

PRAISE FOR

## MAKE YOUR DREAMS BIGGER THAN YOUR MEMORIES

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This is a life-changing book—one of the best I have ever read! Your past does not have to destroy your future. In a very practical way, Terri tells us how to let go of the pain and torment of our past so we can be released into our God-given destiny. I am so excited to use this book in our Mercy program as a weapon against the enemy!

### NANCY ALCORN

Founder and President  
Mercy Ministries International

I've known Terri Savelle Foy for many years now, and I can honestly say that she is a true gem to the Body of Christ. She is a woman of integrity and has great spiritual insight. I know that you are going to enjoy *Make Your Dreams Bigger Than Your Memories* because God has anointed Terri to share her heart with you so that you, too, can forget the past and press forward to the good future God has for you. So sit down and enjoy this book. It will be a blessing to you.

### DR. JESSE DUPLANTIS

Founder and President  
Jesse Duplantis Ministries

It has been a great joy for me as a father and a minister of the gospel to watch my daughter Terri enter into the calling that God has placed upon her life and hear the many wonderful testimonies of those who have benefited from her obedience. Terri has a unique way of ministering to those who have been hurt emotionally and are on the verge of giving up on themselves. In *Make Your Dreams Bigger Than Your Memories*, she demonstrates through her own experiences and the anointed Word of God that it's never too late to become the winner that God says you can be. Get ready for a life-changing experience!

### JERRY SAVELLE

Founder and President  
Jerry Savelle Ministries International

When I first met Terri Savelle Foy, I wondered what this beautiful, petite woman with the “Minnie Mouse” voice would have to say. I loved seeing a woman emerge who is powerful yet humble, sweet yet passionate about God’s Word, and dynamic in connecting with her audience. I believe this book will be a turning point for many hurting people . . . and that it will propel them into the place God has destined for them to reach.

## **DR. WENDY TREAT**

Co-pastor of Christian Faith Center  
Seattle, Washington

**MAKE YOUR  
DREAMS  
BIGGER THAN YOUR  
MEMORIES**

Don't Let Your Past Keep You From Your Future

**TERRI SAVELLE FOY**



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*I want to dedicate this book to you—the person  
who is reading it right now. I believe it is a divine appointment  
for you to read this book from cover to cover in order  
to give your past a burial . . . and to begin pursuing the  
God-given dreams that are already on the inside of you.  
Never again will your memories be bigger  
than your dreams!*

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# FOREWORD

The mountain is steep, and you've climbed long and hard to make it to the top. It's been your life-long dream to climb that mountain. You're almost there; every muscle in your body is screaming for rest, but you can't stop. You're too close to the top. Too close to realizing your dreams.

You keep pushing forward with everything within you when suddenly you feel someone grab your leg. You look down and see someone at your heels; there's a hand clenched to your leg, and you're being pulled down. You're frozen. You can't climb anymore, because you've changed your focus. You're looking down, not up. You quickly glance to the top and see that someone is there with a hand outstretched. All you have to do is reach up and take that hand. But you feel the pull at your heels, so you look back.

How many people are stuck because they can't move forward for looking backward? Their dreams are just ahead, and God's hand is outstretched. All they have to do is stay focused on Him, stay focused on their goal, and move forward. But Satan is at their heels reminding them of every sin and every mistake, heaping condemnation on them. All the while Jesus is waiting with His hand outstretched.

Through the years I've heard countless stories of people making wrong choices that have caused endless pain and sorrow to them and others around them. I've even had many confide in me

personally about issues in their life they were struggling with that weighed them down—marriages that were being ripped apart because of adultery; shame brought on by abuse; failure in some area of their life; the list goes on. I've seen some of them agonize with guilt because of sin in their past, while some have had a hard time forgiving themselves and moving forward even though God has forgiven them.

Terri Savelle Foy opens the window to her past and shares with us some of her most painful and shameful memories. Her no-holds-barred, I'm-not-going-to-smooth-this-over-because-I'm-a-well-known-preacher's-kid approach gives the reader a connection with her, and we are reminded once again that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23, *KJV*).

Terri struggled with guilt over her past for many years. God had a plan for her life, but she couldn't step into the fullness of that plan until she learned how to accept His forgiveness and forgive herself. What can we learn from Terri and her story?

