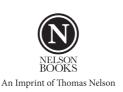
BACK

GETTING UNSTUCK AND MOVING FORWARD WITH PASSION AND PURPOSE

CHRISTINE CAINE



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Where You Look Is Where You Will Go

rs. Caine! Keep your eyes straight ahead. Let your peripheral vision do the work. Use your mirrors. Remember that where you look, you will go! I don't want to see your head on a swivel. I don't want to see you looking back. Eyes forward!"

My motorcycle safety course instructor belted out most everything he had been teaching me as I exited the last turn and came to a stop. Feeling a bit proud of myself for having mastered the obstacle course he'd designed with orange cones, it must have shown on my face, because before I could look around to accept any fist bumps from my fellow riders, he added, "But don't let me see you on the interstate with that toy, even if it is legal."

With that, everyone laughed, much like they had the past

two days. Ever since I rolled up to the California Motorcyclist Safety Course on my Vespa—wearing my riding gear, complete with elbow and knee pads, boots, and a helmet that made me look like a bobblehead—and took my place among all the other riders, they had simply stared at me in disbelief. I felt welcomed enough among the mostly twenty-something-year-olds straddling their sport bikes, but it was hard to ignore that I was obviously the oldest in the class and the only married-mum-with-kids type.

As I mastered each exercise, little by little I garnered their respect—well, as much respect as you can get on what most people classify as a scooter or a moped. I imagine if I had been on a Ducati, I would have had immediate respect, but showing up on a pretty little Vespa meant I had to earn it. Or at least be a good sport and laugh at myself as much as they all did.

It was the fall of 2020, when things were starting to open up a bit after being shut down during the pandemic. The state of California resumed their Motorcyclist Safety Course because it could be held outdoors and met the requirements for social distancing. And since I wasn't traveling as much because of COVID-19 restrictions, I had a little more time available in my schedule. So I finally booked the course I had been trying to fit in for years.

What made it feel even more important to me is that my husband, Nick, had surprised me for my fiftieth birthday with the Vespa—something I had enjoyed immensely when we lived in Australia. There I owned a hot-pink one, and I rode

it everywhere. But when we got ready to move to the United States, it wasn't practical to ship, so I left it behind—but I never stopped pining for it.

In the process of purchasing the Vespa, Nick had researched everything for me, and he informed me that in order to enjoy my new bike beyond the end of the driveway, I had to take an instructional riding course and pass a written exam. As much as I wanted to just trade in my Australian motorcycle license for a California one, that wasn't going to work. So I studied in advance and passed the written exam with flying colors. However, the riding course was a little more challenging—especially since the last time I'd ridden a bike for any significant amount of time, I'd been driving on the other side of the road. Still, getting my motorcycle license was imperative if I wanted to be free to ride anywhere in the US.

WHERE YOU LOOK, YOU WILL GO

Of all that I learned during the motorcycle safety course, one phrase my instructor used repeatedly never left me: *Where you look, you will go.* For weeks after the course, it resounded in my head. And because the pandemic was ongoing, I especially thought about it in relationship to my pre- and post-pandemic life. I recognized that my natural inclination was to compare life before the pandemic to life after the pandemic. To look back, rather than forward. To find myself expressing

frustration and saying to no one in particular, "When will we go back to normal?"

Maybe you said the same thing. When the pandemic hit us all and stretched around the globe in 2020, and well into 2021, how could we not want to roll back the clock, return to the way it used to be, and do things the way we had always done them?

What changed in those days? Far more than had stayed the same. In my pre-pandemic life, my kids could be dropped off at school. Nick and I could go to an office to work. I could meet face-to-face with my team. I could travel freely. It was hard learning new ways of communicating via Zoom, of speaking to a camera instead of visiting churches, of fighting human trafficking with all the new restrictions.

It was then I recognized that where I looked, I would go. Where my mind went, I would go. Where my emotions went, I would go. I had to remember my purpose and calling. How I did things had to change, no doubt, but I also needed to remember that the promises and purposes of God had not changed at all.

All of it got me to thinking—there are times in each of our lives when we look back and feel desperate to make time stand still, particularly when change happens that we didn't see coming. Isn't that what Lot's wife did when God sent the angels to escort her and her family out of Sodom? She looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. I can't wait to introduce you to her in chapter 1, because what I've learned from her and from my own experiences is that we can't stop and look

back any more than she did. Looking back didn't go well for her, and it never goes well for us either. What's more, looking back doesn't enable us to *go* back, and more times than not, it just makes us *stuck*. In a place. In a space. In a memory. In a habit. In a mindset. When we are stuck, we are not moving ahead because we can't move ahead when our feet are planted in place.

When Jesus invites us into a relationship with him, it is an invitation to follow him.² When we accept his invitation, we don't know where we are going, how long it will take us, or what we will encounter along the way—but what we do know is that he will never leave us nor forsake us.³ Following Jesus is a journey, moving from one place to another, not necessarily geographically but always spiritually. Furthermore, to follow Jesus, we have to go where he is leading, and as much as we might want, we can't spend all our time looking back to where we once were while simultaneously trying to look forward to where he is taking us. In the words of King Solomon, "Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you."⁴

Life is full of unexpected twists and turns, of detours and slowdowns, of surprising stops that divert our focus. In recent years, we've had a lot of them no matter where we live around the globe. We've navigated life through a pandemic and all the loss that goes with it. So many of us lost loved ones and dear friends, relationships and jobs, ministries and businesses, hopes and dreams. It's still hard to comprehend. On top of that, more happened around the world in that time than we

could have ever imagined—politically, economically, environmentally, and socially.

I think we'd all agree that it's shocking how we can be moving forward, full steam ahead, and suddenly life throws something our way that changes everything, whether it affects everyone in the world or just us. If we've not prepared ourselves for how to move through those times, and get our vision looking ahead once more, we can get stuck looking back. We can get stuck in places we never intended to find ourselves—spiritually, emotionally, mentally, relationally, financially, or physically. To be honest, we can get stuck just about anywhere in life, can't we?

- When we like where we are.
- When we are scared about the future.
- When we may not want to let go of what we love.
- When we are wronged.
- When we are hurt.
- When we are disappointed.
- When we are numb from the trauma we've endured.
- When we are betrayed.
- When we are weary.
- When we are overwhelmed.
- When we are discouraged.
- When we are distracted.
- When we are wounded.
- When we are hopeless.

Sometimes, when we stop and think about what we have experienced, how can we not get stuck in disappointment, unforgiveness, bitterness, offense, fear, guilt, anxiety, insecurity, indifference, apathy, comfort, or complacency? And yet, to move forward, we have to find a way to move through these exact places and more. We have to move through loss, grief, hardship, suffering, disillusionment, mistakes, and sheer heartache to keep going.

