

YOUMATTER.

**it's a great
day to be
alive.**

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THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA
FOUNDATION
POST OFFICE BOX 8915
CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE 37414
WWW.DEANSIKES.NET**

“Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.” (Proverbs 24:11)

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA:

As the doors opened, music was pounding; strobe lights were launching beams of light from one corner of the venue to another. As the volume increased, hundreds of noisy teenagers eagerly entered the auditorium that soon would be filled to capacity. The worship band made their way onto the stage, while I meandered over to a corner of the room where I could blend into the crowd and watch as our time together began. Within about seventy minutes, I would give an invitation and watch the altar fill with students who would make what I consider the *choice of a lifetime*. However, I was also getting ready to meet seventeen teenagers who had wrongly bought the lie that death would be better than life. One of those seventeen was a young man named Ronnie. Ronnie pulled me aside and told me that he had already written his suicide note, and

the shotgun he was using to end his life was loaded and positioned in his bedroom. Two hours ago he was sitting with the barrel of that gun in his mouth. But for reasons unknown to him at the time, he had a strong urgency to put the gun down and delay pulling the trigger. Instead of killing himself, he came to church for tonight's service.

GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA:

Over the course of two and a half days, I spoke with over six thousand students. At one of the local high schools I met a young lady named Katie—a senior who was captain of the cheerleading squad. When our assembly came to a close, Katie asked if we could talk. I agreed and she immediately began to cry. Between her tears, she told me that she was battling an eating disorder; and while nobody else knew what she was doing to her body, *she knew*. She told me that, in her estimation, there was no doubt that death would be much better than life.

ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA:

I left our home in Chattanooga on Sunday afternoon and arrived in South Australia on Tuesday. From Wednesday through Sunday, I ministered at eleven events. At one of these

school assemblies I met Robert, a teenager who was having a terribly difficult time at home. As Robert and I talked, I realized the enormous amount of pain that this high school student lived with on a daily basis—pain that came from the abusive mouth of his father. The old saying that *sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me* is simply untrue. Listening to Robert's testimony confirmed to me that words do, indeed, contain within them the power of life and death. Robert was so beaten down by his father's continual verbal assault that when I met him, he had given up on life and wanted to die.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA:

Tom served in local government and was attending a convention where I was ministering for the weekend. When he came to our product table to talk, his jaws trembled and his eyes filled with tears. I listened as Tom openly shared with me that, as a teenager, he had been sexually abused and had never known how to receive the emotional help to begin the healing process that was so desperately needed in his life. Now in his early forties, Tom lived with feelings of rage and an uncontrollable anger

that ruled and reigned each day of his life. The anger had driven such a wedge between his wife and him that it had led to the loss of visitation rights with his children. His family life had fallen apart and his professional life was suffering as well. There among thousands of people, Tom stood at my table and told me that he wanted to die.

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA: Amy was a student at Teen Challenge when I met her. After speaking at a chapel service, I met some of the students at the Center and listened as they shared with me some of the issues that brought them to this point in their lives. Of all the young ladies I met, Amy was the one who most touched my heart. When Amy was two years old, her mom died; then when she was six years old, her dad hung himself while in prison. By the age of ten, Amy was buying and selling drugs on the streets. By age fifteen, Amy was a prostitute. By the time she was sixteen, Amy saw no reason to live and wrongly believed that if she were no longer alive, nobody would miss her.

Then there was **SEARCY, ARKANSAS:** I had just finished speaking with a large

gathering of high school student leaders who had assembled for a week-long Leadership Conference at Harding University. As I made my way back to our table to meet many of these students, a young man walked past me. As our paths crossed, he slowed his pace and asked, "Have you ever written a book about suicide?" I responded that I had not. With that, he accelerated his pace and I never saw him again. His question stayed with me, however, and was the launching pad to what you are now reading.

Since 1993, I have been in full time ministry, traveling across America and into the nations of the world. Everywhere I have gone, I have come face to face with people who believe the lie that death would be a better choice than living.

But in 2010, seemingly more than ever before in our ministry, I came face-to-face with students and adults, but especially students, who told me that they wanted to die. Because of our type of ministry and the places we are called to go, meeting people who have given up on life was nothing new.

But what was new was the sheer number of people I encountered in private, Christian high schools who were no longer sugar-coating on the outside what was happening on the inside. For these students, internal reality was becoming external reality. As it did, I was receiving more calls than ever before from schools and parents, asking for help.

