

FOREWORD BY
DANIELLE STRICKLAND

DISCOVER THE WRONG YOU WERE BORN TO MAKE RIGHT

GENERATION DISTINCT

HANNAH
GRONOWSKI

This book is equally beautiful and challenging. If you want to live life on your heels, soaring by at “average,” this message isn’t for you. But if you want to rise up, if you want to walk forward in the life Jesus died for you to live, if you want to leave a legacy that will ring out through the ages, *Generation Distinct* will give you the exact tools you need to live life on the offense.

LEVI LUSKO, lead pastor of Fresh Life Church; bestselling author

Having known Hannah Gronowski for years, I can testify that she practices what she writes here. Her words are a clarion call, an anthem, for this generation and the next. If you want your life to mean something, if you hope to impact others, if you believe you were created for more, then step into the *Generation Distinct* journey. To borrow a phrase from Hannah herself, “The question isn’t *whether* the world will be changed.” The question this book asks is—*Will you be the one to change it?*

AUBREY SAMPSON, author of *The Louder Song*; church planter; speaker

“You’re here for a reason.” I think we all *want* to believe that, but secretly we might have our doubts. It’s why Hannah’s book is such a gift to us all. Yes, we live in a world of many wrongs. That’s the bad news. The good news is . . . you’re here. All you need to do is discover the wrong you’re here to make right. Open the book, and find your path.

JEFF HENDERSON, author of *Know What You’re FOR*; lead pastor; entrepreneur

Hannah Gronowski is such a refreshing voice! She's deeply biblical, culturally savvy, and one of the finest leaders of our generation. This book is a must-read. It helps unlock the passion, purpose, and potential of one of the most unique generations of all time. If you are ready to dream again, pick this book up NOW.

RASHAWN COPELAND, founder of I'm So Blessed Daily; author of *Start Where You Are*

Hannah Gronowski is one of the key leaders in this next generation. She's a convener, a voice, and a launcher of next-gen leaders. In a generation riddled with stereotypes, I'm thankful for her words on living a distinctly different, set-apart life. She'll help you clarify your calling and move past your excuses.

GRANT SKELDON, executive director of Initiative Network; author of *The Passion Generation*

What if we encouraged and empowered a generation to unleash their God-given gifts and abilities instead of stifling them with criticism and stigmas? In *Generation Distinct*, my friend Hannah Gronowski shows us how Jesus encounters young people and unleashes them to change this world. Be encouraged . . . God is using this generation!

NICK HALL, founder and chief communicator of Pulse

In this work, Hannah shows the world what it means to lead with humility and authority. Her words uplift while they challenge. It's rare to find someone as uniquely gifted for this time as Hannah is.

CARLOS WHITTAKER, author of *Enter Wild, Kill the Spider*, and *Moment Maker*

Hannah's passion for living a meaningful life spills all over the pages. She wants that for you, too. This book is not just your invitation but your guide to exploring what's possible for a generation that cares.

CAREY NIEUWHOF, bestselling author; podcaster; speaker

This book is an anthem for this generation! A compelling invitation to live your one and only life with purpose, on mission for the sake of others. Get ready, for these sacred words will call out the best in you and help you live a life that demands an explanation.

STEVE CARTER, pastor; author of *This Invitational Life*

If the future of the next generation is at stake, pass the ball to Hannah. She's the youngest freedom fighter I know. Her book is sure to change lives!

SAM COLLIER, international speaker; global TV and podcast host of *A Greater Story*

At the faith-based university where I'm president, our mission is to help students discover the solution that they were created to be. That is why I am so excited about the impact this book will have on this generation. In *Generation Distinct*, readers will learn how to develop their potential, discover their passions, and connect with their community to multiply their impact.

DR. KENT INGLE, president of Southeastern University; author of *The Modern Guide to College*, *Framework Leadership*, and *9 Disciplines of Enduring Leadership*

GENERATION  **DISTINCT** 

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with Tyndale House Publishers*



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FOREWORD

I CHUCKLED THE OTHER DAY as I read a recent meme: “Everybody wants to change the world, but no one wants to change the toilet paper!” I laughed so I didn’t cry. The stark reality of world-changing conversations is that they are often wildly inspirational without giving much practical help. As G. K. Chesterton wrote, “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.”¹ This remains true for us, as well, but I’m convinced that the next generation faces an even greater obstacle to applying real-life action to big-picture principles: despair.

There is a fatalistic attitude that lurks as a backdrop to our current cultural thinking. It’s no longer just a simple matter of measuring the difficulty of changing the future. It’s the overwhelming, seeming pointlessness of change that seeks to defeat us before we even begin. We can find despair in the statistics of next-gen persons who are self-harming, suffering from depression, disconnected from their peers,

and considering suicide. Those numbers alone should alarm us. But fatalism is also found in popular theological ideals of comfort and pleasure and wealth and personal blessing that culminate in extreme consumerism and self-growth and personal pleasure in spite of—or maybe as the cause of—global poverty, deep injustices, and racial disparity (to name a few).

What can change this global fatalistic setup, which can only lead us into deeper cycles of oppression both personally (we will drown in our own selfishness) and globally (we will die without change)?

Fire. We need fire. We need to awaken and be lit on fire with a power greater than ourselves and a power that can lead us out of ourselves into the deepest needs of the earth. We need leaders of this era who can speak to the cultural wind of fatalism and command it to be still. We need creative miracle workers who can convince a generation lulled to sleep by a spirit of despair to wake up to their sacred calling and discover their divine worth. We need fire to light up the darkness of the night in order to show us a way forward—to show us that there is light at the end of the tunnel and to send us running in that direction. We need fire that motivates and liberates and sets us all ablaze with hope!

