

You're Made
for a
God-Sized
Dream

*Opening the Door
to All God Has for You*

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For the

God-sized dreamers ~

you know who you are

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1

The “More” You’re Made For



She whispers it into the phone, almost too softly for me to hear.

“I just . . . have this desire in my heart that won’t go away.”

She lists off reasons why it won’t work, why this isn’t the right time, and how she feels odd for even thinking about it in the first place.

When she pauses for a deep, unsure breath, I slip in these words: “It sounds like you have a God-sized dream.”

“A what?” she responds with a bit of wonder in her voice.

I smile and share more about desire and hope, what it means to make it to your personal Promised Land, and how everything is going to be different now.

I understand God-sized dreams because I’ve lived them. And once you have a taste, there’s no going back to life as you knew it before.

You may say, “But I don’t have big dreams.”

Exactly.

The size of the dream isn't what matters.

I believe everyone has God-sized dreams. It's not about how big or small they are, because he creates each one to perfectly fit the size of *your* heart.

Your dream might be to move across the world and start a nonprofit organization that cares for orphans—what looks like a grand adventure in the world's eyes.

Or your dream might be to stay right in your small town and raise your kids so that they grow into strong men and women—what looks like something fairly ordinary in the world's eyes.

Both matter equally.

And both are God-sized dreams.

It's not about what you do as much as *how* you do it. It's about pursuing life with passion and purpose and going with God wherever he leads.

It's about not settling. It's about tenaciously believing *you're made for more*.

Not as in “bigger house, fancier car, more luxurious lifestyle.”

No, my friend, I mean “more of Jesus, more of what he's created you to be, more of what he's called you to do.” Less of you, actually, and more of all he is and all he has for you—which is beyond what you can even imagine.

I'm thinking of you right now, wherever you are—perhaps holding this book in your hand in the aisle of a bookstore, curled up on your couch, or on a long flight—and I wish I could be right beside you. I'd like to pour you a cup of coffee or tea and listen long and hard to the things you're afraid to tell anyone: the hopes that feel silly, the dreams that seem like dares, the quiet longings of your heart that get especially loud sometimes.

I'd nod, look you in the eyes, and say, “Don't let that go. Don't hide it away. That's real. And, yes, you really can see it come into being in your life. You have what it takes to see those dreams come

true because you have a limitless God living in you. He has given you all you need and made you all you need to be.”

Then I’d get you a cookie too (because believe me, you’d feel like you need one by then), and we’d talk through all the fears, how it really can happen, what to do next.

You might ask me, “What makes God-sized dreams so important to you?”

I’d tell you that I’ve lived my share. Some have come true—like being a writer, counselor, life coach, and speaker. Others, like my desire for children, have led me to places of heartbreak and then healing without ever turning out the way I imagined. Through it all, the happy and the hard, I’ve discovered that the places I feel closest to Jesus, the moments when God is most real in my life, always seem to come when I’m on an adventure with him. And once you’ve learned that, you can’t ever go back to life as you knew it. I’ll share more about my God-sized dreams as we go along.

I’d also say that what I’ve experienced has been echoed by thousands of women on my blog, through emails and life coaching, at my church, and in many other ways. Do you feel like you’re alone in your dream? You’re not, my friend. I’m right beside you now on these pages. And because I’m passionate about God-sized dreamers, I also do e-coaching for women like you online (find out more at www.holleygerth.com). Many, many of your sisters are on this God-sized dream journey with you too. You’ll even hear some of their stories in the following pages.

So consider this book that conversation we’d have over coffee or tea. What I’ve written is a gift from my heart to yours, from one dreamer to another. I believe with you, for you, and most of all—I believe in the God who lives within you.

You really are made for more.

And this is your time.

Right here, right now.

How Dreaming Begins

I sit in the backseat of a pickup truck with my nieces and nephews. Scrawny legs and arms restlessly swing back and forth as they try to pass the time. To distract them, I ask the question all adults do: “What do you want to be when you grow up?”

The answer comes swiftly and universally: “We want to work at Chuck E. Cheese’s!” For those of you not familiar with Chuck E. Cheese’s, it’s an establishment full of pizza, games, and far too much sugar—the perfect spot to start your career, in the eyes of a six-year-old.

Fast-forward a few years and we’re standing in the kitchen around the holidays. Those scrawny legs and arms have grown into tall teen bodies, and I check to see how the professional ambitions are going. “Do you still want to work at Chuck E. Cheese’s when you grow up?”

I get laughs and quizzical looks as if I’ve gone crazy. “Aunt Holley!” they exclaim. “Why would we ever want to do that?”

When we start dreaming as children, it’s a lot like practice. We learn to ride bicycles, and we also become more skilled at turning the wheels in our minds. We tell people we want to be astronauts or queens and to find ponies under our Christmas trees.

