

taylor bennett

journey of a lifetime



Discovering the Unique Adventure God Has for You

taylor bennett



Visit Tyndale online at tyndale.com.

Visit the author online at taylor--bennett.com.

Tyndale and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Ministries. *Wander* and the Wander logo are trademarks of Tyndale House Ministries. Wander is an imprint of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois.

Journey of a Lifetime: Discovering the Unique Adventure God Has for You

Copyright © 2022 by Taylor Bennett. All rights reserved.

Cover photograph of balloon copyright © PER Images/Stocksy. All rights reserved.

Cover photograph of sky by Davies Designs Studio on Unsplash.

Designed by Lindsey Bergsma

Interior balloon images are the property of their respective copyright holders on Unsplash.com. Chapter 1 by Ian Dooley; Chapter 2 by Alex Azabache; Chapter 3 by Cinthia Aguilar; Chapter 4 by Benjamin Cremer; Chapter 5 by Maurits Bausenhart; Chapter 6 by Maximilian Meyer; Chapter 7 by Sven Scheuermeier; Chapter 8 by Cristina Gottardi; Chapter 9 by Max Harlynking.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, 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 quotations marked ESV are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the (NASB®) New American Standard Bible, © copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. www.lockman.org.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version, opyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For manufacturing information regarding this product, please call 1-855-277-9400.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-855-277-9400.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4964-5618-2

Printed in the United States of America

28	27	26	25	24	23	22
7	6	5	4	3	2	1



contents

READY FOR AN ADVENTURE? I

CHAPTER I: MY LIFE HAS A ROAD MAP	?	•	5
-----------------------------------	---	---	---

CHAPTER 2: WHICH GATE? 27

CHAPTER 3: GOODBYE, BAGGAGE! 55

Chapter 4: Trust the guide 8i

Chapter 5: Bumps in the road 107

Chapter 6: The Layover 139

CHAPTER 7: A BICYCLE BUILT FOR TWO (OR MORE!) 171

Chapter 8: All the nations 197

CHAPTER 9: THE FINAL STEP 223

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 253

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 255

ready for an adventure?

CIAO, FELLOW WANDERERS! If you're like me, you love the thrill of setting off on a new adventure, whether it's a flight around the world or just a stroll around the block. But did you know that the greatest journey you'll ever embark on doesn't happen via plane, train, car, bus, or boat?

In fact, the most important adventure of all time doesn't even take place outside your house. It happens within your heart.

It's your walk with God.

I knew from an early age that the Lord had given me *big* dreams and plans, but it was only when I learned to trust in him and devote my life to walking down his path that I began to fully understand those dreams and realize my passions. (In fact, those God-given dreams are what led me to write these words right now!)

If you've ever felt like God has something big planned for your life but you don't know what, or if you're having trouble knowing what path the Lord wants you to take, this book is for you. I started working on *Journey of a Lifetime* when I was

dealing with a lot of uncertainty and change. As I wrote it, I began to immerse myself more fully in the Word until the Lord's plans for my life became clearer than I ever could have expected.

It is my hope and prayer that, as you journey alongside Jesus in the upcoming weeks, you will also experience God's guidance and provision on a whole new level. But, as with any truly great adventure, you can't begin your journey without first setting an itinerary. So let's talk a little bit about how this book works.

Journey of a Lifetime is divided into nine chapters, each of which focuses on a particular aspect of our journey with Christ and relates to a specific passage of Scripture. You'll find ten days' worth of devotions in each chapter, plus a special "bonus adventure" at the end. You can make this a true ninety-day experience, reading one devotion each day, or stretch it out by doing one devotion per day Monday through Friday and setting aside a day specifically for your bonus adventure at the end of every two-week period. Or if you're feeling particularly lost and could use some extra support, feel free to double up and read two devotions every day.