Still, I imagine we all find it easier to stay stuck than risk moving forward and what might come with it, like stepping out into unfamiliar terrain and feeling even more uncomfortable. Like experiencing more hurt, more disappointment, more suffering, or more betrayal. It's little wonder the writer of Hebrews said that we must focus our eyes on Jesus. "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." 5

To keep going through the most painful part of his mission, Jesus kept his focus on the joy that lay before him. That's how he endured the cross and made it to his seat at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. Because of Christ's sacrifice, we won't ever have to go through the kind of suffering he did—but we will still go through our own times of pain and hardship, of disappointment and hurt, of loss and heartache. Keeping our eyes on Jesus, who is the way, is the only way we can find our way forward.

Successfully navigating the twists and turns of life while

fixing our eyes on Jesus requires a spiritual strategy with four steps:

- 1. We need to first learn how to stop looking back and start looking to Jesus.
- 2. We need to invite Jesus in to help us get unstuck from those places where we never meant to be.
- 3. We need to start moving forward in a way that ensures we're successfully pursuing all the plans, purposes, and promises God has for our lives.
- 4. What's more, we need to learn how to do this repeatedly in every area of our lives all throughout our lives, because new challenges will present themselves—Jesus told us they would. He said we would have trouble in this world, but he also told us how to move through what life would throw our way.⁶

I understand how challenging this can be, particularly because it is not something we do once and move on. As we journey together through the pages of this book, I pray you will discover how to stop looking back and start looking to Jesus, how to move on from where you are to where God wants you to be, how to look forward to the future God has for you, and how to keep moving toward it in bold faith—especially when the world is ever-changing.

Love, Chris

PART ONE

Why Moving Forward Is Important



The World Is Always Changing, God Remains the Same

Lord . . . we are grateful for your protection and provision, and for everything that you have already done, and everything you have prepared for us ahead. We trust you . . . we know you have so much for us as an organization here in Ukraine and globally . . . we are so grateful that we are able to be your hands and your feet to rescue people . . . that we can help people have freedom and restoration . . . keep our hearts that we would notice and see the miracles that you're doing around us. Thank you, Lord.

JULIA, A21 COUNTRY MANAGER, UKRAINE, SAFE
HOUSE OUTSIDE KYIV, FEBRUARY 11, 2022

Clutching my chest, swallowing hard, it was all I could do to voice my *amen*. Never in all the years of A21 had I

witnessed such courage, such strength, such faith in our team. Julia and two of our Ukraine team—Liliia and Yuliia—had joined our global team meeting from a safe house outside Kyiv. They had been there for a couple of days, along with their husbands and children. Nadiia, another team member, joined from another location inside Ukraine. There were more than one hundred and fifty of our A21 team members from sixteen countries gathered in what we affectionately called the upper Zoom room. Since the pandemic had started in 2020, and we all began to work from home, Zoom calls were where we met to connect and update each other on the work of A21 and our other ministries from around the world. Today, we were linked together in prayer over something none of our offices had ever faced—the threat of a war in a city where we had an A21 office.

Finding my voice, I shouted to Julia and the rest of the team huddled together on a sofa, "We're here for you and are with you all the way. Whatever you need, we are here to help. We love you! Stay safe!"

As everyone else waved bye and began disappearing from my screen, I held on. For as long as I could. Never had I felt so responsible for so many. Never had I felt so desperate for them to be out of harm's way. Never had I wanted to be on the other side of the world more. And as my tears spilled, so did my prayers. How could I not cry my prayers? Lord, please be their refuge and their fortress. Cover them under your wings. Protect them from any harm. Have mercy on everyone in Ukraine.

Making my way to the garage, I found Nick still staring

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at his computer screen, though everyone was gone from the meeting. It weighed just as heavily on him as it did me. Letting the silence hold us, he didn't move. He didn't say a word. Truth be told, he didn't need to. It had all been said. For days we'd been talking. To each other. To Julia. To our A21 chief operations officer, Phil. To our security team, Tony and Andreas. To our contacts in Washington, DC, and Europe. To all our other country managers around the globe. To the pastors of our three Zoe churches in Warsaw, Thessaloniki, and Sofia. After all, it was clear they would all be involved in helping anyone fleeing Ukraine, being the hands and feet of Jesus, as Julia so beautifully prayed. Whatever move Russia made, we were prepared—as prepared as one can be for an impending war.

WHEN RUSSIA INVADED UKRAINE

After what felt like an unusually long day, perhaps because of all the updates coming out of Ukraine and calls back and forth with our team, Nick and I turned in for the night. We'd barely fallen asleep when Nick's phone rang. It was Andreas, and in the quiet of the night, I could hear every word. Russia had begun launching missiles and invading Ukraine. Julia and the team would have to move quickly. It was 5:30 a.m. at the safe house. He would give them time to get the kids up, eat breakfast, and pack, but that was all. Counterattack missiles

were already flying over their heads. There was nothing to do but move forward. There was no going back to Kyiv.

Nick had brought Tony and Andreas onto our team to expand security for all our A21 offices. After a trafficker threatened members of our European team in court, it was clear that we needed to do more to ensure everyone on our team was protected. But never did we expect the need to include a plan to escape an invasion.

For a long while after the call, Nick and I lay awake in the dark. I couldn't help but pray for each person staying in the safe house, putting before the Lord what I felt each of them needed, especially Julia's husband, Slava. In the weeks leading up to the invasion, each night after they had tucked their two boys in bed, Julia said they would talk about what might happen if a war started and what they would do. She said it wasn't easy to hear what was in his heart, but she understood. He wanted to stay and help and do what he was called to do. As the care pastor for their church, he wanted to stay and care for the people of Kyiv, to prepare the church building to serve as a refuge, shelter, hospital, or place to distribute meals—whatever the people of Kyiv would need it to be. He was Ukrainian. They both were. And together, they were followers of Christ who had committed to a life of faith, a life of serving, a life of caring for others. Of course he would stay, and she would go. For the sake of the boys, for the sake of her team, for the sake of every potential victim of human trafficking. From her work at A21, Julia knew that the most vulnerable to trafficking

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during a war are women and children. She knew she could do more to help prevent trafficking and reach the vulnerable if she were based in Poland, if she could work on the border helping the multitudes who would inevitably be fleeing Ukraine in search of safety.

When morning came, neither Nick nor I had slept as much as we had prayed. When Andreas updated us, he said the team was on the road, but he and Tony were changing their route, and most likely, they would keep changing it, even if it meant passing up safe houses they had secured and hoped to use. It appeared best to press on to Julia's relative's home in western Ukraine.

