



THE
Set-apart WOMAN
GOD'S INVITATION TO SACRED LIVING



LESLIE LUDY

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *Authentic Beauty* & *Set-Apart Femininity*

If you're content with a subnormal, explainable brand of "Christianity," or if you're looking for a book that echoes the siren call of the world to experience a comfortable, feel-good, trouble-free, self-centered existence, this book is not for you. But if you're hungry for more of God; if you long to rise above the pull and distractions of our culture and enter into all for which God created and saved you; if you want to live a life that outlasts you; and if you want to experience the sweet fruit of true love, sacrifice, holiness, and courage, then I urge you to read *The Set-Apart Woman*. Let it rock your world and let it challenge you to build your life on the Rock, Christ Jesus.

NANCY LEIGH DEMOSS

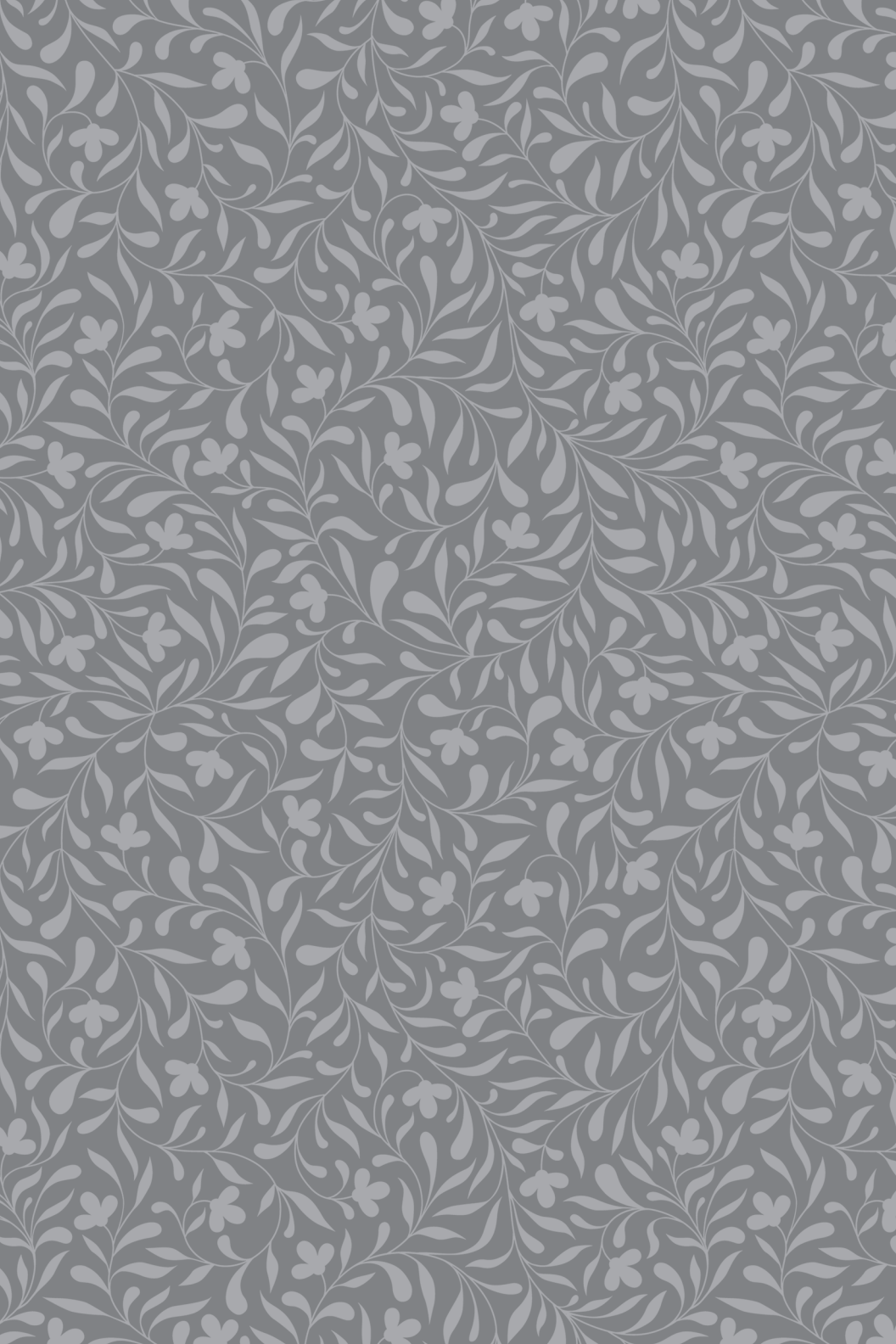
Author and *Revive Our Hearts* teacher and host

