

You Have It In You!: Empowered To Do The Impossible

By Sheryl Brady

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With this empowering, transformative guide, you'll find the strength to overcome your greatest challenges by exploring the lives of the Bible's most remarkable characters.

By exploring the lives of the Bible's most remarkable characters, we can learn how to dig deep within ourselves and find the strength to overcome and succeed in any situation.

Some of the most talented, faithful, and amazing people in the Bible didn't know they had it in them, either—not until God revealed to them the truth about their identity and abilities, often in the midst of perilous trials and challenging situations.

Like these heroes of Christianity, all of us have untapped talents, unclaimed abilities, and unknown gifts waiting to be discovered inside us. Pastor Sheryl Brady believes God wants us to peel away the layers we try to hide behind, dissolve the excuses we use as camouflage, and reveal the beauty of our true selves. By sharing her own life journey as well as examples from history and current culture, Brady encourages us to reconsider the way we see ourselves and to reframe our own understanding of how we got there.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Sheryl Brady is a lecturer, recording artist, and pastor of The Potter's House of North Dallas. She has been a guest lecturer for *God's Leading Ladies Life Enrichment Program* and appeared as a guest artist on the Grammy-nominated recording of T.D. Jakes's "Woman, Thou Art Loosed." She lives with her husband, Bishop Joby Brady, and three daughters, Lana, Tina, and Nina, in Dallas. Visit her website at SherylBrady.com.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE GRACE TO START OVER

MY LIFE OFTEN SEEMS TO REVOLVE AROUND MOVING Sometimes when I see the boxes in our garage, I can't remember if they are there for me to pack or unpack! And I know my experience has become the norm. As technology makes us more mobile, we're used to moving from state to state, country to country, to advance our careers, keep our jobs, or be closer to the people we love. Perhaps it's not the physical act of moving that's unsettling so much as the context of why we're moving.

Most of my moves have centered around my relationship with God and commitment to serve his church. In the introduction, I shared how I first met Bishop T. D. Jakes and indicated what an immediate, powerful impact he had on my spiritual journey. In fact, the outcome of that meeting in Cleveland on that hot summer night was the move my family made a few years later to Charleston, West Virginia, to serve with his ministry.

We were elders and elated to be a part of the church, but I must confess, I think we *took* much more than we *gave*. Not that we weren't givers, because we were, are, and always will be givers, but what we gave in terms of our time, talent, and treasure could in no way compare to that which we received in our spirits. I was hungry and thirsty for God, and week after week I would pull my chair up to the table that Bishop had spread and eat until I couldn't hold any more. God called us there, and for that I will eternally be grateful.

This move began a wonderful season for me and my family. The people were kind and welcoming. Our home in Charleston was very comfortable. Being born and raised in Detroit, I never would have thought I'd be so happy living in the hills of West Virginia, but I was! Due to our schedule of constant traveling to preach and sing, we hadn't had a home in a while, so just having our own place was refreshing. We had been in full-time ministry at this point for almost thirteen years, most of which was spent traveling. On top of it all, I got to sit under the teaching of the man who woke up things in me that I didn't even know were there!

A few years later, Bishop Jakes shared the calling God had placed on him to move his ministry to Texas, in the Dallas–Fort Worth area. Along with several other families, we pulled out boxes, packed, and made the trek west, becoming a part of The Potter's House.

Exactly one week later, with pieces of my life divided up into a gazillion boxes, I stood at the podium and opened the first service of a record-breaking, history-making ministry in a word of prayer. I still do not recall how I ended up being the one asked to do such an important task. And I will never forget how honored I was

to be there and experience the awesomeness of that moment! Could it get any better than that? I was in a great church, serving with a great leader who was carrying a great Word, living in a great city—life was just, well, great!