I prayed and asked God what He would have me do to help hurting people who want to hurt themselves. The more I prayed, the more I was led to sit down and write. When I began writing, I was also reminded of the hurt that families and friends are encountering on a daily basis—the painful hurt that comes when someone we care deeply about suddenly ends their life. As they bring their life to an abrupt conclusion, what is not concluded are all the questions that are left unanswered and all of the conversations that will never happen, this side of eternity.

It was a sunny November afternoon in 2010 that my praying led me to Proverbs 24:11 which reads, “***Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.***” This one verse so spoke to me that when I read it, I knew

why I was coming face-to-face with so many cries for help. The Holy Spirit gave me that verse, and then gave me the title for this book. With that, I invite you to read on and learn why, or perhaps be reminded of why *You Matter*, and why *It's a Great Day to Be Alive*.

What's so great about you being alive today? Oh, that's an easy one to answer. You woke up. Simple as that might sound, it's the truth. You see, God has never made a mistake and He is not going to start by making a mistake with you. So, in His infinite wisdom and according to His plan for humanity, of which you are a part, the fact that you are alive this very moment tells me that you have something to contribute. It tells me that you are needed. Maybe you're wondering who needs you. Again, that's an easy one to answer. **God needs you.** Remember, He's never missed it; so the very fact that you are alive is assurance that you are needed.

I can almost hear your brain immediately responding to that last sentence; maybe you find yourself wondering, 'What does God need **me** to do for **Him**? After all, He is God.' True enough; but God needs people to pursue and fulfill His master plan here on the earth.

You are a part of His plan. I know this because He was there when you were conceived and born. Do you realize that from the beginning of time, God, the Creator of the universe, has been thinking about you? He has; and if you open your Bible to Jeremiah 29:11, I think you too will agree that even now, at this very moment, His mind is on you: ***“For I know the thoughts I think toward YOU, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not evil, to give YOU a future and a hope.”***

Maybe you find yourself wondering what He’s thinking when He thinks about you. If your curiosity is getting the best of you, let me suggest that the answer to this question is found in the verse you just read. He’s thinking about your future and the hope He has for you and your future.

Hope. Now there’s a word that is used every day, but I wonder if we fully understand its true meaning. Have you ever checked out the definition of hope? I looked it up and here’s what I saw: hope is, *“the feeling that something desired is possible.”* Take a minute and make the answer to the next question personal. What do you desire to see happen in and through your life? With hope, these desires become possible.

One of the common denominators I have encountered with many people who say that they no longer want to live was the loss of hope in their personal lives. These people seem to have it all together on the outside; but on the inside, oftentimes their world is a dark, dismal cavern of despair.

When a person **loses hope**, they lose their ability to believe in their future. They oftentimes let go of what was once possible, and they allow their God-given *dream machine* to unplug from its source of inspiration. When this loss of hope happens, people from all walks of life and from every imaginable social class rapidly progress into an emotionally-isolated, lonely, and painful experience known as **hopelessness**. Hopelessness is defined as, “*beyond optimism; desperate; inadequate.*” Do these terms sound familiar to you?

Each person who reads this book will have a couple of things in common. One of these common denominators is that each of us will, in some form or another, base our life and the way we choose to live our life on a system of belief. I have a belief system upon which I base my life, and every day I try to live according to that system. My beliefs are based on the best-selling book of all times—

the Bible. In this book, we are offered a divinely-inspired manual for living and creating the life we each are called to pursue and ultimately fulfill.

Turn in the New Testament of the Bible to 1 Corinthians 13:8 and you will see that *love never fails*. Since God is love and we know that love never fails, then we can be assured that God has never failed.

The truth that God has never failed can be tough for the human mind to fully comprehend. But approaching God and His love from the human mind never really works. To understand God and His love for you requires that you *approach Him from your heart, not your head*, and doing so with something you might not even know you've been given—the gift of faith. In its simplest definition, faith is believing what God says and applying His Word to your everyday life. The Biblical definition of faith, found in Hebrews 11:1, tells us that *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*.