That's why I'm writing the foreword to this book. Hannah is striking a match that can set a generation ablaze. If you read this book, you will not only have

some practical ideas of life-changing strategies to help you discover your sacred calling and live it—but you will also have all the flaming energy you need to realize that every time you shine, every time you let your calling and life blaze into the deepest and darkest night (inside or out), you are a beacon of hope that change is possible, that the future can be better, and that things can be different. Maybe our true calling isn't to change the world but to love the world—and to do that, we must start by changing ourselves. This book has that kind of hope woven into its pages.

I'm an eternal optimist. Thousands of years ago, writing to a people figuring out their identity and purpose in the wake of exile, Zechariah called them "prisoners of hope" (Zechariah 9:12). Hannah's voice will help you understand what it is to deal with the stark realities of growing up in this current world—seemingly imprisoned by despair, facing the ideals of a generation who grew up on a steady diet of cynicism ("Whatever") and nihilism ("It doesn't matter") and fatalism ("It won't change"), but who through God's invitation have found something so much better! Hope is an eternal agency of change. And these pages are filled with it. It's not wishful thinking—it's infusing hope into our everyday lives. Our decisions. Our callings. Our gifts. Our impact. It's hope emerging as the source of change, and as Hannah suggests, we fuel this fire together.

As you read these pages, you'll hear the sound of change. It will call you to live differently and equip you to join a people locked into hope as a way of life. This hopeful generation will be distinct, indeed, and will shine like stars on the darkest night. If you think about it, stars are really just cosmic fires, blazing away. As you let your life catch fire, it will blaze and shine hope in this world and light up the darkness. Hannah has convinced me of this—and I pray her words will convince you as well!

Danielle Strickland
Spiritual leader, author, advocate

THE ANTHEM

HERE'S TO YOU.

The wild.

The risky.

The rebels.

The fighters.

The untamed.

The dreamers.

The doers.

The spirited.

The whimsical.

The activists.

The fierce.

The strong.

The bold.

The courageous.

You are my people.

This book is for you.

This book is for us.

This book is for what our world could be if we decide to change it.

It won't be easy, and it won't be safe.

But it will be wild. And we like wild.

This is our anthem. This is our rallying cry. This is our map. This is our guide.

This is our path into a life that matters. This is our conversation about what that even means.

This is about everything your soul has been searching for, screaming for, hoping for, yearning for since you took your first breath.

This is about what will still matter to you when you take your last breath.

This is about life in all of its fullness and beauty and magic.

And this is about life in all of its sacrifice and surrender and pain.

This is about adventure and fulfillment and excitement and risk and triumph.

And this is about planting and existing and staying where we are.

This book is about passion and purpose and what makes our souls come alive.

And it's about justice and activism and fighting until our last breath to stand up for what is right.

This is about sustainable solutions to devastating injustice.

And this is about everything we must sacrifice if we truly care about justice for all people.

This is about unity and peace and real, authentic, costly love.

This is about linking arms, reaching across divides, and inviting more voices to the table.

This is about a Jesus I have encountered who is better, more beautiful, more radical, more untame, more risky, more wild than I ever imagined.

This is about living a life that matters.

This is your story, and this is mine.

Let's go on a wild adventure together.

Let's live lives that matter.

INTRODUCTION

YOU WANT TO LIVE A LIFE THAT MATTERS. You want to fight for change. You want to create beauty. You want to unleash hope. You want to advocate for justice. You want to live a bigger story. You want to build a better future.

I know because, well, me too. I'm just like you.

I'm Hannah. I'm twenty-five. I was born with a neon soul and freedom in my lungs. A lust for life is both my edge and my curse. I believe in hope. I believe in unity. People are my lifeblood. I think we're stronger together. I believe every voice matters. Even mine. Even yours. And I think every person should have a place at the table.

I believe in justice. I believe in equality. I believe your

story and perspective is important and should be heard. I believe in a love that crosses divides and breaks the rules and honors each and every life. I think love is truly the most powerful force for change.

I'm a human. I'm a friend. I'm a sister. I'm a leader. I'm a dreamer. I'm a doer. I'm a little bit wild, with a wanderer's soul. And I am never more at home than when I'm somewhere I've never been.

I know life is meant to be lived in all of its magnitude. I am confident our stories can be written to change the course of history. I am convinced ordinary people have the potential to create extraordinary impact.

I'm tired of the old ways of living. I'm over the ordinary. I'm bored of the bland. And I hate being reduced to the label *religious*. I follow Jesus. Not because I have to. But because I want to. Because I have encountered a Jesus who embodies a wildly unprecedented brand of love.

And . . . I really want to live a life that matters. I want to leave a mark on this world. I want my impact to echo throughout eternity. I want to empower people and build things that last and do something about the pain I see around me. I want to create. I want to change. I want to advocate. I want to march. I want to influence. I want to invest. I want to liberate. I want to lead.

This book is full of stories and ideas and questions

and doubts and invitations and opportunities and dreams and truths. These are the records of my journey as I have embarked on a quest to discover how to live a life that matters. And this is your invitation to begin a journey of your own into a whole new kind of life.

Life is beautiful. But it's also sacred. And when we live into the paradox of the beautifully sacred gift of life, we learn to thrive. As you flip through these pages, I won't tell you how to live. Instead, I just want to share what I've learned. Because through a winding journey of mistakes and victories and laughter and tears, I've discovered something I always hoped was possible but wasn't sure I could find.

I didn't find a perfect life. I didn't find an easy life. I didn't find a glamorous life. But I found a life that really matters. And that is the very best kind of life.

Here we go. The time is now. Let's go on a wild adventure together to discover what it really means to live a life that matters.

THE LIE OF COMFORT

I'm nineteen years old, and I'm choking on my comfort. The very thing I thought would bring me freedom is tying me down tighter every day. I've chased comfort as though it's the goal of my life. But every time I think I succeed, the comfort seems to slip right through my tightly locked fingers—coaxing me even

further into its deceit. Comfort promises a life that is good and predictable and orderly. It promises a good life that will make you . . . *happy*. It promises you'll stay safe and be successful and life will finally be . . . easy. But really, I'm just trying to be someone who looks good on paper. And I feel like a shadow of who I'm created to be.

