

# **Confessions of a HOT MESS- from MESS to MESSage**

**90 Days of MESSages for the Hot Mess in You**

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**KW**  
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PUBLISHING

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## **Introduction: Something New!**

*“For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in a dry wasteland” (Isaiah 43:19 NLT).*

Have you ever felt called to do something? I used to worry that God might call me to be a missionary in a third-world country—without running water, electricity, or Starbucks. He hasn’t called me to do that, but I’ve had a strong conviction for the last few years that he wants me to share my struggles through writing with the hope that it will help others. Who knew that putting myself out there and sharing what a hot mess I am would be my calling? And who am I to write a Christian book? I think I’m a decent writer, but I haven’t been to seminary or had any related formal education. However, I’ve felt a continued nudge that hasn’t wavered that this is what He wants me to do. So, I started a blog and now have written a book.

In *Holy Ambition*, Chip Ingram talks about the people God uses:

God has chosen very regular, ordinary, common people just like you and me to accomplish the biggest events in all of human history. He used a teenage girl to bring His Son into this planet. He used a blue-collar worker to raise Him from childhood and teach Him about a life of integrity and worship. He used common fishermen to lay the foundation for the greatest revolution that has ever touched the world. And God wants to use you and God wants to use me in the same ways.

*“For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong...” (1 Corinthians 1:26-27 ESV).*

He even uses hot messes like me! What is a hot mess? Here are a few definitions:

- ✦ When someone’s thoughts or appearance are in a state of disarray, but they maintain an undeniable attractiveness or beauty (urban dictionary)

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- ✿ A person or thing that is spectacularly unsuccessful or disordered, especially one that is a source of peculiar fascination (dictionary.com)

Here are some hot mess examples for you. Just yesterday, I was to speak at an event for a local organization during lunch. I walked the dogs before I left for work and forgot to change from my tennis shoes. Also, it rained most of the day, and I forgot my umbrella, so, by lunchtime, my curly hair looked like an alpaca. And what's the difference between a llama and an alpaca? See, this is how my brain works. Today I turned on the blender to make my morning smoothie and forgot to put the lid on.

I have lots of other examples that you'll see in this book. I compare. I have a crazy brain. I people-please. I try to control. I can't cook, or keep plants alive, or do arts and crafts.

I generally look fairly put together, but the rest of me often isn't. So, I think we have now established that I'm a hot mess and that God chooses ordinary, foolish people. Let's move back to the "new thing" I'm doing. Sometimes we stay mired in the "as is" and don't trust Him to move forward with the new thing. Although it has taken me way out of my comfort zone, I'm glad that I'm doing the new thing and can't wait to see what the next new thing will be.

If you aren't sure of your calling, ask God to give you eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to do His will, and He will lead you towards your purpose.

*"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago" (Ephesians 2:10 NLT).*



# SECTION 1:

## **Understanding and Caring for Yourself**

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1

## Who Am I?

Humans are definitely a complicated mix of experiences, thoughts, and emotions. Many people go through life not really understanding themselves, what motivates them, and why they do what they do. I believe that it's important for us to take time to know ourselves in order to maximize our potential.

It has taken me years to understand myself better, and I have just recently come to know who I am in Christ. For a long time, there were things from my past that I let guide my thoughts, emotions, and behavior, and I didn't realize that this was even happening. I guess I just kind of operated on autopilot. Shame and rejection from previous experiences in my life were affecting me. I was also operating from a narrative that I wasn't good enough.

I believe that the journey of self-discovery begins with knowing and understanding Jesus. For a truthful look at who we are, we must look into the Bible as we are told to use God's Word as a mirror to truly understand ourselves. James 1:22-24 says, *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like."*

God tells us to examine ourselves and our actions. (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Galatians 6:4) When we look at ourselves using His Word, we can see where we are, how we can improve, and where repentance is needed.

Knowing ourselves involves a strong awareness of our personalities, including our struggles, strengths and weaknesses, thoughts and beliefs, motivations, and emotions. It took some time, self-reflection, and counseling for me to better understand myself and what was driving me. Although some Christians hesitate to go to counseling, I truly believe that almost everyone can benefit from it. Sometimes we need an outside person to help facilitate understanding of ourselves. Although self-reflection and counseling have been helpful, the thing that has most impacted my journey towards self-discovery is my faith and my deepening relationship with Jesus.