As I write this, and as you are now reading it, in my heart I hear many of you saying, “Me, special? Right. This guy doesn't even know me and certainly doesn't know what I'm going through. So, how can he say I'm

special?” You’re right. The odds of you and I knowing each other are less than slim; and if we do not know each other, then certainly I have no idea what you’re going through right now. But, what I do know is that **God made you and that truth, in and of itself, makes you special.**

The Bible teaches us that, when God created you, He did so with a purpose. It teaches us that God was there when you were born. Job 33:4 tells us that *the Spirit of God made you, and the breath of the Almighty gave you life.* Think about what that means. When you were conceived, the Spirit of God was there. He was right there in that moment. He allowed your life to begin! The breath of the Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, is the breath that jumpstarted the body of Adam, the first man God created (Genesis 2:7). That same breath of God has given life to every human being who has ever lived since, and it is the same breath that has given life to you.

Two things are at work here. You have the Spirit of God who was there when you were conceived, and the breath of the Almighty that gave you life. What does that really mean? It means that, when God created you, He put a part of who He is inside of your

DNA! When your lungs began to work, they did so because God put His breath in you.

I have met many people who think they were a mistake, or think they should have never been born, or think that nobody likes them. While all of that might seem like factual information to the person who is saying it, it is not the truth. And it is the truth that sets a person free. My goal for this book is that the truth of God's Word will penetrate the soil of your heart; and that as it does, you will catch the revelation that **YOU MATTER!**

You are the only "you" who has ever lived; there is not another one like you anywhere on the earth. I could hold up my watch and show you that my watch is an original. It was crafted by a master craftsman, and it is the only one of its kind anywhere in the world. But instead of talking about the watch, let's talk about you.

Do you understand that you were crafted and created by a Master Craftsman? That you are an original? And that there is not another like you anywhere on the planet? That, my friend, is why you are so valuable to God's Kingdom. You bring something to the table that nobody else brings, and it is not what you do. It's **who you are.**

It is true that we all have challenging moments. Maybe I'm old-fashioned or perhaps just an eternal optimist, but I truly believe that good can come from those challenging moments along this journey we know as life. I believe that every day we wake up we've been given another gift from God. I have seen this firsthand in my own life, and I've listened to thousands of people share their testimonies with me as I travel. No matter what we go through, seasons come and seasons go. Perhaps most importantly, regardless of who you are or where you are, if you're breathing, God has something scheduled for you to do today.

If you look at John 10:10, you will see just who it is that wants you to end your life before you can complete the tasks God has for you. Jesus said that the thief, or the devil, comes to do three things—steal, kill, and destroy. That is the devil's mission for your life. He wants to steal from you, kill you, or destroy you. Thankfully, the verse continues on and Jesus says, ***“But I have come to give you life, and life more abundantly.”*** Jesus came to give you life to the fullest; life that is overflowing with His presence and His goodness.

Suicide is also built in three's. If a person

is contemplating suicide, they are in one of three steps or phases. Phase one is they will think about it. They will take the seed of a thought and it will drop into their heart. The Bible teaches us in Luke 6:45 that ***out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.*** So when a person thinks about something, they typically get whatever they focus on. When a person is thinking about ending their own life, and those thoughts go deeper and deeper into their heart, the heart then begins to overflow with what is inside the heart. Out of the mouth, the person then begins to talk. So phase two is talking.

Let's look at the power of words. God created the world by His words. Every time He wanted to see His world change, He spoke something. In Genesis 1:27, we read that God created you to be just like Him. Then when you jump to Job 22:28, you realize that you and I will declare a thing, and what we say will be established for us. This is where faith comes in.

Everything that God is, the devil is not. For every good portion of God, there is a bad portion of the devil. Every time God tries to bless us, the devil tries to curse us. Every time God tries to take us higher, the devil tries to bring us lower. Therein lies the war

between our heart and our mind.

If a person is thinking about suicide and then begins to talk about it, unless they are stopped, they will attempt it. Attempting suicide is phase three.

I have seen these steps happen many times. Today, if you are already talking about how you would end your life, you have to understand that you are two-thirds of the way there. My question to you is simple: if you are a threat to the devil, and I am not a threat, who is the devil going after? Will he go after you, the threat? Or after me, the non-threat? The answer is obvious. The devil goes after those he views as a threat to what he is trying to accomplish on earth, because he realizes his time is short.

Is there a real devil? You'd better believe there is. He became the devil because of one thing—pride. He thought he would be better than God. Apparently he had a lot of influence because he took a third of the heavenly beings with him. If he could influence that many heavenly beings to follow him instead of God, then certainly he is going to try to influence you to follow him, too.

