Living Beyond Ordinary
Discovering Authentic Significance and Purpose

Scott George
Endorsements

Living Beyond Ordinary: Discovering Authentic Significance & Purpose
Scott George, Author

What ‘Beyond Ordinary’ leaders are saying:

“Living Beyond Ordinary is the inspirational account of how an ordinary life, fueled by an extraordinary vision, can help to change a community one life at a time.”
Congressman Daniel Webster

“I am excited Scott George has shared his experiences in his new book, Living Beyond Ordinary: Discovering Authentic Significance & Purpose. The story of how Scott started this charity outreach—with one pallet of food and sheer dedication and determination— is truly an inspiration. Scott’s vision has motivated so many people in our community to help thousands of families obtain a better quality of life. His vision and insight is one I admire and appreciate.”
Mayor Buddy Dyer
City of Orlando

"Orange County Florida is fortunate to have Scott George and his leadership. The Community Food and Outreach Center makes our community a better place to live."
Teresa Jacobs
Orange County Mayor

"Pastor Scott George is somewhat of a hero in our community—a man who acted out of faith and loved out of compassion. This book will not only inspire you, it will make you want to help someone . . . or even accomplish your own God-given dreams.
Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Senior Pastor
Northland, A Church Distributed

“What a gripping story of a modern-day Nehemiah dramatically called to rebuild the broken people of my home town, Orlando. The innovative idea in this book is every bit as original as the iPhone or Google. Scott George and his team are doing for food what Habitat for Humanity did for homes---giving people the human dignity of participating in their own rescue and recovery. If you want to be inspired to do something beyond ordinary, this is the book for you; but block out some time, because once you start it’ll be hard to put down!”
Pat Morley
Author, Founder of Man in the Mirror
“Living Beyond Ordinary is an eloquent, thoughtful, and inspirational story shared by of one of Central Florida’s truly selfless servants. The Orlando Solar Bear organization is proud to call Scott George a friend and colleague.”

Jason Siegel, CEO/President
Orlando Solar Bears

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“Living Beyond Ordinary reflects what is possible when a man of God commits to do the unglamorous ministry of providing for those truly in need.”

Dick Batchelor, Founder & President
Dick Batchelor Management Group, Inc.

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“Scott George’s book, Living Beyond Ordinary, takes us on a journey revealing a fresh, life-changing look at how we can carry out the mission of Christ’s compassion.”

Dr. David Uth, Senior Pastor
First Baptist Orlando

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“As you read this book it will inspire you to fight the enemy called average and motivate you to passionately pursue a life beyond ordinary.”

Andrae Bailey, CEO
Central Florida Commission on Homelessness

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“Scott George and the mission of the Community Food and Outreach Center have impacted thousands of lives in central Florida. The hopeless now have hope thanks to this man’s philosophy of giving a hand up instead of a hand out, and the message of Living Beyond Ordinary.”

Scott Anez, Broadcaster
ESPN Radio
WDBO, Orlando FL

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“Scott George and this book, Living Beyond Ordinary, are true blessings to our community and to those well beyond Central Florida who will be impacted by this positive, life-changing message. He exemplifies living a life Beyond the Ordinary.

Jason Brewer, Meteorologist
WESH-TV, Orlando FL

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Scott George has been a selfless, faithful leader in our community. I know this book, Living Beyond Ordinary, will be an inspiration to many.”

Dr. David Swanson, Senior Pastor
First Presbyterian Church of Orlando

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“Scott’s vision to build the Community Food and Outreach Center, a place of hope that provides a ‘helping hand’ to others, is a testament to his core beliefs.”

**Pete Clarke**  
Orange County Commissioner

“**In Living Beyond Ordinary**, Pastor Scott George has actually written three books in one— an exciting and inspirational story, a carefully considered philosophy of what true charity entails and a powerful message about God’s call to each of us to make a decided difference in a world of great need.”

**James Coffin, Executive Director**  
Interfaith Council of Central Florida

“Scott George is a genuine, straightforward follower of Jesus with a big heart and a sharp mind who has developed an amazing, innovative and pace-setting ministry in Central Florida. Scott’s leadership gifts and passion for others clearly are “beyond ordinary.”