My soul is tired of pretending. I want to live a life that matters. But I'm not even sure what that means.

I'm looking for a life that is adventurous and wild and full and exciting. I used to dream and plan and create goals and write bucket lists. I thought by this point of my life, I would have built five schools in developing countries and backpacked across Europe and rescued girls off the street in Thailand and rock climbed in Yosemite and empowered every homeless family in downtown Chicago.

But instead, I find myself lying in bed, my alarm clock blaring, the freezing winter air shoving me back under the covers. Eventually, I get up, take a shower, and grab the lunch I packed for the day. My car doesn't start because it's older than I am, and I fumble nervously with the jumper cables. Finally, I am on my way, texting frantically at a stoplight to let the team know I'm running late. Overwhelmed and discouraged, I get to the office and throw my stuff down on my desk as I hustle to the meeting and collapse in a chair at a large round table.

I try hard to focus on the meeting, but the daily narrative once again plays on a loop in my head: *I want to live a life that matters. But this isn't it.*

Someone calls on me, and I am dragged back into reality. I quiet my soul. I tell her to behave. I tell her to stop. I don't want to hear those thoughts anymore. They're not practical. They're not attainable. My soul is exhausted as she boldly competes with the rush, the hurry, the loud pace of my life. My soul was once bright, neon, wild—and now she seems to have retreated so deeply within me, I can barely hear her tired voice pleading for a chance to come alive again. I know something needs to change.

I have heard whispers of the kind of life I wanted to live. I've seen glimpses of a different type of existence. I've read stories full of wild meaning; I just don't know how to write my own. If I am ever going to live a life that matters, I know everything needs to change.

Later that night, I sit in a room full of young adults on a bone-chilling February Chicago night, and I hear the same longing—the soundtrack of my generation. Not like my favorite soundtrack that I'd pop in for a weekend road trip—more like the broken record player you'd find at a great-aunt's house that plays the same shrill melody over and over and over. Everyone is annoyed by it, but no one tries to fix it.

We are dripping with dreams. We feel the rumblings of more, knowing the world is broken and

wanting to have a part in making it right. And on this dreary winter night, I look around and know that every person in this room is packed with potential. Each of us longs, aches, for all that life *could* be.

But something holds us back. I shift awkwardly in my seat. It feels like someone has sucked the oxygen out of the room. We desperately yearn for a life full of deep relationships and loud laughter and authentic faith, of thrilling adventure and world-changing risk and wide-eyed wonder. But the dreary conversation settles, instead, on why that life is just too far out of reach for our normal, ordinary existence. Work is *hard*. Life is *rough*. Relationships are *difficult*. Responsibility feels *stifling*. We drearily ponder what to do with our lives.

We have become discouraged, tame, quiet, unsure. Our vision and potential and passions and dreams are sitting off in a corner collecting dust, their colors fading with each passing day. Resignation has seeped into our everyday lives, convincing us the impossible we once dreamed of was just that: impossible.

And one by one, we are missing the story we were created to write.

A WHOLE NEW WAY TO LIVE

I think God had me in mind when He created mountains.

When I first saw the Rockies from the plane window on my first trip to Colorado, my heart did a backflip, and the smile on my face didn't budge at any point over the next five days. Something about being surrounded by mountains makes me feel small and strong all at once. I love that about our God—that He created us with the instinct to love and admire His handiwork. I love that He connected our hearts to different elements of what He has created. I just think that was so cool of Him.

My friend Faith and I arrived in Colorado Springs with very little agenda. We were there for adventure. We had booked a ticket for the Centennial State in a moment of adventurous impulse, found friends who would generously share their house with us, and boarded a plane with high hopes and mountainous visions.

Once we arrived, we asked everyone we met what our “must dos” should be during our five days in the Springs. We decided to spend our days exploring the Garden of the Gods and rock climbing at Red Rock Canyon and finding the best coffee shops in town.

But one morning, we were greeted by rain softly pattering on the roof and heavy fog swirling outside our window. For a while, we wandered aimlessly around the house. We were listless, our adrenaline still hanging thick in the air as our eyes drifted over the unfinished list of planned activities. Reluctantly, we admitted we would have to wait out the rain.

We weren't sure what to do next. We wandered into the front room and peered out the rain-stripped window—and noticed a dry wooden swing under a covering, swaying gently in the rainstorm.

We grabbed pillows and blankets and hot cups of coffee and hurried out to the swing. And there we sat for the next three hours, the mist from the rain gently brushing our faces as we looked out toward the fog-draped mountains. We pulled the blankets just a little bit tighter. There we sat, reflecting fondly on the many magical moments we had experienced that week.

Something about sitting on that swing amid the gloom and the misty mountains felt sacred. We spoke in hushed tones, hesitant to disrupt the weight of the moment.

The moments spent on that swing changed the direction of my life. We talked about our longings to devote our lives to something greater than ourselves. We admitted the thirst within our souls to sacrifice deeply to create real change in our world. We gently whispered the dissatisfaction we felt in our relatively comfortable lives. We yearned to stop just talking about injustice and start doing something about it. We wrestled with big ideas and scary dreams together. We refused to apologize for a belief we held that God could use us—yes, even us—to mark history in a profound way.

We dreamed bold dreams about what it would look like to start . . . *something*. Something that would provide an anthem for a tribe of tenacious, passionate, wild young leaders—calling them to abolish cultural complacency, unleash lasting justice, and join an adventure following our untamable God. It's what our souls were hungry for. And we believed it was what our generation around the world was hungry for as well.

I looked up at the tips of the Rockies, just visible above the fog, and wondered aloud, “What if we're talking about discovering *a whole new way to live?*”

It was as though, just for a moment, heaven touched earth. Something sacred was taking place on that little wooden swing on a rainy day in Colorado.

Faith smiled. “Yes, Hannah. Let's discover a whole new way to live.”