When God put His life inside of you, simultaneously He put inside of you His

vision. The vision that God put inside of your heart is what the devil is after. So when the devil tries to convince you that your life doesn't matter, that you were a mistake, that you should never have been born, or that nobody cares about you, all of that tells me that the devil realizes you are a viable threat to him and his kingdom. He is, therefore, trying everything in his power to destroy you before you can take hold of the vision God placed within you. Before you can even begin to walk in that vision, the devil is trying his best to put an end to your life.

People often ask me why bad things happen to good people. Why did that person commit suicide? I don't have all the answers, but here are the answers I do have. There is a good God, and there is a bad devil. There is a war going on between them. In John 16:33, the Bible tells us to ***be of good cheer, because I (Jesus) have overcome the world.*** In this world there is tribulation. There are moments of trial and testing. There are moments when you wonder if you can keep going. That is when you have to dig down deep and pull from the word of faith that lives inside of you.

You might be asking, "What's the word of faith? It lives where?" The word of faith

is the Word of God. As you put the Word of God into your heart, that becomes your arsenal. It becomes your defense system to fight off the attacks of the enemy. If you are going through a traumatic time and all hell is breaking loose around you, and if you think you don't want to live anymore, understand that none of the above came from God. It all came from the devil. He is trying his best to stop you from becoming who you were called to be from the foundation of the earth.

When you realize that the devil is after the purpose for your life, then you must ask yourself why the devil cares about what you are called to do. Why would he try to destroy you? What is it about your purpose that the devil is trying to stop?

That one question should give you a great level of joy, because God put His purpose inside your heart for one reason. Why? Because He knows He can trust you. How do you know He can trust you? Simple. God trusts you because you are His kid. He loves you and trusts you much more than any earthly father ever could. God knows that His kids are going to make mistakes, that we are going to blow it, and that we will prove that we are capable of walking away from the purest form of love that has ever existed.

But it is because of that very love that He opens up His arms and says to us, “No matter what you’ve done, I still love you.” Perhaps you cannot relate to this because your earthly father could not show you that kind of love; but you have a Heavenly Father who loves you more than you can comprehend.

No matter who you are or where you are today, and no matter where you live, work, or attend school, the truth I want to convey in this book is that God loves you. It is the Spirit of God who gave you life. It is the Spirit of God who brings freedom into your life.

How do you overcome a daily, continuing battle of feeling that you want to die? I have received many notes and e-mails from people who are great people and they love God. But they hate their life. They have given up and are ready to die. But they are reaching out for just one ray of hope that maybe, just maybe, what I am saying is true. If these words are true—and they are—and if this truth can penetrate your heart to the point that you can begin to accelerate down the road of life and embrace the calling that God has on your life, then your life will truly begin anew.

Just as I base my life on the Bible, everything I am talking about in this book

has Biblical references. If you go to church or have read the Bible, I'm sure there is at least one Bible verse that you can quote. Even a rank heathen who is on his way to hell can probably quote John 3:16. But there is a verse in the Bible that, when I saw it, I had a deep conversation with God about it. That is Genesis 1:3. It reads: "Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." If you study that out in the original language, it actually said, "God said, 'Let light be,' and light was." I asked God why, of all the things we see that He created, is light the very first thing that we recognize?

Just as quickly as I asked God that question, He asked me a question: "What does light do?"

I responded, "I asked you first."

Some of you who are reading this might not have any idea how to respond to what you just read. In your eyes, God seems like somebody who is far away somewhere, maybe on Mars, hobbling around with a cane and a beard down to His ankles, trying to figure out how He's going to make it through the next twenty-four hours. But that is a false impression. God is as new right now as He was at the beginning of time. He doesn't need to worry because He knows

exactly what is going to happen. Because of that, I have a relationship with Him; not a religion with Him. It is my belief that religion is man's way to try to get to God, while Christianity is God's way to get to man. Christianity is based on a relationship. So when I say that I asked God the question about light, I really did. When I say to you that He responded by asking me what light does, He really did. When I say that my response to Him was that I asked you first, I really did. Why? Because that is the relationship I have with Him. I can almost see Him in heaven, sitting on His throne, slapping His leg and saying, "That's funny Dean. That's really funny."

If you can get that revelation of who God really is, and realize the vast amount of love that He has for you, then you will understand that He does not just love others. He loves *you!* Let that sink in. You cannot earn His love or demand His love. You can just receive His love. It's a free gift for you, but it cost Him everything.