If you want to be entertained or pampered as a Christian reader, do not read this book! But if you really love Jesus Christ and desire more than anything to become the person He created you to be, this book is for you! In *The Set-Apart Woman*, Leslie Ludy pours out her heart, calling us to leave behind the "rags" of current pop culture in order to become a beautiful woman clothed with the likeness of Jesus Christ. I could hardly put the book down as my own life was challenged! (Every Christian needs to take a hard look at the subtle, devious ways the world has crept into one's everyday life.)

Leslie's open and honest sharing of her own struggle connects us to reality. Her balanced teaching on what it means to be transformed by Jesus Himself rather than legalistic religion is refreshing. Her strong stand on biblical principle is convincing! The life that Leslie describes would be impossible were it not for Jesus—*His very life* alive in the heart of every Christian who is ready and willing to exchange all broken self-centeredness for all that He is. Want it? God has spoken into the life of Leslie Ludy, and we who long to love the Lord our God with all our hearts would do well to listen as she speaks into our lives through the pages of this book!

BONNIE BARROWS THOMAS

Torchbearers International



THE
set-apart WOMAN
GOD'S INVITATION TO SACRED LIVING

LESLIE LUDY

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The Set-Apart Woman: God's Invitation to Sacred Living

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*But know that the LORD has
set apart the godly for himself.*

PSALM 4:3, ESV



CHAPTER ONE

The Divine Invitation

The Sacred Call to Come Away with Jesus

*Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.*

2 CORINTHIANS 6:17

*My beloved spoke, and said to me:
“Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.”*

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:10

*He who hath given himself entirely unto God,
will never think he doth too much for Him.*

HENRY SCUGAL, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*

*Comrades in this solemn fight . . . let us settle it as something that
cannot be shaken: we are here to live holy, loving, lowly lives.
We cannot do this unless we walk very, very close to our Lord Jesus.
Anything that would hinder us from the closest walk possible to us
till we see Him face to face is not for us.*

AMY CARMICHAEL, *God's Missionary*



IT WAS A BALMY Sunday night about ten years ago. Eric and I were preparing to speak at the evening service of a large church, sitting in the greenroom with the worship team as they waited for their turn to go onstage. I sipped from a bottle of water and listened to the lighthearted banter that swirled around us.

The guitar player had just been to an exciting play-off game and was giving the associate pastor an animated description of all the action. The drummer was inviting the bass player over after church to try out his new Xbox. The worship leader was sharing his artistic analysis of the Hollywood blockbuster he'd just seen with one of the tech guys.

"Hey, did anyone watch *Saturday Night Live* last night?" the keyboard player suddenly asked.

"Oh, yeah!" the guitar player responded. "It was hilarious, man!"

The worship leader quickly chimed in with, "I was laughing so hard I had Pepsi coming out of my nose!"

For the next five minutes, the group relived the comedic antics of their favorite actors on the show, repeating all the crude and sarcastic one-liners verbatim. They carried on until the worship leader finally said, "Okay, guys, let's get serious. We're starting in a minute. Who wants to pray?"