Jesus was the most self-aware person ever. He knew who he was, why he was on earth, and what he needed to do to accomplish his mission. Peter is

an example of someone who wasn't so self-aware. At the Last Supper, Jesus predicted that Peter would deny him. Peter adamantly pledged that he wouldn't, but then he denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed. When he realized what he had done, he cried bitterly (Matthew 26).

Self-discovery can be difficult and painful because it involves dredging up unpleasant things from our past. However, we need to do this to move to higher ground. Here are a few ideas that might be helpful in getting to know yourself better:

### *Take an assessment*

Some common assessments are the Enneagram, Myers Briggs Type Indicator, DISC, StrengthsFinder, and there are several Spiritual Gifts Inventories. At work, we use an assessment which helps you understand how you are wired. I am a Merchant/Builder, which means I'm a relationship-builder who is action-oriented. This has pretty much been the underlying theme in my assessments over the years. I also know that I am pretty much right in the middle of introvert and extrovert, which helps me to better understand why I need some alone time to recharge most days since I generally have to "extrovert" at work.

### *Explore what guides and motivates you*

Ask yourself questions like:

- ✳ Who am I really?
- ✳ Why am I here?
- ✳ What inspires me?
- ✳ What makes me unique?
- ✳ What do I do well?
- ✳ What don't I do well?
- ✳ Where am I going?

### *Ask others for feedback*

Ask other people who are close to you questions like:

- ✳ What behaviors are limiting my potential?
- ✳ What do you think are my strengths and weaknesses?
- ✳ How would you describe me to others?
- ✳ Is there anything you avoid saying to me because you're afraid of my reaction?

### *Ask God for help*

Spend time with God and ask Him to help you in your quest to better understand yourself. *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life"* (Psalm 139:23-24 NLT).



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## Why Am I Here?

Have you ever wondered about your purpose or calling in life? I know I have, and it's taken me fifty-plus years for it to become clear. I have learned that it is in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Before we were ever formed, he had his eye and his designs on us for glorious living, as part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone. We all have our own unique calling, which is where our passion, gifts, and talents, and the world's deepest needs intersect. Jeremiah 1:5 says, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."* This tells us that God knew what our calling would be and how we were meant to impact the world before we were even conceived.

I grew up, finished college, and began working. Soon to follow was marriage, kids, divorce, marriage again with a blended family, and career through all of that. I didn't come up for air for about twenty years or take the time to specifically articulate a calling. I generally was aware of what I was good at and what I wasn't. Cooking, or really any domestic tasks, were definitely not in my area of talent. In fact, I remember my daughters asking one night what we were having for dinner, and they cheered when I told them frozen dinners. My stepdaughter said that pinto beans (from a can) were my best dish. And my neighbor texts me every time he hears a fire truck nearby to see if I'm cooking. Crafts are not a strength for me either. We did a rotation for leading the elementary kids' Sunday School class years ago. On my rotation, we made popsicle stick crosses and drew designs on them. Very creative, right? So, we have established some of the things I don't do well.

I am pretty adept at communication, building relationships, project management, and leading teams. I probably naturally used my gifts and talents in my job and, to an extent, in the world. However, I had never really articulated my calling or made a concerted effort to work towards a particular purpose. It often felt like I was just trying to get through the day.

When my kids got older and I eventually became an empty nester (ish - they keep coming back), I became more introspective and wanted more clarity on why I'm here on this earth and what I should focus on for the rest of my life. I attended a leadership training class where we went through some activities to articulate

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our calling. Mine sounds much like the YMCA mission statement. It is “to help others to reach their God-given potential.” I feel I have done some of this in my roles in the Human Resources field and, of course, tried to help my children in this way. However, having my calling articulated has made a big difference for me. I have been using it as a filter in prioritizing my life and activities.

If you aren’t sure what your calling is, here are some tips to help you discover it.

### Listen to your life

Start by answering these questions:

- ✳ If money were not an issue, what would you do with your time?
- ✳ What do you love to do?
- ✳ What gives you energy?
- ✳ What drains the life out of you?
- ✳ What do you want to change, shape, and leave better than you found it?
- ✳ What segment of the population are you drawn to help?
- ✳ What are your gifts and talents? It is also helpful to ask others this question to get an outside perspective.