Let's get back to the question, what does light do? I thought about it and said, "Light does two things that I can think of. It dispels darkness, and it enables vision."

Right then the Lord said to me, "What do I

say in my Word about vision?”

I replied, “The Word says in Proverbs that without a vision, people perish.”

“Ah, you’re getting it,” He said.

Using Genesis 1:3, perhaps God could be saying today as you are reading this book, “Vision, be!” And vision was. Without God’s vision, you are going nowhere quickly. But with God’s vision for your life, you may very well change the world as we know it.

The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable according to Romans 11:29. The gifts are plural, but the calling is singular. When you are in your one calling, all of your gifts work together for the successful accomplishment of the one calling that God placed on your life. God has given me some gifts, and every day as a minister, I use the gifts that He has given me. All of those gifts operate in the calling that He has placed on my life.

You, too, have been given gifts. What are your gifts? Maybe you would call them talents. Every talent that you have was given to you for the calling that God has placed upon your life.

If you go back to the New Testament in Matthew chapter 25, you will read about three men who were given talents. One guy

was given one talent, another was given two, and another five. The guy who had five talents knew what to do with his. He put them to work and doubled them. The guy who had two talents also put his to work, and his results were doubled. But the guy who had one talent buried it. He didn't use it. One day the master returned and wanted an accounting of what the guys had done with the talents they had been given. He told the guy who buried his one talent that, at the very least, he could have put it in the bank and earned some interest. Because he did nothing with it, the master took the one talent he had entrusted to him, and gave it to the guy who doubled his five talents.

What is the point? God gave you gifts and talents for a reason. If you die today, and you have not fulfilled the calling God placed on your life, then based on this parable, I believe we will stand before God one day and He will say, "What were you thinking?"

You might be saying to yourself, "Yeah, Dean, but you have no idea what my life is like. You have no idea what it's like to live where I live, or to be in the home environment I am in, or to be passed from home to home like I was." Maybe you are from a divorced family, or one or both of

your parents died when you were young, or you were abused and have lived in foster care. Maybe you lived in a great home, but you blended in and nobody ever knew you were having challenges. Whatever has brought you to this point, what really matters is what you do with what you have been given. Where will you go from here? What will you do with this opportunity you have been given called life?

I cannot overemphasize the importance of you realizing that, if you were not here, we would all be missing something wonderfully beneficial to the human race. The Bible tells us about the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:14-20, and how that it has not one, but many members or parts. The eye cannot say to the ear that I have no need of you, and the hand cannot tell the foot that feet are not necessary. Every part of the body has components that are necessary for the complete function of that body. The body cannot function properly when one or more parts are missing.

You are a necessary component. You have something to offer. You might say that nobody cares about you. But in Genesis 8:22, the Bible says that everything in the Kingdom of God is seed, time, and harvest.

There is first a seed, then there is some time, and then there is a harvest. Let's look at seed from a practical standpoint. If you don't have a lot of friends, are you being friendly? How often do you simply smile? How often do you reach out to someone else? How often do you get your mind off yourself and all that is going on in your life, and get your mind on someone else?

If you sow the seed of kindness, you will reap the harvest of someone being kind to you. If you sow the seed of reaching out to someone else, God will make sure that someone else reaches out to you. Whatever you make happen for someone else, God will make sure the same thing happens for you. It's when we begin to walk in the depth of His love and the sincerity of His Word; it's when we take His Word literally; it's when we find ourselves taking the Word—chapter and verse—seriously, that we find ourselves so defined in the Bible that we finally recognize who we are and what we are called to do.

I am called to Ezekiel 3:10 and 11, with the message of Jeremiah 29:11, for the purpose of 2 Timothy 4:5. I know my calling in exact chapters and verses. I think in chapter and verse. When I do that, God leads me so much

faster because He responds to His Word.

Today, you can find yourself in God's Word, too. You might be thinking, "Dean, I don't even know how to begin that process." I didn't, either. But I opened the Book and started reading. How did I know where to start? I just asked God, "Can you show me where you want me to start?" And He led me. If you believe He will, and even if you *don't* believe He will, you are correct. You see, as a person thinks in His heart, so is he. I simply believed that God would show me, and He did.

Find yourself in Scriptures! This does not necessarily mean that you have to walk around carrying a cross and constantly quote Scriptures. I am talking about you understanding Genesis 1:3 and how vision from heaven deposited into your life gives *you* the legal authority to live life and create life.