Know that there is nothing in your past that God cannot forgive, and that if God can forgive you, then you can forgive yourself. Know that you can live your dreams if you choose to shake off the bondage of the past, get a clear vision of what God wants for your life, and then move in that direction.

Terri takes her testimony a step further and shares about the process that helped her on her journey toward complete healing from her past. These strategies are outlined in a practical way that can bring hope and healing to everyone who is struggling with issues that are keeping them from realizing their dreams.

You will be encouraged, inspired and motivated as you read Terri's book. Then release all of the negative aspects of your past so that you can live the abundant life that God intends for you to live.

Joni Lamb

Author, co-founder of the Daystar Television Network  
and host of *Joni*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I want to thank the Lord for loving me so much! Thank You, Jesus, for being the healer of the brokenhearted, for being my redeemer and for being the lifter of my head. What an honor it is to share Your Word with others and to encourage readers with what You've done in my life. Thank You for enabling me to dream.

Thank you to my sweet husband, Rodney, for not giving up on our marriage. You held on when I let go. It was tough at first, but God has helped us grow, learn from our mistakes and love each other more. Thank You for believing in me and in the call of God on my life. It means so much to me to have your support. And thank you for letting me use you (as funny examples) in my illustrations!

Thank you to my precious daughter, Kassidi, for believing in her mom so much! Being my only child, you sure end up in a lot of messages. Thank you for being my traveling buddy, my shopping buddy, and for sitting through countless church services hearing the same stories over and over. You are so valuable to me. Thank you for loving God and loving your mom so much! *Je t'adore . . .* with all my heart.

How do I thank my parents, Jerry and Carolyn Savelle, for all they have done to teach me God's Word? Mom and Dad, you are living examples of the unconditional love of God. Thank you for raising me in a Christian home, for forgiving me for not making

the best choices at times, and for always believing in me. You are the same behind the scenes as you are in front of people. Who would have thought that your little red-headed, freckle-faced Terra La Berra would be writing a book? Because of you, I have been given opportunities to share my message . . . and I do not take that lightly. I am so honored and so grateful to be your daughter.

Thank you to my sister, Jerri, for providing me with so many stories! We have so many funny childhood memories. I hope you don't mind me telling the world. We are opposite in so many ways, but we always have that "sister thing" that we share with no one else. All we have to do is look at each other and we know what the other person is thinking! I love you . . . and your six kids so much!

Thank you to my best friend, Theresa Paschall, for being bold enough to speak the truth to me . . . in love. It sure helps having a best friend who is also a counselor. I owe you thousands of dollars in therapy, Theresa! Thank you for being so trustworthy. You know everything there is to know about me . . . and you still love me and believe in me! That's a true best friend. I value your prayers, your opinions, your phone calls, your text messages and our weekly Mexican lunches . . . more than you know! Thank you for being my covenant friend for life.

Thank you to my assistant, Donna Groover, for keeping me on target with writing this book. You always have your little day planner reminding me of deadlines! Most of all, thank you for holding me accountable and loving me enough to speak the truth into my life. I appreciate your honesty . . . and your prayers. I am

so thankful that God brought you from Jamaica to England to Texas to work with me.

Thank you, Isaiah Shook, for being a part of this ministry from the ground floor. You have done just about everything to help launch the ministry that God has put in my heart. From designing artwork to filming podcasts and from attending ladies' conferences to adding mascara (in photoshop) to some of my pale-looking pictures, you've done it all. Having your support and your God-given gifts on my team has brought such excellence to this ministry.

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**1**

**WHEN YOU LOOK BACK . . .  
*YOU'VE LOST YOUR FUTURE***

---

It was 5:30 in the morning when I was out walking in my neighborhood, getting some exercise. Filled with anxiety, I had little to no vision for my future. I was filled with enormous regret over my past. As I made my routine lap around the cul-de-sac, I was praying quietly under my breath. Begging God yet again to forgive me for my awful sins. But this time, something happened. I was struck with a vision.

I saw myself standing at the foot of the cross of Christ. When I looked up and saw Jesus' feet, blood was dripping from them onto the top of my head. In the depths of my heart, I clearly heard the Lord gently speak these words to me, "I'm washing the memories of the past away," as His blood covered my head. The blood continued to flow down my body, covering my heart, and I heard Him whisper again, "I am the Healer of the brokenhearted" (see Isa. 61:1). The precious flow proceeded to run all the way down to the bottom of my feet, and again, I vividly heard the Lord say, "The residue of sin is gone from you."