WORTH THE TRIP

A month earlier, I had flown to Europe to visit some of our European offices and team. After not being able to travel outside the United States for two long years due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, I was determined to be in the same room with as many of our team as I could. I wanted to see their faces and look into their eyes, without a computer screen separating us. I decided before I traveled that I was not going to compare it to pre-COVID travel life. I chose to adjust my mindset in advance. Nothing would ever be like it once was, so what was the point of looking back?

It was a hard trip. Because of the omicron variant. Because

of all the paperwork required by each country. Because of all the restrictions. Because of all the COVID-19 tests. Never had I taken so many. But it was all so worth it. Seeing our teams, sharing meals, talking until the wee hours of the morning, hearing even more about all the creative ways they'd found to keep in touch with survivors during lockdowns—it seemed more like an awesome reunion. We were so happy to actually see each other.

I'll never forget being in Warsaw, eager to travel on to Kyiv next to see Julia and the team there, when Andreas called Nick. It was already too dangerous for us to travel to Kyiv, he said, and if we got there, it was possible we wouldn't be able to get out. The Russians had surrounded Ukraine on three sides. From all indications, it was just a matter of time before the invasion started.

From my perspective, if it wasn't safe enough for us to travel to Ukraine, then it wasn't safe enough for our team to stay. Nick agreed. We both wanted them relocated to Warsaw as quickly as possible. From what Andreas said, Julia was almost ready. She and the team had reached a safe house outside Kyiv but were still making trips back to the city for supplies.

The morning Andreas called Julia to say it was time to go, though she'd been preparing for weeks, deep down she still wasn't ready. She had hoped for more time with her husband, Slava. That's where her heart weighed most heavily. How could it not? When would she see him again? Would they be the same? What was all this going to do to their boys? And yet,

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she knew the team had to go. She knew it was best. For her. For Liliia and Yuliia. For their husbands. For their girls and their boys. If they had to run for their lives, then they would do it for the sake of the next generation.

RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES

I've never had to run for my life, though my grandparents did, and then a generation later, my parents did. My grandparents fled Izmir, Turkey, for Greece, and then to Egypt, in 1922, during the Greek Genocide. There, in Alexandria, Egypt, a truly cosmopolitan city and the gateway to Europe, they worked to reestablish their lives and raise their family in peace. But in 1952, the nationalist generals overthrew King Farouk and became a powerful force. Christians became a persecuted minority, and both my parents, who were young and single and didn't know each other, fled from Egypt. My mother was just sixteen when her parents put her and her sister on a ship to Australia. If they couldn't save the whole family, then they would save their children. With tens of thousands of other Greek families, my mother and her sister landed in Australia with next to nothing. Somehow, they each managed to work two jobs, saving enough money to buy passage for their parents and brother to make the same journey they did. Like my mum and her sister, they came with one suitcase each, leaving everything else behind.

When I was growing up, Mum never spoke of any of this. Neither did my aunt or my uncle. It was something I later learned they would all rather leave in the past. To this day, it is unimaginable to me the fear Mum must have faced and the courage she surely mustered. I can only guess at the weight of responsibility she carried for her sister and brother, for her mum and dad.

When she later met my dad in Sydney, they fell in love and married. From what I observed growing up, whatever they both experienced fleeing from Egypt, they didn't spend time looking back. Together, they forged a new life and, with the rest of our extended family, made Australia home.

A CLOUD BY DAY AND A PILLAR BY NIGHT

For four days, Andreas and Tony kept Julia and the team moving forward from a distance. They called her every hour. They reassured her they were watching her every move. In three cars, the entire team and their families caravanned across the country. In small towns, they refueled. Andreas had given them a list of supplies to pack, including extra fuel, but as long as stations had fuel, they would purchase what they needed. The jugs of fuel would be for when the stations ran out. In one town, the line for fuel was more than one hundred cars, and each car was allowed a ration of only twenty-one liters.

Never once did they stop. Instead, they took turns driving

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so each of them could nap and they could keep going. From satellite images, Andreas watched from his office in Europe all night, every night, and Tony watched from his office in the US all day, every day. When a fellow A21 team member, Mi Yung, sent Julia a text reminding her of God's protection over the children of Israel when they escaped Egypt, she recounted how God led Moses and the children of Israel with a cloud by day and a pillar by night.² To Julia, Andreas and Tony were just like the cloud and the pillar. It meant everything to know that someone was watching over them. To know they were not alone.

One evening, as they waited in line for fuel, a man came walking along the line of cars with a teapot. He was offering hot water for people to make coffee or tea. Later that night, he came back, only this time he brought his wife. She had made a pot of borscht and wanted everyone in their cars to eat. They all agreed it was the best borscht they had ever eaten. She'd even boiled eggs for them to save for later.

When they finally walked in the door of Julia's relatives' home, in the western part of Ukraine, seeing the table set with an abundance of food suddenly felt so normal. Watching her boys hug her family brought a kind of relief she hadn't felt in days. She could feel her anxiety give way to hope, her fear give way to renewed courage. Taking it all in felt like a gentle reminder that God was with them, watching over them, and going before them, even while the world as they knew it was crumbling behind them.

YOU CAN'T STAY

When Andreas called Julia the next time, it was much sooner than the hour mark. "Julia, I know you've just arrived, and I know you're relieved to see your family," he said, "but you can't stay. I can give you an hour and a half to eat, rest, and enjoy your relatives, and then you have to head for the border tonight."

Crossing the border into Poland was more of a contingency plan than a predetermined one. But from the beginning, the team was prepared that if the invasion escalated, that's where they would go. Though Julia held out hope they could all stay inside the borders of their home country, during the time they'd been on the road, the bombing of the capital city had intensified, as did the shelling all across the country.

When Andreas told her that the men could be restricted from crossing the border with the women and children, she had to steel herself before passing on such news. Martial law had been declared and a government regulation prohibited all men between the ages of eighteen and sixty from leaving the country.³

For the next two and a half days, Julia and the team inched along in a line that was miles long and led to a border crossing. With no bathrooms, no showers, and nothing for the kids to do, they did their best to hide their fear and keep their kids busy. The dirt on the cars became whiteboards on which the kids drew with their fingers. Grassy fields alongside the

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road turned into playgrounds. Mealtimes turned into picnics. Watching as others ran out of fuel, abandoned their cars, and began walking, often carrying children and pulling suitcases, they couldn't help but agonize over whether they'd actually make it. In one of his last calls to Julia, Andreas prepared her for what lay ahead.

