



52 DEVOTIONS

AS LONG
AS I HAVE
BREATH

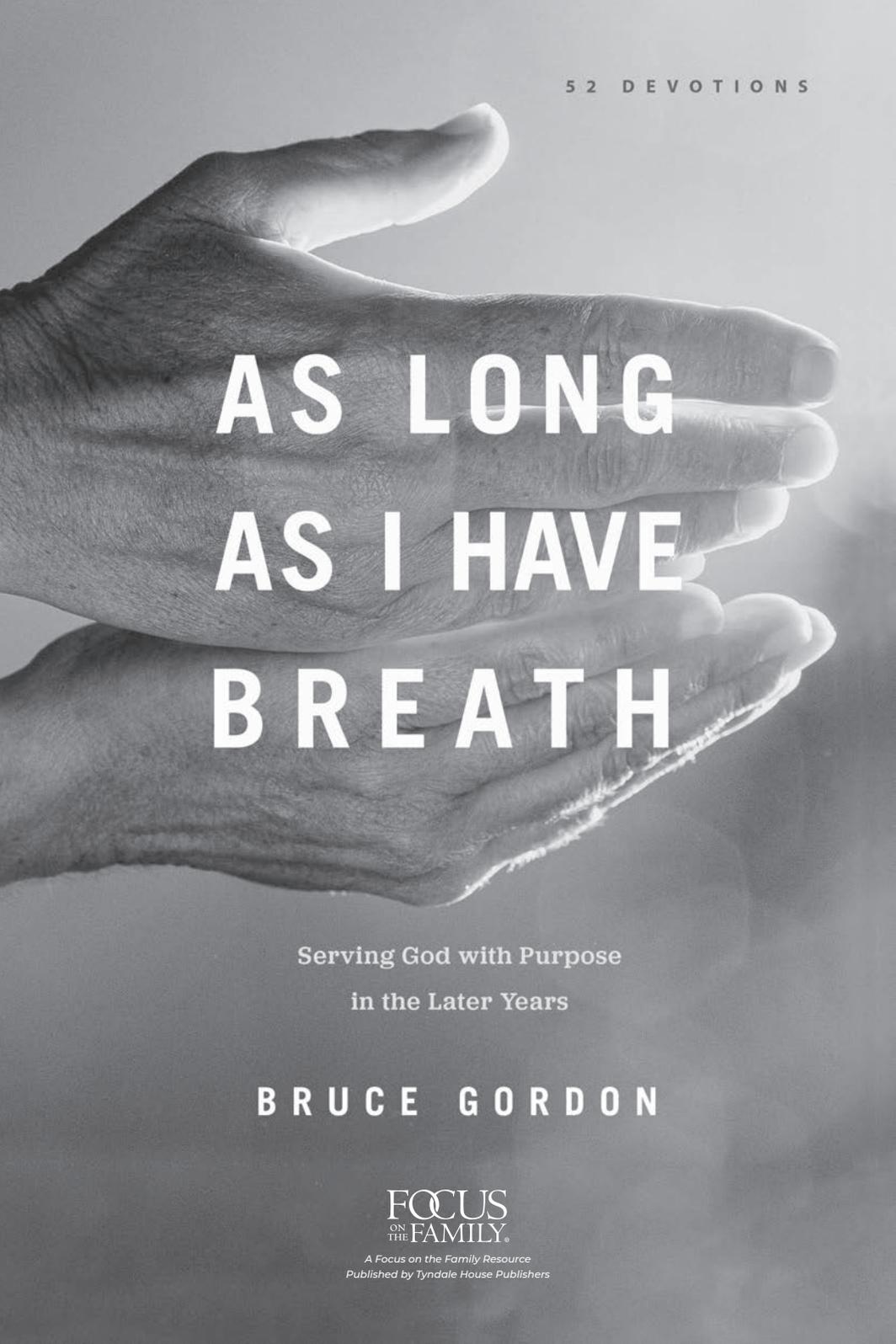
Serving God with Purpose
in the Later Years

BRUCE GORDON

FOCUS^{ON}THE FAMILY[®]

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As Long as I Have Breath: Serving God with Purpose in the Later Years

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INTRODUCTION

I HAVE A PASSION, which is why I wrote these weekly reflections.

I have a couple of strong beliefs about getting old.

I believe that aging matters.