A LIFE THAT MATTERS

The most monumental moments of history can often be traced back to a small, passionate band of brothers and sisters who refused to allow the world to stay as it was. These radical individuals were driven by a vision of the future so compelling, they were willing to sacrifice everything they had and all they were to see the world changed. They linked arms. They claimed their cause. They rose up. And they have marked our

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history books. They have changed our realities. They have altered our world forever.

The apostle Peter and his band of disciples traveled all around the known world to spread the movement of the early church. William Wilberforce led the Clapham Sect and forever transformed the culture in England. George Washington and his unlikely army defeated the powerhouse of the day to start a new country characterized by freedom. Martin Luther King Jr. and his team of friends and allies rallied together in the pursuit of equality and justice.

I believe you and I stand at a crossroads in history. Our world is desperately calling out to the next band of passionate, gritty, tenacious young leaders, asking them to rise up and demand a different type of world.

A world of hope. A world of unity. A world of beauty and honor and a pure kind of love. A world of justice and truth, where we stand together instead of tearing each other apart. A world of equality. A world of opportunity. A world where every single life matters.

And perhaps . . . *we* are the leaders, the next band of brothers and sisters, who will leave a mark on history.

The question isn't *whether* the world will be changed. The question is, Who will change it?

When God was laying out the strategy for the

entire world, He wrote your name down on this day, in your place, with your passions, for a reason. I don't know exactly what it looked like for God to create this grand strategy. But I like to imagine what it could have been like.

I imagine: Before the first flash of light ever comes into existence, Father, Spirit, and Son are sitting together at a table. Next to the table is a large whiteboard, too big to even describe. And the Spirit begins to say the names, one by one, of the people who will one day inhabit the earth God is about to create:

“Maria.”

“Muhammad.”

“Jose.”

“Anna.”

“Oscar.”

“Sasha.”

“Jamena.”

“Adrienne.”

As the Father hears each name, a fond smile spreads across His face as He thinks about one of that person's funny quirks, or a sweet story from their childhood, or a magical moment they'll encounter as an adult. He turns around and writes that name in bold ink on the whiteboard, with arrows and dotted lines and circles connecting each person into the grand story He is weaving. As He writes each name, the web grows thicker, and each name becomes more

and more essential. A name is no longer just a name. It is a person who will influence another person, who will influence another person, who will influence another person. It goes on and on and on.

Eventually, He says my name. God laughs, knowing the crazy and wild soul He will place within me and my loud laugh He knows will startle people in coffee shops, and the love He will give me for mountains and deserts and oceans and forests.

He shakes His head lovingly, knowing I will desperately search for adventure and get myself into all sorts of trouble along the way. He knows the ache and longing that will rise up within me to see wrong things made right in our world. And then, He turns around and writes my name on the board. My name is surrounded by the people who have impacted my life: my mentors, my pastors, my family, my friends, and the countless leaders who have loved me, led me, and invested in me.

Rippling out from my name are the high school girls I mentor, and the refugee kids I get to hang out with, and the baristas at my favorite coffee shop, and the Generation Distinct Tribe, and the staff I lead, and maybe even some people I will never even meet. Maybe even your name is there. Names upon names, woven together and interconnected.

Finally, the Spirit says, “That’s all of our children.”
Father, Son, and Spirit take a step back and look

lovingly at this whiteboard full of names. A masterpiece of people. A web of impact. A mosaic of lives and talents and places and passions and dreams and callings and encounters and stories. The Father's gaze falls on Jesus, and He whispers, "This is all possible because of the rescue plan, because we love each and every one of these people enough to risk it all, to sacrifice everything to redeem them."

Then, with the air full of expectancy, God loudly proclaims, "Let there be light." And the world begins.

Who has your life touched? What injustice could be crossed off because your name comes onto the scene? What names will never ripple outward unless your name first connects with them?

You are not an extra name, a last-minute addition, or a forgotten element. You have an essential, pivotal role in God's strategy for the redemption and restoration of this world. Do not miss it. Do not waste your life wondering when someone will finally invite you to participate. Because the very moment God placed you on this earth, He was issuing you and me an invitation to *life*.

You're *invited* to love without hindrance.

You're *invited* to live with great intentionality.

You're *invited* to laugh as loud as you'd like.

You're *invited* to lead with remarkable courage.

You're *invited* to travel far and wide.

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**“YOU HAVE AN ESSENTIAL, PIVOTAL
ROLE IN GOD’S STRATEGY FOR THE
REDEMPTION AND RESTORATION OF
THIS WORLD.”**

You're *invited* to stay home and invest in the people you love.

You're *invited* to create beautiful art.

You're *invited* to fight for justice around the world.

You're *invited* to confront the injustice in your own hometown.

You're *invited* to make great speeches.

You're *invited* to dress in bright colors.

You're *invited* to speak boldly for truth.

You're *invited* to preach the gospel on a stage.

You're *invited* to preach the gospel in back alleys.

You're *invited* to create relationships across divides of race and culture.

You're *invited* to start world-changing initiatives.

You're *invited* to provide a meal for a hungry man in your city.

You're *invited* to welcome people into your home.

You're *invited* to design beautiful spaces for community to happen.

You're *invited* to write soulful poetry.

You're *invited* to start groundbreaking companies.

You're *invited* to raise funds for children across the globe.

You're *invited* to pour into the lives of children in your own neighborhood.

You're *invited*.

What are you waiting for? Don't waste your life waiting for an *invitation* you have already received. God is still calling to His people and asking, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" He doesn't force us to say yes. He *invites*. He asks. And He waits for us to respond and say, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8).

The *invitation* is already extended. Let's be a generation that raises our hands, jumping up and down, waving our arms, calling out God's name, and yelling, "Send me. Send me. *Send me!*" You're *invited* into this wild adventure of life.

Jesus wants to thrill us. To invite us into a life so risky and wild and unsafe that we finally discover what we were created for. He wants to make our eyes wide with wonder and our souls fully alive. And He is reaching out His hand, whispering to us about the wild adventures that await us if we will only say yes. Adventures that are sometimes difficult and painful, that require great amounts of sacrifice. And yet. These adventures will fulfill our deepest longings for meaning, our soulful search for fulfillment, and our great grasp for purpose. These adventures are what we were created for.

