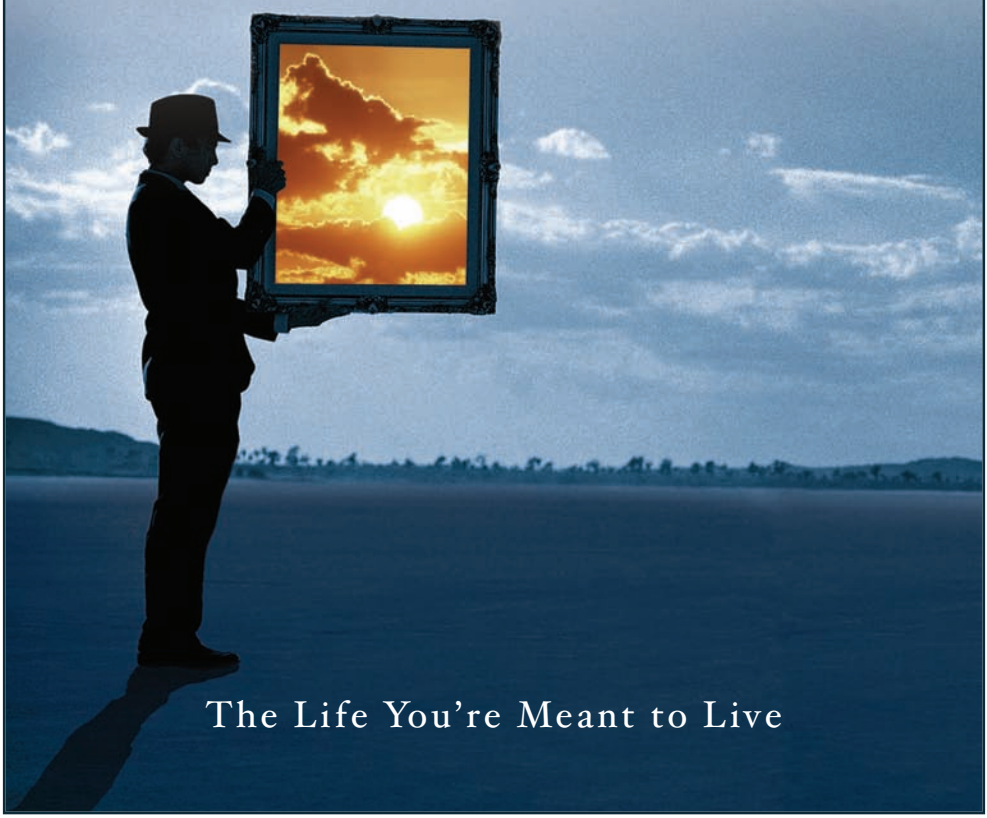
Extraordinary

A Devotional
by John Bevere



The Life You're Meant to Live

Devotional 1

No More "Normal"!

Thank you for joining me in these *Extraordinary* devotional sessions; I believe this message will ignite your heart and launch you on your journey to unveiling your "extraordinary."

To start, let's look at the word "extraordinary." Its definition is "beyond what is usual, exceptional, exceeding the common measure." Antonyms for "extraordinary" are common, normal, and, usual. The opposite of extraordinary is normal! I think if we're honest, we all want our lives to be more than what we've known and seen. Unless it's suppressed, there is an innate desire in each of us to rise above common. We yearn for the extraordinary.

The most popular films that have captured the hearts and attention of the public involve extraordinary powers. There's Spiderman, Superman, the Star Wars saga, Incredibles--and that's just a few. How intriguing that they are films that center on extraordinary characters doing remarkable feats, with a good number of the heroes possessing beyond-human abilities or powers. Why? Because "extraordinary" is how we were created to live. It was God's plan from the beginning. Here's how the Apostle Paul explained it to the Christians in Ephesus:

My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along. Through Christians like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels! (Ephesians 3:9-10, Message)

Unfortunately, God's plan and man's execution of the plan are often not the same. One of the main reasons I avoided Christianity for years was its portrayal. I saw men of God as Bible-thumping critics who were passive, backward, and ignorant. The idea that Christians were pioneers who lived and thought outside the box, behaving in extraordinary ways, never crossed my mind.

And my image of Christian women was even worse. I perceived they had no say in important matters, dressed unfashionably, and neglected their appearance. It was frowned upon for a godly woman to venture beyond her domestic duties, and certainly unheard of for her to lead in any way.

I viewed Christianity as lifeless. Becoming a believer would mean losing individuality and foregoing creativity, excellence, passion, and the ability to succeed in any arena of life. I didn't know it then, but my views were the opposite of how God created us to live.

