

*"Discover the powerful secrets of a God-breathed life  
and enjoy the fresh air of God's blessing."*

STEVEN FURTICK

LEAD PASTOR, ELEVATION CHURCH; AUTHOR OF SUN STAND STILL

# FRESH AIR

*trading stale spiritual obligation for a life-altering,  
energizing, experience-it-everyday relationship with God*

**CHRIS HODGES**

*foreword by CRAIG GROESCHEL*

Chris Hodges's book *Fresh Air* explains how to experience a freshness in your life and relationship with God that you may not have realized was possible. Instead of a list of Christian how-to's or quick fixes, it takes readers inward, leading them on a spiritual journey of transformation from the inside out. Chris's personal experiences and humorous anecdotes make this book an engaging read. I recommend it!

**JOHN C. MAXWELL**

*Leadership expert, author, and speaker*

Inspiring and practical, *Fresh Air* is a must-read for anyone who wants more out of life. Best of all, the insightful and power-filled principles in this book are ones that anyone can apply.

**MARK BATTERSON**

*Lead pastor, National Community Church, Washington, DC;  
New York Times bestselling author*

Chris Hodges is being used by God in our generation to bring new insights and leadership to the church. Discover the powerful secrets of a God-breathed life and enjoy the fresh air of God's blessing.

**STEVEN FURTICK**

*Lead pastor, Elevation Church; author of Sun Stand Still*

If anyone can honestly tell you what it means to live a vibrant life with God, Chris can. He is one of America's best teachers of God's Word. There is a critical need for the message in this book because many Christians have grown cold and stale. No matter where you are in your walk with God, you can use some fresh air. Pick up this book and get ready to breathe again.

**RICK BEZET**

*Lead pastor, New Life Church of Arkansas*

We all know what it is like to feel stuck, when it seems like we are going nowhere fast. In times like that, the breath of God makes all the difference. It renews us; it changes hearts and attitudes. *Fresh Air* reminds us that if we seek God, he will never fail to change us from the inside out.

**GREG SURRATT**

*Lead pastor, Seacoast Church; author of Ir-Rev-Rend*

Too many people feel stuck in life. It's a common problem with a solution few consider: the Holy Spirit. In *Fresh Air*, Chris shows how to live a life empowered by the Spirit—and he does it without ever being weird! I am so encouraged whenever I spend time with Chris. As you read this book, I know you'll feel the same way.

**ROBERT MORRIS**

*Senior pastor, Gateway Church; bestselling author of The Blessed Life, From Dream to Destiny, and The God I Never Knew*

The heart of the Father resonates throughout the pages of *Fresh Air*, and the insights will become divine and meaningful treasures in your heart. Your own witness will then become a breath of fresh life to others.

**JAMES ROBISON**

*Founder and president, LIFE Outreach International*

So often we find ourselves in what Chris refers to as the doldrums—a spiritual state where we feel lifeless, bored, and without hope amidst the routines of life. We know there is more, and long for it, but we aren't quite sure how to get there. Whether it's finding passion in your marriage again, discovering true fulfillment in your career, or actually enjoying time in the spiritual disciplines, *Fresh Air* unpacks what it looks like to have a new life full of vision, purpose, passion, and hope.

**CHRISTINE CAINE**

*Founder, The A21 Campaign*

I love this book! *Fresh Air* will help you escape the mundane treadmill of living by empty rules and striving for empty success. With authenticity and clarity, Chris points us to the person who makes life fun again: Jesus.

**JUDAH SMITH**

*Lead pastor, The City Church*

*Fresh Air* is an uplifting book that will bring a renewed sense of purpose into your life. Chris Hodges shows why peace and fulfillment come from a strong connection to Jesus Christ on the inside. He will teach you how to breathe new life into your attitudes, your relationships, your finances, and the way you see yourself.

**MATTHEW BARNETT**

*Cofounder, The Dream Center; senior pastor, Angelus Temple; author, The Cause within You*

Chris's heart to see individuals flourish in their spiritual journey is a "breath of fresh air," and I believe that as you read this book, you will receive life-giving words of encouragement and an awakened sense of calling and purpose. Allow the Holy Spirit to refresh and inspire you as you begin to understand what it means to live a God-breathed life.

