

Foreword
by Margie
Blanchard

A Guide to Reigniting Dreams *and* Finding
Renewed Joy and Purpose in Your Next Season

Women at Halftime

Shayne Moore *and* Carolyn Castleberry Hux

A HALFTIME INSTITUTE RESOURCE

I have been on my halftime journey for over a decade. This current season has felt a bit dry—I drank this book in. It was just what the doctor ordered!

LINDA REEB, founder of MomsMentoring.com and coauthor of *Halftime for Couples*

Your best is yet to come! Don't believe me? Read *Women at Halftime* and you'll learn, just as I did several years ago, that God has so much more for you—things beyond your wildest imagination! Don't resign or retire . . . *refire!* This book will help you become all God created *you* to be.

DIANE SPICER, author of *Unmasked: A Remarkable True Story of Transformation and Redemption* and Halftime Australia executive coach

Once when I was challenged to visualize an image that depicted my purpose, I imagined a suspension swinging bridge over a river gorge. The choice is yours: Stay where you are, known and safe, or dare to step toward a new future. *Women at Halftime* is the suspension bridge for all who read it.

SANDRA L. FRAZIER, MD, UAB Medicine Provider health officer

Carolyn and Shayne not only identify the possible directions for your life, but they also lay out guidelines to facilitate your journey. Relatable life lessons demonstrate the ability to transform dreams and passions into a fulfilling life. This is the ultimate “pay it forward” book, and the authors’ enthusiasm, faith, and focus are infectious.

KATHY ANDERSON

Women at Halftime is incredible. It was like the book was written for me. The three words *pray*, *act*, and *adjust*—along with *forgive*—are the most powerful words in the book. Whoever reads this book will not be disappointed!

LAURA CONTRERAS ROWE, author, entrepreneur, and Realtor

This wonderful book provides the tools, quiet challenge of reflection, and encouragement for every woman to let God help her finish well. Grab a cup of tea and settle in for a life-changing read!

JO ANNA COUCH, MS, CPC, owner of Coaching by Faith, a Christian executive/life coaching practice

Women at Halftime addresses the diverse challenges encountered by women in midlife. Utilizing the tools and plans provided and embracing God's calling in our lives, we can feel supported and encouraged by other women's wisdom and experiences.

JULIE ANDERSON, broker-owner, AFJ Properties

I started as a Fellow of the Halftime Institute in August 2020—the year the world experienced a lockdown due to COVID and the year I turned fifty. As a senior corporate executive who travels more than 50 percent of each year for a global multinational, I found 2020 to be almost like a divine pause year, giving me time to reflect, *What is my calling for Life 2.0?* In fact, being the only Asian and woman among my esteemed colleagues of American men, I asked HTI, Where are all the women attendees at Halftime? So I am super glad this book is finally published for women who are entering halftime. Ladies, the best part of your life is yet to be.

JULIENNE LOH, Halftime Fellow 2020, Singapore

As a former participant of the Halftime Institute, I was pleasantly surprised to see how *Women of Halftime* challenged me to continue my journey to relevance. The authors weave personal stories with tools for introspection and challenging exercises to prompt further growth. Whether you have determined your relevance or are still searching your soul, this book will help you come to conclusions about yourself and your future.

ELLEN VOIE, CAE and president/CEO of Women In Trucking Association, Inc.

As my children started to leave the nest, I soon realized a whole new world of significance was awaiting me outside the home. Halftime Institute was a key help to get me started on a new calling and career of significance. *Women at Halftime* is the perfect guide for women pursuing their halftime calling.

MARGARET ERENETA, Halftime Institute graduate and producer of *One80 Podcast*

Women at Halftime shows how to make the next season of life even more purposeful by boldly giving women the courage to dream, providing a systematic way to rediscover our gifts and identify our values, and granting the freedom to dig up the buried treasures of our true selves. The authors share an easy-to-follow method of emotional and spiritual management, while helping us always keep our focus on Scripture and our eyes fixed on Christ.

ASHLEY NORONHA, cofounder of The Truth & Beauty Project

What if a vibrant life—one that God uniquely created you to live out—awaited you in your next season? Would you be willing to be vulnerable and intentional as you spend time with the Lord to bask in such a season? If so, then come journey with Shayne and Carolyn as they walk you through a wonderful balance of Scripture, guidance, encouragement, and next steps to get you going into your next season . . . one that he has handcrafted for you, his cherished daughter.

CARRIE PARK, wife, mother of five, leader, writer, and speaker

Women at Halftime offers an inspiring road map for women at midlife who want more—more purpose and impact—but aren't sure how to get there. The book offers a proven process intermixed with encouraging stories and practical steps. What an invitation to purpose and joy for the next season of life!