No matter what, every chapter comes packed with plenty of encouragement for your journey as well as a key verse to tuck in your bag for later. The first devotional of each chapter will introduce you to a small portion of Scripture I've selected just for you. Write it on a piece of paper with your nicest handlettering, scribble it on a note card, or scrawl it on the back of a receipt—whatever it takes!—then commit to memorizing it over the following weeks. By the end of this book, you'll be

well equipped with several scriptural "souvenirs" that you can carry on your travels through this life—and cling to during difficult times.

This book is yours to do with as you please. It's simply a guidebook to help encourage you in your walk with the Lord. There's no right or wrong way to engage with it, and there's no pressure to follow a special formula. Our journey with Christ is never-ending yet ever changing, and so is this book. Keep it by your side as a companion during your journey, but keep the Lord and his Word even closer. Study the Scripture passages for yourself and learn from the words God gave to his people. It is my hope and prayer that this devotional will not only inspire you in your faith but also *challenge* you.

After all, setting off on an adventure can be a little daunting and arduous, but there is joy and beauty to be found in every step of every journey—especially our journey with the Lord!

As you work through this book and grow closer to God, I'd love to share in your journey via social media. Share your commitment to deepening your walk with the Lord with the hashtag #TakingTheJourneyOfALifetime, or tag me so I can come alongside you as you set off on this adventure.

Bon voyage!



DAY 1: JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

READ JEREMIAH 1:4-10

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart. - v. 5

000

SO YOU'RE READY to go on an adventure. I'm glad, because this isn't just any adventure. In fact, you've just taken the first step on a journey of a lifetime! Over the next ninety days, we're going to experience the crazy, powerful love of God firsthand and take a close look at the incredible, unique, and *amazing* plans he has for each and every one of us.

But before we can get started, we need a road map.

Any adventure—whether it's a cross-country trip or the great journey we call life—is only as good as the map we have to guide us. But finding a map of our city, state, or country is one thing. There isn't *really* a road map for our entire life.

Or is there?

The answer, my friends, is yes.

God knows each of us. Better than we know ourselves. And he loves us. Deeply. Powerfully. Eternally. Before we even entered this world, he put together a road map to guide us through this life: his Word. Along with that, the Lord has a map for each of our lives—a calling for us to live out that is far greater than we could ever imagine.

In this chapter, we'll be taking a closer look at these beautiful maps God has given us—both the one we find in the Bible and the one he's hidden away deep in our hearts. We'll explore verses that talk about his desire for us to follow his paths in obedience and trust, as well as those that highlight God's wild, unrivaled love for us.

Dear heavenly Father, what a joy and honor it is to know that you've given each of us a road map for our life. Thank you for being my Comforter and Protector, my Guide and my Friend. Give me the strength to follow the path you have laid out for me, and be with me in my heart and spirit today and every day. Amen.

.....

To start things off, go ahead and write down today's memory verse—Jeremiah 1:5—and place it somewhere you'll see it often. Keep it close by your side as we embark on this incredible journey with the Creator of the world.

DAY 2: A LIGHT FOR OUR PATH

READ PSALM 119:101-105

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. - v. 105

-0-0-0-

PICTURE THIS: you're walking down a long country road under a sunset sky of blazing tangerine-orange and bubble gumpink clouds. The air is cool with the promise of twilight, and birds sing their evening songs as they soar above the meadow. Peaceful, right?

Fast-forward a bit.

The sun has set, and darkness is creeping in. The birds have gone silent; the chill in the air is a bit more pronounced. Those cotton-candy clouds have gone as black as licorice, blotting out the moon and stars. A coyote howls in the distance. You're all alone.

When we try to go through life without God's Word, it can feel a bit like walking down that dark, deserted country road. Things become shadowy and scary without the light that comes from knowing him and being intimately acquainted with his promises.

In Psalm 119, the author tells us that God's Word is sweet like honey and that it illuminates the path he wants us to take.