Szymon, our Zoe Warsaw pastor, was at the border waiting for her. He'd been there for two days. It was certain that the men would not be allowed to cross, but Tony was working on a plan for where they could go to be safe. They would need to rearrange the contents of the cars, leaving any remaining supplies in one car for the men to take. And their goodbyes would need to be quick.

I can't tell you the relief we all felt when our group crossed the border—and the millions more who came after them.

WHAT NEXT?

When the war in Ukraine started, it seemed like a continuation of all that had been happening for the past couple of years. After all, starting in 2020, in addition to moving through a global pandemic, we had experienced natural disasters on most every continent—hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, drought, and flooding.⁴ The ground warmed enough in the mid-Atlantic region for billions of cicadas to emerge—after seventeen years of being underground.⁵ It was reminiscent of

a plague of biblical proportions. We saw protests and riots in major cities in more than sixty countries, drawing attention to racial injustice. It was easy to understand why some people wanted to throw their hands up in the air and ask, "What's next?"—because it did feel like one thing after another just kept happening. When people questioned whether it was the end of the world, it was—even though we're all still here—because it was the end of the world as we once knew it.

Like most everyone, I was tempted to look back. To want to go back. To 2019. Or any year of our lives before 2020. To go back to normal, whatever our normal was. To forget the new normal that we were all desperately trying to create. Yet, no matter how much I longed to go back to normal, there was no going back. That world as we knew it was finished, and God was beckoning me, along with everyone else, to move forward, to lay hold of his purpose and promises in the future.

Sorting through the tension of not looking back and trying to move forward—including trying to figure out how to move at all in a locked-down world—I began reminding myself that while the world had changed, God had not. He was the same as he'd always been, and I could depend on him to guide me forward.⁷

During that same season of doing my best not to look back and instead to keep moving forward, I was reminded of a woman in the Bible who looked back when she wasn't supposed to, and it didn't go well for her. I mentioned her earlier in the introduction as Lot's wife. She was the woman running for her life with her family in Genesis 19. As they ran, destruction was raining down on their hometown of Sodom, and despite being told by an angel not to look back, she turned and looked back. Scripture tells us, "But Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt."8

I began reminding myself that while the world had changed, God had not.

What makes Lot's wife especially significant is that Jesus said for us to remember her. In the middle of an eschatological discourse in the New Testament, Jesus dropped in three words: "Remember Lot's wife."

If you've ever read Luke 17, it's all too easy to miss these three words. I know because I did for years. I read them, of course, but that's all. I flew past them. But Jesus never wastes a word, let alone three, so there must be some significance in this second-shortest verse in the Bible. (If you didn't know that fun fact, now you do. Perhaps it will help you win your next Bible quiz.) These three words began to show me the importance of not looking back. Of always moving forward. Even in the midst of a pandemic or a war or something far more normal. They became words I couldn't forget and words that showed me the way forward.

Remember Lot's wife.

For thirty-plus years now, I've been going to women's conferences, and I don't remember ever hearing a message on Lot's

wife, nor do I remember teaching one. And yet, of the possible 170 women mentioned in Scripture, 10 she is the only one that Jesus tells us to remember. Why her? Why not Eve, Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Rahab, Esther, Elizabeth, or even Mary, his own mother? Of all the women Jesus could have told us to remember, he mentioned only one: Lot's wife. (For all the Bible scholars reading this, Jesus did tell us that the *deed* of the woman who poured oil over him would be remembered forever, 11 but he told us to remember only one woman—Lot's wife.) This is astonishing to me. Why her? There had to be a reason.

LONGINGLY SHE LINGERED

Lot's wife gets one cameo in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. That's it. That's all Scripture records. Why would Jesus tell us to remember a woman who appears on the pages of Scripture only long enough to disappear? A woman who has the shortest bio ever. A woman whose proper name we don't even know. What is it about her that we're to remember?

As I began to study her life, I noted something very important. This woman was told one thing: "Don't look back." And the one thing she was told not to do is the one thing she did. Furthermore, I found that understanding *how* she looked back quite possibly held a clue as to *why* she looked back: "But Lot's wife, from behind him, [foolishly, longingly] looked [back

toward Sodom in an act of disobedience], and she became a pillar of salt."12

She looked back longingly in an act of disobedience. I don't want to be harsh about Lot's wife. We all make mistakes, and we all disobey, and to think she looked back longingly causes me to feel for her. Here she was, living her life as usual, and suddenly she's told to pack up and run for her life. All the while an angel is holding her hand and guiding her.

Even reading her story afresh while writing, compassion overtook me. I couldn't help but think of Julia fleeing Ukraine. I thought of my grandparents fleeing Turkey and then Greece. I thought of my parents fleeing Egypt. Like Lot's wife, they all had to leave everything familiar behind. Julia even had to leave her husband behind. And once our team was at the border, so did Lilia and Yulia. Every time Julia might have wanted to look back and stop, she had to keep going. For herself, for her children, and for her team. With one phone call, her life changed. With Andreas and Tony guiding her, essentially holding her hand, she and the rest of our team ran for their lives.

Looking at Lot's wife with Julia in mind, I can imagine Lot's wife having deep-seated feelings. It's no wonder she looked back *longingly*. Maybe *how* she looked back has as much to do with it as the mere fact that she looked back at all.

To look back longingly is to look back with a yearning desire.¹³ What was it she longed for exactly? What did she so deeply desire? Putting myself in her shoes, I can imagine any

number of things. Maybe it was her home. Maybe it was the way her home made her feel safe and secure. Maybe it was the way she'd gotten everything arranged and decorated just so. Maybe it was the way her home welcomed her each time she ran errands and came back to it. Did she long for her belongings? Her friends? Her routine? Her extended family? If you have ever moved from one city to another, then perhaps you know firsthand how easy it is to long for what was, compared to the work involved in adjusting to all that's new.

Maybe she had a position in the community, a place of prominence. After all, Sodom wasn't an impoverished city, and she was married to a wealthy man. 14 Could it be that she looked back longingly at everything she had grown attached to and was being forced to abandon? She appeared to be torn between what she was leaving and where she was going. Have you ever been there? Isn't this our challenge in everything God invites us to do? To move forward or stop and look back? And not just to the tangible things that can slip through our fingers but to places in time, to memories, and to the feelings those memories evoke. It can be any of that or all of that, can't it?