WENDE GAIKEMA, executive coach and principal, Coach Wendé

This beautiful book is long overdue. Yet the wait has resulted in a rich treasure of practical, prayerful, and purposeful tools and stories that could not have sparkled years ago. May we all ponder anew what God has for us next.

SHARLA LANGSTON, cofounder and advisory council, Women Doing Well

Though the central premises of halftime are not gender-specific, *Women at Halftime* embraces the female perspective. This book provides the perfect road map: how to thoughtfully assess your day-to-day activities, spend time figuring out who you are and what you can do, and keep working in that direction. Most importantly, don't do it alone; God will provide resources and relationships just when you need them!

MARY LONG

Women *at* Halftime

W O M E N
Foreword
by Margie
Blanchard

A Guide to Reigniting Dreams *and* Finding
Renewed Joy and Purpose in Your Next Season

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Women at Halftime

H A L F
Shayne Moore *and* Carolyn Castleberry Hux

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This book is dedicated to our daughters:

Greta and Elizabeth

Lindsay, Brooke, Rachel, and Kara

Keep it safe

Let no one drown it out

Your voice and light

Erase all doubt

CONTENTS

Foreword by Margie Blanchard *xiii*

Introduction: Welcome to Halftime *1*

1. Embrace Change *9*

PART 1: GET CLEAR *23*

2. Turn Your Dreamer Back On *27*

3. Reclaim Your True Self *45*

4. Identify Your Values *71*

PART 2: GET FREE *95*

5. Leave Behind Fears and Limiting Beliefs *99*

6. Create Capacity for Your New Path Forward *115*

7. Embrace Forgiveness *137*

PART 3: GET CALLED *155*

8. Take the Pulse of Your Passions *159*

9. Discover What Fits You *173*

10. Write a Purpose Statement *199*

PART 4: GET GOING *215*

11. Keep Moving Despite Confusion and Setbacks *219*

12. Go Together *233*

Afterword by Linda Buford *247*

Acknowledgments *255*

Notes *257*

About the Authors *263*

FOREWORD

AN INVITATION TO
RENEWED PURPOSE AND JOY

Margie Blanchard

Women at Halftime is a gift—for you, for someone you love, for a women’s support group, for every woman at midlife who wants to recapture her spark of purpose and joy. This helpful, well-researched work develops and extends the halftime ideas pioneered nearly thirty years ago by Bob Buford and applies them to the unique challenges of women in midlife—a time when they have more opportunities than ever before. If only they knew which ones to take and which would fit their unique abilities and situation. If only they had help in engineering the necessary changes.

Getting to know Bob Buford and spending quality time with him was one of the great blessings of my life. Serving on the boards of the Leadership Network and the Halftime Institute for many years, as well as going through eighteen months of halftime

coaching myself, deepened that blessing. Because the majority of those attending Halftime Institute programs were men, those of us on the board often wondered, “Do the women in our programs need something different than what we offer men?” For example, I had heard one female executive say she had three times as many stakeholders in her life as the men she knew, and each of those stakeholders would be significantly impacted if she made *any* changes in her life. We also discovered that the early tagline and promise of halftime, “moving from success to significance,” did not resonate with many women who felt their years of caring for home, hearth, and children were of utmost significance.

What makes *Women at Halftime* different from many other life- and career-planning guides is that God is at the center of it. The promise of Ephesians 2:10—that we are God’s workmanship and created for good works—is the central principle for this work.

I love how Shayne and Carolyn recommend doing this halftime work over time and with others—a coach, mentor, friend, or small group. Invite someone to join you as you begin this journey. Then get ready to see your life change as the authors lead you through the four stages: Get Clear, Get Free, Get Called, and Get Going. This is not a process that can happen in a couple of days or even weeks. The goal is not a quick fix but a long-term one to help you find joy and fulfillment to sustain you throughout your second half. Beginning with the foundation of positive experiences that have led up to midlife, Shayne and Carolyn build on who you are and what you’ve learned and accomplished to help launch you into something meaningful and enjoyable for your next season—a season God cares deeply about! If you’re looking for renewed purpose and joy, I can think of no better guide than *Women at Halftime*.

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO HALFTIME

“My best years are behind me.”

“Nobody knows what to do with a fifty-year-old housewife trying to reenter the workforce. I can’t make it past the human resources department because they have no idea what to do with me. I feel worthless.”

“I focused on my career and never married or had children. Now that my career is ending, I feel completely lost. Who am I?”

“I am ready for more, but I don’t know where to even begin to find it.”

“I want to work but I feel like the world has passed me by. I loved raising my children and volunteering at church, but those things did not prepare me for my second half.”

“I feel like God is finished with me.”

