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YOU ARE GOD'S PLAN A Published by David C. Cook 4050 Lee Vance View Colorado Springs, CO 80918 U.S.A.

David C. Cook Distribution Canada 55 Woodslee Avenue, Paris, Ontario, Canada N3L 3E5

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The stories presented in this book are personal and include details about the lives of family members, friends, and neighbors. While some names and story details have been changed for privacy's sake, I've sought to remain true to the essence and impact of each story.

LCCN 2009940961 ISBN 978-1-4347-6463-8 eISBN 978-1-4347-0189-3

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Published in association with the literary agency of Wolgemuth & Associates, Inc.

First edition published by Kingdom Building Ministries in 2006

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You Are God's Plan A Study Questions

Introduction

- 1. List three words that best describe your feelings when you hear that "you are God's Plan A for reaching the world around you."
- 2. Why do you think Jesus chose the word *laborer* to describe His answer to the needs around Him (and you)?
- 3. "Laborers are ordinary people who express their love for God through practical, hands-and-feet service ... reaching the world with His love ... in everyday society." What might the world be like if *every* Christian approached everyday life like this, as God's everyplace "laborer"?
- 4. What prevents people from pursuing God's Plan A for their lives? What prevents *you* from pursuing God's Plan A? What would help you pursue it with reckless abandon?

Part 1: The Plan

Chapter 1: Overlooked and Undervalued

- 1. What did you learn from James the Roofer? His attitude? His relational approach? His style?
- 2. Knowing that God normally uses ordinary people to impact lives, what ordinary people has God used in your life? Do they know the difference they made in your life? Like James the Roofer, who waited thirteen years for someone to validate him, are they still waiting for their ministry to be validated by someone? Have you told these people how they contributed to your life—and to the lives of others?
- 3. What gifts or skills does the church seem to value most? Why are those gifts or skills valued more than others? Why do people with "upfront" gifts and abilities often receive more validation than people with relational, "up-close" gifts and abilities?

Chapter 2: Wrapped in Ordinary

- 1. Consider Grace the Grandma. To what extent would you have overlooked the ministry potential of this elderly woman and her old farmhouse? Before reading about the needs of the prisoners, did she overlook herself? Why? How far did her ministry reach? How far could yours reach from where you are now?
- 2. If Grace's life were a "living sermon," what conclusions and observations do the "sermon notes" point to?
- 3. Throughout Scripture, God chose and empowered ordinary people—so why do so many assume He can't and won't do that

today ... through them? Why do so many find it easier to place their trust in people with impressive talents and abilities? Is this inclination flawless? Is it scriptural?

4. How can we empower ordinary people to minister in ordinary ways in ordinary places?

Chapter 3: Being You-nique

- 1. Describe a time when you were expected to do something or be someone that wasn't a great match with how or who God has wired you to be. How did you feel? Has this ever occurred in a ministry opportunity? Does God ever lead people to a ministry assignment that's not an optimal "fit" according to their gifts and passions? Why would He do so? Has He ever led you into such an assignment?
- 2. What activities, events, and interests in your life allow you to naturally get up close to others who aren't followers of Jesus?
- 3. According to Psalm 139, God, the Creator of the universe, created *you*. Are you willing to explore and pursue living out the "you-niqueness" of His purposes and plans for you? What prevents you from doing so? List some practical and immediate next steps you can take.

Chapter 4: Everyday, Up-Close Heroes

- 1. "God wants our 24/7, 'on location' laborership because when *we* are up close to others—where we live, work, and play—*He* is up close to them as well." What prevents you from seeing, thinking, and living this way?
- 2. In what places (work, neighborhood, sports venues, etc.) do you find yourself up close to people who have little or no relationship with God? To what extent do you see those places as God's spiritual harvest fields for *you* to labor in?
- 3. When have you experienced someone who was "fully present, in the moment" with you? What did the person do? Describe how you felt. What difference did it make in your life?
- 4. List the visual images that come to mind when you think of the following phrases:
 - "Daily dispensers of God's grace"
 - "Up-close relationships are God's construction zones"

What other physical images or reminders might help you better remember that God's presence in you allows Him to be up close to others everywhere you are?