**Dr. Bob Bushong**  
Senior Pastor/Minister of Preaching  
First United Methodist Church

“As a guest lecturer at the University of Central Florida’s MBA Executive Leadership courses, Scott George shares his huge heart and great wisdom in **Living Beyond Ordinary**. This book will powerfully challenge you to make a positive difference in each life you touch.”

**Greg Mathison Sr., M.S., Ph.D.**  
University of Central Florida

“**Living Beyond Ordinary** is a compelling and inspiring story that challenges all of us to fight average and live our lives with a sense of urgency and purpose.”

**Austin Hunt**  
Harvest Food Outreach

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**
"An original is hard to find but easy to recognize."  - John Mason

"We were born an original, don't die a copy."  - John Mason

"A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is brave five minutes longer."  - Ralph Waldo Emerson

"I don't work at being ordinary."  - Paul McCartney

"Be daring, be different, be impractical, be anything that will assert integrity of purpose and imaginative vision against the play-it-safers, the creatures of the commonplace, the slaves of the ordinary."  - Cecil Beaton

"I think a hero is an ordinary individual who finds strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles."  - Christopher Reeve

"Success is doing ordinary things extraordinarily well."  - Jim Rohn

"If you are not willing to risk the unusual, you will have to settle for the ordinary."  - Jim Rohn

What is a life beyond ordinary?

Ordinary  [awr-dn-er-ee]

1. of no special quality or interest; commonplace; unexceptional:

2. plain or undistinguished:

3. somewhat inferior or below average; mediocre:

4. customary; usual; normal; the commonplace or average condition, degree; something regular, customary, or usual

Something just didn't sound right about the words I was reading as I looked up the word ordinary: “plain, average, normal, commonplace.” It certainly wasn't appealing to me nor did it make me want to wake up in
the morning with the goal of being plain. I tend to agree with Lou Holtz, the great football coach and sports personality, when he said, “I can’t believe that God put us on this earth to be ordinary.”

Don’t get me wrong, I’m a pretty ordinary guy. I’m a pastor and non-profit founder in Orlando, I’ve been married to my best friend, Tammi, for 28 years, I have 4 great children, and there is nothing really very special about me other than the fact that I’ve seen some remarkable events take place in my life over the last few years in starting the non-profit Community Food and Outreach Center in downtown Orlando.

It all started 13 years ago, and over these years I have chronicled amazing stories and experiences that I believe will inspire and motivate ordinary people to believe for and strive to be extraordinary. Over the past 30 years of leading organizations, churches, non-profit centers and people, I have learned a few things about people and their dreams.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

In 1968, the Detroit Tigers were playing the St. Louis Cardinals in the World Series. Our family had just moved from Detroit to Missouri and our class was consumed with the baseball battle; I soon figured out that I was the only one in the class of 35 who was rooting for the underdog Tigers. My classmates couldn't believe that I could actually live in Missouri and root for a team in Michigan. They didn't understand it and neither did I; all I knew was that I was determined. No matter the cost, I was a loyal fan until the bitter end. Although I was only 7 years old, I learned a very important lesson that fall that would follow me the rest of my life; cheering for the underdog can be a bit intimidating and lonely but very rewarding. I had no idea that this characteristic would follow me and shape my calling and ministry. Ever since that series I always found myself rooting for the team that no one wanted to win. I loved the fact that the team the experts said couldn't win, could win and pull off the upset. Whether it was the baseball team or the kid in the lunchroom, I found myself being drawn to the unpopular or rejected. As a young boy, I found great reward in believing for the one no one wanted to win. As children, we all have superheroes we look up to and admire. We love the fact that Superman shows up at just the right time and saves the day, or how Batman knows exactly what to do to rescue a person in need. I really never had a specific superhero that I wanted to be when I grew up, but I do remember the feeling and joy of standing up for the kid being made fun of or the new kid on the black who needed a friend, or a friend who needed to be cheered up. I wasn't much for following the crowd; even as a young boy, I was willing to go against the flow and cheer loudly for the underdog. Although the Tigers eventually won the series that year, I was the real winner by learning the principle of being a hero for an unlikely friend in need.

