

What people are saying about ...

THE BEST IS YET TO BE

“The midlife years can really be surprisingly tough ones. But my friend, Bruce Peppin, does a great job in guiding us through the challenges we face and inspires us to finish strong.”

Dr. Kevin Leman, author of *Have a Happy Family by Friday*

“If you live to be eighty-two, you only have 20,000 days to live your life. How will you spend your days? Bruce Peppin’s book will cause you to ask hard questions and lead you on the path to finish your days well. Read this book, it could change your life!”

Linda Dillow, author of *What’s It Like to Be Married to Me?*

“I love how Bruce brings depth to his ultimate optimism through biblical principles and life experiences—and how his practical strategies for finishing well makes me actually look *forward* to getting older!”

Cynthia Tobias, author of *The Way They Learn*

“I highly recommend this book. *The Best Is Yet to Be* is an excellent and practical resource. I found this message inspiring and was filled with passion for the days that are yet ahead of me.”

Tom Doyle, vice president of e3 Partners
and author of *Dreams and Visions*

“What a timely reminder Bruce has given us as we continue to run the race. Like a writer who needs to keep his pencil sharpened, we need to sharpen our focus, commitment, and resolve. What a joy it is to join in with my own recommitment to finishing strong.”

Lynda Hunter Bjorklund, EdD, author,
speaker, and founding editor of Focus on the
Family’s *Single-Parent Family* magazine

THE BEST IS YET TO BE

MOVING MOUNTAINS
IN MIDLIFE

BRUCE PEPPIN

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transforming lives together

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Some names have been changed to protect individuals and their stories.

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First Edition 2015

*To my wife, Kathleen,
my son and daughter-in-law, Brooks and Jordyn,
and my daughter, Brianna.
Each has been an inspiration for this book
and is on the journey with me to finish life well.*

CONTENTS

Foreword	9
Acknowledgments	13
Introduction	15

PART ONE: THE CHALLENGE

Chapter 1: Life in Review	23
Chapter 2: The Narrow Way	33
Chapter 3: High Risk	49

PART TWO: THE CORE

Chapter 4: Going Deeper	61
Chapter 5: Mr. and Mrs.	77
Chapter 6: Pebble or Boulder	99
Chapter 7: Unexpected Friends	117
Chapter 8: Assignments.	129

PART THREE: THE CORNERSTONES

Chapter 9: Heroic Invisibility	139
Chapter 10: Famous in Heaven.	147
Chapter 11: Decades, Not Days	155
Chapter 12: Be Ready	165
Chapter 13: Drink the Cup	177
Chapter 14: Faithful to the End	193

PART FOUR: THE CULMINATION

Chapter 15: Think Differently 205

Chapter 16: The Finish 227

PART FIVE: THE COURSE

Discussion Questions and Bible Study 247

Appendix A 275

Appendix B 280

Appendix C 282

Notes 285

Contact the Author 288

FOREWORD

Back when I was a boy, every television show or movie portraying a man in the throes of a midlife crisis seemed to follow a similar script. The character, usually a balding, slightly overweight individual, appears frustrated and often bored with life. At some point, he's seen holding a drink, taking a long draw on a cigarette or cigar, and gazing longingly out to the horizon. For some reason, the man is often standing alone and along the ocean's edge. His life hasn't unfolded according to plan. The dreams of his youth are now dashed. He feels "stuck"—stuck in a job, stuck in a relationship, and stuck trying to manage the mundane minutiae of everyday life.

So, what does he do?

Inevitably, he decides to shake free from the shackles of convention. The antidote to the malaise is adventure, but often of the selfish sort. Soon, the character is seen driving a red convertible down an open road with a beautiful blonde by his side. Or maybe we see him lying on a beach in some exotic locale.

The subtle but clear message is this: true liberation in life can be achieved only if we focus on ourselves. The so-called "straight" life is a boorish burden. Traditional milestones—finishing school, getting married, having children, coaching youth sports, volunteering at your church, and focusing on others—might be all right for some, but not for those who really want to experience the *good* life.