Right now, I find myself sitting on the very same porch swing I sat on a few years ago as my friend and I dreamed of embarking on a journey to discover a whole new way of living. And do you know what we

discovered? This. This book is the chronicle of what we discovered. These chapters are the narratives of my past few years, which I've spent exploring and discovering a brand-new kind of life. This new life didn't move me across the globe or make me sell all my possessions or take me backpacking to find myself or lead me to an orphanage in another country. Because this journey is not about taking you *out* of your life. It's about discovering the purpose and passions and dreams that have always been right there in your life, waiting for you to look them in the eyes and simply say yes.

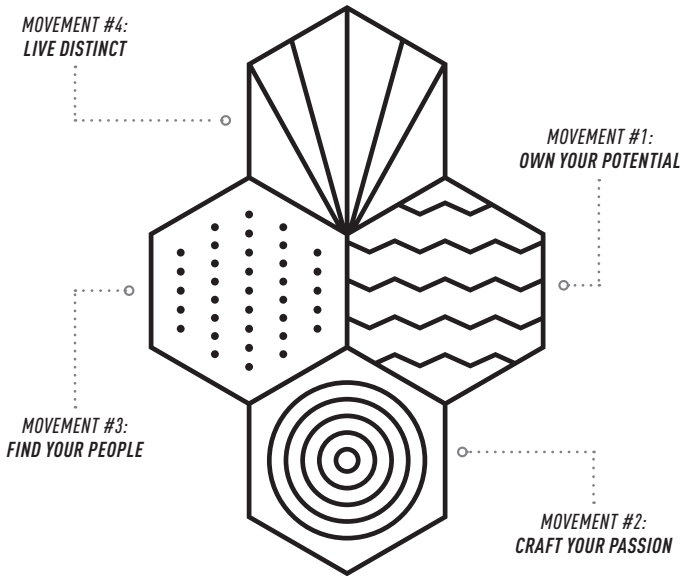
I am blown away at the path Jesus led me along. These chapters are not a random assortment of some good ideas or helpful suggestions. They are simply the guideposts that continued to push me forward on my own journey into discovering a life that really matters—and maybe, along the way, you'll be able to find the markers for your own journey.

We don't need a list of rules. We're over that. We need an anthem that will rally a generation to action.

MOVEMENT #1: OWN YOUR POTENTIAL

Nothing will change if we don't believe, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that change is possible and that it starts with us. Our anthem will begin as we claim the potential we have to lead our world into a new future.

GENERATION DISTINCT MOVEMENTS



MOVEMENT #2: CRAFT YOUR PASSION

If we want to see our world transformed, we need a generation of leaders who are living out their passions with great conviction, deep commitment, and untamable vision. Our anthem will declare our devotion to crafting our passions from the inside out—taking an honest look at what justice really means and embarking with purpose and strategy to actually transform our world.

MOVEMENT #3: FIND YOUR PEOPLE

Reshaping our world is impossible in the absence of unity. To witness justice unleashed, hope spread, and love rule, we'll need to reach across divides, link arms in unity, and charge together into a whole new future. Our anthem will give words to the stirrings of our soul for love to overcome hate and unity to sweep across our world.

MOVEMENT #4: LIVE DISTINCT

This vision is not just about us. It is about what the world *could* be if we decide to change it. It is about what lies ahead. Together, we can trailblaze a whole new way of living for the individuals yet to be born. This anthem will set our sights on the future as we create a brand-new way of living not just for ourselves but also for those who come after us.

This book isn't just a book. It's an invitation into a whole new life.

The future generations depend on us to break the chains and blaze the trail.

The world is waiting.

So, friends, don't wait to begin your own journey into a whole new way to live. Don't put it off until tomorrow. Don't convince yourself that a better time or an easier season of life will come along. *This* is your porch swing moment.

And maybe, in three years, you'll find yourself once again sitting on your own "porch swing," and you will shake your head in wonder as you reflect on the journey Jesus has led you on, and you, too, will be able to say with deep conviction, "I am truly living a life that matters."

It's time to stand up, shake off the fear, embrace the unknown, and run into this adventure. It's time to refuse to stay safe, to settle into mundane routine, to keep life easy, or to remain complacent. Instead, let's link arms together as we storm the gates of this world with truth and love and honor and justice and light.

Let's lead the way for our world. Let's become the leaders of change, of justice, and of redemption. It's time for you and me to rise.

Our world is ready to realize a radical new way to live. A life that is deeper and wilder. A life full of purpose and passion and impact. A life of risk and heart-pumping excitement. A life lived alongside a tribe of people. A life of building things that last. A life of creating beauty that brings change. A life of grander stories. A life of fulfillment. A life that creates a whole new world for the generations to come. A life that really matters.

A spark has been lit in the souls of our tribe. Us. This generation. The young leaders. And it will spread like wildfire as we pass it on to the generations surrounding us. This movement will begin as ordinary

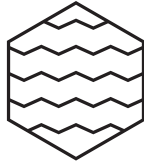
people live their rebuttal to the stereotype of our generation as apathetic.

This won't happen by accident. It will happen as we take real action, together, to remake our lives, remake our communities, remake our countries, remake our world.

Are you ready?

Your wild adventure is about to begin.

Let's live lives that really matter.



MOVEMENT #1

OWN YOUR POTENTIAL

Unlikely Leaders

THE SUN GLISTENS OFF THE OCEAN in front of me like light glistens off soft, plush velvet. The waves are gently embracing the shore where I'm sitting, while white seabirds circle overhead, their color contrasting poetically against the intense blue of the morning sky. The whole world feels still and peaceful, wrapping me in mauve as the sun peeks over the horizon.

