

A person in a dark jacket stands on a rocky peak, looking out over a mountain range at sunset. The sky is a mix of purple, pink, and blue, with stars visible in the upper portion. The overall mood is contemplative and majestic.

The Power of a Principled Life

In the
Footsteps
of the
Few

"This book is about ascending the heights of virtue and walking the arduous road of integrity, both of which have been forsaken by much of our culture. It's about reversing the descending fall of our lives by intentionally ascending the state of our souls."

CRAIG D. LOUNSBROUGH

In the Footsteps of the Few
To Live a Principled Life

By Craig D. Lounsbrough

Dedication

My parents lived out what is outlined in the pages of this book. Had they not done so, this book would not exist. Many people talk about living out a principled life, as they talk about doing many things. However, as the old saying goes, “talk is cheap.” My parents didn’t talk. They acted.

I’ve found that it’s rather easy to live out these principles when the winds are favorable, the tides are gentle, and the skies of life remain blue and rubbed warm. But when life turns dark and you’re pounded by the gale force winds of adversity, things are different. It is in such a maelstrom that the power of these principles is either shown to be steadfast or they fall fast. Having had a front-row seat to principle and integrity walking the hard road of life through the life of my parents, I came to understand the renewing essence, the raw power, and the uncompromising necessity of such living. Therefore, this book is dedicated to Mom and Dad. Thank you for your timeless and Christ-centered example that convinced me of the power of these principles.

This book is also dedicated to my children. I have watched both of them sort through life in their efforts to determine what is important versus what is said to be important. I have stood at their sides and watched them grapple with choices large and small. And in the end, I have watched them make the choices that will serve them well while many of those around them did not. Therefore, this book is dedicated to Cheyenne and

Craig D. Lounsbrough

Corey. Thanks to both of you for allowing me the privilege of observing two young hearts navigate the many choices offered up by a world spiraling down. You have both done marvelously well.

Likewise, my thanks to Beacon Publishing Group for their untiring assistance in bringing this book from the platform of my laptop to the reality of print. Your support, professionalism, and undying efforts are deeply appreciated.

Finally, but foremost, I want to thank God that I have been repeatedly granted the priceless privilege of watching hardy souls as they braced themselves against the winds of all kinds of adversities, only to hold onto that which is good and true despite the ferocity of those winds. Your examples have been deeply profound, enduring in their inspiration, and perpetually life-altering.

Chapter One
What I Want
The Frightening Call of Great Things

“So Eli told Samuel, ‘Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’ So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ Then Samuel said, ‘Speak, for your servant is listening.’”

- 1 Samuel 3:9-10 (NIV)

“Let us always remember that Christ calls men and women not only to trust Him as Savior, but also to follow Him as Lord. That call to discipleship must be part of our message if we are to be faithful to Him.”

- Billy Graham

I want to be happy, but I don't think I want to be satisfied; for satisfaction lures me into believing that happiness is found in reaching some point rather than realizing happiness is born of striving for those points. I want to experience a resilient and wonderfully endearing sense of contentment that neatly threads itself through every part of my soul, but I don't want that contentment to morph into the baser mentality of complacency. I want to keep a weathered eye on every horizon, but I want to do more than just watch those horizons from some sorry distance. Rather, I want to walk their ridges. I don't want to contemplate the taking of a journey. Rather, I want to be contemplating

a journey as I'm taking it.

I want to robustly celebrate the achievements and vigorously revel in the milestones in a manner completely worthy of them, but I never want to fall to the bane of mediocrity that would prompt me to see them as a terminus. I want to develop a sturdy confidence born of the advances made, and I want to have that confidence perpetually reinforced by the successes achieved. Yet, I pray that my failures will always serve to temper that confidence so that it never turns to rot in the form of arrogance. And in further managing this tempered confidence, I never want it to be so strong that I errantly assume any challenge as too small to be worthy of my time. I want to be happy, but I don't think I want to be satisfied.

For whatever reason I might do it and in whatever way I might do it, I never want to hand myself excuses to round the next summit instead of scaling it. I never want to slothfully presume the ability to achieve a goal without holding myself accountable to actually getting on the track and running the race. And I suppose worst of all, I never want to scan my assorted array of trophies, whether they be numerous or few, and in the scanning embrace some languid sense born of complacency that somehow it is done and that I can hang up my hat, when in reality life is never done and no hat is really ever hung.