Of course, what the screenwriters don't always show us is all the brokenness behind those who pursue the sports car or the extramarital affair. We rarely see the first wife (or the ex-wife) or the children waiting for Dad to come to his senses—and come home—instead of going to a bar with the boys. The result of this selfish pursuit is at best a quiet desperation and, at worst, a complete disaster.

It doesn't have to be that way.

At least the apostle Paul didn't think so. As he approached the end of his earthly ministry, Paul was able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7 NIV). He never abandoned his principles. He never wavered from the course. And when it came time to cross the finish line, he did so with contentment and joy.

How did he do it? Can we follow in Paul's footsteps? My friend Bruce Peppin believes you can. So strongly does he believe this, in fact, that he's written this book to help you make it happen. *The Best Is Yet to Be: Moving Mountains in Midlife* is a reflection of the author's love for people and his passion to equip, enable, and encourage his fellow believers to *finish well*. Bruce himself is pursuing this challenge, and he wants to take as many others along for the ride as he possibly can.

I've been acquainted with Bruce long enough—more than two decades—to know that he knows his stuff. Even more importantly, I can testify to the solidity of his commitment to Jesus Christ. He has a gentle but tenacious spirit, a calm and steady temperament, a genuine gift for leadership, and an ability to discern God's truth clearly in the darkest and most confusing of circumstances. So firm is his dedication to the work of the kingdom that he has for many years been part of a group that walks the halls of Focus on the Family headquarters during the early morning hours simply in order to pray for the staff before the day begins. If anyone understands what it means to follow Christ with integrity and courage, it's Bruce Peppin.

Now that I'm in my fifties, Bruce's charge in the following pages is personal to me. Like you, I'm committed to dedicating the remainder of my life to doing significant work. I've been blessed to spend the last quarter century at Focus on the Family, and never before in the history of the ministry have we been helping more people. But you don't have to be working full-time in Christian ministry to make a difference and contribute in a significant way. All of us are called to play our part.

FOREWORD

When the eighteenth-century preacher Jonathan Edwards was just eighteen years of age, he preached his first sermon. His main thesis was that Christians should be a happy people, not downcast or heavy burdened. He gave three reasons why:

1. Our bad things will turn out for good.
2. Our good things can never be taken away from us.
3. *The best things are yet to come.*

What mountains are you trying to move in your life? I realize that some folks believe our current situation has grown pretty bleak, but from where I sit, it's an exciting time to be alive. God is great, and He has lots of big, important things for each and every one of us to do in His service! That's why I'm so enthusiastic about tomorrow. If you agree—or if you're looking for something that will help you catch this vision—I highly recommend that you turn the page and find out what Bruce has to say on the subject.

And like Jonathan Edwards suggested and God's Word affirms, the best really *is* yet to come!

Jim Daly
President and CEO of Focus on the Family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful. That is how I feel toward God and everyone who helped make this book a reality.

My wife, Kathleen, has lived through its pages, which was no small task. I am thankful to have journeyed with her for over thirty-one years.

I am indebted to Tim and Diane Jones and my home group that threw down the gauntlet one evening telling me that I needed to pursue the stirrings of my heart—to help others finish life well. They encouraged me to get serious about what I thought the Lord was leading me to do. When I needed some time away, Tim took me out into the wilderness to climb some of Colorado's fourteen-thousand-foot mountains. In the beauty of that backcountry and through the companionship of a close friend, I found my heart spiritually refreshed.

I've lost count of how many divine appointments took place during the many conversations I had with my friend and colleague Ron Wilson. His spiritual insights and counsel have been life changing.

Nearly every day, Chris Perez asked how my book writing was going. He often told me, "If you don't write this book, God will raise up someone else who will!" That was convicting and kept me pressing ahead when momentum slowed.