Like a light switching off, the joking abruptly ceased as everyone huddled together for prayer. Someone offered a short petition for God to be glorified in the service. After a corporate "amen" they hurried to take their positions onstage.

The Set-Apart Woman

Eric and I watched as they led the congregation in worship, closing their eyes and lifting their hands to heaven dramatically as they sang.

I felt uncomfortable as I observed the scene. How could these Christians go straight from reveling in the ungodly humor of *Saturday Night Live* into a worship session in which they claimed Christ as their “all in all”? But I soon realized that my inner discomfort wasn’t merely from watching the worship team’s double standard; it was also from the prick of my own conscience.

You have the same compromise in your own life, an inner Voice reminded me gently.

I bristled in self-defense. Sure, I too was a Christian leader who sometimes got preoccupied with pop culture. But at least I put some space in between my worldly indulgences and my ministry life. And I was at least somewhat careful about what I watched and listened to. Compared to a lot of what I saw in modern Christianity, my life seemed pure and Christ-centered. And yet . . .

Come away with Me, and leave mediocrity and compromise behind, the beckoning Voice spoke to my heart. *You had something more than this once, and you have let it slip away.*

I was reminded of that season years ago when, as a young woman, I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ. As I had let go of sinful patterns and yielded to the refining work of God’s Spirit, He had gently purged my life of worldly mentalities and ungodly habits. He had taught me how to build my life around Him rather than merely fit Him into my life. He had shaped

me into a set-apart young woman. I no longer chased after the shallow distractions of pop culture. He became the delight of my heart—not just in word, but in day-to-day reality.

But now, so many years later, something had changed. I still had a semblance of intimacy with Christ. I was still having daily quiet times and reading my Bible. I was still living morally and speaking Truth. My testimony continued to inspire and strengthen other believers. But until this moment, I hadn't realized that my spiritual life had grown dull, my relationship with Christ had grown distant, and I had become preoccupied with the distractions of the world.

My heart ached with the clear revelation that I had left my first love, just like the church of Ephesus in the book of Revelation (2:4). I'd been so busy getting ruffled over the compromise and worldliness in the lives of Christians around me that I hadn't noticed that I was guilty of many of the same pitfalls.

During the early years of my relationship with Christ, I had understood what it meant to be consecrated to Him. Instead of spending time on frivolity, I had spent time in prayer and the Word of God. Instead of chasing after popularity, I had learned how to put others first and serve those in need. In our premarriage days, Eric and I had spent the majority of our time on eternal things, not temporal ones. We weren't consumed with pop culture, but with learning more about God and growing closer to Him. We'd studied Christian biographies and gleaned wisdom from the lives of great men and women who had gone before us. Scripture

was alive and powerful. Our spiritual fire had burned bright and strong.

But as we grew older and became Christian influencers, the pressures of leadership started taking their toll. Public ministry was grueling, and we often found ourselves drawn to pop-culture entertainment to find our reprieve. We felt entitled to a break from being in “ministry-leader mode” all the time, and believed it was our responsibility to stay in touch with the culture by being “clued in” to society’s trends in music, media, and professional sports. We felt we were spiritually mature enough to separate the good from the bad. We didn’t think a few worldly pastimes would harm us, as long as we were careful to put reasonable boundaries around what we listened to and watched.

None of the Christian leaders I knew would have expressed concern over these activities. They themselves regularly participated in the same things. In fact, more than one respected Christian had advised Eric and me to engage in these pastimes as a way to decompress from the pressures of being in public ministry.

“You can’t be spiritual *all* the time,” one pastor friend had told us, “otherwise you’ll just burn yourself out.”