Most people grow up believing that one day they will be great and do great things. Ask any little kid what they want to do when they grow up and I guarantee they won't say, "I want to be normal" or "I want to be average." No....most little children have within them a seed of greatness to be "extraordinary."

But somehow over time, our dreams get dashed and we slip into commonplace and forget about the dreams and goals we once had. I tend to agree with Ralph Waldo Emerson who said, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them."

Most people live their lives with a song in their heart, but they have lost the tune or forgot the words and they are living lives of commonplace and normalcy. There are currently 8 billion people alive in this world and the number is growing. I want each reader of this book to be inspired to believe that each and every one of us is born with a goal to be less than ordinary; that if you're one of the 8 billion people alive, you have been created to not lead a life of quiet desperation, but to lead a life of extraordinary greatness.

In this book, I will attempt to let you see and hear the practical stories and experiences I have encountered and will add a few principles that you can apply to life; it will hopefully inspire you to reach back to your childhood dreams of being great and achieving greatness. Since I'm not only an author, speaker and non-
profit leader, I'm also a pastor, so I will add to the recipe the spice that makes this all possible....The God factor. I'm not attempting to cram my religion down your throat as much as I am hoping that all readers will see the value of time-tested biblical principles that can be applied to any situation or circumstance. I really believe in what Mike Huckabee said, "It's when ordinary people rise above the expectations and seize the opportunity that milestones truly are reached." God has a way of using ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Let's get started on our journey of together.
“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.” —Wayne Dyer

“It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.” —Henry David Thoreau

“Open your eyes, look within. Are you satisfied with the life you’re living?” —Bob Marley

“Life’s most persistent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” —Martin Luther King

“I was not a messiah, but an ordinary man who had become a leader because of extraordinary circumstances.” —Nelson Mandela

CHAPTER 1

BEYOND ORDINARY LIVING

The Miller family met me in my church office in the darkest moment of their life. Mr. Miller was a Vietnam veteran who had defended our country with honor and courage; yet now, the Miller’s house was a few weeks away from foreclosure, their eight-year-old daughter, Amanda, was facing a serious illness and needed immediate medical treatment, unpaid bills were piling up, and they were hungry. In complete desperation, they looked to God, His church—His people—for help. My heart was broken for them, but I also knew the sad truth: We were unable to meet their needs. Guilt and shame washed over me.

I was fully aware of what the Bible says about not sending away people in need, but I had a budget to adhere to and a bottom line to keep an eye on. Despite my feelings of guilt, I had to deliver the devastating news: “I’m sorry . . . we can’t help you.” Even as the words came out of my mouth, my shame increased and grew. They seemed a bit confused at my answer, inadvertently glancing around the nicely furnished church office as if to ask: “How is that possible? Look at this place.” No doubt they had seen the fairly new cars of our staff members as they walked through our parking lot, and as they entered the building, noticed the fine new sound system and beautiful organ in the sanctuary. They could only imagine what the office furniture alone cost. They were right to be perplexed.

I offered to pray for them, hoping this would relieve my embarrassment, but it didn’t. The more I prayed for them, the worse I felt. After my faithless prayer, my goal was to escort them out of my office as quickly as possible, hoping that as soon as they were gone, my shame would be gone as well; however, after they left it only weighed heavy on my heart.

I watched the Millers leave my office and walk south on Orange Avenue in downtown Orlando. They left facing homelessness, unable to care for their young daughter’s serious medical condition, and uncertain what they would even eat that day.

Soon after, I left my plush office, got into my new Chevy Suburban, and drove north on Orange Avenue, toward the suburbs. I hoped my thirty-minute commute would be filled with smooth jazz to help me relax and find some rationalization to relieve my guilt and shame over my encounter just minutes earlier with the Millers. Yet with every mile I drove, the conviction that something was very wrong only increased. I
compared the Miller’s current life situation with my own. I had a roof over my head. They would soon be homeless. Dinner was waiting for me. They didn’t know where their next meal would come from. Should any medical issue arise for my children, I had the medical coverage and money to cover it. Their daughter might die without treatment. My thirty-minute commute felt like three hours—the longest ride of my life.

