

The background is a light blue gradient. In the top-left and bottom-right corners, there are intricate, white, stylized floral or leaf-like patterns that appear to be cut out of paper, casting soft shadows. The central text is written in a dark blue, elegant cursive font. The words 'Yes', 'No', and 'Maybe' are stacked vertically, with '&' positioned between 'Yes' and 'No'.

Yes,  
& No,  
Maybe

Living with the God of Immeasurably More

Wendy Pope

Yes,  
& No,  
Maybe

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*transforming lives together*

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# Contents

Acknowledgments . . . . .	13
Foreword by Wendy Blight. . . . .	15
Introduction . . . . .	19
<i>Yes Cultivates Trust</i>	
1. Obedience: Our First Yes . . . . .	33
2. Obstacles to Yes . . . . .	55
3. Obsession of Yes . . . . .	79
<i>No Invites Revelation</i>	
4. No to Self: Accepting My New Image . . . . .	103
5. No to Self: Analyzing What Conceals My Image. . . . .	127
6. No to Self: Adjusting to My New Image . . . . .	151
<i>Maybe Welcomes Freedom</i>	
7. Maybe Celebrates Freedom <i>For</i> . . . . .	177
8. Maybe Considers before Committing . . . . .	197
9. Maybe Confronts <i>What Ifs</i> and a Warning . . . . .	213
10. My Immeasurably More Life. . . . .	235
Epilogue. . . . .	245
Appendix: Spiritual Gifts Assessment . . . . .	251
Notes . . . . .	259
About the Author . . . . .	265
Bible Credits . . . . .	269

## Section One

# *Yes Cultivates Trust*

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and  
this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

Ephesians 2:8

## Obedience: Our First Yes

Okay. You may be dismayed by the title of chapter 1, particularly this one word: *obedience*. Maybe you even rolled your eyes and released a deep sigh when you read that word. In the introduction, you got all hyped up about the immeasurably more life, only to turn the page and read a word that sticks in your teeth like a kernel of popcorn.

Please don't put this book down. And please don't take it back to the store and ask for a refund.

*Obedience* and *obey* are not among popular Bible words like *grace*. Oh, we welcome God's grace. Then there's *mercy*. Don't we love God's mercy? We can't forget *cleansed*, *forgiven*, *washed away*, and *dearly loved*. We flock to these Bible words. But *obey*? Not so much. However, when we survey feel-good, inspirational words, we might consider that each word is experienced in its fullest when our heart is in alignment with God's—when we are obedient to Him. How would we respond to God's instructions if we knew the impact our obedience to God would have on the immeasurably more life we long

to live? Saying yes to obedience cultivates trust—our trust in God as well as God’s trust in us.

I’ll go ahead and admit that I’m a rule follower. I haven’t always loved or embraced regulations. But I’ve matured and come to understand that most rules are for the greater good. Speed limits and stop signs are put in place to keep drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians safe. Imagine the chaos that would ensue with unrestricted speeds and no stop signs! As a former non-lover of rules, I now find security in knowing and following the expectations before me. A flood of joy fills me when I adhere to instructions, even those I don’t like or understand.

I am the mom who clocked every minute of her teenagers’ driving hours in order for them to receive their driver’s licenses. Nope, I didn’t fudge at all. The sign at the movie theater clearly states “No outside food,” so no candy smuggling into the theater for me. When the hotel checkout time is at 10:00 a.m., we leave by 10:00 a.m.—even when no one is around to verify our on-time departure. Some women can make a dish with a little of this and a pinch of that. Oh, do I admire these women! My rule-abiding heart just won’t let me ad lib in the kitchen. If the recipe calls for a teaspoon of oregano, I get the measuring spoon out and level it off.

***Saying yes to obedience cultivates trust—our  
trust in God as well as God’s trust in us.***

Some may say I have a problem. I get that. Really, I do. But for me, if I know the guidelines, I feel convicted that it is my responsibility to follow them.

However, when it comes to obeying God, that's a different story. Please tell me I'm not the only one who winces at the word *obey*. That word stirs up different reactions. *It's too hard. I really just want to live like I want to live. What exactly am I supposed to obey? Obedience brings me great joy!* And each of us, at any given time, has probably experienced each statement.