The next thing I saw was a big arm reaching down and handing me a clipboard. On it were the words "This is an assignment on your life." I was then handed a set of keys, and a voice boomed, "And here are the keys to the Kingdom of heaven to help you fulfill your assignment."

Wow! Needless to say, that vision changed the course of my life. But what exactly did it mean? I believe that God was telling me (1) I was truly forgiven for my past; (2) I had an assignment from God, a future and a purpose for being born; and (3) God

had given me everything necessary to fulfill that assignment. All I had to do was believe that I was forgiven. Since having that vision, John 17:4 has become one of my favorite verses: “I glorified you on earth by completing down to the last detail what you assigned me to do” (*THE MESSAGE*).

That vision came at a time when I was absolutely consumed with shame and guilt over my past. Because I am a visual learner, I believe that God knew I had to “see” the blood of Jesus truly forgiving me. I had to “see” that God still had a plan for my life, even though I had made some big mistakes. And I had to “see” that God believes in me. I believe that by the time you finish this book, you, too, will *see* that for your own life.

Living in the past is deadly. It’s designed to kill you. Kill your future. Kill your dreams. Kill your potential. Kill your confidence. Think about what your past means to you. It could represent anything from sexual abuse by a family member to a mistake you made just last night or a secret you have been hiding for 20 years.

What images run through your mind? Do thoughts of your past produce a negative emotional response? Do you *sigh* really big and think, *If people only knew . . .*? Does it make you think of all the mistakes you’ve made or regrets you hang on to? Does the past bring a face to your mind that you want to get out of your mind? Does it make you feel anger, rage and deep feelings of rejection? Do you feel overwhelming regret, guilt and shame that you just can’t seem to shake?

I don’t know what the past means to you personally, but you do, and more importantly, God does. If you are truly fed up with

being limited or even paralyzed by your past, and you simply want a new beginning, you're reading the right book.

For many years, I could not get past my past—past mistakes, past relationships, past hurts, past disappointments. I spent most of my prayer time praying over the past. I relived the past when I lay down at night, when I woke up in the morning and when I went about my day. I was letting my past define my future, and it was destroying any potential God gave me to do something with my life.

I am such a firm believer that you have a limited time on earth to do everything you possibly can with your life. God allowed you to be born for a purpose. So no matter what has happened in your past, God can still use you. He wants to use you. Do not die with your potential untapped because of something that happened back then! There's too much you've still got to do!

### **Remember Lot's Wife**

It is recorded in Luke 17:32 that Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife!" You may be familiar with the story of Lot's wife from Genesis 19. God was getting ready to destroy the city of Sodom and Gomorrah because the inhabitants were wicked and their lives were corroded with sin. God's heart was broken that all these people He created to love Him were doing nothing but looking for new ways to rebel against Him. God promised to save a man named Lot, and his family, from the destruction, and He gave them one command as they were on their way out: "Do look back" (Gen. 19:17, *NIV*).

But what happened as they left? Lot's wife looked back and she was turned into a pillar of salt. I heard Joyce Meyer once say that when this woman turned back, she gave the impression that she cared more about her past than she did her future. Lot's wife lost her future by looking back. The reality is that you, too, can lose your future by looking back!

Sometimes I wonder what God had planned for Lot's wife to accomplish. What was on her clipboard? How do you suppose her story could have been written if she hadn't turned back? Would she have made a name for herself rather than be called "Lot's Wife"? Was her life so meaningless that nobody even remembered her name?

I hope this story alarms you. An alarm is meant to wake you up. I hope that statement (Don't look back!) wakes you up the way it woke me up in understanding how serious this is. Don't destroy your life by looking back. It's over. It's behind you. Everything about your past is finished! God wants to do a new thing in your life, but He can't do it if you keep lingering in your past.

### **"Regret" Is a Bad Word**

I was walking out of my office gates one day, looking straight ahead, when suddenly I turned around. *Bam!* A car came out of nowhere and hit me on the right side. Instantly, I woke up from that startling dream, wondering what it was all about. It was so real. *We're not supposed to die in our dreams*, I thought. Next, I heard the Lord speak so clearly in my heart these life-changing words:

“If you continue to look back at the life I’ve delivered you from, your life will be summed up in one word: regret.”