After a few years, my husband, with whom I've worked hand in hand in ministry for the last thirty-four years, started getting that "I'm hearing from God look" in his eyes. Surely not! Why? Where? What for? Not that I was rebellious, but I just wanted to understand. Just a little bit of *explanation* would make *cooperation* a whole lot easier! As he talked and I cried, he said God had put it in his heart to go back east.

He made a statement to me I couldn't understand at the time, but I've never forgotten it: "Baby, I need to get you out of here, because if I don't, you'll never become who God has called you to be." Looking back, I see that it was time for me to put all I had learned to work. As long as I just stayed there, eating from his table, I would never have gotten the hands-on experience I needed. It was as if I'd been in a twelve-year internship, and it was finally time for me to live out all that had been poured into me over the many years that I learned from this great ministry. With Bishop's blessing, we pulled out of the great state of Texas with our children, our dogs, our boxes, and a sense of purpose we couldn't even describe.

I felt a little like Abram when God spoke to him to leave his country and his kin, and then journey "to a place I will show thee" (Gen. 12:1). We were taking every step by faith and ultimately our *faithwalk* led us straight into Faith World Church in beautiful Orlando, Florida, under the leadership of Pastor Clint Brown. We knew this would be a temporary landing spot for us, where we would continue to wait upon the Lord for his direction. We knew he had planted a desire in us to build a church of our own; however, we were not exactly sure at the time where it would be.

Pastor Clint and the entire Faith World family were a great blessing to us. They welcomed us with open arms. They loved us, made space for us, encouraged and laughed with us, and helped us believe in "us." Pastor Clint has reckless faith. He built such faith in us regarding the gifting of God in our lives that it wasn't long before we felt as if we were "well able to take the land" (Num. 13:30). The Lord began to put the city of Raleigh, North Carolina, on my husband's heart.

With all of the Word Bishop Jakes had planted in us, the faith Pastor Brown poured into us, and the prayers our family had prayed over us, we gathered up our kids, our dogs, and our boxes, and set out once again with an inexplicable grace to start over! Every step of the way we saw the provision and the protection of the Lord. Once we made it to Raleigh, we settled in for ten wonderful years, during which we founded The River Church. I was honored to co-lead and guide this baby through its infancy into a beautiful, mature community of believers. We'd never had to use as much faith as we had to use there, yet we'd never seen as much favor as we were shown there either.

On the very day of our tenth anniversary at The River, my husband and I were sitting at the dinner table with Bishop Jakes, and he began talking about vision. He shared with us how God speaks and brings a shift to his life, seemingly every ten years. Needless to say, he had my attention simply because this was exactly where I found myself, at a major milestone on my journey. I didn't say anything about it at the time, but somehow I knew this conversation was not one that we haphazardly stumbled into. Somehow I knew there was something seriously sovereign about the moment I had found myself in. Somehow I knew a significant shift was about to take place in our lives.

After dinner I thanked Bishop and his wife for their beautiful spirit of hospitality and we left Dallas, returning to North Carolina with an unexplainable excitement. What was God up to?

My eyes hadn't seen it, my ears hadn't heard it, but my Spirit knew that God was about to jet-propel us once again into his divine purpose for our lives. Sure enough, less than three weeks later my phone rang, and Bishop Jakes was on the line. "Sheryl, I'd like to ask you and Joby [my husband] to pray about coming home to Texas." He shared with us his vision to establish a campus extension in North Dallas that would be part of The Potter's House. At the end of our conversation, Joby and I thanked him for offering us such an awesome opportunity, assuring him we would pray for the perfect will of God to be made manifest. Hanging up the phone, I couldn't help but wonder if what I heard was actually what he said.

Could this really be God's plan for our lives? Could God really be asking us to return to Dallas? Was it his will for us to leave North Carolina? Out of everyone in the world Bishop Jakes could've called, he called us? It was one of those rare times I felt speechless and knew that I had to spend some major time alone with God in order to sort through the swirling emotions inside. We needed to hear his voice. We needed to know that, once again, he would give us the grace to start over.