The bottom line is this: obedience makes our life in Christ come alive. The single most important yes you will ever say is when you accept God's invitation to eternal life.

## OUR FIRST AND BIGGEST YES

Let's start at the beginning. As in "In the beginning"—that part of the Bible that starts the whole story, found in Genesis 1 and 2. God in all His creative genius established the whole world. From the first "Let there be" on day one, until the fashioning of Adam on day six, and rest on day seven, God laid out His plan for mankind. God enjoyed fellowship with Adam and Eve in His breathtaking garden. He provided everything they would ever need and protected them from what they didn't. God's good plan for mankind and the earth was set into motion. But one day Adam and Eve took it off the rails.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God (Gen. 2:16–17; 3:6–7), which severed their perfect connection with Him. This act of disobedience brought sin into the world and birthed our need for a Savior. Unless Adam's sin was paid for, we would be separated from God forever. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16 NASB).

Jesus is sometimes referred to as the second Adam or the last Adam (see 1 Cor. 15:45). The first Adam represented the natural life, which was marred by passing sin from generation to generation. From him, all people have inherited a sin nature. Jesus represents the spiritual life. Jesus's birth, death, and resurrection didn't remove our sin nature. But His gift of salvation does give us a new, spiritual nature. It gives us the possibility of life without the power of sin reigning over us. Note the word *possibility*; we will revisit the concept later.

Let's go back to the Garden for a minute. God saw that everything He created was good, even the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If God knew that having knowledge of good and evil wouldn't benefit Adam and Eve, then why would He create such a tree and tell Adam and Eve not to eat from it?

God could have made Adam and Eve do exactly what He wanted them to do, like a marionette controlling puppets by their strings. But God wanted the first family to *choose* to obey Him—to build a trust relationship with Him. He wanted them to look at the tree and say, "This tree is beautiful. The fruit looks delicious. I don't know why God said we can't have it, but I will trust and obey Him, even when I don't understand." But we all know that's not what happened.

The *possibility* of a Spirit-filled life, free from the pulling power of sin, is available to us. But we can't even see that possibility until we accept God's invitation for salvation—our first and biggest yes to God.

## SIN, MEET SALVATION

Jesus's sacrifice on the cross is the bridge between sin and salvation. God's desire was to be in uninterrupted fellowship with His creation.

However, Adam and Eve's sin put a kink in that perfect plan. So God sent His Son to satisfy the debt of our sin. He died in our place to close the gap between mankind and the punishment of sin, which is death.

God invites us to be His sons and daughters through the free gift of salvation (see Rom. 6:23). No strings attached, no price to pay, and no good works necessary (see Eph. 2:8–9). Everyone, without exception, is invited to be part of God's family, to know and live with the God of immeasurably more, free from the power and penalty of sin.

At the tender age of seven, I accepted my invitation. The tub was filled with Mr. Bubble and my momma was helping me with my Saturday night bath. (We always got clean on Saturday for church on Sunday.) We started talking about Jesus. She explained salvation. I told her I wanted Jesus to live in my heart.

The next Sunday, I met with my pastor in his study. I remember it vividly. The room was big and filled with lots of books. The morning sun shone through the big window, and the smell of my pastor's Old Spice tickled my nose. Without hesitation, I hopped up into one of his big, comfy chairs, my legs hanging over the soft leather because they weren't long enough for my feet to touch the floor. It was intimidating and exhilarating at the same time. I felt so grown up.

***Believing is an ongoing decision, not just a onetime event.***

My pastor shared the plan of salvation as he read through a blue-and-white pamphlet. On the last page were two hills separated by a divide. He labeled one hill "God," the other hill "Wendy," and the divide "sin." With his black pen, he drew a cross connecting the two hills and wrote "Jesus." In my mind and heart, I crossed that bridge.

Then we prayed. The following Sunday, my chubby seven-year-old legs carried me down the aisle. I took my pastor's hand and made my private decision public. I believed in Jesus, and my sin met salvation on January 19, 1975. Everyone who believes Christ is Lord will be saved: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Rom. 1:16).