How do you create something? God created by speaking, and because we are created in His image, I believe that we, too, are commissioned by Him to speak and call those things that are not as though they already were.

What does this have to do with me not wanting to live, you ask? Sometimes you

have to declare by faith the end result before you ever see it. You might be sitting there right now with a razor blade pressed against your wrist. You might be staring at a bottle of two hundred pills that are sitting in front of you. Maybe you have a gun that is already loaded and a suicide note that is already written. But for some reason, you have chosen to read a little further. Our being together right now through the form of this book was not a mistake or a coincidence. This did not *just* happen. God orchestrated this.

Perhaps you find yourself right now in the valley of decision. The Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 30:19 to choose this day life or death, blessing or cursing. God wants you to choose life. When He is ready for you to go to heaven, He can get you there without your help. How do I know that? Because I can read. John 17:4 tells us what Jesus said when He was talking to His father: "I have glorified you on this earth. I have finished the work you gave me to do."

Do you want to glorify God? Then start and finish the work He gave you to do. When Jesus finished the work, He did not retire. He got out of here and went to heaven. But He did not take His own life to do so. He simply

was received in heaven by the faith that operated in Him and connected Him to His Heavenly Father.

Jesus told us that greater works would we do than even He did. So that same faith that raised Jesus from the grave is resident in you, if you have accepted Him as your Lord and Savior. Faith is what keeps you going. You need to have faith in the vision that God placed within you. Believe that the vision can take on the tangible form of an activity that daily can draw you into a relationship with Him—a relationship that causes you to help other people. You might be saying, “I’m going to be an accountant, or I’m going to build houses, or I’m going to work in retail. How can that help God?”

Two words: your testimony. Everything that you and I go through can become part of a long-living testimony. But the root word of testimony is test. So if you are going through a test right now, it is a test that will prove where you truly stand in faith. It will produce a testimony that can be used to help other people come through what you presently are going through. But if you fail the test and end your life, we will all miss you.

Earlier I told you that God has never failed, and He is not going to start with you. The Bible tells us in 2 Peter 3:9 that it is not God’s will that any should perish—meaning go to hell. He wants

us in heaven with Him. But before He brings you into eternal life with Him, there is a job He has for you to do here. We have only a brief amount of time to accomplish that job here on earth, but eternity with Him will last forever.

If you died, and today I stood over your coffin and spoke, I would talk about your life. People who are there would probably cry. Then I would pray a closing prayer, and there would be three people on either side of your casket. They would roll you down the aisle, put you into a car, and drive you to a piece of property in a cemetery. Those same six people would pick you up and carry you to a piece of ground that had been dug out. Your family would be seated in two or three rows, and other people would stand behind them. I would wait until everyone was settled in, and I would begin to talk some more about your life and where I believe you are now. I would talk about ashes to ashes and dust to dust, and I would commence your body back to the earth from where it came. Then I would pray again. Some workers from that cemetery would gently lower your casket into the ground. And that would be the last impression we would have of you on this side of eternity.

After everyone left, the workers would place dirt on top of your casket and fill up the hole. Three or four weeks later, somebody would call

and say that your grave marker had now arrived, and they were placing it at the ground where you were buried. On that tombstone would be some information: your name, the year you were born, a dash, and the year that you died.

What I want you to understand now, more than at any other time in your life, is that the dash on your tombstone represents your life. In the scope of eternity, we all have such a small amount of time to make a difference. If you are spending so much of your time thinking about why you don't need to be here, that is just a ploy of the devil to keep you from accomplishing your mission.

What do you do if your home life is an incubator for disaster? You might be surprised at the number of teenagers who have come to me and privately shared that they have been assaulted, sexually abused, or verbally abused, and they are trying to run from what should be the safest place in the world; yet in reality, it is the most dangerous. In high schools around the country, often I am asked, "What can I do? Who can I turn to?"

That is a fair question. One of the answers I always offer people is to encourage them to find a caring adult, maybe someone in their school or their church. Perhaps they can talk to their youth pastor. Find an adult with whom you can sit down and be honest and real. It's not that you are

trying to get somebody else in trouble; you are simply trying to protect your very life.