Those seemed like wise words. We lived a demanding life. What was wrong with escaping every now and then and enjoying the pleasures of pop culture for a while (within reasonable Christian boundaries, of course)? But as I evaluated our lifestyle in light of the set-apartness and spiritual passion we’d once had, I knew I had lost something sacred. I still

believed all the same things. But my spiritual fire had faded to a flicker. I had lost my hunger for more of God. I realized I was guilty of the same hypocrisy as those worshipers onstage: honoring Christ with my mouth but not with my heart and life. I had to admit that I would rather spend an evening curled up on the couch in front of the T.V. than on my knees in prayer or studying God's Word. I felt more at home surfing the Internet for new fashion trends than searching the Word of God for priceless nuggets of Truth. And I was far more inclined to open a Grisham novel than an inspiring Christian biography.

The more comfortable I had become with the world's messages, the easier it had become to allow subtle sins into my life. Self-pity, laziness, and selfishness had become familiar companions, along with many other "small" compromises. Because they had crept in gradually, it was easy to excuse them and allow them to remain.

I felt convicted and ashamed as I realized how far from the center I had strayed, even as a Christian leader. I had traded spiritual passion for mediocrity. I was loving Christ with only part of my heart, rather than with my entire being.

God's message to my soul was unmistakable: "Remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first" (Rev. 2:5, NASB). He was asking me to rise up and come away with Him—to exchange mediocrity, compromise, and worldliness for something infinitely more beautiful and fulfilling: unhindered fellowship with Jesus Christ. He was reminding me of the consecrated, Christ-centered

life I was called to live. He was ready to purify me from the inside out and ignite my spiritual fire once again.

For several years, I had been disturbed over the mediocrity I had seen in the modern church. I'd prayed many times for revival to sweep over American Christianity. But now I saw that I needed a personal revival before I'd be ready to pray for a corporate one. *Lord, send a revival, and let it begin in my own soul!* was the resounding cry of my heart as I left the church that evening.

Over the following months and into the next couple years, a profound transformation took place within my soul. Eric was walking through a similar awakening, and we began to talk for hours about what God was doing within each of us. We repented of the worldliness and compromise we'd yielded to. We allowed God's Spirit to shine His searchlight deep within our souls and purge away the dross of selfishness and sinful habits. We became broken over our sin and hungry for His righteousness. The worldly pastimes that had once seemed so important now held no attraction to either of us. We pressed into God with more fervency than we ever had before, even in the early days of our conversions.

That revival season became a turning point in our Christian lives. We began to understand the power and fullness of the Gospel for the first time. It's not that what we'd had previously wasn't genuine Christianity. But it was incomplete. Much like a house with plumbing or electricity that had never been hooked up, we'd had something real and tangible, but it had never functioned at its full potential.

We asked God to show us how to keep our spiritual fire from fading and compromise from creeping back in. We asked Him to give us a single-minded, unshakable loyalty to Him. As we embraced a life of wholehearted consecration to Jesus Christ, we began to experience a vibrant, victorious Christianity that permeated every area of our existence.

This wasn't just a spiritual high. The change was a lasting one. The victory, joy, peace, and intimacy with Christ that we discovered during that time have remained strong, deepening and growing ever since—even through some of the most intense trials we've ever experienced.

Yes, we have had struggles and failures along the way. And we have certainly not “arrived” in our journey toward complete consecration to Jesus Christ. There are always new areas in which He must gently convict us of sin and deepen our understanding of what it means to be set apart for Him. But by His grace, we gained something during that season that has transformed our Christian existence—an unshakable passion for Jesus Christ. Our spiritual flicker became a steady, burning flame when we stopped pining after the things of this world and started pining after Him instead.

A HOLY DISCONTENT

Have you ever felt a longing for *something more* in your relationship with Jesus Christ?

Maybe you have picked up this book because you feel a holy discontent within your soul: that persistent, gentle tug

of Christ's Spirit, asking you to come away with Him; to leave mediocrity and compromise behind; to become fully, wholly, completely *His*; to love Him *radically*—not merely with your words, but with your entire heart, soul, mind, and strength. Maybe you are growing dissatisfied with mediocrity, and you long to live a life of passionate devotion to the one true King, but you aren't sure how.