**BRIAN HOUSTON**

*Senior pastor, Hillsong Church*

With amazing candidness, Pastor Chris unveils the secret of an inner life that is full, thrilling, and invigorating. He balances the Spirit-led life with the divine order of the Spirit to produce a life-giving lifestyle. I have known Chris for more than thirty years and know of no more humble, yielded, pure vessel. He truly is a breath of fresh air.

**LARRY STOCKSTILL**

*Pastor, Bethany World Prayer Center*

This book will change your thinking and help you to revive every area of your life. Chris's authenticity and transparency are vital to this generation of Christ-followers. Live the life God intended for you—don't settle for anything less!

**DINO RIZZO**

*Lead pastor, Healing Place Church; author, Servolution*

A brilliant must-read! If you've ever experienced staleness in your life or simply desire a richer, fuller life in God, you will be encouraged by the message in these pages. *Fresh Air* will bring newness to your walk with God and revival to your soul.

**STOVALL WEEMS**

*Lead pastor, Celebration Church*

# FRESH AIR

*trading stale spiritual obligation for a life-altering,  
energizing, experience-it-everyday relationship with God*





**CHRIS  
HODGES**



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*Fresh Air: Trading Stale Spiritual Obligation for a Life-Altering, Energizing, Experience-It-Everyday Relationship with God*

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## FOREWORD

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Have you ever met someone who had something you didn't have?

I'm not talking about a person who had a cool fishing boat, a cute boyfriend, or a full-size bowling alley in the basement. I'm referring to something different, something internal. He or she had some inner quality that was difficult to describe but impossible to miss. It might have been an unmistakable joy, an unshakable faith, an undeniable peace, or something else you wanted—but didn't have.

Chris Hodges was a person like that for me.

In the summer of 2006 I was slowly sinking under the weight of way too many commitments. When a friend asked me for a personal favor, my mind raced with excuses. Instinctively, I blurted out something about how busy I was, the only reasonable defense I could come up with in the moment.

My friend didn't take no for an answer. "I really believe you should meet this guy. He's a pastor, like you. I can't tell you why, but I'm just asking you this one time, will you meet with him for me?"

I reluctantly agreed to a one-hour meeting with Chris Hodges. Little did I know that our brief meeting would extend into a three-day weekend and grow into one of the closest friendships I've ever known.

There was something about Chris that grabbed my attention and wouldn't let go. Like me, he was leading a growing church. (In fact, I don't know if I've seen a church in the United States grow faster than his.) For me, the weight of leading our church seemed more like a burden than a blessing. Chris, on the other hand, seemed to walk lighter, rest better, and enjoy life at a deeper level than I did. At first I dismissed it as a difference in personality types, but then I discovered that he's a type A personality like me. The more time we spent together, the more I had to admit that our differences weren't practical or physical. They were unquestionably spiritual.

Chris seemed to live with more of God's presence.

On a trip to his church, Church of the Highlands in Birmingham, Alabama, I finally asked Chris point-blank, "What's different about you?"

And that's when Chris started to tell me his story, the same one he'll share with you in this book. For starters, he hadn't always been as intimate with God. In fact, he'd been consistently overwhelmed, hurting, and deeply depressed. Chris explained in detail how he learned to do life and ministry empowered by the Holy Spirit. His thoughts weren't spooky or odd; they were very biblical and surprisingly practical.

With his encouragement, I sought God during my first twenty-one-day fast (something Chris had done with his church for years). Seeking the heart of God while denying my body physical nutrition unleashed something special inside of me. God's Word, God's people, and God's presence became a bigger part of my life—more so than ever before. God started to change me, heal me, cleanse me.

The people closest to me noticed the changes too. Now I'm not just serving God. I'm loving God, enjoying God, knowing God. And the difference is bigger than I could ever adequately explain.