Tom Doyle, my pastor and friend, was a big supporter of this project. He introduced me to an experienced agent, David R. Shepherd. I was honored when David agreed to represent my book, and I appreciated his wise coaching along the way.

This book was enriched by the wisdom of Jody and Linda Dillow, Tony and Becky Metcalf, Brad and Meshell Watt, Tom and JoAnn Doyle, David Brown, Denny Repko, Jim Downing, Chris Crossan, Gene Ashe,

Jack Boghosian, Jacki Kintz, Lon Adams, Paul Batura, and Ray Vander Laan. Others have remained anonymous, but they shared stories that underscored the importance of finishing well in life.

I remember the day I found out that David C Cook wanted to publish my book. I was overwhelmed with the sense of God's favor on this endeavor. David C Cook has brought many outstanding titles to the market. I hope this is another one! I want to express my gratitude to Alex Field and his exceptional team for all their efforts in producing and promoting the book you now hold in your hands. Amy Konyndyk created an amazing cover and worked hard to get it just right. I took to heart Traci DePree's probing questions and editorial recommendations, which significantly improved the manuscript.

I am also grateful for you, the reader, who will be turning the following pages. You will quickly know the value of this book's message in your life and whether others should be told about it. My prayer is that both will be the case.

INTRODUCTION

I hit a wall in May 2000. I didn't know if my marriage was going to make it or if I could hold my family together. Most of all, I felt betrayed and abandoned by God. The irony was I worked for a Christian ministry.

I felt like a phony, just going through the motions while my life was falling apart. Depression had me by the throat, and I couldn't pull out of its grip.

I left work for a month. During this time, I met with a psychiatrist, traveled with my wife, Kathleen, to reconnect, hiked in the Rocky Mountains, and used the time away to regroup.

Upon reflection, there were many lessons I learned by going through that crisis. The biggest one was realizing I had been trying to live life on my own terms. I was defining the ground rules and determining how I should measure success and happiness. That approach lasted for a while, given my high degree of effort and control. But at some point, life didn't fit within a comfortable box. More doubts began to spill out, and soon it felt as though the floodgates had opened.

There are many unknowns when a decision is made to change direction and live life according to *God's terms*. When Jesus called Levi, a tax collector, He said only two words: "Follow Me!" (Mark 2:14). There were no explanations or guarantees of what life would be like. Jesus was simply telling him, "Trust Me; I know the way." After wrestling with what to do, I chose to follow Him without having all the answers.

My feelings of abandonment by God diminished and eventually gave way to a growing sense of connection to Him. My problems didn't all go away, but I handled them much differently than before. It was no longer a mentality that said, "If I do this, then, God, You're obligated to do that." There was no more performing or trying to earn God's favor.

Those were my old terms, and I cast them aside. Now I could embrace the Lord of heaven who knew me by name and promised to lead the way even when I couldn't see where the path was going.

I realize what I am saying might seem like a spiritual leap to some people. It's possible you may feel far away from God, as I did, or not even know if God is there. That is totally understandable. It is a core issue we must grapple with in life. For readers who may be interested, I have written a section (appendix A in the back of this book) about what a personal relationship with the Lord looks like. Or perhaps you're a follower of Jesus but have grown weary and discouraged. I am hoping the topics discussed and the help offered in this book will provide a needed boost to your faith.

The title of my book, *The Best Is Yet to Be*, emphasizes the point that there is genuine hope for our future even though the obstacles confronting us may seem like mountains blocking our way. I am encouraged to read what Jesus told His disciples about these kinds of mountains: "For truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you" (Matt. 17:20). The subtitle, *Moving Mountains in Midlife*, is based on this amazing promise and will be explored in the pages ahead.

What we're after is a life that knows God personally and experiences Him moving the mountains for us. There is no secret formula to it; only proven biblical priorities and principles can guide us along the right path. Jesus described it like this: "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt. 7:13–14). It is important to remember that Jesus is both the gate we are to enter by and the way we are to travel on. He is the key to everything!