The word *salvation* in the Greek is *sótéria* (so-tay-ree'-ah). It means "deliverance, preservation, safety, and salvation." *Helps Word Studies* defines *sótéria* like this: "God's rescue which delivers believers out of destruction *and into* His safety."<sup>1</sup> For what better promise of hope could we surrender our earthly life and eternal life? If we confess our sins—all our sins—"he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Our old self is made new: "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (2 Cor. 5:17 NLT).

***Every yes we offer God demonstrates our  
present-tense trust in Him.***

Oh, and we can't ignore the word *believes* in Romans 1:16. I'm not normally a grammar geek—only a word nerd—but this is really good stuff. The Greek word for "believe" is *pisteuó* (pist-yoo'-o).<sup>2</sup> *Pisteuó* means to believe and to have faith in. This use of the word is a present-tense verb, an action taking place currently. But the word can also describe things that happened in the past or certain events that are planned to happen in the future.

Believing is an ongoing decision, not just a onetime event. Every yes we offer God demonstrates our present-tense trust in Him.

Accepting Jesus's free gift of salvation is the beginning of our trusting relationship with the God of immeasurably more. A yes to salvation brings about internal changes that make us rethink our way of living and motivate us to live fully for Christ (we will discuss this more in the next section of the book). Salvation is available to *anyone* who believes. And God is patient with people. His Spirit can change the hardest of hearts and redirect the lifestyle of the most stubborn and willful. There is no one God won't pursue and can't use—even a Jesus hater.

## THE HARD-HEARTED CHRISTIAN HATER

About the same time as Jesus's birth in Bethlehem, another boy was born in Tarsus, a Roman province of Cilicia (modern-day Turkey): Paul, whose Roman name was Paulous Saulos. His parents were a prominent, wealthy, Jewish couple from the tribe of Benjamin, and they were Pharisees of the largest Judaic branch.

The Pharisees were a sect of individuals who perverted the law of Moses into a legalistic way of life, rather than embracing its security and protection. This dogma became embedded in Saul from the moment he could toddle around a tent. Judaism is a religion based on the law given to Moses by God. The keeping of the law was the most important duty a Jew or believing Gentile could fulfill as a member of the "covenant community" of believers.<sup>3</sup>

The prominence and wealth of Saul's family afforded him educational opportunities that most would only dare to dream of. According

to the Jewish Mishnah, which is the oldest official compilation of Jewish oral laws (created after the Bible writings), a young boy is able to learn Scripture at the age of five, and that was exactly when Paul's training began. At twelve, he moved with his family to Jerusalem, where he continued his training under the well-known and esteemed Rabbi Gamaliel, who exposed him to a broad education in the law, philosophy, ethics, and classical literature.

From the outside, Saul had it all: a prestigious family heritage, scholastic achievements, and community recognition. We first meet him—full of himself—on the outskirts of town, standing witness to the stoning of a Christian named Stephen.

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:57–60)

Saul's Jewish roots ran deep. There was no compromise in his commitment to the law and practices of Judaism. Under no circumstance was he going to allow Christianity to flourish. Any teaching other than the law was heretical. Like Stephen, anyone who taught about faith in Jesus Christ had to be confronted and condemned.

*No one is beyond God's reach, and everyone is savable.*

Saul was a Christian hater of the worst kind. His murderous actions and staunch convictions would have given modern-day missionaries pause to pray in abundance before sharing Christ. In fact, many Christians these days would steer away from a man like Saul and write him off as a lost cause for the kingdom of God. But no one is beyond God's reach, and everyone is savable. Aren't you thankful for this truth? Just like God sees potential in you and me, He saw potential in Saul.

However, Saul didn't want just to contain Christianity; he wanted to eradicate from the world anything having to do with Jesus or the Christian faith. Stephen's stoning marked the beginning of Saul's mission: "But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison" (Acts 8:3).

Persecution of the church ran rampant in Jerusalem. Christians scattered, and news spread like wildfire far and wide of Saul's aggressive approach to believers of the Way. (The Way is the name Christ followers were referred to in Scripture. See Acts 9:1–2.) But Saul's tactics didn't stop the advancement of the early church, which made him even more determined to hate Jesus and His followers.