Why Do I 'Never Want' to Do These Things?

Laziness is humanity domesticated to its own destruction. Mediocrity is life pent up in the very iron-

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clad cages that we create out of the misguided notion that an ‘adventure’ is a product of those misty-eyed idealists who expend their lives chasing dreams too elusive to catch. Therefore, we create dreams that we can cage so that they simply can’t elude us, and in their captivity we can manage them so that, God forbid, they never manage us. And what we forget is that a dream caged is nothing more than an anemic, pasty-white wish that is always in the process of dying in whatever cage it happens to find itself.

We Are Made for More

We are made for more than all of that. Our humanity yearns for the next adventure. We desire lofty summits and distant finish lines that tax the whole of our energies in order to get us to them. There is inherent within us this incessant sense that where ‘we are’ is not where ‘we’re going,’ and that to park it wherever we’re at is to start dying in that very place. There is some fixed notion in our psyche and some insistent voice in our souls that will not be silenced and cannot be appeased by lesser agendas. These call out despite the many ways we work to silence them, and in the calling out they call us out.

Sadly, in light of the calling, we too often surrender to fear and we sell-out to apathy. We foolishly peddle our resources and pawn off our talents to lesser things so that we can hold up some small, pithy achievement to offset the gnawing guilt we experience over bypassing the greater achievements that were our calling before we were called away. We can’t show up empty-handed, for that would work against our efforts

to squelch the already suppressed voice of passion. Yet, unless we set our sights on higher things we will always be empty-hearted, for blind obedience to fear and the steady ingestion of apathy leaves everything it touches empty. And I would propose that emptiness of this sort is the bedfellow of death itself.

Therefore, we achieve something because we must. And at times we dress up those ‘somethings’ so that they don’t look half bad. But too often our achievements are an insidious effort to sedate our sense of passion and render it appeased. They’re the anemic manifestation of our fears, a groveling by-product of our lackluster vision, and a response to the snide voice of mediocrity that herald’s ‘passion’ as the fool’s errand.

Passion is not fooled, even though we are fooled by the belief that we somehow fooled it. To numb passion is not to diminish its power. Rather, it is to diminish our sense of its power. In doing so we stepped down instead of stepping up. We swapped mountains for back alleys, and dramatic vistas for fading fences. And these realities create a grinding angst within us that will not be soothed by anything but heeding the call from which we’ve run.

What to Do?

Decide to Do Something

As obvious as it may sound, the first thing to do is decide to do something. Without the decision to do something, anything and everything is only an idea. An idea, regardless of how ingenious or bold changes

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nothing until it is birthed as a reality. The greatest ideas will only tickle our imagination, but they won't fire it until they're released. They will nudge us, but they won't force us to jump. They will call, but they won't beg.

To do something is to decide to be disciplined. It's a decision to take a step rather than toy with ideas. It is a choice to move from the non-committal ease of playing out various scenarios in our head, to grabbing one of them by the throat and acting on it. It is not based on cost in stepping out, for the greatest cost of all is in not stepping out. And it is the sad reality that most of our ideas die without ever having been birthed as realities because we choose to do everything but step.

Decide If You're Going to be Brave

An idea as only an 'idea' and nothing more than an idea is safe. As ideas and ideas only, they're manageable. They're domesticated. They're leashed. We hold them within the safe confines of our minds and our imaginations, toying with them as time permits and returning them to those confines when it does not. But cut the reigns and turn an idea loose and it may not be as manageable and domesticated as we might like it to be. So, are we brave enough for the ride that is certain to ensue?

An idea that is given legs is one of the most dangerous things imaginable, but it is also one of the most exciting things possible. An idea running at full stride is wildly frightening in a manner that unleashes something that was never supposed to be leashed. It is

not about throwing caution to the wind as some might think. Rather, it's about stepping into the wind and being swept up by it while wisely holding caution as we do. It's about understanding that wisdom is not held hostage to safety. Rather, wisdom is based on figuring out how we navigate dangerous things in a way that no longer renders them dangerous. And as such, are we going to choose to be brave?