HER FEET WERE SO TIRED, AND YET SHE KNEW THERE were many miles to go before they would reach the border. Dust hovered above the road and choked her, making her more aware of her thirst. How could her life have changed so quickly?

For a while they had all been so happy together, so grateful to have formed a new family. It seemed like just days ago Ruth had been sitting with her husband, his brother and wife, and her mother-in-law and enjoying a meal of bread and fish. Her husband's father had died many years before, but they had endured their grief, grateful that he had saved their lives from the terrible famine in their homeland. Even though she hadn't conceived a child yet, there was still much joy and hope for the future. Ruth and her husband looked ahead with anticipation.

And then the worst happened. He didn't come home from the sea one afternoon, and then an old man came and brought them the terrible news. Her husband was dead. Before the shock of his passing could fade, the unimaginable struck again, and her brother-in-law drew his last breath as well. She and her sister-in-law, Orpah, and mother-in-law, Naomi, consoled each other as best they could, but the double blow felt unbearable. Naomi wailed and sobbed with such anguish.

Now they walked in silence, the three of them. Naomi had decided that she would return to her home in Bethlehem, where the Lord was providing food for the Israelites. The woman who had become like a second mother to Ruth worked hard each day to contain the wells of gut-wrenching grief, anger, and bitterness that ran so deep. Ruth herself continued to grieve, but what choice did she have but to go forward? Everyone told her that she was young and would marry again and bear children, but she wasn't sure. After what had happened to them, nothing was certain anymore. (Ruth 1)

PERHAPS OF ALL MY MOVES, RETURNING TO DALLAS from North Carolina was the hardest. I can't even begin to articulate all of the thoughts that raced through my mind over the next months after Bishop Jakes's phone call. Going to The Potter's House would be wonderful, but leaving The River and the beautiful people who taught me how to pastor in the first place would be, needless to say, extremely painful.

I'm guessing you've been there, too. When you are faced with a decision, an opportunity, a choice about your life's direction, it's so tempting to stay put and maintain a comfortable pace on level ground. As we get older (certainly as I get older!), it seems harder to pack up and start over, more challenging to transplant the tender roots so newly established and reimmerge them in distant soil. While the grassy ground often looks greener on the other side, by middle age most of us have learned that beneath the beautiful emerald turf we sometimes find the soil rocky and barren, inhospitable to our attempts at going deep.

From my experience, and I'm guessing yours, moving always poses innumerable risks and countless questions: *Will it be worth leaving what I know I have here, for the possibility of what I might have there? Will my new home be as comfortable and enjoyable as my present one? Will the people there accept me and my family, welcoming us as part of their community and fellowship? Or will we find ourselves locked into the role of outsiders, always kept at arm's length from the locals, the natives, the long-term community members who know they belong and want to keep their circle closed?*

What will the future hold for us in this new land? Will the blessing that's so obviously on our lives go with us? Will the goodness of the Lord taste as good to us in Texas as it does in North Carolina? Am I even capable of doing this? These were the questions I asked myself. These were the questions that I honestly needed answers to.

Knowing that answers emerge from experience, I went to my Bible, the greatest book ever written. I was immediately reminded of a couple of dear friends of mine. I've never met them in person, but through the power of their story recorded in God's Word, I've learned so much about what it means to love well, to commit, to obey, and to be faithful. Ruth and Naomi remind me that any move begins with our hearts and not our feet. Their story is one of having more courage than common sense, more love than logic, and more faith than fear.

THE SCENE WOULD ALWAYS HAUNT HER. STANDING IN the middle of the road with Orpah and Naomi, Ruth watched as her dear sister-in-law returned to Moab, back to her family there. Naomi had insisted. They had stopped beside a well to drink and refresh themselves, the water so cold on their parched throats.

And then suddenly, her second mother began speaking softly to them. As tears crawled down the older woman's withered cheeks, Naomi told her sons' wives that they must continue with her no farther. Orpah was torn, clearly, but she finally relented and walked back the way they had come.