In an effort to take his persecution to a higher level, Saul asked Caiaphas the high priest for permission to travel to Damascus. His intent was to find men and women who followed Jesus and take them to prison in Jerusalem.

Let's put a paper clip on this page of the story for a minute and think about the why. Why was Saul so set on persecuting Christians?

There was great hostility between the Jews, converted Jews, and Gentile Christians. The conflict involved the concept of following the law—following the one true God of Moses—and the message of the gospel of Jesus, who claimed to be the Son of God. It is apparent that Stephen’s preaching in a Greek synagogue about salvation through Jesus set Saul off. However, Saul’s family and religious beliefs didn’t teach him to have such a profound hatred for Christians, nor did it teach him to kill. So why did he advocate and encourage murder? Because he was born with a sin nature.

All the religious training in the world won’t remove our sin nature. The sin nature rises up and oozes out of all of us. If it’s not contained, it can affect even a little girl who is about to have her first sleepover with her best friend ...

We were both four years old when Christie and I played under the magnolia trees at Hickory Grove United Methodist Church, and she picked *me* to be her very best friend. In many ways, this decision directed the course of my life, but we will save those stories for another day. Part of being Christie’s best friend included slumber parties at each other’s homes. The excitement of our first sleepover was too much for my eager heart to bear. I couldn’t wait to spend time with my new bestie, so I slipped into her classroom to begin our weekend together early.

It was logical to my mind that since I was sleeping over at Christie’s house, I should stay in her classroom rather than go to my room—where I belonged—with Mrs. Knowland and Mrs. Highly. I was sitting in my “rightful” place (as I thought), beside my bestie, when her teacher Mrs. Greene asked why I was not in my *own* classroom. Without stuttering or stammering, my pink lips stated an eloquent, well-spoken lie: “Since

I am sleeping over at Christie's house tonight, Mrs. Knowland and Mrs. Highly said I could stay in here today."

Yes, I told that lie and went right back to what I was doing, never noticing that Mrs. Greene left the room to verify my tall tale. You can probably guess what happened next.

My teacher promptly and abruptly escorted me down the hall to my classroom. Rather than playing on the playground that sunny afternoon, I had the pleasure of sitting in the "principal's" office (aka, a hard chair beside the secretary in the church office, but still very scary). Did I learn my lesson about lying? For that day and in that moment, yes, but it wouldn't be the last time I would sin.

No one had to teach me how to lie. Adults taught me how to tie my shoes, make my bed, and ride a bike without training wheels. Other children taught me how to play tag and skip rope. Yet, as a young child, I knew how to tell a fib all by myself. I sinned on my own accord—and in a church preschool no less! Because of Adam's original sin in the Garden, all of his descendants (that's us) inherited a propensity to sin. We need an encounter with the Savior to help us not give in to temptation. Just like the Savior met me in the pastor's study, the Savior met Saul on a dusty road between Jerusalem and Damascus.

## WHEN THE PERSECUTOR MET THE PERSECUTED

With official papers in hand and a regiment of men by his side, Saul readied himself for the 6-day, 130-mile journey to Damascus. He was in full pursuit to put an end to the Christianity craziness. In all his zeal and fury, I feel quite certain that Saul never considered that he himself was being pursued.

***It's often in the unexpected moments that we  
receive more than we expect from God.***

Just about a mile or so from his destination, the pursued met the Pursuer in a bizarre and extraordinary way. The persecutor met the Persecuted. Saul met Jesus. God seeks His own, whether they're in a sycamore tree, like Zacchaeus; in the hull of a boat, like Jonah; or at a well in Samaria, like the woman with many husbands. God pursues His people. Saul had no idea that his immeasurably more life was going to begin while on a mission to steal the immeasurably more life from so many. "As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him" (Acts 9:3).

Suddenly. Unexpectedly. Without warning. A light flashed from heaven. We know by reading Acts 22:6, another account of Saul's Damascus road moment, that the encounter occurred at midday. We'd expect the sun to be brilliant at noon, but we wouldn't anticipate a light brighter than the sun to blaze from heaven (Acts 26:13). The light was so bright that Saul and his brigade fell to the ground to protect their eyes. It's often in the unexpected moments that we receive more than we expect from God.