And I wonder if the Sea of Galilee might have looked a little bit like this as Peter and Andrew dragged their boats back into the water for another day of doing exactly what they did every other day. Rowing. Casting. Catching. Hauling. Cleaning. Selling.

There is something so paradoxical about routine. Most of us claim to hate monotony in principle. If I asked you, “Do you want to live a monotonous life?” you would probably say no. Who wants to live a life of settling for the same thing, over and over? But really, we are often addicted to the safety, the knowability of routine.

Your life might be more monotonous than you even realize. You want your life to make lasting impact. But as you look at your calendar, you wonder if anything you did over the past week actually . . . *mattered*.

Because the opposite of monotony is not excitement. The opposite of monotony is meaning.

I imagine life felt monotonous for Peter and Andrew as they dragged their boat back into the water day after day, wiping the sweat off their foreheads and looking out at the condition of the sea. This was what they did every day. It was their normal. It was their safe. It was their ordinary. In many ways, it was exactly what their culture *expected* of them. They weren’t given the opportunity to continue their formal education. So . . . they became fishermen. And there they sat. Minding their own business, sweating in the heat of the day, dirty from a long day of work, ordinary and overlooked in every way.

Most theologians and people who are way smarter than I am agree that at the time when we meet these unlikely heroes in the book of Matthew (Matthew

4:18-22), Peter was in his early twenties and Andrew was in his late teens. These were no prophetic leaders. They weren't brilliant orators. They weren't wealthy business owners. They were just Peter and Andrew, two young guys who caught fish.

And right in the center of the normalcy of their lives, Jesus walks onto the scene.

I don't know what you think about Jesus. But you don't have to believe what I believe to learn something from the life of this world-altering individual. Jesus Christ wasn't just some nice man who talked about morals. His life launched the greatest movement of all time. His name is known around the globe. His teachings are proclaimed to millions of people every day. People of nearly every language and nation and race worship Him. Individuals of all socioeconomic classes follow Him and study His life. He was a rebel with a cause worth fighting for. He was a revolutionary whose followers shook up the world. He was a leader who turned the religious systems upside down.

I believe Jesus is the God of the world, the Creator of the universe, and the Savior of all humanity. But whatever you do or don't believe about Jesus at this point, we can all agree on one thing: We have something to learn from the most influential person in all of history.

This guy, Jesus, was on a mission to save the entire

human race and launch a worldwide movement that would alter the rest of history. And you would think, at this point of the story when He meets Peter and Andrew, Jesus would be in all-out recruitment mode. For a mission as grand and important as His, we'd expect Him to be searching for the brightest minds, the most eloquent communicators, the most experienced leaders. Surely He'd head for the Temple to track down the religious leaders or toward the palace to recruit the royalty. Because change always happens out of the centers of power, from the smart and the privileged, right?

But maybe Jesus sees the world differently than we do. Because on that normal day in Galilee, Jesus walked toward the boats. As He scanned the crowd, His gaze fell on two dirty young faces. And I imagine He smiled. These two fishermen had no idea their entire lives were about to change forever.

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "*Come, follow me,*" Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.

MATTHEW 4:18-20, AUTHOR'S EMPHASIS

Later in the story, we learn that God chose Peter to be the rock of His church. Jesus looked straight in the eyes of this scruffy, loudmouthed, uncensored, passionate young man and said, “On *you*, I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18, author’s paraphrase).

In other words, “Peter—I am going to start a movement. This movement is going to change all of history and all of eternity. This movement must spread to all corners of the world, and it must impact people who will be born thousands and thousands of years from now. And it is all going to happen under your leadership. You. The uneducated, foot-in-your-mouth, twentysomething guy. *You* will lead this movement.”

Jesus could have chosen someone important. He could have chosen someone polished. He very well could have chosen someone who was older or more experienced or more qualified. But Jesus just didn’t. And I love that He didn’t.

Everything changed for Peter and Andrew that day on the lake. They were drawn out of their mediocrity and invited into meaning. They were called out of ordinary and given the gift of extraordinary. They were shaken out of normal and drawn into a radical new way of life. Because someone showed up who was powerful enough, radical enough, just crazy enough to see the potential in those two ordinary kids. And I know this about Jesus: He sees the potential in you, too.

Sometimes, we can hear the stories of how this whole idea of Christianity came to be and we picture it all starting with old men in thick robes drearily pondering deep thoughts about God. My view of Jesus changed forever when I began to understand who it was He invited to be the original members of His world-changing team.

I don't think Jesus approached Peter because there was no one else at the docks that day, or because He couldn't find the Temple, or because the royal family turned Him down. I think Jesus was making a statement about young people for the rest of history. I think Jesus was creating a new precedent for the people the world calls "unqualified." Because when Jesus sees the young, unlikely, unqualified people in our world, He doesn't dismiss them. He doesn't scold them for their questions or their struggles or their fears. He doesn't see apathy, and He doesn't see the problems in our society. Rather, He sees a group of people He can use to shake up the world and to start a movement.

How can it be that Jesus sees the world so differently? How can it be that Jesus chose the unlikely in our world? How can it be that Jesus started the most influential movement of all time with a team of rag-tag teens and twentysomethings? What would compel Him to show up at the shore and disrupt the normal lives of two so-called ordinary young men? What kind

of love would compel Him to see past what the world sees to uncover the people He knew they *could* be?

HOW ABOUT YOU?

I was a sixteen-year-old who wanted to change things. I wanted justice to be unleashed through my little life. My young soul wanted to advocate for people and rescue the oppressed and change the world in every grand way. But . . . I didn't have any clue where to begin. I remember spending months with the question spinning around in my mind, *How can I change the world?*

I pleaded with Jesus to show me what I was created for. I wanted to know what it would look like—really look like—to live for something larger than myself.

One quiet Saturday afternoon I walked through the aisles of a used bookstore, my fingers brushing gently across the faded, worn book spines. I was sure they held the secrets of life within their yellowed pages. And I was searching for answers, desperate for direction. I stumbled on a book that dripped with promise and brought it home to crack open its wisdom. I sat on the couch and, as I peered into the pages, I felt like everything was about to change.