Change did not come easily for Orpah. She was definitely the fruit of her homeland, Moab, a name that meant "the place that doesn't require change" (see Jer. 48:11). And while she loved Naomi and had been greatly influenced by her God, when the moment of truth came, Orpah couldn't make a clean break from her past because she found change to be too challenging. Severing old ties and launching into unknown territories was a price she was unprepared to pay. And while standing at the border of a breakthrough, she kissed them good-bye, forever turning her back on Ruth, Naomi, and Naomi's God.

As Ruth stood watching Orpah, for just a moment, questions flooded her mind: Could she really start over in a strange land where she would know no one except Naomi? Should she go back with Orpah and return to what was familiar, the people and place she knew so well? And what about this God of her husband and his family? Was he in the midst of her journey, or was he abandoning her to find her own way?

One glance at Naomi's face, the wrinkles of worry and the eyes of emptiness, and Ruth knew that returning to Moab was not an option. Her questions did not matter. There was nothing Naomi could say that could compel Ruth to abandon her. She had told Naomi that she loved her and that she had even discovered a love for this strange Hebrew God, the one Naomi herself struggled to trust, now that her husband and sons had been taken. Naomi tried to insist, tried to gently push Ruth away, but she would have none of it.

"Ms. Naomi, I can't go back. I have nothing to go back for. Things are different now. Knowing you has changed my life. I was incomplete without you. I found God in you and from there I found purpose. Yes, Ms. Naomi, you were the one who connected me to my destiny! You told me who I was. You told me what I could

become. You woke up the sleeping things that were inside of me. I'm awake now and it's all because of you! How in the world do you think I could go back to sleep now? Whatever I've got to do, I'll do it. Whatever I've got to change, I'll change it, but you can't leave me where I am! My heart is fixed.

"Wherever you go, I'm going. Wherever you live is where I'm living. And whenever we've walked together as far as we can walk, wherever you die is where I want to die. And wherever they lay you down, I want them to leave a spot for me right there beside you!"

"Ms. Naomi, I don't know where we are going and, to be honest, it really doesn't matter. If we are starting over, then guess what? We are doing it together!"

HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO TAKE A LEAP OF FAITH FOR someone you loved? If not a physical move, then a move of the heart? Have you ever had to choose between playing it safe and walking in uncharted territory? I know I have, and even though I had moved many times before, this last time stood out.

Moving day was finally here—time for us to leave North Carolina and head back home to Texas. My adult children and their spouses and kids were moving with my husband and me. Together, we had spent the last forty-eight hours in a hurricane of movers, boxes, tape, and especially my babies. Each of us, in our own way, showed the strains of what-in-the-world-is-going-on syndrome. This was especially hard for me, because I'm usually the stabilizer, trying to make sure everyone is doing well. My grandson Jaden's tear-stained face reinforced his sweet but weary voice when he said, "I'm tired, GeGe. I didn't take my nap." As with all of us, his usual routine had been shattered.

Finally it was time to turn off the lights and leave the place that we had known as home for so many years. As my daughter Lana and I flipped the basement lights out, she noticed in the corner her beautiful little daughter, Kenzie, who had found a crib mattress that somehow didn't make it onto the moving truck. She sat there with her sad-girl face, leaning against the wall.

I said, "Kenzie, what's wrong, baby?"

She mumbled, "I don't want to leave."

Lana fell on the crib mattress next to her and unleashed a gallon of long overdue, locked-up tears. Seeing my two beautiful girls sitting there crying made me cry! There we sat, three generations of crybabies, huddled in a nearly dark, boxed-up basement. So we just let ourselves have a moment! Finally, we headed upstairs and made a dash for our vehicles in the midst of an unbelievable, torrential rainstorm—even the sky was crying that night.