Decide How Important Comfort and Familiarity Are

Unleash your ideas and things will never be the same; guaranteed. Things will change when great ideas are unleashed because they can't help but change. What 'is' will become the stuff of a history that will lay beyond our ability to ever reclaim again. Our ideas are the stuff of the future. They are never home in the present for the present is only the thing that launches them, not the thing that cultivates them. If our lives have been expended in the acquisition of comfort and the cultivation of familiarity, our future is our 'now' and no idea can sufficiently grow in that.

While the degree of success rests on the magnitude of the idea being released, the greater degree to which it will be successful is the degree to which we unleash it. And if we prefer familiarity and the comfort that it engenders, we might never truly let an idea loose, or we may well attempt to cram it back into the confines we released it from after we've unleashed it. At best, the ideas are hamstrung. At worst, they perish.

Get the Resources

If you've decided that you want to do something, if you're sufficiently brave to do it, and if you're willing to forgo familiarity and comfort in the pursuit of it, then get the resources that you need to make it happen. Real resources. This is not about thin and pasty resources, nor is it about material that's been worn thin. It's not about sugary-sweet notions or trite sayings that are fun and fanciful but are shallow and porous.

Rather, this is about finding bold, honest, timely, daring, frank, deep and brisk material that will thrust you out beyond the confines you saw as the terminus of your dreams. Find resources that are unforgiving in helping you grow, reliable in content, proven in substance, and thick with wisdom. Learn from trusted people who have been there-and-back who have likewise taken other people there-and-back. Grab these resources, let them grab you, and then rigorously apply them without delay or excuse. When you do, you will start the process of placing yourself in a position to begin heeding the call of great things.

Chapter Two
Not Where We Were
Finding Ourselves Somewhere Else

“I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands.”

- Psalm 119:176 (NIV)

“I've never been lost, but I was mighty turned around for three days once.”

- Daniel Boone

It seems that we have some vague and rather ethereal sense of where we're going in this thing called life. For the more contemplative soul, that sense might be quite refined. For the casual traveler, it might be a bit more nebulous and scattered. For many, where they're going is defined by the tasks of the day, rather than enlarged by a vision for tomorrow.

In many cases where we're going is far more rigorously defined by all the places where we don't want to go, rather than the places where we do want to go. At other times its definition is rather handily shaped by the opinions of others, or it's carved directly from the bedrock of the value systems that have been built into our lives throughout the whole of our lives. For others, it's based on the need to avoid the pain of our past or somehow prove our worth in the face of a self-image that lays battered and bloodied. Vague or refined, we all have some sense of where we're going.

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And too often, we find ourselves ending up someplace else.

Some of us are not necessarily in conscious pursuit of wherever this place is. We have this instinctually primal sense that it's there and we intuitively assume that our path will take a natural course to wherever that place is. Then, there are others of us who are myopically focused on where we're going to the degree that everything that we do is wholly defined by that singularly beguiling destination. Some of the more adventurous souls among us nimbly pursue that destination, spiritedly pulling in as much of everything that we can along the way to accentuate both the journey as well as the destination. In whatever way we do it, we all have some sense of where we're going. And too often, we find ourselves ending up someplace else.

The Detours We Create

Yet, life is not so predictable as to always wind its way to the places that we presumed it to be going. There are those times when where we were going was bafflingly mistaken as some sort of final destination when in reality it was only a step to a final destination. At other times the place where we're going is really a destination that we had fabricated because the place to which life had originally called us appeared too big, or too far, or too steep, or simply impossible in whatever way our limited vision happened to interpret it. At such times we craft some other less intimidating and thoroughly unfulfilling destination. Sometimes our destination is to set a course away from our destination

so that we can dispense with whatever responsibility or obligation our original destination might have demanded of us.

And then in the magic of life, there are those times where we have actually pursued some authentic destination with such rigorous tenacity that the trajectory of our efforts has catapulted us past our destination to places that are everything of our furthest and fondest imagination. However, it might play out, we're all headed somewhere.