I tried to encourage myself with reminders that I was a loving man and that ours was a giving, generous church, and recalled many examples to make a convincing case for this. It didn’t help. Though we could not help the Millers today, many families are in need, and we have helped many, I reassured myself. It didn’t work. I tried to comfort myself with the thought that our church was certainly not as bad as some at helping those in need. No relief. I tried to console myself with the thought that we were doing as much as the average, ordinary Christian church. It hit me like a freight train: average . . . ordinary.

There it was. In that instant, God seared my heart with the truth that He was calling our church—and me personally—to live beyond ordinary.

This was a turning point in my life and in my faith. God broke my heart and I could only cry out to Him for mercy and forgiveness. For the rest of that ride, I prayed fervently, committing our church and myself to never repeat what I had done that day. Never again would we turn our ear from the cries of the poor. Never again would we settle for living an ordinary Christian life. From that time on, we were determined to live beyond ordinary.

**It All Started with a Pallet of Food**

Our church in Winter Park, Florida, just north of the Orlando city limits, was started by a small, motley crew of passionate college students with big hearts and big vision. We were determined that our DNA would be different from the churches we had known, yet had not fully realized our vision. Though many consider Winter Park to be an affluent area, energized by our resolve to move beyond ordinary, we were determined to commit significant time and energy to reaching our community by helping people in practical ways.

We picked up a single $65 pallet of food from the local food bank and began distributing it to those in need. It wasn’t much, but it was all we could afford and an important first step of obedience. Though we were not sure if what we were doing was needed or would work in “rich” Winter Park, we quickly realized that even there, families were struggling. Of course, we had no idea at the time that one pallet of food and one small step of obedience would lead to the establishment of a center that would help feed thousands of people each week in Central Florida.

The distribution of that one pallet of food went so well and the people we served were so appreciative, that every Wednesday afternoon after that we began picking up a pallet of food to distribute. Before Wednesday service each week, a faithful team of volunteers would meet at the church after work, sort the food, clean it, and put it into smaller bags for distribution. In the service, they would lead the congregation in prayer that God would use the distributed food to bring hope and help to children and families in need. We would put a small sign out on the road to let people in passing cars know that if they needed help, we were willing to serve them.
Each week, I was incredibly moved by the huge impact our small acts of kindness had on people who needed a little encouragement and hope. Tears would flow, people would hug, volunteers were touched, and good things were happening. It wasn’t rocket science, but we seemed to be onto something.

Not long after this, our distribution program grew and we were out of room. We needed to find a campus we could grow into and expand our reach. It just so happened a campus was available; an old church building sixteen miles away, in downtown Orlando. Though we were determined to live beyond ordinary, it would take an extraordinary effort to stay committed to our vision.

**Downtown Orlando ... A World Away**

It took months of casting the vision for us to get buy-in from the church membership to take the huge leap of faith to move our church from the well-manicured suburbs of Winter Park to a decaying, run down, inner city area of Orlando, Florida. Even after the move, many people in the church questioned why we made such a drastic move to the inner city. At that time, people who could were leaving downtown Orlando in droves, moving to the suburbs. We were doing the exact opposite. It was quite a shock to the faith of many. So unusual was our decision that our local newspaper, the *Orlando Sentinel*, considered it front page news—headline worthy!

Though our move was unusual and difficult, I was confident it was the right move. Just months after the move, to all who were committed to our beyond ordinary vision, the reason we were led to make the move became clear. Hurting families in need were flooding into our church. We had never seen anything like it. Our church, Destiny, was living out its destiny and being pushed like never before to meet not just the needs of our congregation, but of the community around us as well.