Chapter 5: Living in the Mainstream

- 1. In what ways do you tend to limit your faith to what God does inside a church building? How often have you felt guilty or concerned by your unsuccessful attempts to get people to come to a church building with you? How does thinking *I am the church* change your perspective and spark new ideas for mainstream ministry to others?
- 2. Where is the most unlikely mainstream place you go (or could begin to go) where you and God could have a mainstream-ministry connection with difficult-to-reach people?
- 3. Has anyone ever impressed you from a distance but disappointed you once you became acquainted with him or her? Or have you ever been unimpressed with someone from a distance but deeply touched by his or her life once you knew the person better? What does this tell you about people?

Chapter 6: People to Love

- 1. Do you believe every person is worthy of love? If so, how does this affect the way we live? How should Jesus' followers interact with people in light of God's love for everyone in the world?
- 2. Have you ever stepped out of your comfort zone like Camille did? If not, when have you refused God's leading because the risk seemed too great? What prevented you from taking a risk? Why do we tend to live safe and predictable lives? Did Jesus take "people to love" risks? Name some examples.
- 3. Name at least one unlikeable person in your life whom God wants to love through you. What practical steps can you take to be that person's first-ever taste of unconditional love?
- 4. "In God's school of love ... learning is enhanced when people aren't the same." Describe a time when you crossed a social boundary and grew from it.
- 5. What do you think Ahmad meant when he said to Dwight, "You have never treated me like a project ... you have always treated me like a person"? What's the difference?

Chapter 7: The Domino Effect

- 1. One domino ... one tip ... and lives are changed. Who has significantly touched your life, and what kind of chain-tipping motion did that person make? What examples come to mind from other people's lives?
- 2. Jesus always focused on the person directly in front of Him, employing the domino effect. Identify at least one person "in front of you" on whom you can focus.
- 3. "Jesus didn't live by a formula for in-the-moment acts of love. He saw the need, engaged people's hearts, and compassionately reached toward each person and situation differently." How important is this? Has anyone ever insensitively tried force-fitting a formula that didn't fit to you or your situation? How did it feel? What can you learn from the experience?

4. Do you tend to trust more in ministry formulas that others have told you will work than in a simpler approach involving genuine, in-the-moment love, prayer, and Spirit-directed obedience? Why or why not?

Chapter 8: God-Issued Camouflage

- 1. What disadvantages might occur from holding a vocational ministry title? According to Ephesians 4:11–12, what is the primary task of a vocational minister?
- 2. Read Philippians 2:5–8. Why do you think God outfitted Jesus with *camo* (rather than the glory of almighty God) before sending Him to the world? How did this *camo* assist His up-close role as Immanuel ("God with us")? Was entering our world in camouflage necessary in order to reach the world? Why or why not?
- 3. Trying to fix someone from the outside-in differs greatly from allowing God to change someone from the inside-out. What's the difference? Why have Christians gained a reputation for and often opted for the outside-in approach?
- 4. Why do you think people felt comfortable inviting Jesus into their homes and introducing Him to their friends? Do you feel people respond the same way to you? Why or why not?

Chapter 9: Meal-Table Ministry

- 1. Before reading this chapter, had you ever considered utilizing meal tables as an opportunity for ministry? Had you noticed how often Jesus employed meal tables in His earthly ministry?
- 2. Does the idea of *you* being the church in which God is housed (1 Cor. 3:16) challenge you? Does it challenge what you always perceived about church? Is there anything you think someone might be able to receive from you that they couldn't readily receive from a church service?
- 3. Since stories are most often told and heard around meal tables, what chapters of God-stories in your life book could you share over a meal? How has God shown His faithfulness to you? What miracles have you seen Him perform in your life or the lives of others close to you? Because God continues to shower us with His grace and love, you always will have fresh stories to tell!

Chapter 10: Your Story, God's Story

- 1. "Everybody, cross-generationally, loves to hear stories." Do you agree? Why or why not?
- 2. Have Christians earned more of a reputation for talking or listening? How does genuine listening affect a relationship? What is "prayerful listening"? What advantage do storytellers who listen *first* have over storytellers who share about themselves and then listen?
- 3. What does it mean to share "overlaps between your story and others' stories"?
- 4. How has knowing or feeling the pain of other people's life stories touched or helped you?

5. Have you sensed that when certain people share their stories, God is the One most on display? What could you learn from them, and how might you better show God in your stories? What special stories from your life book clearly demonstrate that God's loving and gracious intervention is powerful and life altering?