Hollywood, religious people, and our culture had painted for me a warped and limited image of God's people. Why did I have this distortion? We have a common enemy named Satan who is called "the ruler of this world." He controls the world's system and influences the minds of those who do not belong to God. What he fears most is Christians discovering who God's made them to be—extraordinary people with abilities to carry out remarkable and unusual feats. This should be the image society has of a Christian.

The truth is God not only desires you to live extraordinarily but He has also equipped you to do so. An exceptional life is not restricted to certain individuals or professions. It doesn't matter who you are or how you serve in life. If you're a school teacher, government leader, stay-at-home mom, athlete, student—it doesn't matter because you were created for extraordinary achievements in that role. The power to accomplish remarkable feats and live an exceptional life is not tied to an occupation but to a disposition of the heart.

The message of *Extraordinary* is a progressive revelation that has the potential to ruin you forever for the ordinary. I speak from experience because as I sought God, researched, wrote, and prayed over this book, I was changed forever! As you make this journey with me, you'll not only know you were created for the extraordinary, but you'll actually understand how to live it.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think of when you hear or say the word "extraordinary"? How has our society and culture contributed to that?

2. Christians of the early church were held in high esteem by their society. What view do you think society has of the church right now?

3. What image of Christianity do you think you are portraying for the unbelievers in your world?

4. Have you discovered your extraordinary life? If not, what's holding you back?

In Conclusion...

We've been called to a life far beyond the norm, and God has given us everything we need to live that way. It's time to unveil our "hero within" and become all He has planned for us to be!

Devotional 2

Grace-fully Pleasing God

God's love for us is unconditional and unchanging. This is clearly seen in the words of Jesus' prayer the night before His crucifixion. He says in John 17:23: "Then the world will know that you [God the Father] sent me [Jesus Christ] and will understand that you love them as much as you love me." Did you catch that? God loves us as much as He loves Jesus! No person or thing is more valuable to God than Jesus. Yet, God saw our value equal to that of what He prized most.

We must understand that there's nothing we can do to make Him love us more or less. But we are in control of how pleased He is with us. When it comes to pleasing God, the big question is, "Can we do it?" Can imperfect people like us, living in an imperfect world, bring a perfect God delight?

Hear the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:3: "We have everything we need to live a life that pleases God. It was all given to us by God's own power." There's our answer—we have everything it takes to live a life that pleases our Heavenly Father.

With that said, I want you never to forget this statement: *You have the ability to please God, but it is up to you to utilize the power and live it out.*

God expects us to be faithful with what He's given us, and He doesn't empower each child equally. This is made clear in the parable of the talents. One servant was given five talents, another was given two, and still another was given one.

We must always pay attention to what God has given us. A person's ability to write, teach, preach, sing, design, organize, lead, and so forth are all God-given gifts. You were perfectly created by God to function in the kingdom and have the gifts and abilities to fulfill your specific assignment. So, in regard to what we have, we cannot compare our measured results with others. However, in regard to what we do with what we have, we will be judged and in this we bring pleasure, or a lack of it, to our Heavenly Father.

So, going back to Peter's words, the next question is: "What is the power that has been miraculously given to us that enables us to please God?" The answer is "His grace."

Grace. Much has been communicated about grace in recent times, yet it still isn't fully understood by so many. It's without a doubt one of the most, if not the most, important truths a believer should grasp, because it's the very foundation of our salvation and life in Christ. It is not just God's favor that cannot be earned; it is also God's empowering presence that gives us the ability to do what pleases

Him. Grace gives us the ability to exceed our own ability! It gives us the ability to live extraordinarily!

God didn't just rescue us from sin and eternal death. He has empowered us so that we can live successfully here in this world. He didn't want children who would have the title of righteousness but not the ability to overcome the sins and weaknesses that ensnared them in the first place. No, He designed salvation to be complete—triumphant living in this world, as well as in the one to come.

Discussion Questions:

1. What has been your understanding of grace? How has this session challenged that mindset?

2. Why do you believe or not believe that you are just as valuable to God as Jesus? How has your relationship with your earthly parents affected that belief?

3. What gifts, talents, and abilities has God given to you? How effective are you at using them to fulfill kingdom assignments?

4. In what areas of your life would you like to experience more of God's grace to live extraordinarily?

In Conclusion...

We mean everything to God, and His love for us is unconditional and unchanging. We as imperfect people have the ability to please our perfect Father, but this can be accomplished only by His grace!