The encounter with sudden, unexpected light wasn't all that Saul and his companions experienced. Out of the piercing flash of light spoke a voice that everyone heard but only Saul could understand (see Acts 22:9). Jesus, in some manifestation of His glory, appeared to Saul. Without beating around the bush, He asked a question as piercing as the light that had blinded Saul's eyes: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4).

***The proof of a Damascus road experience isn't whether someone hears us say a prayer but how we live our life after saying yes.***

Jesus made sure that Saul had no doubt whom the message was intended for. With deep sentiment Jesus repeated Saul's name. Fear-stricken, with his eyes clinched, and his face buried, Saul dared to address the voice: "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). Without hesitation, Jesus identified Himself and told Saul to get up and head into the city. The men stumbled to their feet and assisted Saul, because he still could not see. Totally bewildered, they walked through the city gate.

God used Ananias, a man from Damascus, to restore Saul's sight and nurse him back to health (Acts 9:17–19). Scripture does not record Saul repenting, or reciting a "sinner's prayer," or meeting with a priest to hear the plan of salvation. Saul met his Pursuer, and his heart said, "Yes"—the first and biggest yes of his life. The proof of a Damascus road experience isn't whether someone hears us say a prayer but how we live our life after saying yes. As believers, we do repent, and we do publicly confess Christ, but that mark of Christianity is in the fruit we bear over our lifetime, not during a onetime event like walking the aisle or praying with a pastor.

"Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God" (Acts 9:19–20). Notice the words *at once*. Saul wasted no time living fully for God. His new life began when his eyes were blinded and Jesus spoke to his heart. I love the way Bible expositor and preacher Alexander Maclaren reports Saul's heart change:

Paul's Christianity meant a radical change in his whole nature. He went out of Jerusalem a persecutor, he came into Damascus a Christian. He rode out of Jerusalem hating, loathing, despising Jesus Christ; he groped his way into Damascus, broken, bruised, clinging contrite to His feet, and clasping His Cross as his only hope. He went out proud, self-reliant, pluming himself upon his many prerogatives, his blue blood, his pure descent, his Rabbinical knowledge, his Pharisaical training, his external religious earnestness, his rigid morality; he rode into Damascus blind in the eyes, but seeing in the soul, and discerning that all these things were, as he says in his strong, vehement way, "but dung" in comparison with his winning Christ.<sup>4</sup>

We are all born spiritually blind. We all grope through life searching for our story until our Pursuer invites us into His. Every soul saved has a Damascus road experience that's just waiting to be told. Your story may not be as spellbinding as Saul's, but it is no less significant to God.

Maybe as you are reading Paul's story you are reminded to pray for someone you know who isn't saved. Perhaps you may have read Saul's story and realized you don't have a Damascus road story of your own. And after reading my story and Saul's, you hear a voice from heaven speaking to your heart or feel a tugging at your heart that you've never felt before. You've had enough of the spiritual blindness and groping through life. You want today to be your day, the day of your salvation, your very own Damascus road experience.

Our focal verse for this first section of the book is Ephesians 2:8, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” The invitation of salvation is being extended to you from God. God sent His only Son, Jesus, to cover the separation sin has caused between you and God.

***We are all born spiritually blind. We all grope through life searching for our story until our Pursuer invites us into His.***

In the space below, draw two hills. Write your name on the top of one hill and God’s name on the top of the other hill. Label the space between the hills “sin.” Now draw a cross connecting the two hills and write “Jesus” on the cross.

Oh, won’t you open your beautiful gift of salvation today?

Perhaps you are thinking, *Salvation sounds wonderful, but you don’t know what I’ve done. God surely wouldn’t invite me, would He?* Yes, He

would, and He does. Jesus invited Saul, a Jesus-hating, Christian-killing Pharisee. Jesus invited His disciples, a group of cowards, extortionists, and traitors. Jesus invited me, a liar and deceiver. And Jesus invites you. Jesus invites *you*. He extends His invitation to you in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” You are a *whoever*.