If you feel like you've been walking in the dark lately, turn to the Lord and dig into the Bible. Not only will you find God's encouragement and truth on every page, but you'll also

be gathering the wisdom you	need to live	e out a life	of faithful-
ness and obedience to him.			

That alone makes this dark world just a little bit brighter.

Dear God, thank you for the guidance you've given us in the Bible. Give me a hunger for your Word today, Lord, and speak to me through it. Amen.
How can you make an effort to spend more time in God's Word? Write down some ideas here, then commit to trying one out for a week.

DAY 3: FOLLOW THE MAP

READ PROVERBS 3:1-8

He will make your paths straight. - v. 6

I LOVE HIKING. Well, most of the time I love it.

But once, I set off on a hike that would supposedly take me to nearly a dozen gorgeous waterfalls via a simple seven-mile loop. Well, let me tell you, those seven miles turned into ten, and by the time I escaped from the maze that the "simple loop" had become, I was hungry, tired, and frustrated.

The hike sounded so easy. How could I possibly have gotten lost?

Simple: I'd forgotten to take a map. And, as I learned that day, even the most experienced hikers need something to guide them home.

The same is true in our lives. Even when we think we have everything figured out, there are still roadblocks, detours, and forks in the road. If we don't have a map, we're going to get—you guessed it—lost.

Thank goodness for our Savior, whose thoughts for us are more numerous than the stars in the sky and who already has a plan in place for each of us. When we align our own desires with what he has planned for our life and what he has ordained in his Word, we'll experience his peace and provision along the way.

But, at the same time, God understands that we're

human—aka *stubborn*. That's why he gives us a choice whether or not to accept all that he has in store for us. There have been times in my life when I've disobeyed what I knew was God's plan, and they all ended up about as well as my hiking experience.

That's not to say that God has us locked into an itinerary that takes us from day one all the way to heaven—we are free in Christ, and he gives us the freedom to make our own choices too. However, it's important for us to take all of our decisions before the Lord, prayerfully considering them and making sure they line up with the road map of his Word.

Today, let's make an effort to equip ourselves for the journey God is sending us on. When we obediently follow our Guide, we'll find that our journey is more beautiful than ever before.

Dear God, thank you for giving me the tools I need to find my way in this world through your Word and your perfect will. Forgive me for the times I've gone off track, and show me the way today. Amen.

Can you remember a time when your life went off track? How did you feel when you finally realigned yourself with God's guidance?

DAY 4: A CARNIVAL OF CHOICES

READ PSALM 143:7-12

Teach me the way in which I should walk; for to You I lift up my soul. ~ v. 8 (NASB)

-0-0-0-

IF YOU'VE EVER visited a theme park or carnival, you probably know what it feels like to be overwhelmed. You enter through the main gate and are immediately met with sights and sounds and smells that all threaten to pull you in different directions. Should you take a picture with the guy in the giant animal costume, hop on a ride that will have you screaming like you're a little girl again, or head straight for the food cart with the amazing aromas?

Sometimes life can feel like that. We're tugged in all directions, each of them seemingly better and more intriguing than the next. When we're faced with some of life's BIG opportunities, it's easy to want to say yes to all of them. But, just as saying yes to everything at a carnival will leave you feeling exhausted, bloated, and even a bit motion sick (not to mention flat-out

broke!), saying yes to every opportunity we come across can leave us feeling burned-out.

What if we remembered to turn to our Lord Jesus Christ when faced with an opportunity? What if we did as the psalmist said and listened for his faithfulness every day at the break of dawn? What then?

The more we seek God, the more he draws near to us. And as he draws near to us, he also begins to shape our paths and guide our lives. When we begin to intentionally seek his will and his plan, we are taking the first step in discovering his road map for our lives—the one that will lead to a bright, brilliant future.

The best part? Jesus is way cooler than any theme park character.

Dear Jesus,	life is crazy	for me too	day. I feel lik	e I'm being p	bulled
in a million	ı directions,	and I'm no	ot sure where	I should go. 1	Please
guide me ar	nd help me i	to do your	will. Amen.		