I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to come to the end of my life and have only regret. What are some regrets that may be plaguing you right now? What is causing you to keep looking back? What continues to catch your eye? What still possesses your heart? What is it in your life that you know is not God’s best but it hurts too bad to let go of? What happened to you that has made you think you’re not as good as other people?

I’m sure you know people who live in the past. Whenever you are around them, every conversation begins with the words “I remember when” and ends with “the past.” They see themselves through their past experiences and believe that everyone else does as well. The truth is that nobody wants to hear it. It gets old, tiring and boring very quickly. In Philippians 3:13-14, Paul says, “One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (*NKJV*). In Matthew 12:34, Jesus also says, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (*NKJV*). Apparently what happened to some people 10, 20 or 30 years ago is still in abundance in their heart, because it keeps coming out of their mouth.

If this is you, then you’re reading the right book. It’s time to let things be done with and behind you once and for all. Don’t waste another day of your life allowing Satan to torment you over the past. Now, I’m not telling you to just get over it. Believe me, I know how frustrating hearing those words can be. And I know

that just hearing them over and over didn't work for me. I needed more. I needed a strategy. And that's exactly what this book is: a step-by-step plan to lead you out of your past and into your vision and dreams.

## **Sin Happens to Us All**

We all have a past. We've all made mistakes and done things we wish we hadn't done. We all wish we could just push a delete button on some of the choices we made yesterday and some of the things we've experienced, and then pretend they never happened. At least I do. Oh, how badly I do. You can't imagine how many times I have cried, "Why were you so stupid, Terri? Why? Why? Why did you do that? Why did you let that happen?" Or looked in the mirror and said, "I don't even know you. Wake up! What is wrong with you?"

Having grown up in church and listened to numerous testimonies of people who lived sinful lives, I knew that God is a forgiving God. However, the difference between the people giving those testimonies and me is that they weren't born again when they sinned. I was. They didn't know God, so who could blame them for all of their stumbles and messes? I, however, was a Christian all my life.

So why did I mess up so badly? What was my excuse? I didn't have one. Why was I flat-out sinning? I wasn't confused about God's commandments. I knew them very well. I just couldn't come to grips with how God could forgive *me*. I felt terrible for falling into Satan's traps, knowing full well the fact that the devil is my enemy.

The reason we, as Christians, fall into sin or disobey God is because we are deceived. Eve went through the same thing in the Garden. She knew God, and she knew exactly what God had said about the trees and the fruit. Eve wasn't confused. She even repeated God's instructions back to Him. She knew which tree, out of the whole Garden, was forbidden. So, why did she eat from the very tree that God specifically warned her about? She was deceived by Satan. He appealed to her flesh and preyed on her weakness. And he got her thinking. Anytime Satan can get you thinking about his suggestion, you can think yourself right out of the will of God for your life.

What happened right after Eve (and Adam) sinned? They immediately felt guilt, shame and regret. (I know these emotions all too well.) They felt unworthy to approach God and hid from Him in their fear. (Ah, exactly what Satan hoped for.) Let me tell you how I know about the guilt, shame and regret of wrong thinking and being taken in by Satan's deceptive ways.

### **What's Going On Behind the Smile?**

I was a kid known for always smiling and being happy. But the girl who smiled a lot had a lot of pain behind that smile. I had been severely hurt by people in my young teenage years. I was manipulated, controlled, violated, abused, and painfully rejected. I felt insignificant. I may have seemed like a perfect child, but the truth is that I was a very insecure young girl who hid many painful things inside. The amazing part is not what I went through, but that I managed to hide it all behind a smile! I was

very good at hiding my pain and keeping it all inside, which is a very dangerous thing.

I wanted so badly to please my parents and be perfect. I never wanted them to be worried about me messing up. So I turned into an overachiever. I made good grades and was in the National Honor Society program in high school. I was also homecoming queen; co-captain of the varsity cheerleaders; voted Miss Crowley High School; Class Favorite Girl; and I even dated the quarterback of the football team! I was blessed with many awards, was liked by most everybody, and stayed out of trouble. I *appeared* to have it all together, which was quite far from reality.

In college, it was no different. I was on the Dean's List nearly every semester. I loved God with all my heart. I prayed every night before I went to sleep. I got along with my roommates. Life was basically fun and carefree.