That's why I'm so thankful that you're holding this book. I believe God wants to use Chris's life, his story, and his wisdom to help you

fall more in love with God than you ever have before. As you read, I can assure you that Chris lives what he teaches. And he will help you exchange an increasingly stress-filled life for a God-honoring, world-changing, Spirit-filled life.

It's time for a breath of fresh air.

*Craig Groeschel*





*PART 1*

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*SEARCHING  
FOR A BREATH  
OF FRESH AIR*



CHAPTER 1

# THE DOLDRUMS

---

*We were almost lost in the middle of the Pacific.*

*We almost capsized in those doldrums.*

ROBERT ANDERSON

Most mornings I wake up happy and optimistic, looking forward to another day. I've never been a depressed kind of guy. But in 1999 I had the worst year of my life. On paper everything looked perfect, and there were no external clues pointing to my interior struggle. My wife loved me and our children were healthy. The church where I was an associate pastor was a thriving, growing community of passionate believers. I had even been doing some consulting for other churches that were interested in using our church as a model for their growth plans. There was money in the bank and the bills were paid. I had friends, both old ones I'd known since high school and new ones in our neighborhood, who genuinely liked me and seemed to care about me.

But I had never felt more miserable.

Despite all the good things in my life, I had been experiencing some new challenges: difficult relationships that grew more complicated because of miscommunication and distrust, worries about the future and meeting the financial needs of our expanding family, a stale



spiritual life with little desire to spend time in prayer or Scripture, uncertainty about whether I was where God wanted me to be. Was I really cut out to be a pastor? Somehow I just couldn't envision myself doing the same thing for the rest of my life, but when I thought about it, I wasn't sure what I envisioned for the rest of my life.

In the deepest part of me I wondered, *Is this all there is?*

As the weeks dragged on, I became mired in a swamp of unpleasant emotions that I wasn't used to feeling—at least not all at once and not with such increasing intensity. I was deeply sad, but I wasn't sure why. I sensed anger and frustration, but that was probably because I felt so stuck in my sadness. And then there was the fear. I had never experienced anything like this and didn't know what to make of it.

So I hid it as long as I could and tried to pretend there wasn't a storm cloud constantly roiling around inside me. It seemed to grow darker, with more thunder rumblings and lightning strikes of acute emotion, yet the storm never broke and continued to gather itself over and over again inside my mind and heart.

I knew I was depressed but hated to admit that even to myself. I had never been depressed before and had even been quietly critical of those who seemed to fight an ongoing battle with it. I had always thought, *Just choose to be happy and get on with your life, buddy!* But now those thoughts mocked me because I wasn't sure how to change what I felt inside. I couldn't pinpoint exactly what my feelings were, but I knew I couldn't change them simply by telling myself, *Don't worry, be happy.*

Similarly, I didn't know how to fix the problem. I wasn't sure if it was spiritual or physical, mental or emotional, or all the above. So I did what so many of us do: I forced myself to go through the motions. At church staff meetings, I acted like I couldn't be happier, nodding and smiling, detached from the storm inside me. I'd go home and try to act normal, dismissing any signs of discouragement my wife, Tammy, or our kids noticed with, "I'm okay—just tired."

This went on for months. Then in January of 2000, our church focused on a prayer effort called “21 Days of Prayer,” a time of personal fasting, prayer, and listening for God in our lives. Everyone was asked to participate at whatever level they felt led. This was the fourth time our church had started the year this way, and I had always been involved, although not very seriously.

But this time I was so desperate to hear from God that I went to extremes. Figuring the new year might be my opportunity for a fresh start, I went on a complete fast: no food, no media, no distractions. I would only pray and read my Bible. I was determined to give this a shot and had committed to going to the doctor afterward if this time alone with God didn’t reveal what was going on. (I probably should have gone for a checkup already, but my stubborn ego kept thinking I could handle it.)