Every time you're faced with a decision today, take it to Jesus first. Pray for wisdom and guidance before giving an answer. At the end of the day, come back here and record what the experience was like.

12

DAY 5: HAIRY SITUATIONS

READ JAMES 1:4-5

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. - v. 5

-0-0-

I DON'T KNOW about you, but I wouldn't consider myself especially wise. When I went on my first trip to Europe, I promptly blew up my only hair dryer, even after approximately 10,001 different sources had warned me not to plug it into a European outlet. I also assured my mom that the only way to get anywhere in Venice was to pay a water taxi almost a hundred dollars to take us half a mile down the canal, but that's a story for another time. (Sorry, Mom . . .) The point is, I don't always have a lot of that wonderful thing called wisdom.

But!

In God's Word, he reveals to us that he will *give* wisdom to all those who ask for it. What a relief! Of course, that doesn't mean we'll be exempt from making some really dumb decisions (like trying to plug in that hair dryer). We're still human, after all.

Besides, his wisdom doesn't usually come to us as a big red warning label on an electrical outlet. It isn't written in the sky, waiting for us to look up and take heed. Instead, God's wisdom comes as a gentle prodding, a whisper in our spirit that nudges us in the right direction. It comes from spending time in his Word and learning to live in obedience to him. There is such freedom to be found in this still, small voice that lifts us up and helps us live for Christ.

That's because godly wisdom is meant to guide us—to ensure that we're living lives that are glory-filled and Godhonoring. Godly wisdom isn't a command that we have to follow or a set of rules. Godly wisdom is a way of life.

When we live in obedience and faithfulness to the Lord, we will come to understand his Word in a way that equips us to make choices that will not only please our Father in heaven but also guide us further down the path he has for us. This sort of wisdom is such a gift, and it's ours for the taking—all we need to do is ask.

Dear God, I need your wisdom. Help me to see the world through your eyes. Guide my steps and direct my path, and give me the power to make choices that reflect your desires for my life. Amen.

.....

What is one area of your life in which you could use a bit of heavenly wisdom? Write it down here, then commit to asking God for help several times a day. Listen for his still, small voice as you wait for an answer.



DAY 6: TSUNAMI WATCH

READ JAMES 1:6-8

You must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. - v. 6

-0-0-0

CLOSE YOUR EYES and picture this. (Wait—don't *actually* close your eyes, because then you wouldn't be able to read. . . .)

You're sitting on a beach on a tropical island, digging your toes into the sand and tilting your face to meet the golden sunshine as ocean waves crash on the shore in front of you. All is peaceful; all is calm. Suddenly—out of nowhere—a gust of wind whips up, throwing the peaceful waves into a wild, rocky rhythm. Soon the water is inching up higher and higher on the sand. It's headed straight toward you.

Sneaker waves and riptides can rise at a moment's notice, and when the winds pick up, it's a sure bet that the ocean is

growing more tumultuous by the minute. So, too, if we don't surrender our fears and trust in God, we will be buffeted on every side by the wicked winds of this world.

Yesterday we read about God's incredible gift of wisdom in the book of James—but the same chapter goes on to say we must not doubt that God will provide that gift; when we ask for wisdom, we must *believe* that it will come.

Just like we wouldn't buy a road map only to decide that it can't be trusted, we can't ask God for his gift of wisdom only to turn around and start doubting it. God is our loving heavenly Father, the author and perfecter of our faith. His plans for us are for good and not for evil—so we can trust that his plan for our life is far greater than we could ever imagine.

And what a relief that is! Honestly, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the mere *thought* of attempting to discern God's will for our lives. There are so many possibilities to consider, opportunities that arise, and decisions to make. It's easy to lose faith that we truly are walking down the right path. And that's where the Lord comes in. Because, no matter what, when we serve and honor him, our journey is sure to be one of beauty and grace.

