

▶ 52 Life-Changing Questions

CALLED

to inspire

Marsha
DuCille



PRESENTED TO

FROM

ON



52 Life-Changing Questions

CALLED

to inspire

Marsha DuCille



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois



LIVING
EXPRESSIONS
® COLLECTION

Living Expressions invites you to explore God's Word and express your creativity in ways that are refreshing to the spirit and restorative to the soul.

Visit Tyndale online at www.tyndale.com.

Visit *CALLED* magazine at www.calledmagazine.com.

TYNDALE, Tyndale's quill logo, *Living Expressions*, and the Living Expressions logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

CALLED to Inspire: 52 Life-Changing Questions

Copyright © 2019 by Marsha DuCille. All rights reserved.

Cover and interior illustrations of botanicals copyright © BlackBird Foundry/Creative Market. All rights reserved.

Cover and interior illustrations of geometric line patterns copyright © Irene Demetri/Youandgraphics/Creative Market. All rights reserved.

Cover and interior illustrations of essential patterns copyright © Anugraha Design/Design Cuts. All rights reserved.

Torn paper brush by Marko Dimic/Tricorn Design on Brusheezy.com.

Designed by Libby Dykstra

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken or paraphrased from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotation marked NHEB is taken from the *New Heart English Bible* (public domain).

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,[®] NIV.[®] Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.[®] Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotation marked WEB is taken from the *World English Bible* (public domain).

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-800-323-9400.

ISBN 978-1-4964-3598-9

Printed in China

25	24	23	22	21	20	19
7	6	5	4	3	2	1



CONTENTS

Introduction 1

1. What Does It Mean? 2
2. Do You Accept the Definition? 6
3. Are You Bound? 10
4. How Many Regrets? 14
5. Will You Listen? 18
6. Is Lazarus Dead? 22
7. What Does God Think of Women? 26
8. Is He Too Busy? 30
9. Have You Made Rest a Priority? 34
10. Can God Invest in You? 38
11. What Do You Have? 42
12. Are You Skilled? 46
13. How Heavy Is the Load? 50
14. How Big Is Your Army? 56
15. Whose Armor Are You Wearing? 60
16. Is the Gate Guarded? 64
17. Is It a Bowl of Stew? 68
18. Have You Applied Discipline? 72
19. Is It a Distraction? 76
20. Do You Follow the Trend? 80
21. Who Has the Power? 84
22. Where Do You Go? 88
23. What Did You Say? 92
24. Is the Baby Protected? 96
25. What Has Passed Down? 100

26. What Do You Really Want? 104
27. Will You Seek Vengeance? 110
28. Does It Hurt? 114
29. Too Hard to Love? 118
30. Have You Asked? 122
31. Whose Voice Is That? 126
32. Did You Hear the Whisper? 130
33. How Do You Talk to Yourself? 134
34. Are You Martha? 138
35. Do You Give Honor? 142
36. Where Is the Compassion? 146
37. Are You Sincere? 150
38. Is Forgiveness Too Free? 154
39. Are Strings Attached? 158
40. Is It Your Business? 164
41. Why Compare? 168
42. What Is the Season? 172
43. Will You Take This Blessing? 176
44. Are You Intentionally Intimate? 180
45. Have You Embraced the Process? 184
46. Is He Absent? 188
47. Will You Pick Yourself Up? 192
48. Should You Try Another Way? 196
49. What Is Joy? 200
50. Have You Given Thanks? 204
51. Will You Win or Lose? 208
52. What Are You Waiting For? 212

Notes 216

About the Author 218

INTRODUCTION

IN 2007, WHEN I LAUNCHED *CALLED* MAGAZINE, my life was headed in a different direction. My plan was to practice law and shape public policy. *Me? Start a Christian magazine? God had to be out of his mind!* But the Lord is an out-of-the-box God with out-of-the-box ideas, and he's constantly stretching us to new heights. So when the Lord decided to call my name, I boldly dared to answer.

God has called *you* to do something special, and the world is waiting. If you feel weak, fearful, or unprepared, *CALLED to Inspire* will guide you along the way. Each chapter presents a life-changing question that every woman should answer. The Bible-based devotionals delve into real-life issues—because your journey demands real-life answers. There's also a prayer, declaration, and journal prompt included with every chapter.

CALLED to Inspire was written especially for you. *Don't you hear the Lord calling your name?* You can cling to this companion week after week—and dare to render your answer.