Maybe Lot's wife was trying to preserve the past, something that's all too easy to do. When we work at preserving the past, lingering in nostalgia, we can keep ourselves from the truth of the present and the pain of reality.¹⁵ If we linger in the past, we run the risk of it becoming an idealized version of what really was. Memories can easily be distorted, can't they?¹⁶ Of all the things that could have happened to Lot's wife

THE WORLD IS ALWAYS CHANGING

when she looked back, she turned into a pillar of salt, a substance that has been used as a preservative for centuries and is still used to this day.¹⁷ The irony doesn't escape me. What's more, Lot's wife became the very substance that Jesus said we are. Matthew recorded Jesus saying that we are the salt of the earth.¹⁸ Perhaps we need to ensure that we don't get stuck in a place trying to preserve the past, where we are no longer moving forward, and where we are no longer salting the world around us.

Lot's wife looked back *longingly*. I have found that if we linger too long where we're not supposed to be, we'll start

longing for what we are supposed to no longer be lingering in. When we linger, we hesitate. The literal meaning of *linger* is "to be slow in parting. To remain in existence although waning in strength. It's to procrastinate." And it includes one more eerily accurate depiction: "To remain alive although

If we linger in the past, we run the risk of it becoming an idealized version of what really was.

gradually dying." ¹⁹ Lot's wife might not have had any idea that looking back would cause her death, but it did, didn't it?

Are you longing for something that once was? That is no more? That can never be again?

Are you lingering there in that place where you should no longer be lingering?

Are you lingering in a place and longing for what was, all

the while tolerating what is, in hopes that if you linger long enough, you might get back what God told you to leave?

When Lot's wife longed and lingered, she stopped and looked back toward Sodom in an act of disobedience. Then she became calcified and stuck, frozen in time, paralyzed for eternity as a pillar of salt. I'm Greek, and because I was raised to salt food generously, I love salt. But I don't want to get stuck and turn into a pillar of salt. I imagine you don't either. But in a sense, I find that getting stuck like she did is so easy to do.

We can get stuck in:

- our emotions
- · our thoughts
- our attitudes
- · our opinions
- our possessions
- our plans
- our desires
- · our habits
- our comfort
- our pain
- our wounds
- · our relationships
- our past
- our present
- our future hopes

THE WORLD IS ALWAYS CHANGING

There are myriad ways and places we can get stuck, and it is my prayer that as we journey together through the pages of this book, we will discover where we may have gotten stuck and uncover ways to get unstuck—so we can move forward into the purpose and promises of God for our future.

It's not always easy to move on when God beckons us forward, especially when things are safe, comfortable, and just the way we like it. Equally, it is often difficult to move on when we have experienced deep trauma, pain, or suffering and we feel utterly hopeless and helpless. Moving on is something we know we should do, what we often want to do, and at times what we refuse to do, but it remains something God eagerly wants for us. Wherever you may be on this continuum, I hope you will be able to identify places where you are prone to be stuck, or maybe are stuck, and that you will be infused with the strength of the Holy Spirit to take the next step to getting unstuck.

Remember Lot's Wife •

When God called Lot's wife to go, she stopped. Perhaps she found more comfort in the circumstances that she knew than in the changeless character of the God who called her.

 Identify three times that your circumstances changed suddenly and write them down in a notepad or your journal.

2. Read Hebrews 13:8 and prayerfully reflect. If you were aware of this truth at the time your circumstances changed, how did this truth affect you and your response to your changing circumstances? If not, how do you believe this truth would or could have affected you and changed your response?

TWO

Prepare Your Heart to Go

Sitting on Catherine's bed, running my hand across the covers, I couldn't help but miss her and everything about her. She'd been off to her first year of college for only a month, but it already felt like forever. Every time I walked past her bedroom the emptiness served as a reminder of all that had changed, and sometimes, it beckoned me to come in and sit a while like it did today.

I missed her smile, her laugh, her sense of humor, her quirky taste in music. I missed her hugs and how she towered over me. I missed our late-night talks, especially when they turned into utter nonsense that left us laughing hysterically at nothing we could explain. I missed her having all her friends over and hearing all their latest drama about school, sports, or boys. I missed her picking up a coffee for me or calling me on her way home from volleyball practice to see if I needed anything from the store. I missed finding late-night-snack dishes

in the kitchen sink most mornings. I missed the laundry basket in her room overflowing with clothes, surrounded by all the pieces that missed the basket. I have often thought that my biggest parenting fail was not teaching my kids to actually take their laundry basket to the laundry room rather than merely using it to practice hoop shots.

Looking up at all the photos tacked on the wall, knowing how carefully Catherine had selected them and arranged each one, made me feel a little closer to her. She had always been a people person. The mix of snapshots capturing family, friends, school events, volleyball games, and travels was a wall of fun, a collage of her life, a reflection of the people who meant the most to her and the places she didn't want to forget. Seeing so many photos of us as a family, of her and Sophia together, made me grateful that our family was our priority, that we had worked hard to create memories, and that Catherine became the one who loved curating them.

Deep down, I was glad she was at college and loving it, but I was still getting used to the idea that she had moved away for school. As a college student, when I went to the University of Sydney, no one I knew ever moved away from home; we simply caught the train to school and back each day. As much as I wished that Catherine could have done the same, such an option was out of the question. We live near a freeway in Southern California and there are no trains within fifty miles. Besides, I couldn't expect her college experience to be the same as mine. We were in a different country, in a different time, and

she needed to live her own journey. Still, I was grateful when she chose a school that was only a ninety-minute drive away.

I was adjusting, but there were times like today when I found myself looking back, longing for what was, and mourning what would never be again. I knew the juncture in life we were facing. I knew it was quite possible she'd never live at home again, at least not full-time. I saw how we were at the end of one era and the beginning of a new one. Even when she came home for a quick visit one weekend, rather than feel like old times, it felt like a new time—because it *was* a new time. She came and went as she pleased. She didn't ask my permission to go places or ask how late she could stay out, though she was considerate to keep Nick and me informed of her plans.

Of course, I didn't want her to remain a child and live at home forever, and I did work on preparing myself her entire senior year of high school. But despite all the preparation, the pain was still real, and the transition was still hard. Catherine is my firstborn, which means she has always been my first everything, including my first child to strike out from the base camp of our home and start trekking after the unique calling God has for her. When you've always hiked hand in hand, so to speak, it's the most unnatural thing on the planet to stand still while your child sets off—but that's where we were.

In the moments when I found myself longing to have things back to the way they were, longing to have her back home, I found praying was most helpful. Praying for her helped me let go and keep giving her to God. It helped me

remember that he loved her more than I ever could. It helped me move through my grief and keep moving on to the future God had for her and for me.