INTRODUCTION

By keeping on that narrow way, we will chart the course to arrive at our ultimate destination—heaven! Until then, this daily journey can also be called “pursuing a life that finishes well for the Lord.” It is an essential idea that we will discuss at some length.

The years after I hit the wall were spent doing a deep dive into the Scriptures, trying to make sense out of all the crises I had faced. One area that needed adjusting was my understanding about who God really is and the intense love He has for us. To our own detriment, we dismiss the incredible majesty of our Creator. Whether we realize it or not, the Almighty is our greatest ally. But there is also an Enemy of our souls who is just as real. While we need not fear him, we must understand his tactics and use the weapons God has placed in our hands to defeat him.

I have come to believe that the territories of our minds are where the most significant battles on earth take place. It is here that the Enemy stands against us and the work of God in our hearts. Winning the battle of the mind can dramatically alter our lives and the legacy we leave to future generations. This lesson was driven home to me very directly (which I will talk about in coming chapters).

Being optimistic that the best is yet to be, seeing mountains moved, and finishing well for the Lord all tie together. I should point out, though, that this book is not the final word on these topics by any means. I certainly have not arrived and am still in the trenches like everyone else. In fact, I struggled with whether I was qualified to write this book because of my own shortcomings and the daunting scope of the material.

I took heart in knowing that God is the mountain mover and has already determined what characterizes a life that finishes well. He loves for us to search out His principles in the Scriptures and present them for others to examine. That is what I have attempted to do.

I organized the book into five sections and then included appendixes with additional information. Each section builds on the previous one, but you are welcome to jump to any part that interests you. You'll notice that I have incorporated photos, paintings, poetry, quotations, and many stories to illustrate the principles given.

At the end of each chapter is a word of encouragement called a Moving Mountains Moment. These are meant to inspire you that God can move the highest mountain on your behalf.

The last section includes discussion and Bible study questions for each chapter. This will take you deeper into the content. It is designed for personal or group use.

I present a definition of what a life that finishes well looks like for your consideration. It is based on the two great commandments of Jesus—first, to love God; and second, to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37–39). I hope it inspires you to write your own definition! Because I am a visual learner, I developed a graphic design that shows how all the priorities and principles of the book connect together. You can find it on page 283.

I also want to emphasize that experiencing the kind of life I'm describing here is possible for *everyone*. No one is excluded because of past or present failures. No one is beyond God's reach or His love.

Jesus shared a remarkable parable about the kingdom of heaven that relates to this idea of not being excluded from God's love because of past or present failings. You can read the story in Matthew 20:1–16.

It goes like this: A landowner hired laborers early in the morning to work in his vineyard. He offered to pay them a day's wage, which they were happy to receive. The landowner hired additional laborers throughout the day, even until five o'clock in the evening. Shortly after the final hires, it was time to quit and he called the workers together. He paid each one a full day's wage. This bothered those who had started early in the

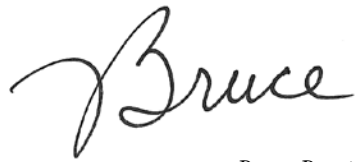
INTRODUCTION

morning even though they received the amount they had agreed to. Jesus used this teaching to give an example of what God's generosity looks like. It has nothing to do with the worker's efforts but is entirely dependent on the landowner's—God's—benevolence.

This holds true in our relationship with Jesus as we seek to finish well. Regardless of age or how far away we may have wandered, as long as we have breath, we can still return and answer His invitation to "Follow Me."

Then someday won't it be wonderful to hear those incredible words from the Lord: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:21 NIV)? The following pages will help guide us toward that destination.

I look forward to joining you on the journey!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial 'B'.