And then on day 17 of my fast, God visited me during one of the morning prayer services at our church as I was worshiping and seeking him in prayer. I’ll never forget that moment, and it remains one of the seminal events of my entire life. His presence was so real, his voice so clear, that the storm inside me broke. Like the sensation of a cool, refreshing rain falling after the heat and humidity of a summer thunderstorm, his presence revived me. I also received a picture in my heart, an image of me leading a congregation of people. Up until that point, I had never even considered being a senior or lead pastor. In my seventeen years of ministry, I had never wanted anything more than to be the best number two guy on the planet. God spoke to my heart and said that he would lead me to something that year and it would be my assignment for the rest of my life.

## **TURNING POINT**

Now this may not sound like much, but it gave me tremendous hope. Shortly after the fast was over, I met with my pastor, Larry Stockstill, and learned that God had spoken to him, too. It was time

for me to launch out and lead a church of my own, Larry said, and he wanted to help me. From then on, one door opened after another, and God made it clear what path he wanted me to follow. I quickly became more passionate, more excited, and more alive than I'd ever been before. And I know I would never have gotten there if not for experiencing that year in the doldrums.

God used that time of desperation and depression to get my attention in the most dramatic way possible. Apparently, it often takes something painful, sometimes even tragic, to get us to listen to God. But that time of prayer and fasting was like a breath of fresh air. The fast disconnected me from the world, and my prayer time connected me to God. Looking back, I suspect God was talking all along and I just couldn't hear him. Somehow I had sensed this and become very sad that I was missing out on the huge heart message he wanted to give me. My depression forced me to stop and listen.

Today, I pastor one of the fastest growing congregations in the country, a dynamic, life-giving church that I love. I've often thought that I wouldn't even be a pastor here in Birmingham, Alabama, if I had not gone through that difficult time of feeling stuck. I had to find a way to move through it and allow God's breath to fill my sails.

Maybe you struggle with depression or have gone through a season like the one I described. You might even feel like you're going through the motions right now, unsure what's wrong but definitely sure that something's not right. Perhaps the hardest part is that your faith feels thin and flimsy, unable to bear whatever it is that's rumbling deep inside you.

Maybe you grew up in the church and know all the right things to say and do. Or maybe religion was not a part of your upbringing—you or your parents didn't see any real joy in the lives of those people who claimed to be filled with the love of Jesus. Or maybe you've experienced this kind of going-through-the-motions numbness in other areas of your life. At work. In your marriage. With your

kids. In your friendships. You're waiting for something to happen, for the storm inside you to break, for a fresh breeze to breathe new life into you. You're not sure how to make it happen. But you know there has to be more.

## THERE HAS TO BE MORE

There's something amazing about feeling a warm ocean breeze across your face from the deck of a ship. And watching the wind fill a giant piece of canvas, tilting that large sail in a way that both powers and directs the vessel, is even more incredible. Before the age of motorized boats, merchants, explorers, and sailors relied on these trade winds to carry them to certain places, especially across the ocean to another country or continent. You've probably seen enough *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies to know this, if you haven't been out on a sailboat yourself.

*You may be waiting for a fresh breeze to breathe new life into you. You're not sure how to make it happen, but you know there has to be more.*

---

Prior to the twentieth century, however, all mariners knew about one area that was to be avoided at all costs: the Doldrums. Taken from the root word meaning "dull" or "lifeless," the expression "in the doldrums" was used to describe the state of being bored and restless, in a slump. Sailors then gave this name to a specific region along the equator where the weather always seemed to illustrate this lifeless condition.

Because of the way the earth rotates, the currents and clouds of the Northern Hemisphere literally collide with the winds and weather of the Southern Hemisphere, creating an area of unpredictable weather. Usually extending between five degrees latitude north and five degrees latitude south of the equator, the Doldrums are also known as the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ).

Normal trade winds converge in this band along the equator and

basically cancel each other out, creating a still, windless dead zone. Their collision also produces convectional storms that result in some of the world's heaviest precipitation. Since there's no wind to move them along, just an air mass hovering overhead, these storms keep sailing ships stuck in place.

It's not surprising, then, that the Doldrums were once feared more than the Bermuda Triangle. Many ships became trapped in the dead zone, forced to endure grueling storms until they wrecked. Sailors would try everything they knew to do to get the ship sailing again, but nothing worked. They were stuck, sometimes permanently.