However, during the last semester of my senior year at Texas Tech University, this happy-go-lucky preacher's kid's life was torn apart. I found myself face down on my bedroom floor in an apartment in Lubbock, Texas, scribbling these words in my journal: "I want to die!" This seemingly "perfect Christian girl," who smiled all the time, was pregnant . . . before marriage.

It was a defining moment in my life. It was a moment that Satan was sure to take full advantage of . . . for as long as I would let him. I can't even articulate how overwhelmed I felt by shame, regret, guilt and hypocrisy. It seemed as if everything I had worked so hard for was for nothing. I was sure that my parents would cringe in seeing their perfect little girl become the biggest disgrace of our family.

I truly wanted to die.

I will never forget the day I found out that I was pregnant. I walked into a grocery store and nervously bought a home pregnancy test. I anxiously wondered if anyone from school would recognize me (knowing that I wasn't married) or, even worse, recognize me as Jerry Savelle's (the preacher's) daughter!

I was alone in my apartment when I took the test. My boyfriend waited on the other end of the telephone for the news. I furiously prayed and waited for the window on the stick to indicate a negative result. No such luck.

With my heart beating fast, and fear exploding in my body, I dropped the phone. On that August morning, a positive pink line confirmed my worst fears. I wasn't the good girl everyone thought. I couldn't hide my mistakes anymore. I hated myself.

Rather than tell my parents or admit to them that I really wasn't who they thought I was, I wanted to disappear or run away. I absolutely could not bear the pain of telling my folks. I knew I would embarrass them and their ministry and crush their hearts. I wanted to have the baby alone and never tell anyone what had happened to me.

I never wanted my parents to be concerned about me, because Terri's "perfect" and always fine. And for a long time it sure looked that way. I did my best to please people, but in my efforts to please God, I was weak. When temptation came, I fell—more often than I'd like to admit. More than anything, I didn't want to disappoint God, but I didn't know how to be strong against Satan. Although having premarital sex was obviously not the only

sin I ever committed, it was the biggest sin that others discovered. For sure, it changed me.

I remember not knowing who I was anymore. I lost my true identity. I didn't know how to act. I used to be perceived as the *good girl*, but overnight I became the *bad girl*. I was confused. I was tormented. I was insecure. I lost the vision for my life. I tried my best to go on with life as usual.

As I sat on my bedroom floor the night I found out I was pregnant, and gasped for breath between my sobs, I painfully wrote the most shocking letter to my parents. I told them their little girl was pregnant outside of marriage. I apologized for being a disgrace and suggested they should disown me. Deep down inside, it was a cry for love.

Oh, how I dreaded my mother checking her mailbox that rainy day, knowing exactly when my letter would arrive! My sweet mom, however, handled the situation with more grace and love than I could imagine. Her first reaction was, "I got your letter today." I said, "You did?" (By now I was sobbing uncontrollably). Then she said, "It looks like we're going to have a grandbaby."

Wow! Only a woman of God would communicate such love and forgiveness at a time when she was so disappointed and hurting. She and my dad both were living examples of the way God loves us even when we disappoint Him. They were quick to forgive me, and I knew that only God could have given them that kind of mercy to handle my news the way they did. I vividly remember my dad calling me, after he received the news from my mom, all the way from a hotel room in Wales.

Through the long distance telephone call, I heard him say, “Terri, this is your daddy.” As tears of shame rolled down my face, I cried, “I’m sorry, Daddy. I’m so sorry.” I’ll never forget his words back to me: “You’re going to be all right. Daddy still loves you. You’re not the first girl to go through this, and you won’t be the last. The Savelles are not quitters, and we’re going to get through this.”

Hiding many tears, I’m sure, my mom and dad both did their best to show me love and forgiveness. God definitely strengthened my parents to be able to say those words to me at a time when I’m sure they felt broken beyond words. There was no doubt that they loved me. It was clearly spoken. But it didn’t change how I felt about myself.

Three weeks later, I walked down a church aisle wearing my sister’s wedding dress. Almost the entire time, my head was dropped down in shame. I was paranoid that everyone was staring at my stomach to see proof that I was pregnant (though you couldn’t even tell). It was the dream day of every little girl, but I hated every minute of it. I felt like such a failure.

Three weeks later, my baby died.