Bruce Peppin

Colorado Springs, Colorado

PART ONE

THE CHALLENGE

Scouting the Territory for Moving Mountains

LIFE IN REVIEW

The Great Pyramid of Giza is a stunning sight. The immensity of its size is overwhelming and its architecture brilliant. It was built around 2560 BC as the burial place for Pharaoh Khufu. As one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, it rose over 480 feet from the desert floor with sides spanning about 750 feet at the base. It was the tallest structure known to man for nearly four millennia. Yet, in an irony of history, the only surviving statue of Khufu is an insignificant ivory sculpture three inches tall.

Domitian, the Roman emperor (AD 81–96), demanded that he be addressed as “Lord and God” and worshipped as deity. Refusing to do so meant a brutal death. To honor Domitian, the city of Ephesus built a large temple that housed a massive marble statue of his image. Eventually, members of his inner court assassinated him by stabbing him repeatedly with a dagger. Today all that is left of his pompous effigy is a marred and cracked head with part of a left arm. His temple lies in ruins, stones scattered around a few decrepit walls and columns. Not much to show for someone who claimed to be divine.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Henry Huntington made millions as a railroad and real estate tycoon. He built a fifty-five-thousand-square-foot French-style villa in San Marino, California, in 1911. His wife, Arabella, was the wealthiest woman in America. While Henry collected rare books and art, Arabella spent vast fortunes on jewelry. Her private collection was one of the world’s most prestigious at the time, mainly purchased from Parisian jewelers, including Cartier.

After Arabella’s death in 1924, the treasure trove of jewels went to her son, Archer, and his wife, Anna. The pair did not share Arabella’s

appreciation for precious stones and sold the whole collection to a young jeweler named Harry Winston. Winston removed the gems from their old-fashioned settings, then recut and sold them across the world. He boasted that Arabella's famous seven-strand, 497-pearl necklace adorned the necks of over two dozen women.

History books are filled with the storied lives of pharaohs, emperors, tycoons, and heiresses who sought fame and fortune, hoping to create a lasting legacy. Most spent their years on vain endeavors, leaving the world without discovering a treasure greater than anything gained on earth—a relationship with the God of heaven.

Thousands of years before, King Solomon observed this pattern and said, "I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me" (Eccles. 2:18). He then summarized it all by saying, "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person" (Eccles. 12:13).

The concluding advice from the wisest and wealthiest man in the world doesn't exhort us to seek more possessions, prestige, or earthly pursuits. He must have surprised his readers when he pointed them to God as the ultimate prize for life.

Another way Solomon might have expressed his counsel would be, "Invest your life in what has eternal value! True treasure is found in knowing God and living fully for Him." This is the kind of life that finishes well for the Lord.

Mark Twain's View of Life

The great writer Mark Twain struggled to find meaning in life after losing his twenty-four-year-old daughter, Susy, to spinal meningitis. Years later, he wrote about her death in his autobiography and described his opinion of human existence this way:

A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle for bread; they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other; age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; shames and humiliations bring down their prides and their vanities; those they love are taken from them, and the joy of life is turned to aching grief. The burden of pain, care, misery, grows heavier year by year; at length ambition is dead; pride is dead; vanity is dead; longing for release is in their place. It comes at last—the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them—and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence; where they achieved nothing; where they were a mistake and a failure and a foolishness; where they have left no sign that they have existed—a world which will lament them a day and forget them forever.¹

Few people can articulate the human condition as well as he did. His words cut to the core and leave us questioning if they might be true of our lives. Are we of no consequence? Will we vanish and leave no mark? Are we like every pharaoh, emperor, and wealthy heiress who puts his or her trust in the wrong things only to see them slip away at death? Is this how our lives will turn out?

The answer to these questions for someone who seeks to follow the Lord is a definite *no*! At the same time, we also acknowledge the reality of life that Twain described as “the burden of pain, care, misery [that] grows heavier year by year.” We don’t discount the gravity of our circumstances. Instead, we draw a different conclusion concerning where they lead us.

Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her humanitarian efforts. All lauded the invaluable work of the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India. At less than five feet tall, this diminutive woman had a commanding presence before world leaders who heard her

pleas on behalf of the poor and disabled. However, when out of the public eye, she struggled with feelings of inner darkness and emotional pain in her longing for God. It was a lifelong battle. She shared those burdens only with her superiors.

Here is an excerpt from a letter she wrote to Father Neuner, one of her spiritual advisers, in her unique style of writing:

Now Father—since [1949 or 1950] this terrible sense of loss—this untold darkness—this loneliness—this continual longing for God—which gives me that pain deep down in my heart.—Darkness is such that I really do not see—neither with my mind nor with my reason...—Sometimes—I just hear my own heart cry out—“My God” and nothing else comes.—The torture and pain I can’t explain....

You see, Father, the contradiction in my life. I long for God—I want to love Him—to love Him much—to live only for love of Him—to love only—and yet there is but pain—longing and no love....

Yet deep down somewhere in my heart that longing for God keeps breaking through the darkness.²

Are you surprised to hear these words coming from someone like Mother Teresa? She is not diminished in my eyes because she wrestled with her faith in God at such deep levels. It is actually encouraging to know she dealt with heavy burdens and came through them just as we can. She saw a break in the darkness that gave her hope for her spiritual struggles. Teresa requested that her letters be destroyed when she was gone, feeling they were too personal and might cause some to doubt their faith. Father Neuner realized how beneficial they would be for others to read and decided instead to preserve them.

The Brevity of Life

For those of us in our midlife years, it is shocking how quickly time has passed by. The memories of raising children, participating in countless

birthday parties, trips to the emergency room, holiday gatherings, and school, church, and sporting events are still lodged in our minds. Who hit the fast-forward button that brought it all to a close and ushered in this new season of life?

Moses pondered how quickly a lifetime passes on the earth. In Psalm 90, he said:

As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years,
Or if due to strength, eighty years,
Yet their pride is but labor and sorrow;
For soon it is gone and we fly away....
So teach us to number our days,
That we may present to You a heart of wisdom. (vv. 10, 12)

At first glance, Moses might appear to lean toward Twain's assessment of life by emphasizing its brevity, labor, and sorrow. However, he quickly looked to God to fill his days with purpose. He hoped to someday possess a heart of wisdom that would honor the Lord's ways. At the end of his life, he had come very near to that goal.

From a stammering reluctance to follow God's command to free Israel from slavery, Moses went on to lead one of the most renowned lives in all the Scriptures. He successfully defeated the pharaoh of Egypt who stood as the world's tyrant. The Almighty used him to deliver the Jewish people from captivity and toward possession of a new land. Moses hand carried the law of God that has guided humanity for centuries. He was a prophet, leader, writer, judge, worker of wonders, and a friend of the Lord of Hosts. The book of Deuteronomy gives him a "finishing well" tribute:

Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses,
whom the LORD knew face to face, for all the signs and
wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of

Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel. (34:10–12)

Think of what would have happened had Moses shrunk back in fear? He would have missed out on being a part of some of the Lord's greatest work in the history of mankind. Instead, he was able to overcome his fears, and he found the Almighty more than adequate to compensate for his shortcomings.

As Moses looked back over his life, he wrote about numbering his days to stay focused on what was important. Following his example, if we lived to be eighty-two years old, that would give us about thirty thousand days to be alive. From there, we'd be awake approximately twenty thousand days with the other ten thousand spent sleeping. Based on these summaries, I've already used 70 percent of my allotment. How about you?

Baby Boomer Generation

As the largest generation in history, the baby boomers exploded onto the scene following World War II with their ranks swelling to seventy-six million between 1946 and 1964. They marched through the cultural upheavals in the 1960s and 1970s, enjoyed economic prosperity, and held an idealistic view of what society could become.