While our GPS systems and hydraulic engine technology now protect ships from the dangers of the equatorial Doldrums, its emotional equivalent seems more prevalent than ever. We still use this figure of speech to describe someone who's in a slump, listless, despondent, stagnant, and going through the motions. I can't think of a better word to describe what I experienced in my church growing up, and then later as a young adult when I found myself back in a spiritual performance trap.

I think most of us can relate to being in the doldrums. You may know what you're supposed to do in life, you may even know where you want to go, but you are stuck in this zone where there's no wind, no breath, no life, nothing to help motivate you and move you along. Maybe you're going through a storm and doing all you can just to stay afloat. Maybe it's been a long time since you've been fired up about anything. Maybe you're in a rut and don't know how to move forward.

There's usually no single reason for you to feel immobilized like this. Like cool air colliding with tropical winds over the ocean, your doldrums may be the result of a number of factors converging. Nonetheless, it's usually helpful to think about what has contributed to your present location in life. Let's quickly look at some reasons you may find yourself stuck in the doldrums.

## DRIFT AWAY

Have you ever spent a lazy day at the beach, riding the waves and bodysurfing? I love doing this with our kids, but it's always amazing where we find ourselves after we've been out in the water for an hour or two. We look back at the shore and suddenly nothing looks familiar. We can't see our umbrella or beach chairs—sometimes we can't even see our hotel! Without realizing it, we have drifted with the current and lost our bearings.

Without a strong direction toward a place where God is moving, without a secure anchor to keep you grounded, it's easy to drift into a dead zone. You may be doing all the right things—at home, at work, at church—but you don't know where your life is headed. You feel lost and disoriented from where you thought you'd be and how you thought you'd get there. But it's almost too terrifying to acknowledge, so you just keep going with the flow day after day.

When I was reading about the Doldrums that sailors face, I was struck by the fact that this dangerous dead zone happens along the equator. When ships got trapped there, it meant they weren't really in the Northern Hemisphere or the Southern Hemisphere; they were stuck where the two meet. I think we often get stuck in a similar manner. If we're honest, we know we don't want to go to hell, but yet we don't really want to serve God, either. We want to have one foot in the world and the other in the Kingdom of God. We want to straddle the spiritual equator, so to speak.

A lot of us have drifted to this place. We're not on fire for God, but of course we're not living for the devil either. We're not abandoning God and leaving the church, but we're not fully alive and enjoying the abundant life Jesus said he came to bring. We're in this middle zone, a spiritual no-man's-land.

*A lot of us have drifted to a spiritual no-man's-land.*

.....

We have gotten off course, and now there's no wind to sustain us. This isn't a new phenomenon. Jesus tells the church at Laodicea,

“Some of you are not hot [not in the Northern Hemisphere], you are not even cold [not in the Southern Hemisphere], you are lukewarm.” And the result is just as disastrous: “There is no life there. I will spit you out of my mouth [if I find you in that lukewarm zone]” (see Revelation 3:15-16).

In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul conveyed a similar message: he told them that he could not consider them spiritual, but he could not call them worldly either. They were a mixture of the two. They were carnal (see 1 Corinthians 3:1, *KJV*). The word *carnal* means that they were stuck in the flesh. The word’s root comes through in a usage you may be more familiar with: chili con carne—chili with meat. Paul basically said these Corinthian Christians were serving up a big dish of faith con carne. They were Christians but still had some flesh-based living in them.

Many of us today follow the same recipe. We want enough Jesus to get us to heaven, but we’ve got a little bit of the world in us too. We’re lukewarm, tepid, not hot or cold, not heavenly and not earthly, not sold out to God and not entirely through renting from the devil. So we drift away and get stuck in the doldrums.