Wondering what else could possibly go wrong with my “former” perfect life, I lay in a cold hospital room after having surgery to remove my stillborn baby. I looked at the tiny child on the sonogram and wished it had been me that died instead.

### **What Are You Not Letting Go Of?**

Choosing to go on with life and trying to make the best of it, I graduated with honors from college that challenging semester and

moved to Fort Worth with my new husband, Rodney. There we started a new life together.

After substitute teaching for a while, I pursued a job at my dad's ministry and began ghostwriting his books. I gained experience in different departments of his ministry and eventually began traveling on crusades with him and another evangelist named Jesse Duplantis.

It appeared that I was over the past. My parents forgave me. I was married. I was justified in the sight of others. I was working in the ministry. I was doing great. Oh the sting of false appearances!

In the summer after I moved to Fort Worth, I attended a Kenneth Copeland Believers' Convention in Anaheim, California. As I stood during the praise and worship service, in the second row, behind my parents, Reverend Oral Roberts was escorted in. He was seated right in front of me and next to my parents.

My dad said to Mr. Roberts, "Do you remember my daughter Terri?"

Mr. Roberts turned around and hugged me. Then he stared at me intently for a long time. Pointing his finger in my face, he said, "Terri, you're called, aren't you?"

I gave him a sheepish smile and responded unconvincingly, "I think so?"

He looked right into my eyes and said, "There's something you're not letting go of! Lift your hands."

I raised both hands and he began hitting the bottom of my elbows and repeating in a booming voice, "Let go! Let go! Let go!"

I stood there crying. I was so embarrassed. I knew that people all around me could hear him. I saw the TV cameras homing in on us,

and because it was Oral Roberts, people wanted to know what he was saying. I was already full of such shame, I got mad inside. Why couldn't I hear something amazing like, "God has a special plan for your life"? You want to know why? Because God knew what I *really* needed to hear.

I went back to my hotel room that night and went into the bathroom and locked the door. I didn't want my husband to see me. I just wanted to cry. I wanted God to tell me exactly what Mr. Roberts was talking about.

I didn't get my answer that night. The truth was, I was oblivious to what I could be holding on to. It wasn't until I flew back home to Texas, and was out walking one morning, that I found out. Yet again, I begged God to show me what I needed to let go of. All of a sudden, I heard the Lord speak to me inside my spirit. "It's the shame of your past, Terri. It's time to let it go." It wasn't just the shame of getting pregnant that I needed to let go of, it was everything—even those hidden things that nobody knew about. I cried for hours.

I didn't realize that I was carrying so much inside. I was letting my past define me. I was letting it shape my character. I was looking at myself as "the girl who got pregnant" not "the girl who was forgiven." I wasn't as funny as I used to be. I was becoming an introverted, insecure girl.

Only months after that experience with Oral Roberts, I heard Pastor Mac Hammond say that "shame and guilt will keep you from your calling." Now it made sense. You see, Satan doesn't want you doing what you were put on this earth to do. If he can

convince you that not only have you sinned, but you *are* that sin, then you will never have the confidence to do anything significant for God. Why? Because sin makes cowards of men: “Fear made cowards of them all” (Esther 9:2, *THE MESSAGE*). If Satan can keep you full of shame, he can keep you from God and His plan for your life.

Satan will do anything he can to stop the plan of God for your life. If it's guilt over the past, he'll use it, just as he did with the man who fell into sexual sin in 2 Corinthians 2:6-7: “The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow” (*NIV*). If it's a past relationship that you know full well God does not want you in, Satan will try to drag you back into it. If you have been delivered from past temptations, Satan will try to convince you to go back to that place.

Is it coincidental? Absolutely not! It's part of the warfare we are in. Nothing about Satan's attacks on your life are by accident. He purposely assaults the areas in your life that hurt you the most. If Satan knows he can intimidate you in an area, he will.

What is it that you need to let go of? What memories are you still replaying over and over in your mind? What are you still holding on to? Picture God standing before you, cupping your face in His gentle hands, and saying, “Let go, My child! Let go! Let go!”

I have fallen into many carefully laid traps that Satan has set before me, and I wish, more than anything, that I hadn't. I wish I had been strong enough to resist temptation before it got me. I

wish I had been wise enough to stay focused. I wish I had been confident enough to stand up for myself. I have let myself down more times than I care to remember, and I've had to "let go" of many such painful attachments, many times. But I know what restoration is. I know what healing is. And I know what it takes to keep the past where it belongs . . . in the past.