The Detours Life Creates

But then there are those other times when life takes a sharp turn that seems little of our actions, nothing of our destination, but everything of circumstances designed to kill our journey and crush our destination long before we get within arm's length of it. There's a sense that something intrinsically unjust, stealthy and evil is always about and on the prowl, and whatever it is, it's bound to show up if it hasn't already. When it does, it undoes everything that we thought was secure and certain, wreaking havoc on whatever our journey had been to that point. And to whatever degree it wrecks the road underneath our feet, we're left in a blurring trauma that renders our journey disjointed, our destination uncertain, and our lives dispirited.

The Explanation of Detours Missed How It Happens

Yet, more often than not it's the not the obvious shifts in our journey that are the core problem. Sure, life shows up and we get shoved down. There's no

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question that the natural ebb and flow of life, whether it be titanic or miniscule, will happen to us. Despite our frequently ego-centric inclinations to the contrary, we are not so shrewd or ingenious as to be able to traverse life in a manner that deftly side-steps everything that comes at us. We don't dance as well as we think we do. Our ingenuity falls prey to our arrogance, and the winds that we assumed to be reliable often shift and drive our genius toward some rocky shoal. And so, life will fall upon us, or ram against us, or pull the ground out from under us, or wreck us.

Casual and Careless

Yet, more often than not, the explanation doesn't rest in life having shown up. The much more poignant issue is that too often we are passive, flabby and lax in rigorously living out our lives. We're far too casual and careless. Somehow, somewhere the exquisite sanctity of life and the priceless privilege of living it out was supplanted with some sense that it's too much work or that it's not going to work, so why try? The gift is lost in the grind and we lose a sustaining sense of gratitude.

We get caught in the shallows, forgetting that the deepest waters hold the greatest treasures. But we would rather forage for trinkets because treasures are too stubborn to just hand themselves to us and we will not succumb to such preposterous demands. The shallows become our calling when they are nothing more than our coffin. Therefore, we drift without knowing that we're drifting because we're no longer paying attention. We come to believe that we are living

a life of great things because it is too overwhelming to embrace the truth that we have forfeited great things. The outcome of such passive living is that we end up finding ourselves somewhere else without ever seeing it coming.

Preoccupied with Pabulum

Too often we're too preoccupied with pabulum. We're tediously engaged with tiny things and we're caught in the tedium of minutia because we can gather these things around us and control them when the bigger things are out of our control. Too frequently we're goaded by the fear of big dreams and massive possibilities, so we dumb down our lives to anesthetize those fears.

There's plenty of pabulum to go around. Therefore, we assume that if we collect sufficient quantities of it, it will add up to something bigger than pabulum. Yet, dreams are never constructed of pabulum and our fears are never put at bay by any collection of it, regardless of how massive. It is an escape, but it is never an answer. It's a detour, but it is never a destination. It is an imitation of what we are attempting to avoid. Subsequently, pabulum gives us a sense that we can circumvent everything that we fear and still achieve everything that we dream. We're caught in small things, and the outcome is that we end up finding ourselves somewhere else without ever seeing it coming.

Along for the Ride

Frequently we presume that we're some docile passenger along for a ride that's going wherever it's going, so we just let it go to wherever that place is. We freely surrender to passivity which is an invitation to meaninglessness. And meaninglessness is the death of the soul itself. Life is a river, we say. And the best course of action is to navigate it because entertaining the far-fetched notion of swimming against it is utterly preposterous.

Assuming that we are along for the ride releases us from any accountability for the ride and where it might end up. We are innocent. Or we're victims of circumstance. Or our families put us here because they didn't know any other place to put us. Or we're simply being obedient to whatever we've subjected ourselves to. Assuming we're on a ride that we can't direct, the outcome is that we end up finding ourselves somewhere else without ever seeing it coming.

The Walls of Denial

At other times, we live in the constructed confines erected from the raw material of denial, causing us to live out a life that is in denial of life itself. We become squatters living in a squatter's camp constructed by the flimsy materials of justification, rationalization, blame-placing and projecting. We pull in the walls due to the reality that materials of this sort are always pulling inward because they will die if we dare to press them outward. Hemmed in by walls of this sort, the world around us is shut out and moves on without our awareness of it.