### Write your calling

Keep it simple and general enough that you don’t pigeonhole yourself. Remember that it can be a changing, living document.

### Dream

Let ideas flow on ways you can use your passion. Narrow your list to two or three. Submit these ideas to God and wait for him for confirmation.

### Put your passion into action

Devise a plan to put your calling into action in your personal and professional life. Identify any of the cages that limit you (fear, insecurity, perfectionism, etc.) and try to get past these to step into your God-given adventure. Pray about ways you can use your calling, and let the spirit guide you.

Consider the Scriptures below as they relate to your unique calling.

- ✳ *“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function...” (Romans 12:4).*





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## Caring for Your Soul

*"What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?" (Matthew 8:36).*

In my women's Bible study group, we had a discussion about the soul. I asked if anyone could define "soul," and no one seemed to have a good definition. One of my friends said that it's like a little person inside you. This cracked me up. It reminded me of the little devil and angel on each shoulder trying to influence someone's actions that I have seen on various shows/movies.

This conversation led me to do some research on the soul. Here are a few definitions that I liked:

- ✿ the part of a person that is not physical and lasts eternally as a person experiences death
- ✿ the fabric that represents us, our entire element of existence

First Thessalonians 5:23 says that we are all created with a spirit, soul, and body: *"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The body is obviously our outermost and visible part, and by it, we exist and experience things in the physical world. Our soul, though unseen, is just as real. It is made up of our mind, emotions, and will and is essentially who we are within. The spirit is the deepest and hidden part of our being. Through our spirit, we can contact the spiritual realm and be in continuous contact with God.

In our world, we exert most of our energy satisfying the body's appetites and almost none to the soul, which requires just as much, if not more, attention. When we feel empty, overwhelmed, or alienated, we tend to drown our thirst for God with distractions like television, social media, the internet, shopping, and work instead of being silent and listening to our souls' needs. Nothing but God ever completely satisfies us because the soul was made for Him and, without him, is restless.

In Psalm 42:1,5, David says, *"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my*

*soul pants for you, O God....Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”*

I'm at a place in my life where I have more time to spend caring for my soul. I remember how challenging it was to have small children and a full-time job. It was difficult to have any time to focus on myself. However, it's important to make time when you can, even if it's just ten or fifteen minutes a day. If you don't provide your soul with the rest and recharge it needs, your well will run dry, and you won't have any energy to pour out to others.

What can you do to feed your soul? Here are some things that help me:

- ✿ Practicing quiet time with God in the morning or whenever I can fit it in
- ✿ Reading
- ✿ Spending time in nature
- ✿ Yoga
- ✿ Exercising
- ✿ Laughing
- ✿ Helping or serving others
- ✿ Cuddling my dogs

Sometimes you have to let things go to take care of your soul. Over the past ten years, I have let go of two jobs that negatively impacted my well-being. Both of these jobs involved chaotic environments and leadership styles that weren't good for my soul. In addition, you may have to let go of relationships that are draining your energy. I have had to let go of several friendships over the years that were emotionally draining.

Finally, to take good care of your soul, you will have to release some of the other things that we will cover in this book—comparison, negative thought patterns, control, and people-pleasing -to name a few!

Take some time to care for your soul! What could be more important?

### **REFLECT**

- ✿ What gets in the way of caring for your soul?
- ✿ What actions could you take to feed your soul?
- ✿ What could you eliminate from your life to focus more on caring for your soul?





## **Caring for Your Body**

*“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).*

Your body is the vessel that carries your soul and spirit while you are on this earth. We have established that it’s important to nurture our souls. But we can do what we want with our bodies, right? Not so much. To care for your soul and spirit, you must also care for your body.

You live your entire life in your body—the one and only body God created for you in which to do his will and work. Unfortunately, we often mistreat this body, and we don’t realize that it affects how well we can live out our God-given purpose. Said differently, we need to have a healthy vessel to best serve the Lord.