WE MOURN TO MOVE

As the days and weeks continued to go by, I grew more accustomed to Catherine living away. We texted and talked on the phone often, but not so often that I didn't give her space. When she would come home for a weekend visit or a weeklong break, I learned to focus more on the fun we could be having rather than dreading her leaving again—and of course I helped her with all the laundry she brought. I began to notice that's when she seemed to schedule a trip home—when she ran out of clean clothes. One day, while folding mounds of her clothes, I recognized that while Catherine was loving her new season, I had to make sure I stopped looking back at what was behind us so I didn't miss what was ahead. I needed to enjoy the adult she was becoming rather than mourning the child she no longer was. I needed to mourn the end of an era but not get stuck there. In the words of King Solomon,

There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven: a time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build; a

time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance; a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace and a time to avoid embracing; a time to search and a time to count as lost; a time to keep and a time to throw away; a time to tear and a time to sew; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.¹

It's so easy to forget there's a time for everything—that there are seasons to our lives—and to start camping in places where we are supposed to be passing through. From my experience, when this happens, we're likely to find ourselves stuck. Perhaps that's where you find yourself today, living in a state of mind instead of having passed through a season.

I remember when we moved from Sydney to the United States, more than a decade ago. I had traveled extensively outside Australia, but from the time I was born, Sydney had always been home. I grew up in a neighborhood where people lived their entire lives; they never moved. For example, my mum's best friend was her neighbor for forty-five years. My mum's house is where I grew up, and I lived there until I married at almost thirty. When Nick and I set up our first home, it was in Sydney. Why would I want to live anywhere else?

I'll never forget Nick coming home after an out-of-town trip and telling me that he felt the Lord was leading us to move to America. I couldn't believe it. Why America? I loved visiting America, but never had I considered living there. I would

have been more open to Santorini or Prague or Budapest or Paris. Those were beautiful cities we had visited that I could envision, but the USA? Where in America would we go? What state? What city? Besides, we'd just finished a major renovation of our home and I was literally living in my dream house. Everything I wanted us to improve, we had managed to achieve. I had determined our home was where we would stay until I was buried. Our girls loved our home, and their best friends were just down the street. Their school was close by; my best friend was close by; everything we needed and wanted was within reach. Why would I want to move, especially to an entirely different country?

But Nick, with the Lord's help, saw a much bigger picture. We had started A21, and he felt the Lord directing us to move to the US where we would be more centrally located and able to manage our global operations more effectively. It was only after much prayer, fasting, and crying that I finally was able to see the logic of a transcontinental move—that I finally felt a peace from the Lord.

To this day, I remember how hard it was to tell my mum and then my brothers and their families. They were as upset as I was at the idea of what our future would look like. It was evident that I would begin to miss life as we all knew it. I would miss weddings and babies being born; I would miss birthdays and sports games, holiday dinners, and family get-togethers. My mum had reached an age where she needed more help, and my brothers and I shared the responsibilities of caring for her.

Never had I considered that I might not live close enough to run errands for her or take her to appointments.

I remember us telling Nick's family, our dearest friends, our pastors, and colleagues. So many of them tried to talk us out of it. "Can't you just keep traveling back and forth?" they asked. They meant well, but trying to explain further, and at times feeling so vulnerable to what felt like disapproval, was painful. It made the grief unbearable, and yet the more we moved through the transition of it all, the more certain I felt that Nick was right, that the move was right.

With the help of a Realtor we befriended, we finally settled on a place in California, though we'd never spent much time there, and made the actual move. But even then, after months of handling so many details related to the move and going through so many emotions on account of the move, I found it easier to keep wishing I were back home in Sydney, to keep thinking about my life there, and staying in touch with friends and family. I was in one place, but my heart was still in another.

You could easily say that I was much like Lot's wife, looking back when I was supposed to be looking ahead and moving forward. Much like the angel who had her hand, God had mine. There was no doubt he was guiding us, leading us, and making a way for us, but it didn't seem to matter any more to me than it did to Lot's wife, because I got stuck just like she did. I had successfully made the move physically, but because I kept looking back, I failed to make it emotionally.

For the first year, because my heart stayed behind,

grieving all I'd lost, I found myself living as though I were still in Australia, and consequently, I wasn't making the effort to build a life in America. I hadn't really prepared my heart to go. I remember spending much of my time on the phone with my friends back home, sometimes crying at how much I missed them. For the most part, I ignored American holidays and celebrated all my Australian ones, because deep down I didn't consider myself an American. When people reached out and invited us to holiday gatherings, I found a reason to politely decline. As you can imagine, living in one place while trying to live in another only led to frustration, and the frustration caused me even more grief.

And with every visit back home, I felt more out of place there too. Because I was not involved in everyone's daily lives, because I was missing all the milestones they were celebrating along the way, I was desperate to fit in. When I tried to feel as though I hadn't left, I'd take our conversations back to where we were when I lived there before. I didn't realize at the time that I was stuck in pre-move season, but they were not. Soon, I felt out of place in the US *and* when I visited Australia. Because neither place felt like home, it grew even more painful.

It was only when a dear friend in the US had what she called a "come-to-Jesus meeting" with me that everything finally began to change for the better. I remember her being ever so sensitive to how fragile I had become and bravely telling me what I desperately needed to hear. "Chris, we don't feel that you are with us here, and every time you come back

from a visit to Australia, you talk of how you feel like they have moved on without you. They have moved on because they had to, and until your heart catches up with your physical move, you are going to be stuck between what you left and where you are going. You might need some time and distance to make the transition you need to make, so maybe don't go back as often. Choose to invest your heart, time, and energy into building your life here. God didn't bring you here to leave you in between. He brought you here to take you to the next phase of your purpose."

I came to understand that acknowledging such endings and beginnings is a necessary step in moving on, and sometimes we need someone to help us see it. I liken it to what Joshua experienced after the death of Moses. Though the final chapter of Deuteronomy shows us that when Moses died, God buried him, and then God declared a time of mourning for Joshua and the children of Israel, on the very next page of the Bible, in the first two verses of the book of Joshua, God said to Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites." I can't help but ask: Why did God state the obvious to Joshua? Didn't Joshua know Moses was dead? Especially since God declared a season of mourning for Moses. And yet God told Joshua that Moses was dead and to prepare to cross over, signaling that one season had ended and a new season had started.

After a year of living in the US, I had to realize that a season of my life was dead as well, that it was finished. Just like

Joshua had to acknowledge it was a new day, that it was time to prepare to go, so did I, and only then was I finally able to move on.