If you resonate with any of these statements, chances are you are in a place we call “halftime”—a disorienting midlife transition for which no one prepared you. What was most significant in your first half of life either no longer fits or no longer even exists. The children you raised have left the nest or soon will. The career or volunteer work that once gave you fulfillment and significance no longer brings you joy. A foundational relationship that once gave you a sense of identity or belonging ended in divorce, death, or relational breakdown. Or it may be that you simply have a gnawing sense that something is missing in your life. Whatever the road that led you to halftime, the daunting question is, “What now?”

Our promise to you is that there is an answer to that question, one that is as unique as you are. As challenging as it may seem right now, your halftime season is actually a gift—a time to discover a new source of energy and significance for your next season. Just as sports teams take a halftime break to regroup in the locker room and strategize with their coach, your midlife transition is a time to pause and strategize for a winning second half.

We can promise that there is a way through the disorientation of midlife because we have both navigated our own halftime crises and discovered new callings on the other side. Based on our experiences as well as those of many other women we’ve coached, we wrote *Women at Halftime* to walk you through a tried-and-true process for getting unstuck and finding renewed joy and purpose in your second half.

THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF WOMEN AT MIDLIFE

It’s likely no surprise to you that midlife is full of unique challenges for women. These include navigating changes in family

relationships, balancing work and personal life, rediscovering self, securing enough resources, coping with loss and transition, managing health problems, and dealing with menopause.¹ However, what you may not know is that midlife and menopause themselves are relatively recent experiences for women.

Dr. Louann Brizendine, author of *The Female Brain*, points out that a century ago, menopause was rare because the life expectancy of women in the United States was forty-nine, two years before the average woman begins to experience menopause.² Today, life expectancy for women in the US is just over eighty years,³ which means most of us will live decades after ending our menstrual cycles. It also means that empty nesting and the need to plan for the years after menopause are, historically speaking, recent challenges for women. Which helps explain in part why science, psychology, culture, and the church have largely failed to catch up with this reality. Today, as millions of us approach and live beyond this once rare female transition, there are relatively few resources available to help us navigate the unique challenges we face. Researchers on the topic admit,

We remain relatively uninformed about the unique experiences of midlife women. Given the recognition of midlife as a stage of the lifespan in which important transitions occur, it is surprising that little attention has been focused on understanding the consequences of stress and women's mental health. . . .

As seen in research on other portions of the lifespan, many of the instruments developed to study stress in men are not adequate for studying women.⁴

And the findings of the research that has been done on women and midlife is sobering. Women face some of their greatest mental health risks during midlife.

- A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that one in eight middle-aged women in the United States has depression, which is the highest rate of depression among any age or gender group.⁵
- Another study found that the suicide rate for middle-aged women has increased by 63 percent since 1999.⁶
- A study on happiness in 132 countries found that unhappiness in developed countries peaks at around age 47.⁷

These mental health struggles are only compounded by other challenges common at midlife, which include crippling debts, crumbling relationships, feeling left behind at work, empty nests or unlaunched children, and caring for aging parents. All of it leaves many middle-aged women feeling that life is an unending burden.⁸ It also demonstrates how difficult this season really is. The struggle is real! To navigate midlife well, women need resources that are not only tailored to their unique needs and challenges, but ones that also draw on the experiences and wisdom of other women. And that is why we wrote *Women at Halftime*.

THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF WOMEN AT HALFTIME

Women at Halftime traces its origins to the work of the Halftime Institute and its founder, Bob Buford. Following the 1994 publication of his bestselling book, *Halftime: Moving from Success to Significance*, Bob founded the Halftime Institute to provide

guidance and coaching for others who were walking through their own midlife transitions. Most of those who participated in the institute's programs were men, so the curriculum reflected their needs and experiences. As more women began to join their ranks over the years, it became apparent that women at midlife had unique needs that weren't being addressed.

- Many women did not relate to the assumption behind the institute's long-standing tagline "from success to significance," especially when they had sacrificed careers to raise children. For some, a better tagline might have been "from sacrifice to significance." Other women were offended by the tagline because they felt raising their children was the most significant thing they had done or ever would do. Having started with significance in their first half, they felt they were losing it at halftime when their children left the nest.
- While men typically found it easy to identify a dream for their second half, many women did not. Women who had turned off their dreamer to empower the career of a husband or to support the aspirations of their children often struggled to turn their dreamer back on again once they had a chance. In fact, many actually felt afraid to dream again.
- Because the starting point for most men was "success," they typically began their halftime journeys with baseline emotional assets such as confidence, pride in accomplishments, and perseverance. In contrast, women tended to come to halftime feeling at a deficit and burdened by negative emotions such as emptiness, discouragement, and hopelessness.