**A Hand Up, Not a Handout (Beyond Ordinary Approach)**

To meet the needs of hurting families in need of food assistance and help, we knew we didn’t want to duplicate what other churches and nonprofit centers were doing. Again, we wanted to go beyond ordinary. Most of the families that flocked to our church were not homeless. In fact, most of them were working families, with moms or dads who often worked two jobs, yet were still unable to make ends meet. These families were not asking for handouts. They wanted a hand up.

As I researched this, I found that many organizations and nonprofit centers in our community applied a traditional model, and simply handed out food. Although this was admirable, it fostered an unhealthy entitlement attitude in many recipients that I found disillusioning. We needed a beyond ordinary approach, by which we invested our heart and resources into people and families that wanted to be empowered, not entitled; that were willing to be a part of the process and have "skin in the game.” It was a radical approach and not widely accepted at the time, but one I felt strongly about pioneering. This model would build dignity and responsibility in people, so both donor and recipient would feel good about it.
Destiny Community Assistance Center Is Born

In the summer of 2001, we made plans to begin implementation of this innovative model of assistance. This beyond ordinary approach took months to fine tune and develop, but we owe much to the Habitat for Humanity nonprofit model for our own. They did not simply give homes away to families in need, but partnered with them to work toward finding affordable housing. Poor working families had to apply themselves and expend considerable “sweat equity” toward the goal of home ownership. I remember thinking to myself, If they can do this model with homes, why can’t we use it with food? We would not simply give food away all the time. We would develop a model by which working families in need would partner with us, and we would make affordable food available for purchase, helping move families from poverty to self-sustainability. The church members were on board and excited to launch this innovative model for our community, but we needed more than just passion and vision for our dream to become reality; we needed funding.

$10,000—All the Money in the World

I remember our breakthrough moment quite vividly. I had just delivered an emotional sermon, sharing with great passion and fervor the need for our church to do something bigger than us and start reaching out to needy families in our community like never before. In the sermon, I challenged members with the truth that the vision could only become reality with their prayer and financial support, and through their volunteer help.

My brother Kris, one of my closest friends and a church member, came up to me in the church lobby and placed an envelope in my hand. He simply said, “Take this gift and let’s make this thing happen.” At the time, I didn’t open the envelope, but simply thanked him. I put the envelope in my pocket and finished shaking hands and speaking with other members.

On the ride home I was exhausted but very excited, encouraged by the response and comments of church members. It was obvious the church was willing to move forward with this ambitious project and we had the momentum for which we had been planning and praying. Little did I know, just minutes later, the momentum I sensed would spike to a whole new level.

Just after lunch, I remembered the envelope my brother had given me. I grabbed it out of my suit jacket pocket and nonchalantly opened it up. I was shocked. Not in a million years did I expect to see all those zeros behind that number one—four to be exact. I was holding a check for $10,000!

As a church made up of young adults (not known for large pocketbooks), that was by far the largest gift we had ever received. I was overcome with gratitude. That $10,000 was exactly what we needed to open the pantry in downtown Orlando in September 2001. I am forever grateful that God used my younger brother in such a wonderful way to catapult our dream into reality.

Keys to Living Beyond Ordinary

There is an application in all this to you and your life: God did not create you to be ordinary. He created you to live beyond ordinary. To live life beyond ordinary, you must be prayerfully alert and aware of your culture,
surroundings, people, and events, and be ready to confidently respond to beyond ordinary opportunities, with faith. Just as in our early days of starting a new nonprofit, what you see and how you react make all the difference.

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.” —Wayne Dyer

1. Look Outside (Observation, Motivation)

We miss so much around us simply because we are not watching and observing. Whether driving, walking, even running, it seems like everyone’s attention today is focused on their smart phones. However, those who live beyond ordinary lives do not spend all their time looking at themselves and their own needs. They have learned to look outside themselves to the needs around them, get motivated by a vision of a need they can meet, and then act on meeting that need. They cannot help but serve by volunteering at a food bank, helping with the local Girl Scout troop, or volunteering with Big Brothers or the YMCA. They are predisposed to activity that brings hope and change.