As I was trying to get the car turned around, I noticed my headlights shining on the dumpster we had rented for discarding trash and debris. We had sent anything worth salvaging to Goodwill, so everything in the dumpster was either broken or beyond repair. It was now overflowing, and there on top was Jaden's first set of drums. A born drummer, my grandson had progressed from toy drums and was now on his second set of real drums—but who's counting!

In the blink of an eye, the dumpster became a stage and my headlights became spotlights focused right on Jaden's drums. And then it hit me like a ton of bricks: we were leaving them behind! In fact, I was leaving a whole era of my life behind. Between the tears and the ridiculous rain, I don't know how we made it out of there in one piece. I felt as if I was driving away from the best ten years of my life—not to mention my eighty-two-year-old mother, who I was leaving wrapped up warm in the arms of my sweet sister, just a few

miles down the road. Zipping in and out for those “I need my mommy” moments would not be so easy from Dallas.

Tears of pain and pleasure streamed down my face. As the joy and sorrow poured out of me, I couldn’t tell which tear was which. I could only say, “Lord, my heart is full of gratitude!” I was grateful for faithfulness, family, and future, resting in the knowledge that at that moment God had plans for us under the lock and key of his sovereignty.

Whether you’re familiar with Ruth’s story or not, I believe we all know how scary it can be to move from one place to another. It’s not just exchanging the familiar for the unknown; moving forces us to look within ourselves and find more strength than we knew we had, more courage than we’ve ever displayed before, and more faith in the goodness of our loving Father than we’ve ever had to show.

Sometimes we have to move in order to survive. Even when it’s too risky, it’s still tempting to stay where we are. You don’t have to take the promotion; you can just stay with the position you have and the job security that it provides. If you go up the ladder at work, there’s always a chance you could fall even further if you fail. But can you live with the questions that will forever gnaw at your peace? The questions that will creep into your mind at the end of the day as you’re attempting to sleep: *I wonder if I would have been even more successful if I’d taken that job? I wonder if our family would’ve been happier if we’d moved? What if God had something special for me in that new place that I was too afraid to take hold of? What if I’ve missed a blessing by being blinded by my fears?*

Each of us has a choice every day either to remain in the Moab of our lives, the place with people just like us, the place where we’ve always belonged, the place that makes no real demands on us, or to embark on a journey of faith into a new country. Naomi was compelled to return to her homeland because of the dire circumstances she experienced in Moab, but her daughter-in-law Ruth clearly had a choice.

Or did she? Reading between the lines, I think something in her said, *Why should I sit here and die when I can leave here and live?* What did Orpah miss by not trekking to Bethlehem with her sister- and mother-in-law? What—or whom—would she have discovered in the grain fields of the future?

THE AFTERNOON SUN BEAT DOWN ON HER BACK AS SHE stooped to gather the grain that had been spilled in the fields of Naomi’s kinsman, Boaz. He had been so kind to her, so gentle, so different from what she expected. She had bowed her head in respect and kept her eyes lowered, but he had spoken to her directly, treating her not like a foreigner, a Moabite, but like a real person, like a woman. His workers also treated her with the same kindness and respect, offering her water to drink. She suspected they even were spilling more grain than usual just so she would be able to gather plenty.

She dared not say it out loud to Naomi, but Ruth felt a new hope in her heart, a new dream taking shape. Could it be that in this foreign land with the Hebrews her heart could find a home? In the quiet of the evening, or sometimes when she was alone in the fields, she would hear the Lord speak to her. He was unlike any god she had ever encountered back in Moab, but she was glad. This God was real. And he cared about her and Naomi. Ruth knew that he was the reason they had a place to live and food to eat. She gave thanks in her heart. (Ruth 2)

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THE WAY GOD PROVIDES FOR us when he challenges us to make moves in life? It may not be easy and we may get weary, and even exhausted, from the journey, but when we follow him, our Father will always sustain us. Just as God promises to remain with us, he also promises to take care of our needs.