In response to feedback from women, the Halftime Institute first solicited input from an advisory group of female alumni and leaders, and then commissioned a survey to collect more information. As the energy for this new initiative continued to build, Halftime Institute leaders asked for volunteers who would be willing to go deeper by gathering stories to learn more about how to better meet the unique needs of women at halftime. We raised our hands to volunteer, and that's when the book you now hold in your hands began to take shape.⁹

More than one hundred women shared their stories with us. Some were interviewed by Carolyn, and some wrote out their stories for us. Others shared their stories with Shayne as they traveled with her on a vision trip to Africa in search of new purpose. As we began to write, still others shared their struggles and broken dreams as well as their breakthroughs and new dreams. What emerged was an inspiring, collective story of women who bravely navigated their halftime challenges and changed their futures. It's a story we're eager to share with you.

OUR HOPE FOR YOU

Our hope is that as you engage with us and this process, you will emerge on the other side with renewed confidence and purpose. The promise of this book is that God still has work for you to do, and his dreams and plans for you are bigger, better, and more significant than anything you could come up with on your own. There is hope for your future. You are not done.

In the pages that follow, we'll lead you through a four-stage process to help you get unstuck and moving toward your dreams. The four stages, which are reflected in the four-part structure of the book, are Get Clear, Get Free, Get Called, and Get Going. We'll

talk more about each stage in chapter 1. We share stories from our own halftime journeys, and each of the four parts opens with a brief vignette from Shayne's halftime journey. We'll also introduce you to women who have walked this same path ahead of you. While each woman worked through the same four-part process to get unstuck, each one also discovered renewed joy and purpose in her own unique way. We believe the same will be true for you.

To help you keep moving through the process, each chapter includes guidance and exercises for self-discovery and application. Some activities will be fairly easy to implement, and others will require more time and work. There is no set time frame for your journey, and no gold stars for rushing through it. Each stage builds on the one before it, so we encourage you to take the time you need to work through it. Because halftime is a journey of self-discovery, it's also important to write down what you're learning and feeling as you go. Using a journal throughout will give you a treasure trove of resources to draw on as you chart your course.

We encourage you to invite a friend or a group of women to take this journey with you. The wisdom of Scripture is, "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. . . . Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12). You may also find it helpful to process your journey with a certified coach, counselor, pastor, or spiritual director. Women are at their best when they are in safe and nurturing relationships with others. If you tend to isolate or withdraw when you are struggling, we invite you to take the risk of inviting at least one other person to travel with you during this season. It could make all the difference.

We believe a meaningful and abundant life is available to you in your second half, and we are eager to help you explore your

Women at Halftime

identity and values, discover your strengths and spiritual gifts, leave behind fear and limitations, and awaken to your truest self, grounded in Christ. We invite you to join us to Get Clear on who you are and who you are not, to Get Free of what is holding you back, to Get Called by God, and to Get Going into a second half of joy and purpose.

Welcome to halftime.

EMBRACE CHANGE

We don't change when we are comfortable. It comes with pain.

That's the nature of the beast of transition.

MICHELLE KILBOURNE, PHD

CAROLYN

I believed my life was over, and I could feel my spirit dying. Falling to the floor in my bedroom, I begged God to show up.

“Where are you, Lord?” I cried. “Do you see what is happening? Do you care?”

The life I had so carefully planned and cultivated was ending, along with my marriage of more than two decades. Although I had seen the end coming for years, it happened just as my children were leaving the nest. In fact, my goal had been to hold everything together until the kids were safely away at college so they wouldn't have to deal with the daily realities of a broken family. If they didn't have to live through the ending, I hoped they wouldn't feel the loss as deeply. I was wrong.

I gave God an earful that day. Like so many women, I had

sacrificed my full-time career to work as a hybrid mom, staying at home and building a flexible work life around my children's schedules. Now, my marriage of twenty-four years was over, my children had flown the nest, and I was approaching my fifties feeling overwhelmed by abandonment and loss. On top of everything else, I had scant evidence God cared about my life.

I tried to look toward the future, but I was haunted by doubts. *Is my life over? What purpose do I still have? Are my best years behind me?*

As I lay there on the floor yell-praying, I felt powerless and invisible. And yet, it was in that dark place that God met me. I heard no booming voices from heaven, and there were no bright lights or angel visitations. I simply felt God's Spirit move in my heart and soul as I poured out my lament of disappointments.

"Finish what you started in me, God," I prayed. "Your love is eternal—don't quit on me now." It was a simple prayer in the midst of this heartbreaking season of change, but it was all I could muster in the moment. It must have been enough. Miraculously, a faint flicker of hope stirred in me, and it was sufficient to get me up off the floor to take my first step. Then another and another.