## EYE OF THE STORM

Sometimes we don’t drift into the spiritual doldrums but are pushed there by life’s disturbances. In fact, the doldrums are a magnet for life’s storms. The storms will either get us there and keep us there, or else they will happen while we’re there. A huge part of the problem is that most of us don’t respond to storms correctly. Instead of running to God for shelter and protection, we run from him, usually right into the eye of the storm.

When the storm winds are blowing and life gets hard, many people feel like they’ve done something wrong—perhaps even something to deserve their present crisis—and therefore they stay away from God. After all, he’ll only punish them more, right? Or when

times get hard, they seem to think that God hasn't kept his end of the bargain. They went to church, prayed, read their Bibles, served those around them—and now this is how God repays them? They feel like they did everything they were supposed to do and had the right to expect God to prevent trials from happening in their lives.

So we get stuck in the doldrums and may even come to view ourselves as victims. No matter what happens, we always seem to be heading into another storm. Maybe it's losing our job or watching our retirement fund shrink to less than where it started. Maybe it's an ongoing illness or injury, if not our own then that of our kids or someone else we love. It could be that our marriage has lost its passion and now we feel stuck in a lifeless relationship. How are we supposed to cope with any one of these crises, let alone the perfect storm that occurs when they collide?

For some people, the answer becomes a secret addiction, a way of numbing the pain by finding a few fleeting moments of pleasure. It could be alcohol or prescription drugs, shopping and then shopping some more, watching porn and withdrawing from our spouses, chatting with a sympathetic stranger online, or staying busy with work 24-7.

We try anything to keep ourselves from thinking about the storms in which we find ourselves—anything to ease the pain. And yet these attempts to gain relief only create more storms as we come to rely on our addictions. Once again, we discover that we are unable to move.

## **LOSING OUR BALANCE**

So often doldrums are the result of weariness and spiritual fatigue. Like a sailor with no compass and no sense of direction, we find ourselves aimlessly following others' wishes, having lost the ability to say no. We don't want to disappoint anyone, right? So we try to do it all—to be the supermom or the perfect dad; to climb the corporate ladder; to lead the Bible study; to head up the kids' fund-raising drive; to stay on top of the household chores.



The result? We burn out and become cynical, angry, frustrated, and soul weary. Our marriages, which started out so beautifully, now seem more like an arrangement of convenience in which two roommates share possessions and custody of the kids. We secretly resent and withdraw from each other. The job that energized our careers and brought us such excitement now comes at us like a double-decker bus, one that we seem to get thrown under by everyone at the office.

The people who were once our friends now really annoy us because it seems like they always want something from us. They call and rant on and on about their problems, never once asking how we are doing. The kids seem only to need more and more while saying thank you less and less. More chauffeuring, more money, more help with homework. And if it's not the kids needing us, it's our own parents, becoming more and more reliant on our help as they age.

We feel like there's no one to talk to, no one who understands all the responsibility we carry. We're so unbearably lonely, even when there are dozens of people around. We bury our emotions just below the surface because we're afraid that if we release them, they will overwhelm us and we'll never function again. We've lost our sense of balance and now neglect the basics. In fact, we've lost not only a sense of balance in our lives but a sense of purpose. The joy of knowing who we are and what God created us to do seems like a distant memory at best.

We're burned out, weary to the bone, scared, and anxious—and there's no end in sight. The doldrums spin us 'round and 'round, and we don't know which way is up. God sure doesn't seem to care enough to do anything about where we are. So we carry our pain alone and try to keep going for one more day.

## **JUST BE IT**

A friend once told me about an experience he had when he was in college. He and some buddies were enjoying one of the first warm

days of spring by going swimming in the mountain streams nearby. Their destination was a place called “the sink,” which featured a beautiful, dramatic, twenty-foot waterfall with a perfect lagoon below for swimming. There was even a cliff on the opposite side with a ledge that was ideal for jumping or diving.

So after horsing around for a while, my friend told me he jumped from the ledge into the water below. Only when he tried to come up, he found himself directly beneath the pounding stream of the waterfall. He began swimming harder, but the undertow of the waterfall pulled him right back beneath it. Starting to panic and running out of air, my friend began paddling frantically toward the shallow end of the lagoon. He could hear his friends talking and laughing—they hadn’t noticed his predicament yet—but he couldn’t break the surface.