The Bible describes a time when the people of Israel had to make a choice about which king they would serve—David or Saul. Though David was God's chosen king for Israel, he had been forced to run for his life and was reduced to living in a cave. Saul was still in control of the kingdom. He was obsessed with finding and killing David, and anyone showing loyalty to the cave-dwelling outlaw would be guilty of treason and put to death.

Those who were willing to remain under Saul's rule could enjoy an easy, comfortable life, free from persecution and hardship. But there were some who refused to choose their own comfort over loyalty to the one true king. They had become dissatisfied serving a selfish king. They knew that choosing to serve David would mean leaving their security and comforts behind and choosing a life of difficulty over a life of ease. To join David in the cave meant living in exile, having a rock for a pillow, and being on Saul's most-wanted list. Yet these men were so discontent living under Saul's control that they became willing to give up their very lives in order to serve the one true king. So they made the courageous choice to go to David and pledge their lives to his service (see 1 Sam. 22:2).

When these brave men left Saul's camp to dwell in the lowly cave with the true king, their lives were not comfortable or easy. They were hunted and hated, just as David was. They took on David's reproach and became known as traitors, just like he was. And yet they developed such a deep, unshakable love and loyalty to their king that nothing else mattered but serving and honoring him. David's name means "beloved," and his followers treated him as such. They knew that, even with all its risks and hardships, serving David was the most fulfilling and amazing life they could ever choose.

David's men powerfully demonstrated their incredible love and loyalty toward him during an event that took place during David's exile in the cave. The Philistines had taken control of much of Israel, and the soldiers were holding hostage the town of Bethlehem, the place of David's birth. Parched with thirst, David expressed his longing for a sip of water from a certain well in Bethlehem: "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" (1 Chron. 11:17).

It would have been a death mission for David to send any of his men to the well, which was surrounded by enemy soldiers. His statement had merely been wishful thinking: "If only it were possible for me to quench my thirst with a drink from that well!"

But David's men lived for only one purpose—to serve and honor God's anointed king. Upon hearing his desire for water from that well, three of his men sprang into action.

If their king wanted a drink from the well, then they were determined to get it for him at any cost.

So the three broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless David would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. And he said, “Far be it from me, O my God, that I should do this! Shall I drink the blood of these men who have put their lives in jeopardy? For at the risk of their lives they brought it.”

(I CHRON. II:18-19)

Their awe-inspiring example begs the question: *Do we possess that kind of to-the-death loyalty to our true King, Jesus Christ?* Are we so radically devoted to Him that we will gladly exchange the comforts of Saul’s kingdom for the difficulties and dangers of David’s cave? Do we love Him so much that we will become numbered among the hunted and despised along with Him? Are we willing to charge straight into the most deadly peril, at risk of our own lives, simply to honor His slightest request?

These questions challenge me at the deepest level of my soul.

There have been all too many times in my life when I have been guilty of “drawing near to Him with my mouth and honoring Him with my lips, while my heart was far from Him” (see Mt. 15:8). There have been too many times when

my own security and comfort mattered more than bringing glory to His name.

Perhaps you can relate.

Many of us are happy to sing songs about Christ, write about Him, and talk about Him to other believers, but often when the true test of loyalty comes, we choose personal comfort over radical abandon to Him. We might take a few small risks for our King, but if He asked for a drink from a well that was surrounded by enemy warriors, we'd reason, *If I went that far in my devotion to Him, I'd be putting myself at risk. I'd be making myself vulnerable to discomfort and pain. I might even get killed. I can't give up everything for Him; it's just not reasonable!*

But Jesus Christ gave up everything for us. And He is asking if we will give Him everything in return. Saying a wholehearted yes to this priceless opportunity is the secret to discovering the vibrant, victorious Christianity of the Bible and finding that *something more* our hearts are longing for.