THE FIRST STEP FROM CRISIS TO ABUNDANT LIFE

If you are a woman at midlife, chances are you have experienced something similar. What was most significant in the first half of your life is either gone or no longer feels like enough. Your life may have revolved around raising children, and now you are an empty nester asking, "What's next?" You may be nearing the end of a successful career, or in a ministry position that no longer fits your giftings, passions, or calling. You may have sacrificed much in the first half of life to pursue a career, a relationship, or a family life you found rewarding. Now, however, whatever you sacrificed

for has changed, ended, or no longer feels rewarding. So today, you are looking for a new kind of significance, a new source of energy and joy for your next season.

The stories and circumstances of women at halftime may be different, but the range of emotions we experience in this difficult season are shared by women everywhere. It's as if we have fallen down a deep well and there is no way out. We struggle as we face transitions we may or may not have chosen. We wrestle with feelings of intellectual, spiritual, and emotional emptiness. We grieve the loss of significant relationships and may feel lonely, disconnected, or isolated. We might sense a vague discontent or feel that we have no sense of purpose at all.

Shayne and I understand the fear and confusion of midlife. We both went through halftime crises and found renewed purpose to navigate our next seasons of life. I found my second-half calling as a coach for the Halftime Institute and had the honor of walking with Shayne through her own valley of despair. Today, we call each other friends and work collaboratively to share what we've learned to help other women. In the pages that follow, we share our stories and the stories of others who have navigated the disorientation of halftime and come through it with renewed purpose. Our hope is to help you move from the crises and challenges of midlife to a meaningful and abundant life.

There is a pathway to joy and significance in your next season,

"I feel like it's time to make my life count, time to find my passions and set new priorities. But I'm also scared because I'm not sure how to get back out there after serving my family and church for decades."

Karen Volpert, MA, Sotheby's Institute of Art, London

and this book will guide you through it. However, taking this journey requires something of you. You must be willing to not only make some changes here and there, but to also embrace change as a lifestyle. It's a decision that only you can make. My own halftime coach put it to me this way: "The first step to changing your life is realizing that you are responsible for your life. You're responsible for where you are now and for where you will go next."

FOUR TRANSFORMATIONAL STAGES

Over the years of coaching hundreds of women, we've discovered that the process of getting unstuck and finding new joy and peace includes four transformational stages: Get Clear, Get Free, Get Called, and Get Going. Each stage builds on the one before it, beginning with the foundation of Get Clear.



Get Clear requires doing the hard work of identifying not only who you are today, but also who you are *not*. The purpose of the Get Clear stage is to excavate your past, pay attention to the reality of your present, and begin imagining your new future. This stage is

about getting clarity on both your true identity in God and what you value most at this stage of life.

Get Free is about breaking away from whatever keeps you from fulfilling the dreams you have for your life or from dreaming at all. This stage is about leaving behind limiting beliefs, facing fears, and creating capacity and space in your life for change.

Get Called is not about merely finding a better life—something you can create on your own—it's about discovering God's best for you. Finding your second-half calling requires listening to God as well as listening to your life. The goal of this stage is to identify what God has uniquely prepared you to do and what he is calling you to do.

Get Going is the stage in which you begin to take tangible steps toward change. Building on the previous three stages, this one is about persevering through setbacks and confusion as you pursue a second half of joy and purpose. It includes crafting a purpose statement that will be your compass as you explore new contexts in which to thrive and seek out new relationships, both of which will help you live out who God has made you to be. Be prepared to step way out of your comfort zone, as so many women you'll meet in this book have done.

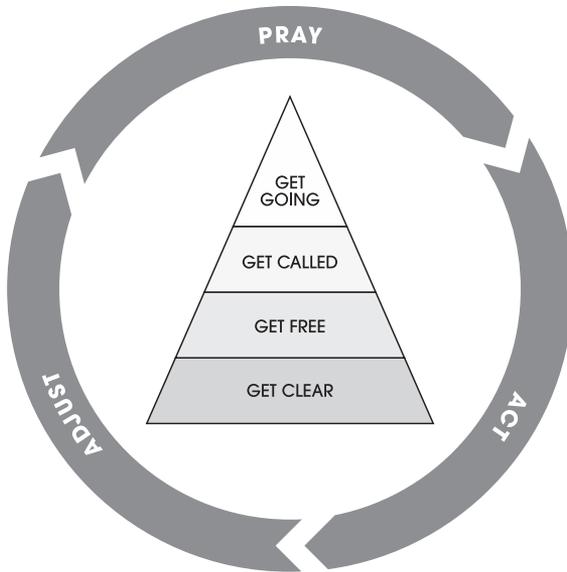
While these four stages are sequential, the process of living them out is not. Life and personal growth rarely proceed in a linear fashion, which means that navigating each of the four stages requires some back-and-forth. For example, as you work through the second and third stages of Get Free and Get Called, you may need to revisit the first stage of Get Clear to clarify who you are and who you are not. At every stage, you will need to be curious about your life, willing to learn new things, and prepared to make adjustments. In our own lives as well as with the women we coach,

we've discovered that the key to navigating this transformational process well is to embrace three essential practices.