I read story after story of the injustice infiltrating our world. And as I read each sentence of the book, my heart broke just a little deeper.

Starvation, slavery, homelessness, trafficking, racism, violence, poverty, and more and more and more. The pain of the world felt heavy on my sixteen-year-old shoulders. As I closed the book after reading it in one sitting, I couldn't find words. I didn't know what to do with this burden I held in my hands.

But in that moment, the God of the universe chose to place a vision in the heart of an unlikely teenager—one I will never forget. I felt Him tell me, "Hannah, you are not called to solve all of the injustice in the world yourself. But I want to use you to empower your generation to fight against the injustice in this world."

The vision was intoxicating. Something woke up within me. I ran up to my bedroom, dug out a whiteboard, and furiously drew out plans and ideas and visions for what it could look like to truly empower my generation. How could we, together, discover the wrong we were born to make right? What if our generation could be the answer to the world's greatest needs?

And then, a few years later, I found myself in that soul-draining routine. I was more discouraged, more confused, more burdened than ever. So many in my generation were settling for mediocre stories. We were entrenched in the expectations of the world, controlled by the culture's push for more, marked by a lack of meaning, desperate for a different kind of life. My generation was sprinting from the church,

convinced that the excitement, adventure, and risk they were searching for certainly would never be found within the four walls of religion.

I didn't know what to do. So I started to talk to God about it.

“God,” I whispered, “somebody has to tell my generation we don't need to walk away from you in order to find the life we are searching for. Somebody has to tell my generation we have so much potential. Somebody has to tell my generation we don't need to wait until we are older or until we have our life figured out to start creating real impact in our world.”

And in that moment, I sensed God whisper back, “That's right, Hannah. How about *you*?”

Those three words have the potential to change everything about our lives. Or nothing about our lives. It's up to us. We can say yes. We can say no. We can raise our hands, or we can back away slowly. We can take action, or we can stay right where we're at.

But God offers us the courage to say yes, if we're willing.

I said yes. I was completely terrified, utterly unsure, and absolutely exhilarated. When Faith and I got home from our trip in Colorado, we shared the vision with a few close friends. Together, we began to dream and plan and create and build a path into a better kind of future. We spent hours in coffee shops, asking big questions. We stayed up late and woke up

early to dream about what *could be*. We wondered, *How can we empower our generation to live lives that really matter?*

Before we were ready, we just started making things. We built a website and gathered more people and shot some videos and created curriculum. Before we knew it, a mobilizing organization called Generation Distinct was born.

Today, my friends and I still laugh at the wide-eyed, naive people we were five years ago when this journey began. We were just crazy enough, just hopeful enough to believe we could change the world. And that is exactly what we set out to do.

I now find myself living a more wild, risky, beautiful life than I could ever have imagined—not because my life is glamorous or perfect. Because it's not. It's entirely imperfect, often messy, somewhat wild, and always unknown. Some days I want to quit. I want to find something easier, less risky, not quite so big. But at the end of my life, I don't think I'll wish I had spent my days doing anything else. Because I get to wake up every day knowing that I am truly living a life that matters.

Every day, I get to empower young leaders around the globe to discover how they, too, can live lives that matter. Together we are discovering the wrongs we were born to make right and experiencing more beautiful, free, fulfilling lives than ever before. Ultimately,

I get to lead people to experience who Jesus Christ really is. And that is the most important work I could ever do. Lives are being changed, and greater stories are being written.

But here's the thing: This isn't happening because I am brilliant or smart or qualified for this calling. In all honesty, I'm not. Most days I still don't think I'm the one for the job. Sometimes, it can feel like the hate in our world is too deep, the injustice too fierce, the pain too prevalent, the terror too heavy. Who am I to do something about it? Who am I to use my voice? Who am I to think my one life can make any sort of difference? What say should I have in creating change in the world? What do I really bring to the table? I'm not the best leader or the most creative innovator. I'm not the most well-educated about injustice or the most qualified person for the job. I'm not really old enough or experienced enough. I often feel weak and afraid. I usually feel in over my head. I question why God would see any sort of potential in me. But He does.

You see, my opportunities don't *qualify* me. The zip code I was born into doesn't *qualify* me. The advantages I have received don't *qualify* me.

And my limitations don't *disqualify* me. My age doesn't *disqualify* me. My lack of a business degree doesn't *disqualify* me. My limited life experience doesn't *disqualify* me.

Maybe you feel you were given more opportunities

than limitations. If that's you, what are you *doing* with the opportunities and advantages you have been given? Because to whom much is given, much is required (see Luke 12:48). Your opportunities aren't an excuse to sit back and get comfortable. Rather, you have a responsibility to *steward* those opportunities to fight for the futures of others.

Maybe you feel you were given more limitations than opportunities. If that's you, then you're in good company. All throughout history we see God use the most unlikely, overlooked, forgotten, unknown people to change the world. Your limitations aren't an excuse to opt out of God's calling on your life. Because what society deems as limitations are really opportunities for God to show off His power.

Here's the truth: Only the One who created us has the right and ability to qualify us for our calling. And the good news is, God doesn't see us the way the world sees us. He doesn't see us for who we currently are. He sees us for who we could be. He sees us for our potential. Because He created us, after all. He knows all that lies within us. He placed within us skills and abilities that are waiting to be uncovered. We don't uncover them and *then* use them; we uncover them *as* we use them. When we are pushed out of what's comfortable, to the edge of where we think we can go, suddenly we discover how God equips us to go even further.

Nothing can disqualify us from the calling God has placed on our lives. If He has called us, He will qualify us. If He has invited us, He will equip us. If He has sent us, He will give us everything we need to say yes.