~Marsha DuCille

1. What Does It Mean?



THE BIBLE IS FASCINATING FOR MANY REASONS, but the diversity of its characters makes it remarkable. Kings and queens, believers and doubters. Virgins and prostitutes, saints and liars. Through the Word of God, we come face-to-face with the triumphs of imperfect people who dared to answer their call.

Being “called” doesn’t mean that we’re perfect or even qualified. It simply means that God has a purpose for our lives. It also means that he has a plan for *everything* in our lives. It can be hard to fathom God’s purpose for our hardships, but the Bible teaches that God always has a greater plan: “We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation” (Romans 5:3-4).

I marvel when I think of Harriet Tubman’s calling. Born a slave, she escaped to freedom and became the most renowned “conductor” of the Underground Railroad. The appalling conditions of slavery offered only two reasonable options: *freedom or death*. After Harriet escaped, she returned to the South a myriad of times and escorted hundreds of slaves to freedom. Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison called Harriet the “Moses” of her people.

Like Harriet Tubman, you are called to do something special for God, so dare to do it! It might be hard to imagine, but even your struggles are paving the way to your purpose. Therefore, don’t be bound by your past or enchained by your limitations. Let the Lord set you free. For in due time, your freedom will free many others.

2. Do You Accept the Definition?



I F I WERE TO ASK YOU TO LIST YOUR GIFTS, you would likely name attributes that someone brought to your attention. Maybe a teacher praised you for being a math whiz or a skilled writer. Perhaps a relative called you an excellent cook or a beautiful singer. The positive words spoken over our lives influence what we call ourselves. In fact, the opposite is also true. Some adults are still trapped by the characterizations that they were given as children. Even as grown-ups, the deprecating voice of a parent or teacher continues to hold them back.

In 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, Jabez refused to accept his mother's negative definition of who he was. Because of her insufferable labor pains, she named him Jabez, meaning "He will cause pain." Jabez's name announced that he was a conveyer of grief, not a source of joy; he was an affliction, not a blessing. But Jabez prayed and asked God to redefine his name: "Oh, that you would bless me and expand my territory! Please be with me in all that I do, and keep me from all trouble and pain!" And God granted him his request."

I don't know what you've been called in the past, but the only definition that matters is the one that God gives you—and the one that you give yourself. You have the power to define your name. If you've been called a failure, redefine yourself as *winner*. If you've been called broke, redefine yourself as *prosperous*. If you've been called unloved, redefine yourself as *treasured*. Today, you can replace every negative definition.

3. Are You Bound?



AT ONE POINT OR ANOTHER, we've all been pinned "between a rock and a hard place." Yet few of us would be willing to amputate an arm in order to be set free. But that's what Aron Ralston did—with a dull pocketknife. While he was climbing over heavy boulders in his hiking path, one of them rolled and trapped his right hand. Five days after unsuccessfully trying to free himself, Aron cut off his right forearm to save his life. It's a true story that's documented in his memoir, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, and it's the subject of the Oscar-nominated film *127 Hours*.

Aron Ralston had to choose between the arm that he wanted and the life that he needed. Our spiritual choices face a similar crossroad. There will be things that we want to keep (like relationships and habits), but God will ask us to let them go. The freeing decision will be a matter of spiritual life or death. In Matthew 5:30, Jesus instructs, "If your hand—even your stronger hand—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell."

When we're bound, we're unable to break free from the sin that holds us back. But Matthew 5:30 commands that we find a way to cut those things off and throw them away—removing the possibility of changing our minds and being bound again.

At times, you'll have to sever relationships that you want to keep and cut off habits that help you cope. But Aron Ralston cut off his arm to save his natural life, and you must cut off whatever is necessary to save your spiritual life.

4. How Many Regrets?



A SINGLE, MIDDLE-AGED PASTOR once told me that he fell in love with a woman during his twenties, but he didn't marry her. Although she brought him joy in a thrilling and unexpected way, he couldn't picture her as a pastor's wife.

She was rough around the edges; not exactly the Bible-teaching type. Moreover, he wondered, *What would other ministers think?* His wife would need to play a role, and she would be expected to look the part. Subsequently, the pastor's "true love" married someone else—and he regrets that misfortune every day of his life.

People pleasers have many regrets, because their lives aren't their own. Like parched wanderers in a desert, they roam in whatever direction satisfies their thirst. It can be a never-ending quest for approval. But those who drink the water that Jesus gives "will never be thirsty again" (John 4:14).