THREE ESSENTIAL PRACTICES

Transformation at midlife is not only possible, but it's also an exciting adventure—one that has the potential to change every area of your life and all of your relationships. Once you decide to embrace change rather than resist it, your halftime will be increasingly filled with joyful anticipation of where your journey will lead.

We've found that a cycle of three practices is especially helpful in the process of learning to embrace change. The cycle is pray, act, adjust.



Committing to these practices will help you navigate the four transformational stages by inviting God into your journey, creating forward momentum, and embracing new learning and

relationships. As you continue to pray, act, and adjust, you'll be drawn deeper into the transformation process and begin to experience positive change unfolding in your life.

Pray

To pray is to have a conversation in which you share your emotions, concerns, and questions with the God who knows and loves you. We say that prayer is the foundation for change because change requires living with an uncomfortable amount of uncertainty and unknowns. You are headed into uncharted territories and will not have all the answers you want as quickly as you want them. To navigate that well, you will need awareness, insight, and wisdom beyond your own. And you'll need the steady comfort and reassurance of knowing that God is with you each step of the way.

Begin by making prayer an intentional daily practice. Although it's always good to pray spontaneously and on the go, setting aside a specific time and place helps to make prayer an intentional part of your change process. You might start with just five to ten minutes at the beginning or end of your day. Use your time with God to share any emotions, concerns, or questions you have about your halftime experience and the changes you face. Ask for what you need—guidance, wisdom, practical help, comfort, a next step. Then listen—deeply.

Beyond that, there are any number of additional ways to incorporate prayer into your journey. You might read a devotional, write out your prayers in a journal, or use a daily prayer app. Use this book as a prompt to pray before you read each chapter and work through the exercises. You can also use the daily routines of life as prompts for prayer—pray on your commute, pray as you prepare

meals, pray while walking the dog or working out. If you are able to read the book in community with others, pray before you meet and pray with one another when you are together.

The words you use when you pray do not matter. However, having an open, curious, willing heart to explore new possibilities does matter. Why? Because God is endlessly creative and probably has plans for you that you never could have dreamed up on your own. If you are looking for God's best for your life, you don't want to miss out on that because you were unwilling to be open to new possibilities. He is ready to take your hand and walk this path with you.

Giving your journey to God in prayer with consistency will not only give you the guidance and reassurance you need, prayer will also give you confidence to take action as you trust God to lead you through this process.

Act

Taking action is required throughout the entire four-stage process. To act means to take a step forward. It might be a simple step, such as recording your thoughts in a journal as you work through a self-awareness exercise. Or it might be a riskier step, such as contacting people in a ministry or organization you are interested in, or even joining that ministry or organization for a short time to try a new role that's outside of your comfort zone. We stress taking action because you will never be able to merely *think* your way into moving forward; true change requires you to *act* your way forward. To take one step, and then another and another.

The challenge is that taking action is often hard, especially when you feel depleted or confused. What can make it even harder is the expectation that if you follow God's best plan for your life,

everything should be easy—all the doors will open, and you simply have to walk through them. However, one look at the life of the apostle Paul in the New Testament proves how misguided this expectation is.

In pursuing his God-given calling and his second-half journey, the apostle Paul was stoned, dragged through the streets, left for dead, shipwrecked, and imprisoned. And yet, at no point did Paul allow his difficult circumstances to keep him from taking action and pursuing his calling. In fact, when Paul encouraged his protégé, Timothy, to live out his God-given calling, he also warned him that there would be difficult times ahead. “Anyone who wants to live all out for Christ is in for a lot of trouble,” he wrote. “There’s no getting around it. . . . But don’t let it faze you” (2 Timothy 3:12-14, MSG).

If Paul is our example of what it means to take action, you may be tempted to put the book down at this point. Understandable. While we hope the actions you take will be easy and flow seamlessly for you, you would be the first if that’s the case. Instead, we invite you to hold on to the promise that, regardless of your circumstances, God will make known to you the path of life and fill you with joy in his presence (Psalm 16:11). This means you should expect that taking action will be hard, and that this is normal. God is at work in your hard times as he makes known to you the path of life for your second half.

Adjust

Taking a step forward doesn’t mean that every step will be an instant or obvious winner or turn out as you hoped. In fact, if you expect change to be a “one and done” process, you’re setting yourself up for frustration and disappointment. If anything, change is

more like a “many and never done” process. That’s why learning to adjust may be the most critical skill to develop as you navigate your halftime season.