Finally, after several minutes, my friend said he realized that he was going to die. He had exhausted himself in the struggle to swim free of the vortex of water created by the falls above. So he stopped paddling and allowed the water to push him deeper still. But after sinking several feet, his body suddenly shot like a torpedo to the surface and through the falls!

Gasping for air, he realized that only when he had completely surrendered did the undercurrent release him from its grasp. If he had relaxed and floated sooner, he wouldn’t have exhausted himself and risked drowning. He had to quit working so hard to save himself if he wanted to live.

The doldrums often affect us in a similar way. We find ourselves in a storm or just in a rut, and suddenly we think we’d better try harder. If only we’d exercise more, stay later at the office, help out with the household chores more, spend more quality time with the kids, pray more often, read the Bible every day . . . well, then everything would be all right. But, of course, we only end up burned out and on the brink of spiritual, physical, and emotional exhaustion.

The doldrums flourish when we're focused on doing rather than being. We forget that real life happens internally more than externally. We would rather *do* something than *be* something.

*The doldrums flourish when we're focused on doing rather than being.*

There are always two ways to determine behavior—the internal motivation and the external motivation. In other words, every behavior is motivated either by an internal force or an external force. I can drive at a safe speed out of concern for my safety and the safety of the people around me or I can do it because of the sign on the highway that tells me I have to drive at a certain speed. I can be faithful to my wife out of my love for her or I can attempt to be faithful in obedience to the law that says, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” I believe there’s a constant tension in us and in our society between internal motivation and the use of external constraints to determine our behavior.

It’s always much easier to have an external rule to make us behave. But while rules are important, that’s not the gospel. The Good News that Jesus brought is about a transformation of the inner person that makes us different at our core.

If you’re ever going to make it out of the doldrums and stay out, then it comes back to your inner motivation. Why do you do what you do? What do you want to do with your life? Where do you want to go?

The purpose of this book is to put wind in your sails again. To get you unstuck. To move you through the storm. To help you reclaim your compass and redirect your course. Heaven knows, we don’t need another motivational, inspirational, feel-good self-help book. I’m not saying that these books aren’t helpful or even biblically based—just that there are plenty of them. Most of them focus on changing behaviors and cultivating habits. Again, that’s not necessarily bad; it’s just inadequate for making lasting change.

You can focus on externals all you want and try to imitate the

methods of others in hopes of duplicating their success, purpose, or happiness. But you'll only end up on the treadmill of disappointment, more frustrated than before, unless you make changes on the inside first.

If you want a breath of fresh air in your life that will resuscitate your spirit and bring you closer to God—and closer to being the person he made you to be—then this book is for you. I'm convinced that if you pursue God, you'll experience a passion and a zeal for living while enjoying every dimension of your life like never before. You will discover the X factor—that rare, life-giving quality that we will explore further in the next chapter—and it will manifest itself in everything you do.

In part 2, we'll look at some of the practices that helped me follow after God and escape the doldrums. Although these practices are not in themselves the secret to a changed life, I believe they are a means to access the power that can change yours.

Yes, it will require some changes, some discipline, and some perseverance. But if you stick with it, then you'll never have to worry about remaining stuck in the doldrums again.

### BREATHING LESSON

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Perhaps you haven't sensed a fresh breath in your life for a long time. You may have gotten out of touch with the way God is active and moving in your world. If so, you may have difficulty even pinpointing the cause or determining the route back into the open air.

If you find yourself in the doldrums today, my hope is that this book will refresh you. My twenty-one-day fast was a catalyst to get me going again, and I want to encourage you to invite God to come alongside you and begin to revitalize you with his healing wind as well. And be encouraged: as painful

as the doldrums are, God will use this stuck place to do a great work in you. Be assured, when something is happening to you, God wants to do something in you.

We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead. And he did rescue us from mortal danger, and he will rescue us again. We have placed our confidence in him, and he will continue to rescue us.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-10, NLT

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