With God's wisdom reigning in our hearts, we have nothing to fear. Our Father loves us, and he is ready to give us good gifts when we live a life of faithfulness to him.

Dear Jesus, I love you. Help me put my trust in you more and more each day so I might receive the incredible gifts you have in store for me. Help me grow in wisdom, strength, and courage as I walk down the path you have planned for me.

•••••

What can you do today to exercise your trust in the Lord				

DAY 7: TRAVEL PLANS

READ PSALM 33

But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. - v. 11

-

I LOVE MAKING PLANS—especially when I go on a trip. Since I was young, I've been the family concierge, doing research, drawing out multiple itineraries, and making restaurant reservations weeks (sometimes even months!) in advance. But, without fail, when we finally reach our destination, those plans go out the window one way or another. There's just no way to fully anticipate actually *being* in a certain location. The lure of street food, the call to explore the unknown, and the everyday

mishaps that come with an adventure never fail to send us in a completely different direction from the one listed on my carefully drawn-out itinerary.

Thank goodness that our God is nothing like me! As it says in the Psalms, his heart's desire for us was written long before we were even born. His plans for our lives are unchangeable—unshakable. The Lord doesn't change his mind; we can trust that his Word and the plans he has for us will not waver. They are good, and they're everlasting.

The next time we feel uncertainty creeping in about our season in life, let's turn to the Lord. We can ask him what he has for us in this time. And—best of all—we can take heart that, whatever his answer is, it is good. It is *true*. His map for us was drawn before time began, and we can trust in him for all eternity.

Lord God, what a beautiful gift you have given me! Thank you for giving me a plan for my life that never changes and never fails. Please show me what you have for me, and help me to walk down your path.

••••••

Take some time this week to go on a trip down memory lane—pull out an old photo album or two and look back over pictures of your childhood. Think about your dreams and plans back then, and compare those dreams with your current hopes and goals. How has God used certain events

in your life	to keep yo	u walking	down the	path he's s	et out
for you?					

DAY 8: NEVER ALONE

READ PSALM 139

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me. ~ vv. 9-10

-0-0-

WHERE DO YOU want to live when you grow up? Are you a hometown girl, or do you yearn for the adventure of moving to a new city, state, or even country? I've always dreamed of moving to Italy and teaching English—or becoming a full-time travel blogger and sharing my globe-trotting experiences with the world—but, for now, God is keeping me busy right in my little hometown in the PNW (Pacific Northwest). And,

much as I love the *idea* of living somewhere new and exotic, this homebody is happy to stay put.

What a comfort it is to know that wherever we are—whether that's our bedroom or a jet airplane thousands of miles above the Pacific Ocean—God is right there with us. Similarly, no matter if we feel like we're on top of the world or in the deepest valley, he is there, guiding us and whispering his plans into our hearts. No matter where we go, we cannot escape his presence.

That might seem like an intimidating thought at first, but it is also wonderful.

The God who made heaven and earth is standing by our side—neither leaving nor forsaking us—and walking along with us through every step of this crazy journey called life. He loves us, cares for us, and has gifted us with his Word, the best road map a girl could ask for.

Jesus, thank you for your presence, for being with me no matter the circumstances. This journey of life has many twists and turns, yet you remain faithful through everything. Guide me today, I pray. Amen.

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go? How do you think God could use you to bless others in that place? Below, dream a little about the limitless possibilities, then write about one place you're going today. How can you listen to God's prompting and follow him when you're there?



DAY 9: GPS GLITCH

READ EPHESIANS 1:15-23

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people. - v. 18



HAVE YOU EVER tried to follow a GPS while driving down a crowded city street or strolling along a bustling sidewalk? You might be attempting to follow the directions, but your eyes are constantly drawn to the hubbub around you. I'll never forget when my mom and I tried to find our way back to our hotel during our first night in Venice. Every cobbled alleyway looked alike, and try as we might to pay attention to the map on my phone, we couldn't keep from getting distracted by the unusual sights, sounds, and smells of the city.