No doubt all our lives are filled with transitions, some that we anticipate and some that catch us by surprise, but in all of them are opportunities for us to look back and get stuck or to look ahead and keep moving. Not every transition is hard, of course. Many of them are easier to move through than others, perhaps because they are things we've prayed for, dreamed of, or worked hard for that are big wins in our lives:

- When we finish school and start our first career job.
- When we accept a promotion.
- When we start a new marriage.
- When we blend a family.
- When we move into a new home.
- When we start a new business.
- When we launch a new initiative.

But for the transitions we did not pray for, did not hope for, did not desire to ever happen, there needs to be a season of mourning first—mainly because something has died. What's more, it's important to keep in mind that mourning isn't just reserved for when a person dies; it's for when anything dies—a dream, a hope, a plan, a goal, a relationship, an expectation. It's for when anything changes that we weren't ready for:

- When we move away from a home and community we loved.
- When we change schools.
- When we change churches.
- When we leave one job for another.
- When we become empty nesters.
- When we find ourselves single again.
- When we experience financial peril.
- When we receive a difficult diagnosis.
- When a friendship dissolves.
- When a relationship ends.
- When someone we love dies.

In all the transitions I've lived through, I've learned that just because something has died, God's promises, plans, and purposes for my life have not. In fact, they are still very much alive. I know there are times when life upends us and we have to accept what we don't want

Mourning isn't just reserved for when a person dies; it's for when anything dies—a dream, a hope, a plan, a goal, a relationship, an expectation.

to accept, but I have found that if we can separate the circumstances we're facing from God's overall purpose for our lives, then we can have the hope we need to keep moving forward. The degree to which we can prepare our hearts to go, move

on, and keep laying hold of God is the degree to which there is more room for opportunity and resurrection, for renewal and life in the future. If we get stuck there, then perhaps there's less of a chance that something good can come from a bad situation, or that hope can come from a hopeless situation, or resurrection can come from what looks like a dead situation. Perhaps calling something dead that is dead is how we can start to move on.

NOT ALL GRIEVING SEASONS ARE THE SAME

A few years before Catherine moved out, my mum passed away. She left this earth the day of my fiftieth birthday celebration. Although she had been ill for a while, and we knew she had taken a turn for the worse, when I FaceTimed with her before I went to my party, I did not think it would be the last time I would ever speak to her. I felt confident that we would get to share more of our lives together. After the initial shock, I found that mourning her death was completely different from anything else I'd ever experienced. In the days before we left for Sydney for her funeral, I kept thinking how I would never see her again this side of eternity. There was such a finality to it all, such a foreverness. It wasn't like grieving through a minor transition with the hope of finding something different once we were through it. She was gone and I was left. The only transition would be my learning to live without her, and I didn't feel ready.

Mum was the woman who loved me before she ever saw me, who wanted me, who adopted me, who named me. I deeply loved her, and she deeply loved me, even though there were times when we didn't completely understand each other. I was not your conventional Greek daughter, and in many ways, my relationship with Mum was complicated. She had a different vision for my life than the path I chose, and it wasn't until she died that many unresolved things came to the surface of my heart—things I didn't even know were buried down deep in my soul.

What I came to understand after my mum's death is that how we mourn, and perhaps how long we mourn, is affected by what or whom we're mourning—and maybe all the surrounding circumstances. My adjusting to moving to the United States or to having Catherine move out and live a couple of hours away from home was completely different from when I had to say goodbye to my mum. Mourning her was much deeper and lasted longer than any other grief I'd known. It took time, and even when I thought I'd moved on, it would sneak up on me and surprise me when I least expected it. But that's what grief does, doesn't it? I'll never forget hugging someone who was wearing Mum's perfume, Chanel No 5. I thought I would buckle at the knees.

As more years have passed, I don't get triggered quite so easily. My mourning season is over, but to this day, I miss her. I still have "Mum" and her phone number listed in my favorites on my phone. I can't bear to delete it. I know I can't call her, but I like having her close like that all the same.

When I grieve, most often I cry and feel sad, and yet, coming from an expressive Greek background, I'll admit there have been times when I've been a bit more dramatic. Nick, on the other hand, being from a British background, is consistently stoic. I may be the only person who can detect when he has a change of emotion. No doubt, the way we express our grief is different for us all. I've known people who grew numb or found it hard to function, and others who were more angry or frustrated. The important thing is to be patient with ourselves and give ourselves time to grieve what we need to grieve.

If we look to the Scriptures, there are allowances and periods of time made specifically for this. When Moses died, God initiated thirty days of mourning. When Aaron died, he was mourned for thirty days.³ Bathsheba mourned the death of Uriah for the duration of her pregnancy, when she carried David's child.⁴ When Jacob died, the Egyptians mourned him for seventy days.⁵ And Scripture gives many more examples of mourning.⁶ Although I'm not sure why they were all for different periods of time, clearly it matters that we take time to grieve.

When I was very young, each time someone in our big Greek family died, the older members of our family would mourn for forty days. As part of this tradition, they signified their grieving period by dressing in black. It was more common in the generation of my grandparents and my great aunts and uncles, but I vaguely remember seeing it. From what my mum explained to me, it was a tradition that helped people recognize the need to grieve and then to move on, and it let others in the community

know that they were mourning. In the weeks following the funeral, Mum said the family would gradually transition from wearing black to wearing charcoal or purple, signifying their journey out of deep grief into stages of lesser grief.

Perhaps, when our mourning tries to keep us wearing black, what we need to do is venture out with some purple, figuratively speaking, though I admit, black is my go-to wardrobe essential. I'm not in a state of perpetual grieving, and I'm not on my way to another funeral; I just happen to wear black most all the time because it is easy for me. It requires me to think less about my wardrobe and more about everything else. My girls have tried to help me change, and from time to time, I have given in to them, but somehow, I always revert back to black. In that regard, I suppose I am stuck, but it's not in a way that holds me back from the future God has for me.

What about you? Is there a place where you're stuck? Is your grief holding you back from the future God has for you? Is there some place in your heart where you are still wearing black on the inside, even though you appear to be wearing purple on the outside? It's all too possible for any of us to tell a tale—with our activities, our expressions, and even our clothes—that all is well, when the truth is our hearts remain cloaked and weighed down in the garments of grief. I find it a relief that God promises to help us with all of this if we invite him in. He promises to give us "a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair."

HOW LONG WILL YOU MOURN?