Given the favorable conditions that surrounded the baby boomers, one might expect them to have an optimistic view of life. However, studies conducted by the Pew Research Center discovered something different. In the December 2010 Social and Demographic Trends report, Pew stated:

The iconic image of the Baby Boom generation is a 1960s-era snapshot of an exuberant, long-haired, rebellious young adult.... This famously huge cohort of Americans finds itself in a funk as it approaches old age....

Some of this pessimism is related to life cycle—for most people, middle age is the most demanding and stressful time of life. Some of the gloominess, however, appears to be particular to Boomers, who bounded onto the national stage in the 1960s with high hopes for remaking society, but who've spent most of their adulthood trailing other age cohorts in overall life satisfaction.³

While the findings describing baby boomers seem melancholy, this book offers a hopeful vision of what life can be like for those in midlife or nearby seasons. There are reasons for optimism that can transcend the pessimism so many in this life stage are characterized by.

Memories of a Mentor

Compare these findings to a man who chose to live differently—filled with purpose and inspiration for others—during the second half of his life. His name was Stan Reed. He served as a pastor in several congregations and earned a reputation as someone to call on if anyone had a need. By worldly standards, he did not earn much money or achieve earthly fame. Yet his influence touched the lives of thousands of people.

I received a phone call saying that Stan had passed away at his home in Southern California. I knew he was close to the end, but the finality of the news hit me hard.

A flood of memories swept over me. I was back at high school, sitting in his office where he told me about Jesus. During college he followed my progress with interest and suggested I consider entering the ministry. I later joined him on the church staff as a youth pastor.

Stan's family asked me to speak at his memorial service. In preparation I dug through some old boxes and found a small book that the youth of the church had given me on my twenty-fifth birthday over thirty-five years earlier.

As I thumbed through it, I came across a page where Stan had written his birthday wishes to me in his left-handed scrawl:

Dear Bruce,

I don't have long to write, but sometimes the shortest and deepest feelings are best received. You have been like a son to me and a good one. I will always cherish our friendship.

May God bless you real good.

With Brotherly Love in Christ,

Stan Reed

Prov. 3:5–6

I had forgotten he had written in that little book. I sat down and fought tears as the meaning of the words sank in again. They revealed the character of this godly, caring man who had taken the time to invest in a young person's life.

At Stan's memorial service, loved ones surrounded him. Connie (his wife of fifty-six years), his five children, fifteen grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, two brothers, sister, and hundreds of friends all came to honor him.

Here are some highlights of sentiments shared:

Steve said, "He was a good and faithful father to me and a faithful husband to my mom. He showed me a lot of grace, especially when I crashed the family car when I was in high school. When my first son was being born, I wondered where my dad was. I later found out he was counseling a couple in the hallway of the hospital and led them to the Lord."

Debra stated, "I'm proud to be the daughter of Stan Reed. He showed me unconditional love."

Janet shared a poem she had written that concluded with "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Susan and Nancy both sang songs.

As I listened to his children speak fondly about him, I wondered what mine would say about me someday.

Stan showed me that it was possible to finish well and leave a far-reaching legacy with our family and friends regardless of how society might measure success. He lived intuitively, from the heart born out of a deep faith in God.

Some of us, however, are going to need help setting the correct course in order to live a life that finishes well for the Lord. We can start right where we are. That is the purpose of this book.

The human condition Mark Twain described is one view of our earthly existence, but it does not need to define us. We can choose a different path. It will take grit and determined commitment to make that journey, but there is no greater endeavor to pursue.

Moving Mountains Moment

For many of us, the problems we face seem like impassable mountains. But there is hope! Jesus spent a lot of time telling people that mountains can be moved by His power. Do we believe Him? The saying “Don’t measure the size of the mountain; talk to the One who can move it” emphasizes this idea. The following verse provides an encouraging reminder of what God can do as we seek Him for help: “Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley” (Isa. 40:4).

Note: Near the end of this book, starting on page 247, you will find discussion and Bible study questions for each chapter. You can use these questions for personal or group study.