We live in walls that we pretend are horizons, or vast doorways that open to massive expanses and marvelous places. In time, we come to believe that they are not walls at all as we've visualized them as something that they will never be. We then live out our lives in these confining hovels, convinced that we are forging great mountains and running in wild places. The outcome is that we end up finding ourselves somewhere else without ever seeing it coming.

Ending Up Where We Wish to Be

We will end up somewhere. The fact that we have a destination is irrefutable as life is a journey that presents us with no option other than the journey. We may decide that the nature and course of the journey is irrelevant, and we may take a backseat to passivity. If we do, we have no right to complain when we end up in some place other than what we may have thought or preferred.

Yet, we can recognize that we are not automatons subject to the flux of the world within which we have found ourselves. It would seem advisable to recognize that we have an obligation to the course that our life is taking, and that along with that obligation we have been granted a profound degree of power to bring to the course. If we imprudently succumb to carelessness, or become engrossed by pabulum, or if we just let the ride go wherever circumstances take it, or if we pull close the walls of denial this thing that we call life will wind itself to wherever it's going with no one at the helm. And that kind of destination cannot be good.

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We would be wise to inventory our lives and determine if we are in some way large or small participating in any of these behaviors. If so, we need to root them out and expunge them from our lives. Reclaiming a sense of vision, and then seizing our lives with discipline and intentionality will set us on a path that will land us in places that we've dreamt to land. If we don't, the place we land may not be on any land that we even remotely recognize.

Chapter Three
To Believe in Something Better
The Rise Against ‘What Is’

“Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

- Matthew 19:26 (NIV)

“Nothing is impossible to a willing heart.”

- John Heywood

Our humanity is ingeniously fashioned in a manner that it can handily break the realities that would seek to break it. Our existence need never be held hostage nor pressed into servitude to the sordid realities of all that is happening around us. Rather, we are able to stand in spirited opposition to those realities, and in the face of them we are capable of crafting brilliant and utterly resilient solutions that crush those realities by transforming them. We are dreamers and the authors of visions. We have the ability to conceptualize marvelous things and actually begin the act of crafting them even at those times when the presence of them or the hope for them is entirely non-existent. We are a powerful bunch vested with immense potential that exceeds even that which we understand.

Yet, we bring these abilities to bear against a world that would wish to press us flat in its skepticism. The world becomes embroiled in the selfish pursuits that it crafts as it chases things born of greed, gluttony and

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selfishness. The world would bend us to its darker ways rather than be bent to a better way. The world would prefer to kill both us and itself rather than give up what it has selfishly given itself over to. Indeed, the world has sold its soul to something that it is convinced will liberate the soul that it sold. Therefore, in the insanity of a world gone rogue, the world will viciously fight for the things that are certain to destroy it.

The weight of living in a world such as this, as well as the incessant press of darkness that such living spawns can at times leave us wondering if our influence might be too insufficient to wrestle the world out of a darkness that has become so terribly dark. We stand as single entities, bringing what light we can. Most times, that light seems swallowed in the vast darkness that seems to advance without restraint. We are left in the squalor of a battle that seems lost, only holding the line so that we can delay the full descent of evil and grant ourselves a few precious moments before life is over.

To Believe In Something Better

But we forget. We are extraordinarily quick to lose touch with a greater reality that infinitely surpasses the darkness which surrounds us. Our perspective becomes one of gradual defeat and continual hopelessness. Our understanding of who we are and Who we serve is lost in the grief of a battle seemingly hopeless and ground perpetually surrendered. We fall prey to the lies of the darkness whose own darkness is completely dependent upon our fear of it. Therefore, the darkness must appear dark beyond what it is in order to create the fear necessary to insure its own

survival. It is not an undefeatable foe. It is, in fact, a foe that fears lest we discover the power that we possess and the vulnerability that it has.

Therefore, to remind us of who we are in times such as these and to fan the flames of our passion, I have compiled a number of quotes that I have had the privilege of authoring. It is my desire to call us back to lofty dreams and rigorous passion. To remind us that the darkness is the absence of light and therefore is totally dependent on the light remaining absent. As such, the darkness is terribly vulnerable as it possesses no means by which to stop the light other than creating fear in us. These quotes are written to set us free and send us out in the marvel of our humanity to change a world that is too ill-equipped to change itself. To say that we stand for something better, and that we will be that ‘something better’ in the standing. It is my hope that these quotes will move you to move your world, for I believe that you can, and I believe that you will:

The Rise Against ‘What Is’

“If it didn’t go all that well today, tomorrow is the opportunity that I have to do what I did today without doing it the way that I did it today.”