I so want you to experience the Jesus I have met. I so want you to meet the most radical individual to ever have stepped foot on this planet. I am so hungry for you to encounter this Jesus who wants to lead you into a more adventurously expectant life than you ever could imagine. Please. *Please*. Don't miss the most incredible invitation ever given. It's right here, and it's extended to you. Jesus is reaching out, inviting you into a whole new, radical, wild way of living with the same three words He has been using all along to gather revolutionaries together and shake up the world: "Come, follow Me."

The only question is, how are you going to respond?

BREAK THE RULES

A couple of months ago, some friends offered to lend me their 1997 Jeep Wrangler for a week while they were out of town.

I took them up on their offer in a snap and assured them I would take great care of it. The next morning, a few friends and I loaded up beach chairs, an Igloo cooler, and brightly colored towels into our borrowed

vehicle and set off for the hour-long drive to the Lake Michigan beachfront.

When we finally arrived, our mouths were dry from singing loudly to the radio, and our skin was raw from the wind whipping across our faces. We unloaded our beach gear, walked down to the shore, and situated ourselves on the beach, feet in the water and books on our laps.

Everything was perfect. The sun was warm. The sand was soft. The lap of the waves was steady and soothing. For a brief fifteen minutes, everything was exactly right.

And then I felt a thick raindrop land on my forehead. I huddled under an umbrella and watched the fog grow thicker over the water and the rain turn the soft sand a deeper shade of brown. I was staying put.

But as the thunder and lightning grew louder and brighter, my friends gently suggested I was being ridiculous. I finally relented and we surrendered our spot on the shore to begin the journey back up the beach.

We ran, rain spitting in our faces and chairs slipping out of our grasps—and then we paused abruptly and looked at each other. Someone yelled, “Our car has no . . . roof!”

The rain had become a heavy, intense downpour. We hobbled with our beach chairs, umbrellas, towels,

and cooler toward the nearest shelter we could find. We eventually found an overhang where other people with wet bathing suits and discouraged expressions sat staring at the steady deluge coming from the dark sky.

We waited there . . . for hours. We sat, we talked, we ate cherries from our cooler. We made conversation with our new friends as we united around our common dilemma. We watched as person after person mustered enough courage to run to their cozy, safe cars. But our car had no roof or doors. So we waited, and waited, and waited.

Eventually, the park maintenance crew came by to inform us they were closing the park for the night. We had no choice but to brave the storm and hope beyond all hope we would make it home in one piece. So we ran for it, up the hill and back toward the street where the now-lonely Jeep still stood like a brave lone soldier who had refused to retreat. We awkwardly threw our beach gear in the back, wrapped ourselves in garbage bags and towels, and began to drive.

The rain continued, and the wind whipped around us. The thunder boomed and the lightning flashed. The storm raged on. But I was laughing loud, my eyes wide with wonder. I had never ridden in an open Jeep during a rainstorm. Maybe you have, but I hadn't. And let me tell you . . . people noticed us.

The Jeep was so full of water that, at stoplights,

we had to take out Styrofoam bowls and start bailing water out of the bottom of our vehicle. Other cars' passengers rolled down their windows to cheer us on, laughing with us (or at us—I'm still not sure). When we were twenty minutes away from home, the rain began to pour even harder. Moms in minivans stared at us in horror, and high schoolers in small beaters stared at us in envy.

We were making quite the scene, and every other car's occupants were watching us.

Maybe it was because we were out in an open Jeep in the pouring rain. Or maybe it was because we looked strange, all wrapped up in towels and garbage bags. Or, just maybe, it was because they saw the wonder on our faces. Maybe they could hear my laughter above the thunder and they could see the whimsy in my eyes. They could tell I was living a moment I would never forget, and, maybe, they wished they had more moments like that in their own lives.

We were rule breakers that day. We "shouldn't" have driven an open Jeep in the middle of a severe thunderstorm. But we did, and others noticed.

Maybe we *shouldn't* change the world. Maybe we *shouldn't* battle against oppression. Maybe we *shouldn't* rescue people out of exploitation. Maybe we *shouldn't* raise our voices. Maybe we *shouldn't* reach across divides. Maybe we *shouldn't* advocate

for change. Maybe we *shouldn't* love the people who are different from us. Maybe we *shouldn't*.

But I don't really care who the world says we *should* be. I'm done trying to live a life I *should* be living. Instead, I want to live the life I was born to live. I want to break all the rules. I want to defy all the odds. I want to challenge everything the world expects from us young leaders.

We can be the people who dare to defy all the old, rigid rules.

I believe it's time for our generation to rise up and refuse to settle for the safe, cozy lives society tells us to chase after. And if we choose to live a distinct life, a life that really matters, our world will take notice. Some people will judge us, and some people will laugh at us. But it will be because deep down, they desire to live a beautiful, daring life as well.

The invitation to live a life that matters comes from Jesus. It's a costly, deeply painful, and heart-wrenching call. And it's a freeing, wild, risky, adventurous call. It's both. But it's what our hearts were created to long for. The very same God who trusted Peter and Andrew to start the movement of the early church is the very same God beckoning to the young leaders of today, inviting us to start a movement in our world and in our culture here, right now.

This season of our lives as young leaders isn't just preparation for our lives. This *is* our lives.

GENERATION
DISTINCT

**“WE CAN BE THE PEOPLE WHO DARE
TO DEFY ALL THE OLD, RIGID RULES.”**

If Jesus Christ trusted the launch and leadership of the most important movement of all time to a circle of ordinary teens and twentysomethings, then why couldn't He use the young leaders of today to lead our culture into a brand-new kind of future once again?

Because Jesus sees the world differently. He chooses the unlikely in our world. He sees past what the world sees to uncover the person He knows you could be. He is reaching out to you, drawing you out of your mediocrity and inviting you into meaning. He is calling you out of ordinary and giving you the gift of extraordinary. You are being shaken out of normal and drawn into a radical new way of life. This is your invitation to get out of your boat. This is your invitation to walk away from your normal. This is your invitation to leave everything behind and set out on a brand-new journey to discover a brand-new way to live.

You have the potential to live a life that matters.