Part 2: The Power

Chapter 11: Having an Acorn Outlook

- 1. "Satan wants to paralyze you by making you feel small, as if you have nothing to offer God or His Kingdom." How can you combat the Enemy's attempts to downsize your life impact with these particular lies?
- 2. What came to mind as you read the story about the Peanut Butter Lady? Do you think she realized her actions were important or potentially significant to God's future Kingdom work? How often do you think people undervalue the small things they are doing (or could do) that might eventually produce large dividends for the Kingdom?
- 3. Satan will spin a web of lies to convince you that you are "foolish, weak, lowly, or inadequate." Dwight mentioned his prolific use of "acorn reminders" to help him remember what a big God can do with "small" things and "small" people. What reminders (biblical, historical, or contemporary, or even reminders from nature) can you collect that will encourage you that your "small" life and even "small" moments might not be so small?

Chapter 12: Fully Charged

- 1. Many people feel disqualified from ministry because they don't think they know enough for God to use them. But in Acts 3 and 4, two regular guys, Peter and John, were used by God to deliver life-altering power to a man they encountered on their way to church. Did their impact come from what they knew or who they were in relationship with? Are you liberated in some way by this story? How?
- 2. Old Testament Israelites too often *forgot* what God had historically and faithfully supplied for them in their most pressing times of need. They consequently lacked the courage, strength, and intimacy with God needed for what God wanted them to do next. With other Christians, recall specific experiences from your lives when God supplied the power and provision you needed.
- 3. God tends to place His people in ministry situations where only His power will resolve the problem. Do you trust in God's power to accomplish things far beyond your capabilities? How much Kingdom activity is held back by people who don't trust Him to flow through them?

Chapter 13: Connectors

- 1. Knowing that your greatest gift to this world is your intimacy with God, what might be keeping you from deeper intimacy with Him? (Hint: Deterrents may even appear good.)
- 2. Is it possible to learn about God without enhancing your intimacy with Him? When has this happened in your life? How can you grow from the experience?

3. When was the last time you invested yourself in a "stretch or sacrifice" moment in order to get as close to God as possible? How did that experience change you?

Chapter 14: Along the Way

- 1. Describe "God's job" in regard to ministry. What's your job? Are you comfortable with your job description? Do you need to worry about whether God can get His "job" done?
- 2. By the end of the story about Dara, did you think she played the smallest role? Do you ever feel your role in God's life story is the smallest part? Do you care more about the significance of your role or the outcome—which ultimately results in God's glory and the furthering of His Kingdom? Why?
- 3. Take a moment to recount Spirit-directed ministry moments from your past. How did they affect your desire to trust, listen, and quickly obey? When did you fall short of obeying what God led you to say or do? What would you do differently?
- 4. Why do so many people resist listening to God and believing it was Him who talked to them (Christians and non-Christians alike)?
- 5. What tends to prevent you from living a Spirit-directed life of followership or laborership? Personal safety? Self-protection? Self-image? Fear? Self-promotion? Repent to God for any of these, and express your willingness to let Him lead you.

Part 3: The Problem

Chapter 15: The Parade

- 1. Why do so many churches operationally reflect the 80/20 principle? Do you think the talents needed for a weekly church gathering are viewed as a short list of special abilities most people don't have? If so, what causes this thinking? How is Plan A ministry different from most people's definition of ministry? What percentage of the 80 percent described by church pastors as "people missing in action" are laborership candidates who are "spectating" only because they haven't been introduced to God's Plan A ministry?
- 2. What would happen if God's laborers invested their love for God and others into the lives of people who might join the parade? Really—what might happen?
- 3. Describe a time when you felt incredible joy and exhilaration because God included you as His "love in the middle" plan for someone's life. Describe the relationship that joy and blessing share with sacrifice and commitment. Do you agree that people who live purposefully—regardless of cost—experience more joy? Why or why not?
- 4. What does it mean to "gain what you cannot lose"? What does it mean to "invest purposefully"?

Chapter 16: In or Out?

- 1. The book boldly proclaims, "There is a Plan A! We need to recover, rediscover, rekindle, revive, and restore the one and only original plan—the one Jesus modeled. Because it's not a plan, it's the plan. The God-designed plan He has for each one of us should be called 'Plan A.'" What characterizes the lives of those who wholeheartedly say, "I'm in!"?
- 2. What do you sense God communicating to you about His specific ministry assignments and plans?
- 3. Which of these lies do you struggle with the most? Why?
 - I'm not perfect enough.
 - I'm not worthy.
 - I don't know enough.