Our society has insidiously influenced our thinking so that we believe that only youth matters. We make too much of youthfulness and too little of age. Society tells us that aging means you are to enjoy life and that at long last you have freedom to do so. Society disregards the notion that we can make a significant contribution to the world in our later years. This simply isn't so!

I also believe that God's Word is not limited by age. There are many examples where He directs someone to great things in what we would refer to as the autumn or even the winter season of life. Abraham at ninety-nine is an example of someone who made his greatest impact in his later years.

Dr. Roger Birkman, the founder of Birkman International, was a mentor, confidant, and friend to me. One August

afternoon my phone rang, and it was Roger. I had never met the man, but he had been tracking my journey. As I write these words this is still emotional for me, that this international leader would reach out. He was seventy-eight years old at that point and asked me to help take Birkman International to a new level because Roger felt that God was asking him to do more. That phone call began a seventeen-year journey that continued until God took Roger home.

On one occasion, Roger and I were in Surabaya, Indonesia, where we were speaking together at an international conference. Roger and I shared a passion for staying fit, and that day we were side by side on treadmills in the fitness room of a magnificent hotel looking over the city. As he walked—I was trying my best to keep up with him—he looked over at me and said, “Bruce, your best days are ahead of you. Only look back to gain perspective for what is ahead and what God has done in your life and what He wants to do.”

I was breathing harder than Roger; I looked at him and responded, “Roger, that goes against what society says, that you especially, and myself coming up behind you, should relax and enjoy these years after age fifty-five.”

In his infamous way, Roger, without missing a step, looked over at me and responded, “Bruce, where in the world are we? Are you enjoying what God is doing with you right now? I know I am!”

There are many examples of men and women who had their greatest impact in their later years. Roger Birkman is one of them, and I want to be one as well.

INTRODUCTION

My consulting practice has focused on transitional leadership. Organizations have life cycles. Leaders ask, “Where in the life cycle is the organization I lead?” The answer to that question is not about age or how long the organization has been in operation. Rather, the important thing is to continually assess what newness looks like.

We, as human beings, are the same. This devotional battles the mindset that says that once we reach retirement age we should relax, rest, and play golf—our usefulness already rendered. Instead, our later years are the best time to find newness of purpose, a revitalized zest for living, and a worthwhile mission to accomplish.

There are different schools of thought on how many days it takes to develop new habits. Whatever the number, I’m giving you 365 days to impact your societal programming, to prove that your greatest days can be ahead of you.

I have also written these devotionals to spur you on and to provide food for thought because more than ever before the 55+ demographic needs to take a stand for what we believe and be an example to those who are following us. We are still to be engaged in the battle rather than just spectators in the stands.

As I write this introduction, we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. What will the world be like post-pandemic? I have just written an article on the skills and leadership competencies that the new normal of the post-pandemic world will need. Leaders and influencers will need to come alongside those whose lives have been completely

disrupted. What had been effective leadership before COVID-19 will need to be rethought as people reenter their daily routines from a place of fear, anxiety, trauma, loss, and grief.

You in your 55+ years are so crucial to those who are younger in the new era we are moving into. You were made for more! As long as you have breath, you can serve the Lord with vigor and purpose.

1

Releasing the Past

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

SOMEONE IN THE 55+ DEMOGRAPHIC recently said to me that even though God had forgiven her, she could never forgive herself. I asked, “*Never?*” Never is a long time.

This unforgiveness had become an ever-tightening noose around this woman’s neck because it kept her trapped in the past.

I wonder how many of you are living with regret.

One of Satan’s strategies is to keep us focused on the failures and disappointments of the past. This creates tentacles of shame that entangle us.

I don’t want to discount the feelings you may have; however, allow me to introduce another perspective and four

steps to victory over this battle in light of 2 Corinthians 5:17. May this four-step process silence the voice in your mind—this voice is not from God.

1. Acknowledge that you haven't forgiven yourself. Write the details of the situation on a sheet of paper.
2. Ask God to forgive you for not forgiving yourself.
3. Read Romans 8:1-2. Choose to believe in and accept the freedom that comes from the power of the Holy Spirit living within you.
4. Choose to forgive yourself. Destroy the piece of paper to represent your forgiveness of yourself. One person told me he tied it to a rock and threw it into the ocean.

Questions

1. In what area of your life do you struggle to forgive yourself?
2. What is keeping you from offering forgiveness to yourself?

RELEASING THE PAST

3. Review the four steps above and journal as needed.
4. Connect with a friend who can help you work through this. Be available to help your friend work through similar areas in his or her life.