In recent years, I have had the privilege of meeting many men and women who are consecrated to Jesus Christ. They have been set free from worldliness, sinful strongholds, and mediocrity. They are living lives of radical abandon to Him. Many have given up comforts, material possessions, security, fame, position, and personal pursuits in order to take up their cross and follow Him (see Mt. 16:24). But even though they have lost so many things that this world deems important, they are some of the happiest, most content, and most self-sacrificing people anywhere.

Why? Because they have forsaken compromise and mediocrity and come away with Jesus. He has become their *everything*, not just in their words, but in their day-to-day reality.

Are they perfect? Of course not. They are continually being refined and corrected by God's Spirit, as we all are. But the spiritual victory and vibrant intimacy with Jesus Christ they have discovered is *real*, and it is *lasting*.

Do they have struggles? Of course. But by God's grace, they have learned to triumph through trials, to fight the Enemy's harassments with prayer, and to overcome his lies with Truth.

Just as David's men forsook their allegiance to Saul, these men and women have cut off their allegiance to this world. They are not preoccupied with pop culture. They would much rather spend an hour at the feet of Jesus than watching the latest comedy on T.V. They have built their lives around the eternal rather than the temporal. They have a joy that cannot be shaken, even during the most severe trials. Because of their single-minded, passionate, unwavering loyalty to the one true King, and their willingness to follow Him with radical abandon, they have discovered a Christianity that *really works*. And their lives are profoundly, eternally impacting this world as a result.

THE INVITATION

Do you desire to *know* Jesus Christ deeply and intimately, as your dearest, closest, most trusted Friend? Do you long to not just talk about Him, sing about Him, and learn about

Him, but to truly walk in daily, passionate relationship with Him? Are you tired of just reading about God's promises in the Bible and ready to *actually experience* the unmatched joy, peace that passes understanding, and soul-level satisfaction that is promised to those who follow Him?

If that is the kind of Christianity that you long for, this book is an invitation to forsake the comforts and security of Saul's camp and come away to the cave with your Beloved. From the outside, the cave may appear to be the most undesirable place in the world. Because when you choose to go where He is, you must also choose to give up your life as you know it and become numbered among the hunted and despised. Going where He is may even cost your very life.

But when you are in intimate fellowship with the true King, all of the risks and discomforts pale in comparison to the sheer wonder and joy of abiding in His presence. When you truly come away with Jesus, you won't focus on what you are giving up, but on what you are gaining. Your love for Him will become so great that the cry of your heart will echo the words of the Waldensian martyr from the Middle Ages who, at the time of his death, declared, "Ten thousand deaths would be too few to express my love for Him!"

There is more to Christianity than what most of us are experiencing today. There is more to intimacy with Jesus Christ than what most of us have discovered. There is more to being a believer in Jesus than adopting a few Christian morals and being part of a "Christian social club" called

church. There is more to the Christian life than what many leaders today are preaching.

Yes, I know that not everyone appreciates hearing that “there is more,” because it implies that we must change—that we as modern Christians are not where we are supposed to be. It means we can’t live in mediocrity while giving lip service to Christ. To come away with our true King, we cannot just visit the cave from time to time. We must *abide* there. To become a loyal servant of David, there can be no allegiance to Saul. To be a true follower of Jesus, there can be no turning back.

Over the past twenty years in Christian ministry, I have encountered two kinds of believers. There are those who are content to remain comfortably where they are, and there are those who have a holy discontent—a longing for something deeper. If you are one of the latter group, you are dissatisfied with just going through the motions of Christianity. You want the real thing. You don’t want to merely draw near to Christ with your words; you desire a real, passionate, daily relationship with Him. You want to experience the joy, peace, victory, faith, and power promised in Scripture to those who believe. You want the kind of to-the-death loyalty to Jesus Christ that David’s “mighty ones” had for their king.

If that describes you, read on! This message won’t tickle your ears, but it *will* stir and awaken your soul. And, Lord willing, it will help you discover the *something more* in your Christianity that you have been longing for.