With the Lord's cup of affirmation, you can charge forward in any direction your destiny takes you. And you'll need it, because God has a track record for requesting unusual things. He instructed Hosea to marry a prostitute and told Noah to build a massive ark. "A flood?" people surely quipped—as Noah invested hefty resources into building a 450-foot boat over the course of decades. But "Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him" (Genesis 6:22).

The apostle Paul wrote, "I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God" (Galatians 1:10). Therefore, drink the cup of affirmation that Jesus gives, and charge forward with your destiny. You'll have far fewer regrets as a God pleaser.

5. Will You Listen?



THE BIBLICAL STORY OF BALAAM is fit for a Disney film. It has all the necessary characters: a talking donkey, a shady prophet, and an invisible angel. But between the kiddie enchantment and enthralling plot, there's something deeper.

Throughout the years, my most helpful customers have been the unpleasant ones. They never fail to point out what "sweeter" folks won't mention. Sure, their messages usually sting, but they also guide me in a better direction. In the Bible, God used a donkey to deliver a message to the prophet Balaam. And God will use anyone to deliver a message to you.

When Balaam was headed down a road (going somewhere that God didn't approve of), his donkey stopped because an angel was blocking the way. Unable to see this, Balaam beat the animal three times. "Then the LORD gave the donkey the ability to speak"—*which certainly got Balaam's attention!* Soon after, "the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the roadway. . . . 'Look,'" the angel said, "I have come to block your way because you are stubbornly resisting me. Three times the donkey saw me and shied away; otherwise, I would certainly have killed you" (Numbers 22:21-33).

In your animated film called *Life*, God will use a variety of characters to get your attention—like your critical mother or prying neighbor, because they have the guts to stop you in your tracks. So before you attack them, the way Balaam beat his donkey, ask the Lord to open your eyes. There's possibly something in the road that you can't see.

6. Is Lazarus Dead?



ONE OF CALLED MAGAZINE'S READERS ONCE WROTE, "My dream function has been broken." Age can make us feel this way. As the years progress, people tend to think that they've wasted too much time. But you're not too old, and it's not too late to accomplish your dream.

Anna Mary Robertson Moses, better known as "Grandma Moses," began her painting career in her mid-seventies. In her golden years, she painted thousands of creations—including twenty-five after the age of one hundred. Some of the finest museums in the world have displayed Grandma Moses' paintings, and various reproductions have been placed on china, fabrics, tiles, and greeting cards. In 1946, 16 million of her Christmas cards were sold, and one of her paintings was purchased for \$1.2 million in 2006. *Do you still think you're too old?*

Through your faith, God can resurrect your dream, just as through the words of Jesus, God resurrected Lazarus: "When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days." However, Jesus said to Martha, "Your brother will rise again."

"Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible," Martha protested. But Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?" With great authority, Jesus then shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" And the dead man rose (John 11:17-44).

Your dream may have died years ago, but it can live again. So tell your Lazarus to rise! You're not too old, and it's not too late to fully live your life.

7. What Does God Think of Women?



MANY RELIGIOUS GROUPS HAVE LONG QUESTIONED the value of women. In the Middle East, where Jesus lived, Jewish rabbis began every synagogue meeting with this prayer of thanksgiving: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who *has not* made me a woman.” To this day, women are sometimes treated like second-class citizens at their places of worship. But God responded to the petition of Zelophehad’s daughters and answered this question: *Does he value women?*

Zelophehad died during the forty years that the Israelites were wandering through the wilderness. With five daughters and no sons, his children couldn’t inherit his land. The laws and customs of the time denied women inheritance rights. In fact, women themselves were considered to *be* property.

However, the five sisters—Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah—boldly “stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the tribal leaders, and the entire community,” and they petitioned for their rights. “Why should the name of our father disappear from his clan just because he had no sons?” the sisters asked. “Give us property along with the rest of our relatives.” So Moses took their case before God, and the Lord replied, “The claim of the daughters of Zelophehad is legitimate. You must give them a grant of land along with their father’s relatives. Assign them the property that would have been given to their father” (Numbers 27:1-7). *Hello, women’s rights!*

Unfairness of any kind can make the best of us feel inferior; but God values women. We can boldly go before the throne of God and collect our inheritance. “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who *has* made me a woman.”



✧ PRAYER

Dear Lord,

Help me to see my value,
no matter how I am treated.

In Jesus' name, amen.

▶ STRENGTH
IN THE WORD

There is no longer Jew or
Gentile, slave or free, male
and female. For you are
all one in Christ.

GALATIANS 3:28

◀ TODAY I DECLARE

I am an important
and valued heir in
God's Kingdom.