Whether it's manna for our daily bread or crumbs for the sparrows, our Father loves to provide life-giving gifts for his children. Ruth's story reveals even more of God's provision as the two women settled into the community and discovered that one of Naomi's relatives by marriage, Boaz, was a wealthy landowner with many fields of grain. Can you look back on your life and remember the times God has provided for you and your family? Ways he has surprised you with unexpected blessings at times of extraordinary need?

When we stay in familiar places, it's so tempting to get in a rut and overlook all that God gives us. We start taking things for granted—our homes, our jobs, our families, our health. But when we're following God's call on our lives, we're forced to rely on Him for everything. We're forced to recognize the many ways he provides even the smallest things for us.

Having moved several times in my life, I've come to appreciate what it means to discover things that I can so easily take for granted—a grocery store close to my house, a good dentist, a good school nearby when my children were young, natural beauty unique to each particular setting. What have you been taking for granted in your life? If you were to pause and make a list of a dozen things that you're especially grateful for today, what would you put on it? Fresh strawberries? A car that runs? The ability to walk around the block with your child? A job you enjoy? A family who loves you? I challenge you to make such a list and consider the "spilled grain" that God is currently scattering into your life!

RUTH CROUCHED IN THE SHADOWS NEAR THE REAR CORNER of the threshing room. The place smelled of wheat and barley, a rich, earthy scent that held the promise of nourishment and life. She couldn't believe she was actually acting so boldly—surely she would never have been so bold back in Moab. When she had met Naomi's son back home, it had been so easy, so natural. Yes, he was a foreigner, but he seemed to know her so well.

Now, she was doing something she had never done before. She was taking such a huge risk, going against what others (even those back home) would consider proper. But somehow this entire move had been about taking risks, about following the voice of her new God, the one who continued to provide for her and talk her through the risky places in life. Was it really possible that he might give her this handsome, kind man as her second husband? Could she really be so blessed to have two men in her life love her with such care and tenderness?

She remained quiet, hidden in the darkness, as Boaz finished eating and drinking and reclined on a pallet on the floor only a few feet away from her. Soon his even breathing and tiny snores were the only sounds in the room. Only the moonlight streaming in a high window allowed her to see him sleeping so peacefully. Silently, she tiptoed to the end of his pallet and knelt down. Lifting the light wool blanket, she uncovered his feet and then reclined on the floor beside them. Was it possible to love someone she had only just met?

She must have drifted off. Now she had heard something, a sound like a man's voice. Where was she? Oh, no! Ruth remembered as she looked up at Boaz only to find him wide awake, staring at her.

"Who are you, woman? And what are you doing here?" he asked her in his deep, soft voice.

"I am your servant, Ruth," she whispered and removed the veil covering most of her face. "As the kinsman-redeemer of Naomi's family, please cover me with your garment."

He hesitated and Ruth thought she heard him making a sound like laughter. Finally, Boaz said, "You have blessed me and must be a gift from the Lord. You may stay here until morning and then we will sort things out."

Ruth breathed a sigh of relief and felt tears well up in her eyes. The presence of the Lord was there in the room with the two of them. She was exactly where she was supposed to be. (Ruth 3)

WHAT RISK DO YOU NEED TO TAKE TODAY IN ORDER TO experience the blessing God has for you next? What opportunity is calling you to take bold steps in its direction? What's the next step on the journey toward the abundant life for which you were created? As Naomi discovered, it's never too late to allow God to redeem our losses and surprise us with blessings beyond our imagination. Upon returning home, she had told her old friends to call her Mara, a name that means "bitter" (Ruth 1:20). She wanted everyone to know she had suffered unbearable losses and that she wasn't going to dare hope for anything from anyone.

But through the loyalty and the risk-taking of her devoted daughter-in-law Ruth, Naomi discovered that her story was not finished. God could and did provide for her more than she herself could've dreamed. It wasn't too late for her, and it's not too late for you. No matter what you've lost, no matter who's left you, no matter where you find yourself, God can and will surprise you with his grace if you'll only let him.