First Corinthians has a lot to say about our bodies:

- ✦ *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred and you together are that temple” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).*
- ✦ *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).*
- ✦ *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).*

Our bodies are part of our service and worship to God, and we honor Him by taking care of our “temples.” Romans 12:1 says, *“Therefore, I urge you brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”*

Let’s consider the story of Daniel from the Bible. Daniel sets an excellent example for us when it comes to the health of our bodies. King Nebuchadnezzar

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requested to bring into his service some young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing an aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. Essentially, studly dudes. Daniel was selected as one of the men who were to be trained to serve. Nebuchadnezzar assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from his table. Daniel asked for and was granted permission to have nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink for ten days. At the end of this period, Daniel and the other men involved in this practice looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who ate the royal food. (Daniel 1:8-16)

Although God doesn't want us to become obsessive about our bodies, he does want us to be good stewards of our health. In *The Daniel Plan*, Rick Warren says that what you do with your body sets the tone for everything else. Physical health influences your mental health, spiritual health, emotional health, and relational health. If you are worth dying for, don't you think God wants you to take good care of yourself?

Below are some good practices for taking care of your "temple:"

### *Eat well*

You've heard the phrase "you are what you eat." It's kind of true. Food is fuel, and we need it to function optimally. Eating well means feeding your body what it needs. You know what to do! Eat lots of fruits and vegetables. Watch your portion sizes. Limit processed foods and sugar.

### *Hydrate*

Drink lots of water and stay hydrated! Most sources recommend sixty-four ounces of water a day. I can't quite get there with my old lady bladder, but I try!

### *Get sufficient sleep*

A good night's sleep is essential. Sleep gives your body a chance to restore and regenerate. Seven to eight hours per day is recommended for most adults.

### *Get moving*

Sedentary behavior has been linked to a wide range of medical problems and a shorter lifespan. Get up and move during the day. Exercise often, doing something you enjoy so you will stick with it.

### *Don't smoke or use tobacco products*

If you want to live an enjoyable life, don't smoke or chew tobacco. The list of diseases and cancers attributed to tobacco use is extensive.



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## Making Change Happen

With each new year, many of us set New Year's resolutions. We resolve to lose weight, exercise, manage our finances better, eat healthier, and read our Bible more, to name a few. Have you ever made New Year's resolutions that didn't stick? According to *U.S. News & World Report*, the failure rate for New Year's resolutions is about eighty percent, and most lose their resolve by mid-February. I know for sure that, many more times than not, my resolutions have failed.

So, why aren't we better at making and keeping our resolutions? Sources cite any number of issues to explain the massive rate of failure. Everything from lack of clarity to setting expectations too high. Another source I read said that the psychology behind the word "resolution" itself is a problem. Resolution is a strong, demanding word that indicates that there is no room for failure. However, we are human, and some amount of failure is inevitable.

The real problem is within our hearts and minds. We'd all like to be better people, but no matter how hard we try, we find ourselves tripped up by our moral failures and weaknesses. Even the Apostle Paul experienced this. He said, "*For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out*" (*Romans 7:18*).

We seem to think that the New Year is the only time we can set out to make changes. However, we can do it at any time! Below are some tips to make positive changes stick, any time of year.

### Understand that you can't, but God can

We usually try to successfully make changes based on our own willpower. Seeking to make those changes in our power generally doesn't work and also dishonors God. The best strategy for keeping our resolutions rests in total dependence on Him.

Zechariah 4:6 says, "*...Not by might nor power, but by my Spirit...*"

Philippians 4:13 says, "*I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*" *This means we must depend on His strength continuously to do all things, including changing our behaviors.*

### Connect with God and others

It can be extremely helpful to include God and a few close friends in identifying changes you would like to make and in holding you accountable.

### Start with small changes

In my opinion, the key to long-lasting success is to develop new positive habits that replace the behaviors we want to change. One reason why we often fail is that we try to take on a big change at one time (i.e., change our entire diet, run a marathon). But, at the same time, we tend to resist extreme change. If something changes too rapidly, it's threatening, and we go back to what is comfortable. If your goal is to eat better, rather than going full force into a diet plan, pick small things you can change that can build into the larger change over time. Use a SMART goal format to formulate your bigger goals as well as the smaller things you will work on towards that end. This means that your goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

The Apostle Paul experienced more than his fair share of failure during his life. During one of his stints in prison, he wrote about his unwillingness to give up. *"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"* (Philippians 3:13b-14).

Paul stopped looking back and looked forward instead. He didn't let the fear of failure hold him back. We can reflect on this when we feel like giving up on the changes we seek to make.

### **REFLECT**

- ✦ What are some behaviors that you would like to change over the coming weeks?
- ✦ What small changes can you make towards your bigger goals?



