicide attempt. The man was in excruciating emotional pain and from that deep place of brokenness he began shrieking extensive profanities at me and then at God. There was blood, tears and rage. He poured out fury from his most deep core.

It frightened me far more than any domestic disturbance or fight call I had responded to. It was terrifying because it underscored that the battles I was experiencing at work were not of the flesh and blood but were spiritual in nature.⁵ That was my tipping point for a choosing a life marked by faith and a personal relationship with God. I knew I desperately needed Him if I had any hope of emotionally surviving my job as a police officer. However, more than that, I knew I

5. Ephesians 6:12

needed faith in order to live each day abundantly in a world ravaged by heartbreak.

I began listening to our church's podcasts each morning when I got off work and went for a run. At that time, our pastor was in an extended series in the chapter of Luke. It was perfect timing and exactly what I needed to hear!

Luke is a fantastic account of the many ways that Jesus served and loved. He met people in the darkest of circumstances, who were facing a variety of hardships, and ushered in healing, love and redemption. From prostitutes to lepers, the lame to societal castaways, Jesus looked people in the eyes and wasn't afraid of their messes. As my pastor navigated these passages of scripture, he kept reminding us that there is always hope because of Jesus. We can get our hopes up!

Have you found yourself looking heavenward and asking, "Why?!" Have you experienced hardship that has hardened your heart? I want to encourage you to grab onto hope with both hands. Yes, it can be so hard. I will admit that I struggled to initially believe hope could take root in my heart. Not with the darkness and destruction I was enmeshed in at work. How can there be hope in devastating mental health struggles? How is there hope when an 18-month-old has broken bones and a bruised body from abuse? How is there hope when a car accident kills a mother and son who were simply on their way home from the store? How is there hope?

And yet, the more I learned the more I wanted to believe. My soul craved the transformational truth I was discovering. I felt beckoned to the beauty of the Gospel. The more I heard the more I felt it could be true and it had to be true. I believed.

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I decided to get my hopes up in Jesus. And that changed everything.

I began approaching each shift with a different perspective—one that was faith-based. I prayed throughout the nights for my fellow officers and the people I encountered on my calls. On my dinner breaks I would take my Bible out and reflect on truth and things from above. I listened to sermons and podcasts while I was cruising around. Soon, my heart was able to handle the tough stuff because I knew that my hope was no longer in my badge. Through the challenges of law enforcement, I found new understandings of the impact of faith.

I sincerely hope you have been able to slip into a sweet place of blessed assurance that God is for you and a love relationship with Jesus changes everything. However, if you are wrestling with this reality and exploring your faith as we speak, it's okay. Take a deep breath and allow yourself to be open to faith-possibilities. Don't add any pressure or feel the need to force the issue. God is invitational and relentless in His pursuit of each of us. I urge you to be open to where your journey may go next.

After wrestling with my faith, I realized that God wants me to invite Him into the broken, bruised, and painful places that don't make sense. All the while, I feel His reassuring words of truth over me.

I am His.

I am seen.

I am beloved.

I can trust Him no matter what.

I am a daughter of the Most High.

I am loved with a sacrificial, all encompassing, boundless love.

He restores what was once lost.

He will provide.

He is my living hope.

Tell me this: If the God of the Universe feels this way about me, then who am I not to step into my purpose? Why would I let the broken systems of the world define who I should be when God's word is so clear about my identity?

When I allowed my identity to be defined by these truths, I became brave and bold.

My ability to be brave is because my confidence is in something so much more than myself. My faith impacts my dreams, my conversations, the workplace, my marriage, my parenting, our home, the places we go and the people I see. The abundant love of God yields abundance in my life.

Are You Brave?

Is your life marked by bravery? Are you living as if the world needs you and the gifts you have to give? Are you showing up as your honest, authentic self to contribute and shine bright?

Maybe your honest answer is yes! If so, I love that. Keep living brave because goodness knows, we need you! You are shining a beautiful light for others and inviting them to do the same.

Maybe your honest answer is no. If so, I love that too. When we can be honest with each other and ourselves there is room for growth and if necessary, healing. I sincerely hope this is a moment where you start to consider the powerful possibilities of brave living.