Devotional 3

Living By a Higher Standard

In order to live the extraordinary life God has for us, we must live a life above reproach. In Peter's first epistle, he said: "...But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God—who chose you to be his children—is holy." (1 Peter 1:15, NLT)

Hear his words—"you must be holy in everything you do, just as God...is holy." This is not a should be statement; rather, it's a command. We are to be holy as God is holy.

The word holy is from the Greek word hagios. Some words used to define it are: set apart, sanctified, consecrated, pure, and morally blameless. The fundamental qualities of holiness are separation, consecration and devotion to the service of God, sharing in His purity, and abstaining from worldly defilement.

We believers are to live at a higher standard, separating ourselves from evil while living among and interacting with people who are not in relationship with God. We are to go into the world as lights but not to be contaminated by the world.

When God says, "be holy as I am holy," He is actually saying, "I don't think, talk or live like you, so come up to My level of living." To be more blunt, He's saying, "Why do you want to hang around the barn yard and live like turkeys when I've called you to soar like eagles! I've called you to an extraordinary life!" To walk in true holiness is to experience liberation and freedom at the highest level.

Paul writes to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We are to cleanse ourselves from every bit of filthiness, and that's the uncleanness according to God's standard, both inwardly and outwardly. Inward would be attitudes of bitterness, envy, jealousy, strife, unforgiveness, greed, lust, and the like. Outward would be acts of stealing, lying, gossip, slander, sexual immorality, fraud, drunkenness, drug addiction, vandalism, physical violence, and more—the list is long.

It doesn't say "God will cleanse us," nor does it say "the blood of Jesus will cleanse us." It says we are to cleanse ourselves.

Please don't misunderstand me: The blood of Jesus does cleanse us of all sin. However, there is a huge difference between justification, which is salvation from eternal death, and sanctification, which is holiness. We were justified the moment

we received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and we became a new creation, inwardly possessing the nature of Jesus. This was freely given by God's grace. However, this time we have a part in the process and need to work in conjunction with it. God's gift of grace supplies us with the power to cleanse ourselves, and we must do the scrubbing!

When we think like God, talk as Jesus did by speaking what the Father says, and imitate Jesus' lifestyle, we will not live like people of the world. Appetites and desires of the flesh will not drive us. We will be influencers and often envied by the world due to our success because we are thinking and acting at a higher level.

Discussion Questions:

1. Until now what has been your understanding of holiness?

2. What are some ways that followers of Christ can demonstrate living by a "higher standard"?

3. What do you think it "looks like" to go about cleansing yourself spiritually?

4. What examples from your own experience—or the experiences of others—have demonstrated "thinking and acting at a higher level"?

In Conclusion...

We're commandd ofto be holy as He is holy, set apart from the world.

In the gospels, when the apostles went forth to bear fruit, the Holy Spirit was only with them, the kingdom was near. However, Jesus shows that after the kingdom comes, the Holy Spirit will be in us—within. We have the power within to advance the kingdom in the hearts and lives of people exactly as Jesus did; it's all because of His amazing grace!

There is to be no lack, even as there is no lack in heaven. If there is a condition in a person's life that is not congruent with heaven's standard, it is to change. We are to declare the kingdom. God's will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven!

Discussion Questions:

1. Put yourself in the shoes of the Pharisees and those who walked the earth in Jesus' day. How might you have responded to Him saying He was the Messiah?

2. Why do you think so many Christians do not seem to live with purpose and power?

3. What are the ramifications in our daily life of the truth that "the kingdom is within" us?

4. How do you think Christ is calling you to advance His kingdom here on earth?

In Conclusion...

As a born-again, Spirit-filled believer, you possess God's kingdom and have been sent by Jesus into the world to see heaven manifested on earth!

Devotional 5

Faith Moves God

Everything we receive from the Lord is through faith. There is a truth that I've discovered many Christians are ignorant of: God does not respond to our need; He responds to our faith. Jesus bluntly stated in James 4:2, "The reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it." He's not talking about half-heartedly asking but about asking with determined faith.

This principle of God responding to our faith rather than need applies to all areas of life, whether it's the ability to walk in holiness, live creatively, apprehend wisdom or inspired ideas, or receive healing or deliverance from habitual behavior—in short, to receive anything heaven has provided for our lives or, more importantly, for reaching our world with the gospel. We cannot minister effectively unless it's done in faith.

Romans 10:10 states that it's "with the heart one believes unto righteousness." This is true faith that originates in our core being. Faith deeply believes God will do what He says, and it subsequently produces words of agreement and actions of obedience. The corresponding words and actions are simply evidence that our heart has laid hold of what God has spoken.