“Pull every dream that you’ve ever had from all of the places that you’ve abandoned them, brush them off, set them in front of yourself, run the fingers of your heart over each of them, fight the lie that you’re not enough to achieve them, and realize that the dream was not too big. Rather, the belief in yourself is too small.”

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“Let us not fall prey to the leaching negativity and rank pessimism that runs unleashed all around us. Rather, with the utmost determination we must bring ourselves to understand that these lies have been given legitimacy by people who thought themselves as powerless in the face of them, rather than recognizing that we have the power to rip the face off of them.”

“You, yes you are the impossible waiting to happen. And the only reason that that sounds impossible to you is that you haven’t been daring enough to push the possible out to the point where it becomes what you once mistook for the impossible.”

“I am begging you to let nothing shackle you that God has sent you to unshackle.”

“I’ve sat with tens of thousands of people and I’ve stared into as many empty eyes. And I must say that the inexplicable contradiction for me is that despite the gaping emptiness engulfing every one of these eyes, there yet lies within each one a wonderfully formidable gifting, an irrepressible energy, a depth yet undiscovered, riches unfathomed, and the resources to amply transform this ever-darkening world. And I’ve seen enough eyes to know that if yours are also empty, like everyone else’s they are also full.”

“God doesn’t ask if something can be done. Nor does He ask if we have the resources to do it. For God is bound by neither question. And when we stand with God, neither are we.”

“You are fully and magnificently equipped to stand up and change the world around you. And to simply sit down and tolerate the world around you is to squander who you are in the process of never being who you are.”

“Do not be ashamed of who you are, for in doing so you are not taking into account the majesty of all that you are. And without any shred of doubt, I know that you are a person of majesty, for in my innumerable years of working with people I have yet to find even one person who is not.”

“Stand up and be the light that God created you to be. Stand with me and the millions of others like both of us who have bowed before this inexplicably marvelous God of ours and in the bowing have begged that He not let us die until the darkness in the world around us has died first.”

“Look in the mirror. Go ahead and look yet again. And look not at the reflection, for while this body of yours is marvelously complex in ways that continue to elude the reach of modern science, it is but a simple shell that holds the image of God within you. And if the shell is that grand, how much more what God has placed inside of it.”

“If I let that which I hold to be true fall victim to a world that says it is not, I have in that action surrendered to the voices of those who know nothing of the truth other than to destroy it because it terrifies them. And if there’s one thing I should be terrified of,

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it's not the surrender itself, but the fact that in the surrender I have given the world permission to avoid the very thing that it should fear."

"It's not the gifts or the abilities or the talents that equip us to accomplish great things. Rather, it's the persistent and adamantly stubborn conviction that we will in no way leave the world the way that we found it. And I would rather join hands with a single person of this kind than sit with a million gifted people who are not of this kind."

And finally...

"I will spend my life believing in you so that you will someday commit to doing the same."

To Believe

We must press ourselves into a sort of reckoning. We must realign our minds with the truth of who we are, who God created us to be, and the fantastic mission that He gifted us with. In a battle this pervasive and insidious, we must ground ourselves in a truth so brilliant and pristinely clean that it will handily stand against the wiles of the devil and the depth of the darkness he has spun. We must align ourselves with a reality so brilliant, robust and muscular that we find ourselves unintimidated by the darkness that now stands quaking in front of us.

We have a God who has called us to great things. Great things. He has not called us to defeat or even some slightly marginal victory. He has called us to

complete and unquestioned victory. And such a call would never have been extended had not this God of ours provided ample resources to achieve that victory.

Before moving to the next chapter, I would encourage you to reread the quotes shared in this chapter. I would likewise encourage you to pick one that speaks to you, to write it down, and recite it daily. Let its truth seep deep into your soul and ignite your heart. Let it breath confidence into your spirit and energy into your convictions. Indeed, it is time to rise against 'what is.' So, let's rise.