To adjust means you are able and willing to pivot, to be nimble, flexible, and open to new ideas, people, and places. Being able to adjust is what enables you to consider alternatives and discern the best way forward rather than simply jumping to the next thing that presents itself. Adjusting might be as simple as letting go of plans that have been on the calendar for months or as complex as letting go of a relationship or a position in order to make room for something new.

Learning to adjust well—without giving in to discouragement, despair, and self-pity—not only keeps our mind and heart open to

“My life had become safe and small, yet my heart longed for something big and bold. God’s plan for my life was changing.”

*Marsha Gordon, PhD, Halftime
Institute certified coach*

the new thing God may be doing, it also increases our ability to learn and grow along the way. A willingness to adjust, to flex with changing circumstances, brings joy, hope, and energy back into our lives.

Honing our adjustment skills also enables us to approach this season with a sense of adventure and curiosity rather than resistance and dread. That’s why a key aspect of

adjusting is learning to normalize failure. Getting caught up in perfectionism or expecting every action to succeed is a surefire way to kill a sense of adventure and curiosity.

Normalizing failure is an acknowledgment that things will not work out perfectly all the time—and that’s okay. We encourage our clients and friends to focus on actions rather than outcomes.

Did you take an action to move forward? That's a success, even if it didn't turn out as you hoped. In that sense, there is no failure at halftime as long as you're willing to keep trying. As you pray, act, and adjust throughout the four transformational stages, keep your focus on progress, not perfection. It is simply a matter of time until you find your sweet spot.

THE CHOICE TO CHANGE

Embracing change began for me with the yell-praying session on my bedroom floor: "Finish what you started in me, God. Your love is eternal—don't quit on me now." The actions I took next and the difficult choices I made to move forward ultimately led me to a one-on-one coaching program at the Halftime Institute. One of the first things my coach told me was that God's plans for me were bigger and better than anything I could dream up on my own. And he was right. It took hard work to get clear on who I am, to get free from what was holding me back, to embrace my calling as a coach, and to get going by pursuing the work I love. Although the changes I experienced happened over a decade, my entire life was transformed through this process.

My coach also told me that the choice to change was mine alone to make. So I want to challenge you with the same challenge he gave to me: "The first step to changing your life is realizing that you are responsible for your life. You're responsible for where you are now and for where you will go next."

It's a choice that faces every woman at halftime: *Am I willing to take responsibility for my life? Am I willing to take one step and then another? Am I willing to change?* And the God-given path to transformation that follows will be as unique as the woman who makes that choice.

- “I now know there will never be another person on earth who has the same purpose or calling as I do. Using my strengths of compassion, encouragement, discernment, wisdom, positivity, empathy, and adaptability, I believe the impossible is now possible—that I can help others to be set free from lies and anchored in love and joy.”
—*KP LoveJoy, founder of LoveJoyCO*
- “Being who God calls me to be now and doing what matters most has been my transformational journey. Before, I was simply busy—head down and plowing through life. God showed up to help me get clear. What I yearned for most was to be present for Wayne and our kids. Now I have arranged my life so I can be present for them while also growing as a coach and being open to serving others.”
—*Nancy Lopez, leadership and career transition coach*
- “In my second-half reinvention, the Lord turned my focus toward the future instead of only looking back at what I had once loved doing. I am now aware of opportunities that are a part of God’s new path for me. Instead of searching desperately for what the plan is, I let it unfold in my life.”
—*Loretta Leffin, anxiety mentor*

If you’re willing to make the choice that these women and so many others have made, we promise that a more joyous and abundant life is available to you. It’s a promise we can make with confidence because we have witnessed transformation in the lives of hundreds of women just like you who have made that choice. It is incredible to see what happens in women’s lives when God shows up.

Our prayer is that you will experience renewed joy, hope, and purpose as you trust God and take one step forward and then another. You are entering deep heart and soul work that really can transform the trajectory of your second half. We celebrate and honor your courage as you embark on this journey with us.

ESSENTIAL PRACTICES

PRAY

Share. As you consider embracing change in your life, what worries, unease, or fears do you have? What excitement, anticipation for the future, and pops of joy are filling your heart right now? God already knows your concerns and is waiting for you to open your heart to him.

Ask. What wisdom, help, or resources do you most need from God to embrace change this next season? Ask him to open new windows in your heart and doors of opportunity in your life to welcome this transformation.

Listen. Quiet your mind and heart for the next several minutes to listen for the gentle, comforting voice of the One who knows you thoroughly and loves you unconditionally.

ACT

Journal your initial thoughts in response to the questions that follow. This action will help you begin to get clear on your current reality, explore your intentions, and open your mind to possibilities for your future.

- What prompted you to begin your halftime journey?