Let me say it up front: This book presents a challenging message. While my writing style is not fire and brimstone, it also isn't fluff and feel-good. There are plenty of books out there that will let you stay comfortably where you are; this is not one of them. This message is meant to take you somewhere, to push you to greater depths of intimacy with Christ and pull you toward greater heights of spiritual triumph. This book will call you to become a set-apart woman, to exchange sin and mediocrity for a set-apart, Christ-consumed life. It's an exciting journey, but it's not an easy one.

As Christian women, our preferences hold a lot of influence over the kinds of books, music, and messages that are impacting the church today. We are the main purchasers of Christian products and the biggest participants in Christian events. I've heard many leaders declare that today's Christian women are too emotionally delicate to be challenged with serious Gospel truth or too busy and distracted to digest messages with deep spiritual substance. Thus, the church is overflowing with shallow Christian fluff that waters down the Gospel and leaves us spiritually empty.

What if we as Christian women got *serious* about our pursuit of Jesus Christ? What if we became broken over our sin, desperate for undiluted Truth, and willing to radically follow Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? Imagine how modern Christianity could change. (I do not discount the important role of men in the Body of Christ. But this book was written primarily for today's Christian women so that is where my emphasis is.)

It is my prayer that this book will point you toward that end. It is my desire to not only cast an inspiring and beautiful vision for biblical, Christ-centered, set-apart womanhood, but also to equip you to live it out. I'll be honest about the struggles and victories I've faced in my own pursuit to become a set-apart woman and share specific ways that God has challenged me with the truths presented in this book.

I hope that this message helps you see Jesus more clearly and know Him more intimately. May it become a catalyst for God's refining fire to purify your heart and life, so that you can become a powerful instrument of change in the Body of Christ today.

Lord, send a revival, and let it begin in us!



If we want to have unhindered fellowship with Jesus, we must be willing to come away from anything and everything standing in the way of wholehearted consecration to Him. Jesus stands ready to take your hand and lead you away from the empty pursuits of this world into the glorious realities of His kingdom. He is inviting you to “rise up . . . and come away” with Him (see S. of S. 2:10). He desires to set you apart for His purposes and for His glory.

Jeremiah 29:13 says, “You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with *all* your heart” (emphasis added). When our desire for Christ becomes so great that

we begin to seek Him as if we are searching for priceless treasure (see Ps. 119:72), when we are willing to give up all the treasures of this world in order to gain Him (see Mt. 13:46; Phil. 3:8)—that is when He will draw nearer to us than we ever imagined possible. Charles Spurgeon wrote,

Jesus says, “Rise up, My love, My fair one and come away.” He asks you to come out from the world and be separate and touch not the unclean thing. . . . Come altogether away from selfishness—from anything which would divide your chaste and pure love to Christ—your soul’s Husband. . . . Come away from your old habits. . . Leave all these things. . . . Come away to private communion. . . . Come away, shut the doors of your chamber and talk with your Lord Jesus and have close and intimate dealing with Him . . . [Come] right away from the world . . . by making your dedication to Christ perfect, complete, unreserved, sincere, spotless.¹

Are you ready to come away with your true King?



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Group Study and Discussion

1. **READ LUKE 14:27,33.** What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? How does this standard differ from the version of Christianity that many of us adopt?
2. **READ SONG OF SOLOMON 2:10.** What does it mean to rise up and come away with Jesus? When we accept this invitation, how do our lives change?

TAKE IT DEEPER

Personal Study and Reflection

READ: 1 SAMUEL 22:2

REFLECT: Do I have a holy discontent toward mediocre Christianity? Am I willing to pursue something deeper by forsaking the comfort and ease of Saul's camp in order to serve David in the humble cave? What would that look like in my daily life?

READ: PSALM 45:10-11

REFLECT: Do I sense Christ calling me to come away with Him? Am I willing to serve Him without holding back, and offer myself completely to Him without reserve? (If yes, take some time to consecrate your life to Him. If no, ask Him to make your heart willing to take this radical step of obedience.)