### **Conquer Your Past by Focusing on Your Future**

I can't tell you how many times I've gotten quiet before the Lord and sat with my journal in my hands ready to write anything I might hear Him say. You know what I would consistently hear in my heart? Yep, that's right. "Let go of the past!"

Weeks would go by. "Let go of the past, Terri!" Months would go by. "Let go of the past, Terri." Years would go by. "Let go of the past, Terri." That was well and good, but I didn't know how. One day, I was led to the verse I mentioned previously, written by the apostle Paul:

But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13-14, *NIV*).

*THE MESSAGE* says it this way: "Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back."

It's obvious when you read Paul's famous verse that he understood that in order to "press toward the mark," or to be in God's perfect will for his life, he had to (1) forget the past, and (2) have a vision. This is what God revealed to me in the vision I told you about at the beginning of this chapter.

I like to envision Philippians 3:13-14 in a picture. I'm watching the acrobatic moves of a trapeze artist. She lets go of one bar, does a magnificent flip in the air and quickly grabs hold of another bar that guides her to the platform. If all she did was let go of the first bar, she'd fall down to the bottom. She has to quickly grab hold of something else to get to the other side.

It's quite an accomplishment to finally let go of your past, but that's not enough. You must quickly grab hold of your future. In other words, you must get a vision for your life if you're ever going to successfully get beyond your past. If you don't have a vision, I can almost guarantee that you will always return to your past, whether it was a life of drugs, alcoholism, homosexuality, crime, infidelity, an unhealthy relationship, or whatever.

The good news is that you can let go of your past and forge ahead with a vision. There is nothing that can stop you. It doesn't matter how old you are. It doesn't matter how educated you are. It doesn't matter what your past experiences have been. It doesn't matter how talented you are. I don't care how small your vision is. If it's to get your laundry done, great! At least you have a vision.

At the end of this book, I have outlined a "chapter challenge" for you to make your dreams bigger than your memories. Every chapter challenge is something I've worked through in my life at

some point in time, and I can tell you that it does work. It's important that you put into practice the things you learn, and this is what these chapter challenges help you do. Each challenge helps you stick with the plan of moving toward your future.

Before you panic and think this is just another “write your vision and make it plain” book, I want to give you a very compelling and simple way to come to grips with your true vision. I want to help you write your story and then live it out. First, you need to see what Habakkuk wrote and get those words ingrained in your mind: “And then GOD answered: ‘Write this. Write what you see. Write it out in big block letters so that it can be read on the run’” (Hab. 2:2, *THE MESSAGE*).

It's obvious that the Lord knows the power in writing a vision, a dream, a goal. This is why He wrote about it in His Word. Vision stops distraction. Think of it this way: When you write a list of things to buy before you go into a grocery store, it keeps you focused on purchasing just those items. You get in and out a whole lot quicker as you check each item off. If you don't have a list, what tends to happen? That's right. You end up wandering aimlessly down each aisle, grabbing whatever meets your fancy. You waste time and money you don't have, and you'll regret it later. Writing a vision will save you a lot of time, money, energy and emotions.

Having a vision for your life is vital to living your life with purpose versus just existing. God did not create you for the purpose of taking up space. He hand-designed you for a specific purpose. Your job is to discover that purpose, get a plan and pursue it. Many people never take the time to think about their dreams,

much less write them down. Those who do are significantly more successful and happier.

Proverbs tells us that without a vision, we will perish (see Prov. 29:18). There's no confusion about that verse. You *will* perish if you do not have a vision for your life. "Perish" means die, de cease, pass away, expire, kick the bucket, cash in one's chips, give up the ghost, drop dead, pop off, choke, croak, die out, die off and die down. Okay, some of those sound pretty funny, but we're talking about *your life!* You only have an allotted time on earth. You're going to spend more time on the other side of death than you will here on earth. In the big scope of life, your time on earth really isn't that much! Why would you want to waste your life tormented by a past that you can't do anything about?

You can't change what has happened to you. You can't change what you did. You can't change the choices you made. But the past is over. God wants to use you . . . now! He is incapable of making mistakes. And He made you for a purpose. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer. 29:11, *NIV*).