Prayerfully look around to see all the needs in your community and you will be inspired to make a difference. Those who live beyond ordinary lives invest a great deal of time in looking outside and allowing themselves to be moved to act. As Bill Wilson, founder of the Metro World Child nonprofit has said, “The need is the call.” This is true more often than not. However, to be moved, we must first allow ourselves to see and feel the need.

As a boy growing up in the church, I had trouble understanding why the church did not seem to have a passion for the poor like Jesus did. The church seemed to be more passionate about buildings, personalities, and programs than they did people—especially poor people. In my lifetime of ministry, I’ve always remembered the promise: “Go after the ones no one want and God will bring you the ones everyone’s after.” I’ve never been motivated to go after the rich, powerful, and influential. As I focus on those in need—the poor and the hurting—I’ve noticed God has a way of bringing people across my path who can come alongside me to fulfill our part in His mission.

There are things happening around you right now that need to be seen by you. It’s no mistake that you are where you are at this time. No one else has the capacity or vision to see things the way you do and meet the need you will meet. You have been positioned in your neighborhood and community for this moment in time. Don’t become so busy that you neglect to see what is around you: stop, look around, get motivated by a need, act on meeting that need, and receive the blessing God holds for you.

2. Look Up (Inspiration)

Helping people in a beyond ordinary way is hard and not for the faint of heart. It can be frustrating when it seems the need never ends or the task is impossible. At times, people you help don’t live up to their end of the bargain, and it hurts your heart. The war against poverty is all-out, all the time. You will need inspiration to maintain the courage and strength required to fight—to know you do not fight alone. I draw such inspiration from a personal relationship with Christ. He sustains me in living beyond ordinary.

David, the shepherd boy who would later become king, declared in Psalm 121:1 (NIV): “I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and
earth.” David knew where his help came from, and was inspired to slay a giant and change the destiny of a
nation. In times of stress, discouragement, and fear, I know I can look up and find peace, strength, and
direction from Jesus, a source far more powerful than I will ever be.

Stop right now and ask yourself: From where do I draw my inspiration? When you look up, you discover true
help and wisdom in your time of need. You hear and see things that many people do not.

Looking up helps me stay focused on things that really matter and gain insight I need to successfully lead.
Though I did not grow up in a home that was familiar with poverty and the issues the poor face, I believe God
inspired me to help and reach out, for these people are dear to His heart. He inspired me to live beyond
ordinary.

3. Look Inside (Self-Evaluation)

What you are doing? Why are you doing it? Living beyond ordinary demands that you stop and look inside to
evaluate and reevaluate what you are doing and why, to be sure you are staying true to your life’s mission or
vision and purpose. To live beyond ordinary, we must regularly inspect our lives, our hearts, and our
motives. Self-evaluation is a necessary step to becoming the person you were meant to be.

My wife, Tammi, is a real estate appraiser. Her job is to look at and inspect every detail of a house, from its
physical qualities (construction) and condition to other qualities that determine its value, such as the
surrounding neighborhood. She takes great pride in this rigorous process of evaluation. Just as she spends
countless hours looking at every detail, we must also take sufficient time, energy, and focus to look in our
hearts and make sure all is well. By looking inside, we see where we can refocus and redirect. Our vision will
become clear only after we look into our heart and look outside our dreams: whoever looks inside awakens.

The wisest of all men, Solomon, once said, “Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards”
(Song of Songs 2:15, NIV). Solomon knew that the big foxes were tall enough to eat the fruit of the vine and
caused little harm, but the small foxes were not tall enough to reach the fruit, so they would eat the sprouts,
thus damaging the vines, keeping them from reaching their full potential. Watch out for the seemingly
insignificant things in your life that steal life from you, seek to undermine your life’s mission and purpose,
and keep you from your God-given potential.

I find that the busyness of life can keep me from looking inside and evaluating my heart, thoughts, and
attitudes, so I must be intentional about this. Along with my personal self-evaluation, several times a month,
as a ministry, we stop and ask tough questions of ourselves: we look inside. Such purposeful self-evaluation
forces us to ask tough questions, ensures the foundation is strong and secure, and confirms we are on
mission, heading in the right direction, and fulfilling the vision.