THE BABY AT HER BREAST SMILED AND COOED EVEN WHEN she handed him off to his grandmother. Ruth had never seen Naomi radiating such joy and delight—not even when her sons had been alive. The Lord had shown them so much favor. And so much of his lovingkindness came through her husband, Boaz.

The days when Ruth had felt weary with grief melted into the past. She had stepped into her future, and all she could do was give thanks and praise. If not for remaining with Naomi, she would've missed the greatest blessings of her life. One cheek-to-cheek brush with her new baby boy, and she knew every risk she had ever taken was well worth it.

IT'S NOT JUST A HAPPY ENDING FOR NAOMI AND RUTH, although it's wonderfully inspiring to see all they went through and how God provided for them. It's good news for us as well. Because the last thing we're told in the book of Ruth, slipped in very matter-of-factly as just another detail, packs a real punch.

We're told Boaz and Ruth's son is named Obed (Ruth 4:17), who became the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. In case we miss it, the book spells out the genealogy, clearly emphasizing that this is the line of David, the shepherd boy chosen by God himself and anointed as Israel's king.

And it's not only that Ruth was kicking off the royal lineage for future kings, because, as you may recall, the family tree of David bore the fruit of a baby in a manger named Jesus, the Messiah and God's own Son, who came to be the ultimate kinsman-redeemer of us all. We see Ruth's name mentioned again in the genealogy of Christ in the New Testament (Matt. 1:5), a feat in itself, since women's names were rarely, if ever, listed in this patriarchal culture, which relied on the father line.

The message then is extraordinary for us today, not only because of all that Ruth endured and then had redeemed by the Lord's lovingkindness, but also because she was an outsider. The last person an Israelite would have picked to be the great-great-grandmother of the Messiah was a Moabite. Through her kindness, tenacity, obedience, and, above all, her willingness to risk time and again, Ruth provided a model for all of us who are required to move.

And the reality, my friend, is that all of us are called to move in life—if not literally, then metaphorically as part of our journey of transformation. We cannot remain where we are, "the place that never changes," if we seek to follow God's will for our lives and experience the fullness of his many blessings.

Ruth was willing to meet life as it came to her. She risked by marrying a foreigner, by committing to leave

her homeland, by committing to her mother-in-law when there was no longer a husband/son to bind them, by not knowing what she would find in Bethlehem, by picking up grain in the fields, by sleeping at Boaz's feet. My hope for you is to experience God's presence no matter what you may be going through or where he calls you to move.

You may not know it, but you have everything you need to take the next step. You may not know you have it in you, but, like Ruth, others whom God has placed in your life do know it. Accept their love and support and allow God to reveal to you what they already see.

Maybe you need to let go of old hurts or grieve past losses in order to move forward. Maybe you need to be patient and obedient and keep doing what God asks of you. I don't know what your issue might be, the thing that might have tears running down your face, have you pacing the floors in the midnight hour, wondering what is next. But I do know that God knows and has equipped you with everything you need to move through it and begin again.

If you aren't sure about your next move or which direction to go in, ask him. He is your father, and he will always have your best interest at heart. He will never abandon you, and he is with you right now, even as your eyes scan the words on this page. No matter what you are going through, he knows what you need.

As we prepare to move on to the next chapter, let me leave you with this: destiny doesn't happen *in spite of us*, destiny happens *because of us*. There are things that you and I must do to provoke the release of God's purpose in our lives. We may not know all of what God has placed within us, but we must be open to find it and, against all odds, continue to move forward.

I can't wait to meet this gutsy girl one day and thank her for making a decision that has affected all of us. You see, Ruth had to leave Moab not only for *herself*, she had to leave because of what was *in her*. Locked inside of a woman, who was locked up inside of Moab, was Jesus, the one who has given all of us the grace to start over.

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