When life becomes so overwhelming and you don't see any way out; when it's dark all around you and it feels like the walls are closing in; when you can't make sense of what you are thinking; and when the devil is beating your brains out with his lies, what do you do? When you are sitting there and all you can do is cry, and perhaps you don't even know why you are crying, what can you do? When the very dream that you were going for seemed to be on track, and then suddenly, that very thing you were going after is taken away from you, and you are left standing with nothing, what do you do?

I know something about this epidemic called suicide. When I was seventeen years old, I didn't know God. I knew about him, but I didn't know him. For about four years, from age seventeen to age twenty-one, every time my phone rang, my heart beat faster. I asked myself this question before I said hello: is this the phone call where I am told that my mother has ended her own life? Year after year I dealt with this and didn't talk to anyone about it. Maybe you can relate.

Then one day, at twenty-one years of age, I was so emotionally tired because I carried a weight that I was never created to carry. That is why God says in His Word in 1 Peter 5:7 to cast your

care upon Him. Why? Because He cares for you. What do you do when all these things go wrong in your life? The simple answer is that you cast your care upon Him. How do you do that? You do it by faith. You take the care and say, “Lord, I give this to you. I wasn’t built to handle this. You can handle this without any problem. I trust that you’re going to lead me, and I cast my care over onto you, because I know that you care for me.” When I cast my care upon Him, I open my heart to receive His care.

At twenty-one years of age I said a simple prayer. Truthfully, I didn’t think anybody heard it except me. I prayed, “God, if you are real, prove it to me. I’ve been in church every time the doors were opened. I’ve been in Christian schools all of my life. But I don’t know you. I want to know if you really exist. I don’t think you do, but if I’m wrong, prove it.”

Two weeks went by and I was sitting in my office dialing a phone. As I dialed the number, off behind me to my left, I heard for the second time in my life the audible voice of God. This time when He spoke to me, I heard two words that would alter the very course of my life. I heard Him say, “Call Mom.”

I dialed the number without delay. The phone rang seven times, and on the eighth ring, my mother answered. When she said hello, I knew

something was terribly wrong. In that moment, when God by His Spirit told me to call Mom and I was obedient to do so, my mom was attempting suicide.

What do you do when you hit rock bottom? What do you do when perhaps you've tried suicide and it didn't work? Perhaps you have considered suicide because you think it is time to end it all, but yet you are reading the truth that God, the Creator of the universe, is pleading with you this day to choose life.

I rushed out of my office and drove up Interstate 75 to a little community called Ooltewah, Tennessee. On the way to my parents' home I said a simple prayer. I prayed, "God, I can't save my mom's life, but you can. I'm asking you to do what I can't do."

Right now, that is what I am praying for you. "God, I can't save their life, but you can. Only you can." Some of you right now have tears coming down your cheeks. Your right hand is trembling. You desperately want to believe that this could be the truth. Could God really love me this much?

I beat on the door at my parents' home, and my mom was barely alive. She stumbled down some stairs and fell into my arms. I carried her to the car and drove her back down Interstate 75 to Park Ridge Hospital. On the way to the hospital,

my mom said one thing to me: “Dean, I cannot be dying.”

I said, “Mom, hang on, you’re not going to die. But you’re going to have to choose to live.”

God gave us the freedom to choose. If you really think there is no hope for you except to die, God loves you enough to let you make that choice. But one of the things that people sometimes don’t think about, or perhaps they don’t think long enough about, is why? Why do you want to die? The second question people don’t consider often enough is, how will this affect other people when I’m gone? While it’s true that you can’t live for someone else, your choices do affect other people’s lives.

The day my mother attempted suicide, I got her to the hospital and God miraculously saved her life. A doctor came to my father and said, “There is no medical explanation for this. It is a miracle of God. She made it, and she is alive and well. You may go see her.” [Since that day, mom went back to school, earned another degree, and today is a Christian Counselor helping people come through challenging times in their lives.]

At that moment I had an encounter with God. He spoke gently to my heart and said, “Hey Deano, I have something I want you to do for me. Interested?”

That led me on a journey that has brought me

into your life today. It is a journey that simply says three things: God loves you. God is not mad at you. And God has a great plan for your life.

If life today seems overbearing, I'm asking you to make a choice to overcome that. If today you think nobody would miss you if you were gone, and it would be easier to die than to continue living, I'm asking you to dig down deep and give life another shot. If today you're sitting there at a place where you don't see any hope at all, I'm asking you to look to the true Hope of Glory. His name is Jesus. He has all the hope you'll ever need, and He will deposit into your heart whatever you need to get through this moment. Remember that it is the devil who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But it is Jesus who came to give you life, and life more abundantly.