4. Look Back (Reflection)

Two pieces of advice you will often hear people share are: “Don’t look back,” and “Don’t live in the past.”
Though I agree that living in the past is not helpful, I strongly believe that from time to time, it is helpful and
necessary to take a look back. Certainly we can recall lessons we’ve learned from past experiences and
mistakes to avoid repeating. We can gain valuable insights from our history that help us move more boldly
and ably into a future of living life beyond ordinary.
Steve Jobs learned the secret of looking back: “For the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: ‘If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?’ And whenever the answer has been ‘No’ for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something.” As a ministry, we regularly look back at both things that did and did not work as we chart our course, and we are very honest about what is not working and changing it to make it work. We also make ourselves students of the track record of other nonprofits and ministries to learn what did and did not work for them. In these ways, looking back helps us to make wise choices as we move ahead.

Ignoring problems will not make them go away. Those who would live beyond ordinary face their troubles or circumstance head on. They face them by looking at them head-on, with courage and boldness, and avoid the temptation to avoid or sidestep issues. To those facing troubles, James writes: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4, NIV). Consider for a moment the lessons you’ve learned from your past troubles and you will quickly see the truth of this.

Life is essentially a series of learning experiences, from beginning to end. Each experience, positive or negative holds the potential to make us grow as Christ like people, even though this is sometimes hard to see or believe. One chief purpose of this world is to help develop our character, and part of that development comes from tests and trials we endure as we march forward. You have been through seasons of joy and sorrow. Your past can serve as a great guide to living a future beyond ordinary if you take time to reflect on it, learn from it, and grow because of it.

Esther . . . Anything but Ordinary

“I was not a messiah, but an ordinary man who had become a leader because of extraordinary circumstances.” —Nelson Mandela

The Bible heroine, Esther, did not start out as a proven leader. She was not born to privilege or wealth—quite the contrary. Esther was an outcast, an orphan who was adopted, but ultimately raised on the wrong side of the tracks. (Her story can be found in the Old Testament book, Esther.) Though some take issue with the book of Esther because the word God cannot be found in it, I contend the DNA of God is found throughout this fascinating story of a girl rejected by men but chosen by God to live a beyond ordinary life.

Esther, a Jew, was discovered by the king and elevated to a royal position at a very critical time. At the time, one of the king’s respected officials, Haman, had proposed and received the king’s approval for a persecution of the Jews in general and death to Esther’s uncle, Mordecai, in particular. Mordecai “texted” an urgent appeal to Esther: “Don’t think that just because you live in the king’s house you’re the one Jew who will get out of this alive. If you persist in staying silent at a time like this, help and deliverance will arrive for the Jews from someplace else; but you and your family will be wiped out. Who knows? Maybe you were made queen for just such a time as this” (Esther 4:12-14, MSG).

This was a historic, turning point moment for Esther. She didn’t see it coming; it just happened. If she would be willing to risk her life to save the Jewish people from destruction, she would move beyond ordinary and become extraordinary. She would never be the same. Her response is one that still inspires countless millions
even thousands of years later, reflecting her inner beauty: “I’ll go to the king, even though it’s forbidden. If I die, I die” (Esther 4:16, MSG).

Esther was ready and willing to embrace even death in order to obey God’s call and vision for her life, and find her place among those who live lives beyond ordinary.

In Jewish culture, the name Esther means “shining star.” At one of the darkest moments in Jewish history, God used this innocent, formerly rejected and lonely girl to bring light and freedom to an entire generation. Esther was just an ordinary person who became a beyond ordinary leader due to extraordinary circumstances. In fact, to this day, the Jewish people celebrate a holiday commemorating the deliverance of the Jewish people, due to Esther’s beyond ordinary action.

Esther’s shining example in the darkest of times should inspire us to seek our own opportunity to move beyond ordinary. You were created for a time such as this, for a unique purpose that only you can live. As you pursue this opportunity and live it out, you will move beyond ordinary to extraordinary. You will never be the same.

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