Like the magical floating city of Venice, this life is filled

with myriad things that can distract us from our goal. Even when we're doing our best to keep our eyes on God and his plans for us, the world can so easily divert our attention elsewhere. The lure of sin—of perfectionism, dishonesty, gossip, or something else entirely—can cripple us in our walk with the Lord.

That's why Paul prayed that the hearts of his fellow believers would be enlightened—so that they could fully understand the great gift of salvation. When we remember what's at the end of this life's journey—eternal life with Christ!—our focus is dramatically changed.

Life with Christ will be greater than any five-star resort, more beautiful than any secluded campground. Eternal life itself is our final destination. It is *real*.

If you're struggling to stay on course with God's plan for your life today, remember that this world is not our final destination. This life is only the journey. The independence God has given us here to explore the world and discover his plan for us is nothing compared to the freedom we will find in the new creation, once Jesus returns to make everything right again. We will no longer be tempted to sin by the devil. Everything will be bright and fresh—clean and new. *Someday*.

God, open my eyes. Help me to see this life for what it is—a long, imperfect journey to the perfect world you have planned for us. Let me honor you with my thoughts and actions and keep my eyes fixed on you. Guide me today, God. I love you.

.....

When do you feel pulled away from closely following God?
What is one small change you can make in your life that will
help you stay on track?

DAY 10: THE ULTIMATE GUIDEBOOK

READ HEBREWS 4:12-13

For the word of God is alive and active. - v. 12

 \sim

WHEN I WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD, my aunt got me a Maui guidebook for Christmas. She knew that I would soon be visiting the island for the very first time with my family and that I was eagerly planning my trip. Over the next few months, as I prepared to fly halfway across the Pacific Ocean (my first big flight!), that guidebook was my constant companion. I read it over and over again, dog-earing pages and taking notes

on must-see locations and attractions. In the years since that magical Maui trip, I have continued to use travel guidebooks and blogs to help me plan every one of my trips—even when I'm going on a day trip.

What if we treated our Bibles more like I treated that old guidebook? What if we got our own copy, read it through—multiple times—and took every part of it to heart? If you're like me, you might've shied away from Bible reading before because it seems boring (reading through old family trees isn't exactly at the top of my must-do list). But what if we saw God's Word for exactly what it is—real, relevant, and powerful, even today? What would happen if we were to cling to the Bible with the same urgency with which we rely on a map or GPS during a road trip?

God has a special plan for each one of us; he is ready and waiting to guide us. When we live according to his Word, we can rest in the confidence that we are walking down the right path.

God, thank you for the gift of your Word. Help me to lean on it and use it as a guide as I navigate through my life. When what I read doesn't seem to make sense or have a purpose, open my heart and give me the wisdom to understand your Word. Amen.

.....

Make your Bible—your spiritual guidebook—yours. Mark it up, dog-ear the pages, or take notes in a separate journal. Don't just read the Word; immerse yourself in it!

bonus adventure: start mapping!

We've spent a lot of time talking about the road map of God's Word and the way it helps us follow him and discover his route for our lives. The Lord knows our next step even before we do, and the more we delight ourselves in him and spend time in his presence, the more we'll come to see those plans at work in our lives. Today, why don't you set aside some time to do just that?

Whether you've already started to see God's plan for you reveal itself or you still feel completely map-less, let these questions be a jumping-off point for you as you prayerfully consider the amazing things God has planned for your life.

- Where has God placed me right now?
- What might he want from me in this situation?
- Where do I want to go?
- Does this seem like somewhere God might want me?
- What are my passions?
- How might God use those passions to impact the world for good?

- What does my relationship with God look like right now? Do I feel like I'm following his will or forging my own trail?
- How can I spend more time studying the map that he has given me through his Word?