Part 4: The Possibilities

Chapter 17: One ... Multiplied!

- 1. What thoughts or images come to mind when you consider the phrase "More time with fewer people equals a greater Kingdom investment." Have you seen evidence in your life of this truth?
- 2. Were you ever impacted by someone committed to life-on-life spiritual multiplication? If so, who? Why do you think so few people are committed to up-close/over-time relational investing?
- 3. Describe the five people who have impacted you most. Describe their relationship to you. What did they do? What was their character like?
- 4. What surprises did you encounter in the "Do the Math" section of this chapter? If you weren't surprised by the math, are you already *applying* this to your relationships? To what extent are you adopting Jesus' ancient-future model?

Chapter 18: Passing the Baton

- 1. "Too often we have emphasized 'reaching' over 'teaching.' We have spent time and money on worthy evangelistic outreaches but neglected the time-consuming process of Kingdom baton passing." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- 2. Is it practical or just as possible for Kingdom laborers to not only run their *own* leg of the race with perseverance, but *also* devote themselves to passing batons to other runners? In what other areas of life have you seen this occur? What advantages does this approach offer? What difficulties? Immediate and long-range gains?

3. What prevents Christians from imitating Jesus' example and "passing the baton"?

Chapter 19: Almost Missing It

- 1. What have you awakened others to in the past? Did you find it rewarding?
- 2. Which method carries more potential for spreading a new idea or starting a movement—top-down or grassroots? What examples from history can you give that support your opinion?
- 3. Can you describe meaningful differences in your life because someone *awakened* you to things you were previously missing? Dwight eventually thanked the man who woke him up to what he almost missed. Who did God employ to spiritually awaken you to His plan for you? Did you find *You Are God's Plan A*, or did someone else refer or give it to you?

Epilogue: Imagine

- 1. When the pastor commissioned Kara, John, Nate, and Christy—regular folks from all walks of life—to be the church, did that surprise you or seem right to you? What Scriptures or doctrines support your view?
- 2. How are ordinary people and missionaries the same and different in their ministry tasks?
- 3. Spend time imagining, dreaming, and discussing with others the following:
 - What would happen if churches around the world challenged, equipped, commissioned, and sent transformed "former attendees" into the world as active, everyday Kingdom laborers? What if this happened with all the churches in your town, city, or county?
 - What if every person—people like James the Roofer, Grace the Grandma, Bruce the Businessman, and Lance the Student—felt valued, equipped, endorsed, and empowered and were sent out to minister in their mainstream places of influence?
 - What if people and churches everywhere began reviving and owning Jesus' original Plan A?
 - What if the body of Christ took off their shackles of unemployment in His Kingdom, stepped up, and reported for duty?
 - What if churches all over the world held commissioning services like the one mentioned in this chapter?
 - What if we made time during our weekly church gatherings for people to give a "Body of Christ Report," sharing about God's activities in their companies, schools, factories, neighborhoods, coffee shops, parks, and anywhere they are being God's "love in the middle," everyday laborers?

You Are God's Plan A Group Celebration and Commissioning

If you were a part of a group of people reading through and discussing *You Are God's Plan A*, why not consider the following celebration and commissioning steps?

Celebration

What have been the biggest Plan A truths you've discovered throughout the study? In what new ways has God been working in and through your life as a result? Take time to share and celebrate these things.

Contemplation

Are there any remaining roadblocks or potential detours that could hinder you from living out God's Plan A for your life? Share any obstacles with group members, and allow them to pray with you about them.

Commitment

Knowing God has a plan for your life is one thing; committing to *live it out* is another. James 1:22–25 declares that the people who will be blessed in what they do are the ones who get beyond reading about, hearing about, and knowing about God's plans—they actually begin *doing* them. "Seal the deal" by making public your commitment to live out God's Plan A for you.

Commissioning

Pray over willing group members, asking God to anoint their unique Plan A lives with His power, wisdom, love, and guidance.

A Continued Awakening

In Matthew 9:37–38, Jesus tells us to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out more laborers into His harvest fields. Complete your time by praying for a continued awakening of more Kingdom laborers like yourselves—to be His hands and feet locally and in every corner of the world.