I was nineteen when my father died from cancer. One of my brothers, George, was older, and the other, Andrew, was younger. To say we were lost wouldn't begin to describe it. My dad was kind and gentle and funny. We adored him; he was our hero. Where my mother would get worked up about things, Dad was more even-keeled. Though we loved him dearly and never could have forgotten him, as time went on, we did—we had to but in many ways my mother didn't. It might have looked like she did from a distance because she did go on with her life, but inside our family we all knew she had gotten stuck in a place where none of us could get her out. For years, she would not move any of my dad's things from their bedroom. Because it was like going into a museum, I avoided her room when I could. If I did go in and try to move anything, she would get visibly upset, as if she were keeping him alive by moving nothing—but he wasn't alive. All our family could do was sit back and watch as she got stuck in her clothing, stuck in her thinking, and stuck in her outlook on life. As much as we invited her or promised to go with her, she wouldn't go on and experience new things without Dad. She did show up for most every family party or grandchild's game or school play, but there were times when it felt like she wasn't as present as she could have been. She showed up physically, but mentally and emotionally she still lived in a past that no longer existed. It hurt to know that she was missing elements of a stunning future full of life and hope with us all.

In the Bible, Jacob responded to the reported loss of Joseph the same way my mum responded to the loss of my dad. "Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. 'No,' he said, 'I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave.'"8

Jacob was in a state of perpetual mourning. At some point in life, when we lose someone we love deeply or something we've invested in greatly, we can easily be tempted to do the same. We can get stuck in that place, and unless we purpose to do otherwise, there we will remain.

Sometimes, when we find ourselves in such a place, we need help. We know from Scripture that the prophet Samuel loved King Saul deeply; after all, he was the first king Samuel ever anointed. But when Saul disobeyed God's instruction, God set in motion a plan for a new king. Samuel grieved deeply, so much so that God asked him, "How long are you going to mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem because I have selected for myself a king from his sons." God wasn't asking out of callousness but out of kindness. He was helping Samuel move on.

How long are you going to mourn? It's a good question, and one we might need to ask ourselves, lest we get stuck looking back. It's one that I had to eventually ask myself when Catherine left home: Christine, how long are you going to mourn?

Yes, I really did that, but I'm not suggesting that we pretend things never happened or that we move on and ignore the pain in our hearts. No, not at all. But I am saying *move*. Move through.

Move through the place of perpetual mourning. Move through the past to the future God has for you.

Move through the place of perpetual mourning. Move through the past to the future God has for you. I know there are times in our lives when such a suggestion feels impossible; that we can't possibly accept it's the end of an era; that it doesn't seem we could ever stop looking back and start looking

ahead; and yet I believe it is possible, even in the worst of circumstances, because God doesn't expect us to do it alone. He wants us to trust in what we do know and trust him with all that we don't. He wants us to find it possible in him, with him, and through him. In the hope he is.¹⁰ In the hope he gives.¹¹ With his presence.¹² And through the power he provides.¹³

I HAVE MOUNTAINS TO GO

When the pandemic began in 2020, and I could no longer travel the way I had for years, my friend Dawn invited me to go hiking. I had always enjoyed being active and getting outside to run or enjoy nature, but ever since moving to the United States, my schedule hadn't allowed me to experience any of its

national parks or see its mountains or rivers up close. For more than a decade, I had spent my time flying to cities, speaking at churches and conferences, and spending time with people. When our family went on vacation, we typically flew to a destination rather than drive. So, while I had crisscrossed the US numerous times, I still hadn't seen what was outside its cities.

Initially, I saw Dawn's invitation as a way to get out of the house in a setting where it was easy to practice social distancing. Little did I know that it would lead to a whole new series of adventures in my life, of seeing God's creation up close, of increasing my mental and physical strength. What's more, during a time in our world when there was so much grief, so many losses, so much pain, it became a way for me to somehow keep all that from becoming bottled up in me. Getting out helped me physically exert myself in a way that helped me spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. There was something therapeutic about being out in God's creation, in nature, seeing the trees, the waterfalls, and the wildlife, experiencing all the different smells and noises. It brought life and hope to me in the midst of a dark, fearful, and contained season. From the start I had no idea all the ways it would keep me moving through the pandemic season we were all moving through, but it did

And yet, as great as it was and still is, I found that hiking at my age is completely different from what it might have been had I started it earlier in life. As I'm typing this, I feel every ache and pain and each one of my fifty-six years. I've come to

understand there's a price to pay far beyond the park entrance fees if you want to see America up close. I just finished hiking the Grand Canyon, rim to river to rim, and although I can't say enough about how extraordinary and beautiful it is, I can barely walk. A group of us, including Dawn and Nick, took the Bright Angel Trail down to the bottom, where we saw the Colorado River, and then we came back up on the South Kaibab Trail, a total of 16.5 miles. We experienced an elevation loss of 4,860 feet going down and a gain of 4,460 feet coming back up, and the views were stunning. As we walked down through the color variations in the layers of rock, we saw mule trains and historic structures. We passed through beautiful grasses and caught glimpses of birds who make the canyon home. I learned so much, and not just about the canyon.

I've had to accept that there are things my body can't do that it once did. Now, it's easier to accept this than many of the other losses I've shared in this chapter, but there's still loss. When I was young, I could play table tennis and soccer. I could run and fall and bounce back quickly. Now when I hike, I have to ice down every ache and pain. There are times when I have to wear a brace on my arm that stabilizes a fracture, or I wear a boot because I've damaged my foot. I never used to care what kinds of shoes I wore, because I didn't have to. Now I look for shoes described with words like *support* and *cushion*. If you're laughing, it's only because you're not there yet.

Despite all the pain and inconveniences, I know I have more mountains and canyons to hike, while I can. And when I

can't, I'll walk like the eighty-five-year-old couple who shuffle past my house every day. They are so adorable, holding hands, not thinking about the mountains they can no longer hike, but savoring the afternoon stroll they can still manage.

Watching them, I fully realize I can mourn all that's aging and stay home, I can get stuck like my mum did and not run to new adventures, or I can learn to care for my injuries and move on. If I keep looking back, I'll miss the rest of my life and all the plans and purposes God has for me. If I choose to keep moving forward, with God's help, I won't miss anything.

Remember Lot's Wife •

Looking back longingly can cost us the future that God has ahead of us, just as it did for Lot's wife.

- 1. I shared that in the moments when I found myself longing to have things back to the way they were, longing to have Catherine back at home, I found praying was most helpful. As you reflect on an area where you are stuck, start by praying the following: God, I recognize that I am stuck, looking back and longing for _______. I want to be free in you and free for you. Please give me the grace, by your Spirit and in your strength, to take steps I need to take to get unstuck and move forward, with bold faith, into the future you have for me.
- 2. When we haven't identified what we've lost specifically

through a transition, we can't grieve fully, and we can get stuck on account of it. When I was moving, it was important for me to identify the things I was going to miss so I could grieve them. As you reflect on an area where you have been (or are) stuck, take some time to list what specifically you have missed (or will miss) on account of this transition.