God created you because He needs you. He needs your mouth to speak for Him. He needs your hands to pick others up who are down. He needs your feet to go where others won't go. He needs your trials to be turned into a testimony for someone else to hear. He created you to live out your dreams, not die with them still in you. Determine right now that you are not going to be a person who had a lot of untapped potential, but a person who has potential and chooses to tap into it.

You may be thinking, *I don't know my vision. I've tried to write it, but I don't even know what I'm supposed to do, much less what God's plan is for my life.* I understand. My biggest dreams were to become a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader! I was a big dreamer!

I want to share a story with you that led me to discover how we all can come to grips with our true dreams and goals for life. After you read it, I don't believe you'll ever question again what you really want to accomplish during the time you have left on earth.

## Your Funeral

One October morning during my junior year of high school, my English teacher, Mrs. Sawyer, told the class to get out a sheet of paper. She said, "Write your full name at the top. Underneath your name, write your birthdate and last night's date." She paused for a minute, then continued, "Now, I want each of you to write your very own obituary."

*What? Isn't that morbid? That's creepy,* I thought. I looked around at the other students and we looked at each other, not knowing what to write.

We weren't let off the hook. "C'mon, people," Mrs. Sawyer said. "What do you want people to say about you at your funeral? Give it some thought. Don't write what you've done up to this time in your life. Write what you *want* said about you."

This strange yet sobering assignment came about through a tragic incident that had happened the night before. It was homecoming week, and as tradition would have it, a bunch of the stu-

dents were “painting the town.” The cheerleaders were out that night decorating the houses of each football player. Other students were driving up and down the city streets, cruising the Sonic Drive-In and acting wild. If you’re not familiar with homecoming traditions in many schools in the South, the students go all out to show their school spirit.

As cheerleaders, our job was to promote school spirit. And that’s exactly what we did. My best friend, Theresa, and I were out in my convertible with the top down. The music was blaring and we were chatting away. In the midst of all the streamers, the paint and high school students looking for an excuse to get out of the house on a school night, tragedy struck. A friendly, likable, Christian guy named Paul accidentally fell out of the back of a truck right in front of the school and was run over. He died later that night.

The next morning, Homecoming Day, the school was silent. It was shocking, unexpected and devastating to us all. I vividly remember walking the halls that day, uniform on, ribbons for sale, the day of the biggest game. The atmosphere felt numb. Nobody was smiling or cheering. Nobody was even “there,” for that matter.

So there we were, listening to Mrs. Sawyer’s instructions on how to write our own obituary. At the end of class, as she walked around the room to collect the pieces of paper, she told us, “Students, you have just written not your obituary but your dreams. Now live them.”

Wow! What a profound project! This exercise is not for high school students alone; it’s for anyone and everyone to consider.

Nearly 20 years later, I discovered that Stephen Covey, in his best-selling book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, listed writing your obituary as one of the habits of successful people! It's the equivalent of writing a vision statement.

When you come to the end of your life and look back, what do you want people to say about you? Would they, right now, say what you want them to say? Or would they not say much at all? How would they describe you? What would they say you did during your time on earth? Did you make a difference in anyone's life?

Forget what they might say right now; what do you *want* them to say? What do you want to accomplish if age, money, education and past experiences were no factor? Don't analyze it, and for goodness' sake, don't try to figure out how it could possibly happen to you. That's not the point. The point is to dream. Later on in this book, I will help you develop a daily vision for your life that will lead you right into God's perfect plan; but for now, I want you to get your mind off of the past and onto your future by dreaming big, with no limits, no excuses, no boundaries.

Just dream.

I'm giving you permission to dream as big as you possibly can. And don't fear that others might read it and make fun of you. Who cares? It's your life, and you only live it once. Imagine that your life is over and the person closest to you has been asked to write your obituary. What would you want them to write? Go ahead and write it for them.

Don't rush through this for the purpose of moving on to chapter 2. Take your time, sit down, think it through and write.

I have done this myself and found that it helped tremendously in following a vision for my life. I took the time to just be honest with myself and write. I didn't write with the thought that anyone else might read it and it would embarrass me. I just wrote how I would like to be described and what I would like to have accomplished. I didn't finish it in one day or even two. I wrote it in increments, but my goal was to finish it, and I did. I wrote my dreams.

Now it's time for you to write yours.