At the beginning of this book, I gave you a scripture that God gave me on that sunny November afternoon. It is the scripture in Proverbs 24:11 that says, ***“Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.”*** Read that one more time. Look at that one phrase, drawn toward death; do you understand what that really means? Deliver those, whether young or old, who are being drawn by the devil himself toward an untimely and premature death. How do you deliver? It isn't me; I cannot deliver. It

is the Word of God and the love of God that delivers. Hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. How do you hold somebody back? If I can talk you into not dying, somebody else could talk you into dying. I can only hold you back by letting you know that there are people in this world who truly do care about you, and who have a love inside of them for you. Even if you never meet them, they represent the love of God. Love is who God is. God is omniscient and omnipresent. That means He knows everything and is everywhere at the same time. Wherever you are right this moment, He is there. He is also with me wherever I am, simultaneously. I understand that might not make sense, but it's the truth.

Think about your life. Realize you are a viable threat to the devil. If you are the threat and I am not the threat, he is not coming after me; he's going after you. Understand that when God created you, His Spirit was there at the point of your conception, and the breath of the Almighty gave you life. If He did not want you alive, He would not have put His breath in you.

Remember those talents. God has given you gifts and a calling. Don't be like the guy who doesn't use the talent and buries it. Become the best you that you can be. Know that God did not make a mistake. Know that if I had spoken at

your funeral today and we had buried you today, and we put that marker at the top of your grave, the dash on that marker would represent how you lived your life during your time here on earth.

In the Bible, Job experienced a lot of tragedy. He lost his children and everything he owned. He got sick and his friends deserted him. But at the end of the book of Job, after everything he had gone through—after all the loss, the pain, the humiliation, and the anger—here is the result of Job’s encounter. In Job 42:5 he said, ***“I have heard about you by the hearing of my ear, but now my eye sees you.”***

When you go through something, you can have revelation knowledge of how to come through it and be better prepared for the next season of your life. Maybe you are coming through an attempted suicide; or maybe you are having thoughts of planning your suicide. Maybe you are coming through an ordeal that is so horrific, nobody would even believe it happened. Yet you are still standing.

You’ve heard about God. But do you know Him? When you know Him in an intimate, personal way, that is when you can have confirmation in your heart that yes, truly, ***YOU MATTER. AND IT IS A GREAT DAY TO BE ALIVE.***

God bless you.

A PRAYER FOR YOU TO CONSIDER

Father, I come to you in the name of Jesus and I do so in faith. I believe that you created me with purpose and today, I choose to receive this purpose from you. Thank you for never giving up on me. In Matthew 16:19 you give me the keys to your kingdom. According to this scripture, I bind the devil and all of his plans for my life, and I do so in the name of Jesus. According to this same verse, I loose the blessing of God to be active in my life and I receive all that you have planned for me. I trust You because I know that Your plans are to prosper me and to give me a future and a hope.

In Romans 10:9 your Word tells me that if I believe in my heart and confess with my mouth that you raised Jesus from the dead, then I would be saved. So right here, right now, I believe in my heart and I say with my mouth that you did raise Jesus from the dead and I believe He is alive today. I ask you, Jesus, to come live in my heart and be Lord of my life. I receive my salvation now, in your name, Jesus.

A PERSONAL NOTE RELATING TO CHRISTIAN COUNSELING

I'm a strong advocate for Christian counseling. I know from very, very personal experience that there are people who are called and anointed by God to listen, to counsel, and to offer suggestions that help us dig deep into our hearts to discover why we do what we do. When God created us, He did so with three components: physical, spiritual and emotional. When I need physical help, I turn to the Word and to my doctor. When I need spiritual direction, I likewise turn to the Word, to my pastor and to those people God has put in my life who are further along than me spiritually. And when I need emotional help, I turn to the Word and to Christian-based counseling. For me, this system works. I strongly suggest you think about giving Christian counseling your prayerful consideration.

Dean



It was a sunny November afternoon in 2010 that my praying led me to Proverbs 24:11 which reads,

Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.

This one verse so spoke to me that when I read it, I knew why I was coming face to face with so many cries for help.

The Holy Spirit gave me that verse, and then gave me the title for this book. With that, I invite you to read on and learn why, or perhaps be reminded of why **YOU MATTER**, and why **it s a great day to be alive.**

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