Women at Halftime

- What do you hope might be different because of your half-time journey?
- If there were no limits and you could be and do anything, who would you be, and what would you do?

ADJUST

What adjustment do you want to make—just one at this point—to take a step forward?

GET *Part 1* CLEAR

SHAYNE

Sitting on the edge of my bed, I throw my laptop away from me with disdain and fume, “Carolyn wants me to do *what?*”

Glaring at my computer dangling precariously off the edge of the bed, I have the urge to finish it off, kick it to its death on the hardwood floor.

Letting out a deep sigh, I begrudgingly retrieve the laptop and reread her questions: “If there were no obstacles, what do you want your life to look like? What is the dream for your life?”

My emotions—self-pity, depression, loss—threaten to overwhelm me. *My dream?*

All I feel is rage.

I am a cliché. A girl interrupted. A traumatic event disrupted my life, relationships, and career, and I cannot get past it. For years, I have been searching for—*something*. A job? But not just any job. In the past, I worked as an author, a speaker, an advocate, and an educator. I traveled as a writer, reporting on what life is like for women and girls living in unthinkable economic and domestic circumstances, working for change for women and girls globally. I want that kind of meaning back in my life now. I *need* purpose. Something I can be all-in on that is far removed from this painful season and something—*anything*—that is outside of the four walls of my house and my now-grown children's lives.

The previous several years had brought intense darkness. I was abandoned by lifelong friends in an hour of need; I was treated poorly in a professional environment by Christian women I trusted deeply yet who betrayed and attacked me. I was the personification of that person lying on the road to Jericho in desperate need, wounded and bleeding. Yet, friends, family, colleagues, and faith leaders walked around and over me without mercy. Where was my Good Samaritan?

It had happened years earlier, but I was still struggling. *Will I never get past those experiences? Why am I so stuck?*

As I stare at Carolyn's questions on my laptop, tears slowly fall down my cheeks. I feel more alone and alienated than ever. *Are there women out there who can answer this question? Who have a dream for their lives?*

Carolyn, my Halftime Institute coach, thinks so. But I feel like a failure even in terms of how I ended up having coaching

sessions with her. She is an *executive* coach. My husband is the one who discovered the Halftime Institute and signed himself up when he unwound his firm and was looking for his next thing. But he ended up finding his next thing before he did any of the coaching sessions. After years of listening to me complain and cry about how I have no life, he donated his sessions to me.

I reluctantly agreed to try the coaching because I am tired of feeling the way I feel. I am stalled, and I have no idea what to do. I have gotten nothing but “no” down every path. I pray, cry, and beg God to use me again. I am embarrassed and humiliated that I seem to be of no use to anyone. I send résumés, I volunteer. But I do not trust myself. I feel I have made a series of bad choices, even though I made them based on sincere prayer, faith, and trust. I feel foolish.

I feel as though God doesn't care either. So many things had come and gone in my life by the time I reached fifty, but my relationship with God had always been my one constant. He had never left me, and this relationship is so hard to put into words. He was so close to me during hard times, the only one who saw, who knew, and who loved without judgment. Yet, today, I find myself utterly devastated by God's silence. *Is he leaving me too?*

I am an extrovert, a list checker, an organizer worker bee. I love to work. *Why is there nothing for me? Why did I choose to stay home with my children?* I feel so stupid. I should have been working this whole time so I would have something of my own: a career, a body of work, a better degree.

I understand most people who do career coaching are men. Men who have been successful influencers and leaders. Men who have created great wealth and resources. I am none of these things. I feel pathetic. One day, a well-intentioned friend asked why I was

so depressed. I moaned like a little child and said, “My kids are gone! I feel like I’ve been left behind.” I just sat sobbing.

It is abundantly clear that what I am doing or not doing is not working. I can stay in this place of discouragement and self-pity, or I can take risks, show up, and push through this barrier.

Deep breath. *Pull it together.*

I did my Halftime homework as instructed. I tried and felt foolish in trying, and I answered Carolyn’s questions. As simple as they were, her questions were difficult and painful to answer, requiring me to search my heart and life to find what I authentically believed about God, the world, and myself at midlife.

For twelve months, Carolyn and I did this often-painful back-and-forth. We had monthly coaching calls with homework and readings in between. During these times, Carolyn spoke truth into my heart and life. One day, she tried to assure me, saying, “So many women at midlife feel exactly the way you do. Stuck. The good news is you are just beginning this journey. A midlife journey is more like growing corn than popping it. It takes time. It is like a mystery unfolding.”

After listening to more of my tearful self-pity, she said, “The bad news is, discouragement is very normal. However, here’s a word of encouragement for you: Transformative growth takes time. Sometimes, when we begin a new phase of life, there is an initial decline before growth.”