Paul states in Ephesians 1 that the same immeasurable power that raised Jesus from the dead has been imparted to us. God is glorified by us living as Jesus lived; He's not glorified with us suffering from inabilities that Jesus paid such a high price to free us from. We were made to reign and rule in life! Hear Paul's words in Romans 5:17: "All who receive God's abundant grace and are freely put right with him will rule in life through Christ." This means we are to rise above the norm. We're no longer living the status quo. We are influencers now, not followers.

As rulers in life, we, in essence, meet people's needs by the exceedingly great power that's in us. This is the victory that overcomes the world, which causes us to rule in life—our faith!

Why don't we "just believe"? Why are we not enjoying an overcoming, godly life advanced in all arenas of society? Paul prayed this prayer so that we would get a revelation of the astonishing power available to us if we just have faith. This is why he further declares in Ephesians 3:20, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

Did you grasp these words? He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all

that we ask or think. However, it gets better because it's not His power given periodically from the throne room or on rare occasions through angels. No, it's His power that works in us, that resides in us after being imparted in our nature through His Spirit! When we get this revelation in our heart, we'll then rule in life, overcoming the world's powers and influence. We will not be defeated, condemned, and fruitless. We will bear much fruit and indeed be imitators of God as His dear children.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your reaction to the statement--"God does not respond to our need; He responds to our faith"?

2. Take a few moments to recall your words and actions in different situations recently: do they reflect your confidence in God and His Word or are they a response to fear?

3. What do you think it means to "rule in life through Christ"?

4. What kind of faith have you been operating in? How might you have limited God in your thinking and asking?

In Conclusion...

Faith is the key to receiving everything from God, and we are called to rule in life through Christ! God is more than able to do extraordinary things in our lives, but we are the ones who limit Him.

Devotional 6

God's Imperial Rule

In this final session, let's turn our attention to the famous words of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-10: "Our Father Who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God, He was actually referring to the "rule of God," which in the Greek translates to "God's imperial rule." So, Jesus literally communicated, "Our Father in heaven, God Almighty, Your imperial rule come, Your will be done on earth just as it is in heaven." God's kingdom has come!

Here's the sobering reality: Godly men and women determine whether or not the will of God gets done on this earth! All stories in the Gospels illustrate this truth. Let me cite just one: It took Jesus, a man, to stand up in the boat and rebuke a life-threatening storm on the Lake of Galilee. God didn't want Jesus and the other men to die, yet He didn't supernaturally calm the storm while Jesus slept. He needed Jesus, a man, to stand up to it and take dominion over it.

Jesus showed us how to reign in life; this is not only our model but our mandate. Where the extraordinary ones are involved, there should be an abundance of creativity, productivity, tranquility, sensitivity, and ingenuity. All that's found in heaven should manifest on earth. We truly are to be light in this dark world.

How do trials and tribulation fit into the scenario? We know we will encounter opposition—the Bible says so. Is opposition potentially a stopping force for an extraordinary life? No, tribulation should be looked upon by an extraordinary person as an opportunity. Joseph's adversity was the path to his great calling. David's adversity prepared him and his leaders for his dynasty. I could go on and on. Bottom line: If there's no battle, there's no victory. If there's no opposition, there's no new ground to take.

I have a dream of a light-filled body of Christ comprised of all ages, inclusive of men and women, awakening to what God has hidden within, and arising in His glory and power. These believers will live in such an extraordinary manner that multitudes will be drawn to the kingdom of God, not merely by what they preach, but by the compelling demonstration of how they live and their remarkable feats.

With all this in mind, I leave you with this caution and exhortation: If we discover who we are in the grace of God, and the exceeding greatness of the power that's resident within in us, but we are not motivated by compassion and sincere love, then we're no good—not only to ourselves, but to energize those we influ-

ence. Jesus was moved with compassion. It was the driving force behind His faith and grace.

Thank you for the time you've invested into these sessions. I covered only a small fraction of the message, so my prayer is that you will now read the entire book. I know the content will transform your life just like it did mine. I believe in you and know you are necessary for what God is doing in the earth!

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it the responsibility of Godly men and women to accomplish God's will on earth?

2. How have you viewed opposition in the past? How has this view affected your response to opposition?

3. In what specific areas of you life would you like to see more of "God's imperial rule"—the advancing of His kingdom?

4. What might be some barriers to your living in "the extraordinary"? How might these barriers be overcome?

In Conclusion...

It is up to us whether or not the will of God gets done on earth, and Jesus modeled how that is to be accomplished. We can expect hardship, but it is to be looked upon as opportunity for victory. We are called to influence the world through our extraordinary lives!

Based on the book *Extraordinary* by John Bevere
Publication Date: October 6, 2009
By WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group
a division of Random House

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