Tell God that you are sorry for your sins and that you are thankful for His invitation to live eternally with Him. With your mouth, tell Him you believe He is Lord. In your heart, believe that Jesus rose from the dead and that salvation is yours forever (see Rom. 10:9). Step confidently into the life Jesus died to give you. And like Saul, *at once* begin to live fully for God as we learn how to do that in our journey together ... and tell someone. If you don't have someone to tell, tell me: My contact information is in the back of the book. I'd love to celebrate with you.

## NEW LIFE, NEW NAME

Everyone has a name, and every name has a meaning. My name is Wendy, pronounced Wen-dee. Its origin is English and means “friend.” The name was created for the heroine in James Barrie's play *Peter Pan*.

Earlier, I introduced you to Saul by his full name, Paulous Saulos Paulus. *Saul* is derived from Hebrew and means “desired” or “asked for.” *Paulus*, or *Paul*, is Greek in origin and means “small” or “humble.” Following his personal encounter with Jesus, Saul *desired* to be identified as Paul. He no longer wanted to be known, but to make known the only one worth knowing—Jesus.

Our decision to follow Christ has the potential (I'll expound on the word *potential* later in the journey) to completely change us from the inside out. God longs to work in us through the power of His Holy Spirit to transform our life so that we can be His witness to the world. However, until we are standing on a solid foundation of faith, our old identity, things we used to do that pleased our flesh, will wrestle with our new identity, the thing we know we should do that pleases God.

Saul realized this truth. He knew himself as *desired*, and others knew him as *desired*. And moreover, others knew him as a murderer, God hater, provoker, and powerful evildoer. God changed his life, and Saul chose to go by his other name so he could live out his calling. Dual Hebrew and Greek names were commonplace in this day. One reason Saul may have chosen to drop *Saul* was because *Paul* was a less regal name (think of King Saul in the Old Testament). With a more common name, he could totally immerse himself in his role as the "apostle to the Gentiles": "I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry" (Rom. 11:13). You see, we live out the name we call ourselves.

My son, Griffin, is fun loving, hardworking, and knows so much about so much. Once, when he was around eight, he collected scrap wood from our neighbor's building project. He used the remnants to build his own little house, complete with a floor, a front door, a window, and a roof with shingles. When I asked Griffin how he knew how to build such a structure, he responded, "I was born knowing." I stood back in awe of his construction project and his confidence in growing into a young man. What I couldn't see behind his wide smile, however, were the doubt and feelings of failure he struggled with in other areas of life. He hid these nagging thoughts when he talked with me and

Scott, so I never saw doubt and failure creep into his young mind, or his witness about Christ.

***We live out the names we call ourselves, but through our salvation we are given new names.***

When did doubt creep in? How did the weight of failure climb on his back? Perhaps these things happened on the playground when he didn't catch the football as well as the other boys. Maybe they plagued him when he noticed his grades weren't as good as other students'. Though fully aware of his salvation in Christ and a young man now, Griffin's old identity, doubt, and failure continue to wrestle with his new identity, one of no shame or condemnation. He's learning to live with his new names and to take on a new identity.

I'm not a stranger to Griffin's type of struggle; maybe you aren't either. For most of my life, I called myself negative names. We live out the names we call ourselves, but through our salvation we are given new names. When we live by our new names, we experience our new life.

God's Word says you're His chosen child, wholly and dearly loved—yet someone else gets the job you are more qualified for and you identify with *rejected* instead. “Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col. 3:12).

You select the “I am fearfully and wonderfully made” graphic for the lock screen of your phone, but when you look in the mirror, you identify more closely with *ugly* and *unworthy*. “I praise you because

I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Ps. 139:14).

You sing, “I know You’ve cast my sin as far as the East is from the West,”<sup>5</sup> but you identify better with *condemned*. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Ps. 103:12).

I WAS	I AM
Guilty	Forgiven
A Failure	Redeemed
Shameful	Holy
Cursed	Blessed
Unwanted	Chosen
A Sinner	Blameless
Abandoned	Adopted
A Beggar	An Heir

Review the lists above and feel free to add to them. Take your pen and cross through every old name you’ve called yourself. Put a star beside every new name. Thank God for renaming you. The next time one of your old names tries to set up a rematch with your new names, picture yourself crossing through the old and starring the new.