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Living with an identity rooted in who God says you are truly takes courage! It means pushing back on cultural currents that want you to play it safe and live small. As you push back and swim upstream you must get comfortable with the work, effort, and attention that it takes. At times, you must also enter places of discomfort and tension as you feel the contrasting priorities vying for your time and attention.

As you pursue brave living you may realize that the future looks a bit fuzzy or unclear. It's so hard to feel a stirring and a yearning but not be able to fully see the path forward. It's in those moments that our actionable faith has to drive us ahead with confidence in God's leadership over our lives.

I have learned to be content with one step at a time, even if those steps feel unsteady. I may not always be entirely sure where the path is leading, but I know I'm moving toward God's best for me. Lingering in the fog of uncertainty, however uncomfortable, means I will emerge on the other side and experience delight. So I press on.

I feel it right now as I write these words. My kids are downstairs watching a cartoon before bed. My husband is working on a jigsaw puzzle. I just finished cleaning the dishes, tidying up the house and working on my grad school homework. The day has taken so much from me. I'm exhausted. Yet, I feel this nagging tension to get my thoughts, ideas, and dreams out into the atmosphere.

Writing this book has been a desire God placed in my heart. Even though many times I wanted to give up on the dream (and believe me, I tried!). God kept urging me forward, prompting me to be brave with my life. Leaning into my faith gives me the courage to keep pushing, even when

things feel hard. Faith makes me courageous, and I know it can do the same for you.

Are You Bold?

Are you bold in your belief that you matter? Have you had your moment in which truth washes over you in a way that changes everything? If not, I encourage you to be very curious as you read through the pages to come. Look for how Jesus shows up to impact even the most seemingly benign and mundane areas of my life. He can do the same for you! Consider what it could mean for you to allow yourself to be transformed at a soul-level. Invite faith into your everyday experiences and especially into your self-concept.

Let's be clear. Being bold isn't about being over-the-top or obnoxious. Some like to mistakenly swap the word bold for "rude" or "presumptuous." That's not the definition I'm using. Being bold is living with enthusiasm and an intention to squeeze every bit of goodness out of life because you are confident that it's what God intends for you.

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It's quite clear within the pages of scripture that you are intended to live a beautiful life. Not a perfect life. Not a life without hardship. But a life marked by joy regardless of your circumstances.⁶ That is the boldest type of living, living in a way that rises

6. 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

above the tough stuff in this world and shines bright all the while.

Easier said than done, right? The Bible tells us that there is a battle raging that threatens to thwart our abundance. John 10:10 tells us, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” Come what may, you are meant to live abundantly.

We Need You

For just a moment I want to make this not about you and rather about us. We need you.

The world needs more people who reflect true hope to a hurting world. We need you to be your best, most brave, and most bold self.

The world needs more people who reflect true hope to a hurting world.

When you are empowered by faith, you will serve others, change the game, leave a lasting impact and challenge the status quo in all the right ways. This type of living will encourage opportunity and leave the promise of possibility in your wake. Be a radiant light! We need you to show up as the wonderfully complex person you were made to be.

It’s time you reject the idea that you must quietly comply with oversimplified expectations. It’s time you purposely step into who you are. It’s time to live bravely and boldly—so how about it, are you in? Are you willing to honestly explore what that can look like?

My goal is to urge YOU forward, toward God’s best, while constantly reminding you to seek your identity in Him first. That is what inspired me to share my story and authentically

IT'S TIME TO BE BRAVE AND BOLD
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reflect on the lessons I've learned along this beautiful, bumpy, and meaningful journey. This is for you.

Brave and Bold Steps Forward

Living into the reality that you are worth it and wonderful requires commitment and work! Take time to reflect on the questions below before diving into the rest of the book.

1. In what areas of your life are you bold?
2. How have insecurities and doubts held you back in the past?
3. Have you experienced a major “faith moment” on your journey?
Write about exactly how it felt when it happened.
4. What is one God-given quality that you like about yourself?
5. As you prepare to dive into this book, what are you most eager for?