Oh, friend, let’s call ourselves by our real names: *forgiven, redeemed, holy, blessed, chosen, blameless, adopted, and heir*. We live out the names we are called, so let’s call ourselves by the right names. Let’s desire to make His name known and allow the Spirit to do His work in us so that we can be His witnesses to the world.

## AND WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT OBEDIENCE?

Let's remove the paper clip and pick up Paul's story on the Damascus road. We've gone through this story but have yet to read the word *obey*. Paul accepted the invitation to live for Jesus, but where in his story of conversion to Christianity did Paul say, "Lord, I will obey you"? Unless we take a deeper look at his response to Jesus, we will miss his commitment to obey God. Saul, the Christian killer, hears a loud voice, is suddenly blinded by a bright light, and falls down. With his face in the dirt he asks, "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5).

***The immeasurably more life extends beyond  
Christ's accomplished work on Calvary.***

Paul's commitment to obey is found tucked in the meaning of the Greek word for *Lord*. *Kurios* (koo'-ree-os) means "ruler, master, one who exercises authority."<sup>6</sup> To accept and acknowledge Jesus as Lord means to obey or submit to His authority. As Saul stood to his feet and headed toward Damascus, he surrendered his will to Jesus, declaring to obey Him.

Jesus identified Himself, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). *Jesus* means "Yahweh saves" (or "Yahweh is salvation").<sup>7</sup> We acknowledge and surrender to God's authority when we call Him Lord.

This idea of surrender is where the rubber meets the road. The immeasurably more life extends beyond Christ's accomplished work on Calvary. It's more than accepting His free gift of salvation. The immeasurably more life follows the example of Paul: the giving up of our

wants, whims, and wishes in order to obey the will of God. You may accept the free gift of salvation, ensuring your eternity, but if you never surrender to His lordship, you won't experience the life that the God of immeasurably more has to offer you. And you may find yourself asking, "Is this as good as it gets?"

Maybe you are new to the idea of obeying God, and giving up your will for His will seems a little over the top. Perhaps you are a little apprehensive about trusting Him with the everyday affairs of your life. I get it. Really, I do. I lived most of my Christian life leaning on my understanding, living my way, and keeping my pew warm on Sunday. But all that changed when, in my early thirties, I was confronted with how poorly my plan was working out.

Do you remember where my story started? Those thirteen words—"You don't make our house a place I want to come home to"—that pierced my heart? After Scott said them, I lowered my face to the ground and asked God to help me fix my messed-up life. Like Saul with his face down in the dirt before heaven, I knew I had to make Jesus the Lord of every area of my life. My first yes when I was a little girl secured my salvation. But the next yes of my full surrender to God's will and His Word as an adult, as a wife, and as a mother ushered me into a life beyond anything I could have asked for, thought of, or imagined. I still live with unmet expectations, unfulfilled dreams, unanswered prayers, and unwanted situations, but my relationship with God through Jesus makes it possible to live fully in spite of the "uns."

Jesus wants to be more than our Savior. He wants to be Lord of our life—directing our decisions, guiding our steps, calming our fears, enjoying our company, inhabiting our praise, and showering us with blessings from His bountiful riches. Total surrender to God and the

work of His Word aren't for the faint of heart. There are obstacles along the way and an enemy who seeks to impede our progress. It's through surrender that we experience God, and it's through our experience with Him that our trust in Him grows. Saying yes cultivates trust. Trust empowers us to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of our living with the God of immeasurably more.

## ASK AND IMAGINE

Turn to chapter 10. Write about your Damascus road experience. And if you haven't had such an experience, write about where you are with your belief in God right now. End the section by listing every one of your new names. When did your sin meet Jesus's salvation? What is your new name?

If you think you might be ready to take the next step toward knowing and accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, the best thing to do is to get involved with a local church family. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association also has some great resources to help you take the next step in your faith, including the website [PeaceWithGod.net](http://PeaceWithGod.net) and their church-finding tool at <https://churches.goingfarther.net>.