It’s a fine line between reality and what’s possible when we’re children. Like for my nieces and nephews, most of those dreams disappear through the years, and that’s okay. As we mature, so do our desires. Yet in those early dreams, we often find the seeds of the *something more* God has planted within us. If I’d asked you the same question I posed to my nieces and nephews, what would you have said?

(Note: Throughout the book you’ll find interactive tools like the one below. If you’d like to download a printable version, go to

the “Books & More” page at www.holleygerth.com. You can also download a printable version of the Go Deeper Guides that are at the end of each chapter.)

What were some of your childhood dreams?

I vividly remember perching on the edge of my parents’ bed as a child. I squeezed my eyes tight, took a giant leap, and flapped my arms as hard as I could. Landing on the ground, I ran to my mom and dad to declare, “I flew!”

As I got older, I realized that as much as I felt like it was true, I hadn’t actually become the world’s first flying child that day.

“Flying is an impossible dream,” some would say. Yet I have flown across the country and even across the world—many times.

Sure, as I grew up I realized I needed a plane to make the dream happen. But few things thrill me like staring out the window of a jet at twinkling lights below and thinking to myself, “I’m flying.” I feel like that kid at the edge of the bed all over again.

Imagine I said, “I can’t fly with my arms, so I’m not going to fly at all. What a silly dream. I need to grow up, face reality, and forget that ever even crossed my mind.”

You’d probably say, “Holley, you might want to reconsider. Don’t you ever want to go to Hawaii, visit Paris, or even just be

able to visit your family without spending hours in the car? You're giving up so much!"

Yet we often do the same with our dreams. As children we let our imaginations go wild, and as time passes we begin to understand more of what's reality and what's fantasy. Rather than seeing those outlandish desires as a natural part of childhood, we convince ourselves that we're irresponsible dreamers. We need to settle down. Face the facts. Forget about flying and keep our feet on the ground.

Says who?

Who told you to stop dreaming? Maybe it was a teacher who told you to sit still in class and stop drawing those pictures. Maybe it was an overly cautious parent who wanted to keep you from getting hurt. Maybe it was the bully on the playground who yelled to the whole class that you were weird.

What if they were wrong?

Oh, of course there are dreams that we do need to let go. Like the Chuck E. Cheese ambitions of my nieces and nephews, sometimes a dream is more of a wish, and it blows away like a dandelion in the winds of time.

But if someone said or did something that made you stop dreaming altogether, then, my friend, I can assure you that wasn't from Jesus.

Dreaming is a core part of who we are. True, not all of our dreams come from God and not all of them are his will for our lives (more on that later), but the capacity to use our imaginations, to have visions, to nurture desires is inherent in who he has created us to be. "A longing fulfilled is a tree of life" (Prov. 13:12).

Dreams and desires propel us forward. In many ways, they keep us moving toward heaven—they don't allow us to get too comfortable here, to settle in ways and places God never intended.

As long as you are alive, God wants you to go further, dig deeper, and draw closer to him. And I believe dreams are one of the primary ways God makes that happen. *Every dream or desire you have that comes from God is an invitation for more intimacy with him.*

Did you catch that?

You can stop feeling guilty about dreaming and hoping.

And if life has diminished your capacity to dream, here’s your permission to start again.

Really.

Five Lies That Keep Us from Dreaming

Ever since Eden, the enemy has come at us with a million different versions of the same question, “Did God really say . . . ?” And many times those questions are aimed squarely at our dreams.

Did God really say you have what it takes?

Did God really say that’s what you’re supposed to do?

When you follow your God-sized dreams, you’ll face many external obstacles. But the biggest threats are from the inside. So let’s start there.

Lie #1: “Dreaming Is Selfish”

She sits on the edge of her chair and stares at the corner of the room. I watch her fidget and run her fingers along the edge of her jeans. I can tell she’s thinking of the husband and children and laundry waiting for her at home.

“I want to follow this dream,” she says. “But it just feels so selfish.”

From all the women I’ve talked to about God-sized dreams, this is the lie I hear most often. Women are a generous gender. We

care deeply, passionately. We'd do anything for the ones we love. We serve selflessly. That is good, beautiful, and true.

But you matter too.

So do your dreams. The enemy knows that it's often one little word that can stop our dreaming in its tracks: *selfish*. We come to a screeching halt and say, "I'm not going within ten feet of that possibility." But if we tiptoe closer to that lie, we can see it for what it really is—a mirage.

Let me cup your lovely face in my hands and whisper this loud enough for your heart to hear: "Your dreams, your desires, your hopes are not selfish when they are from God's heart and in his hands."

"God is love" (1 John 4:16). Everything he does is loving. Everything he places within you is loving. That includes your dreams.

Now, if your dream is to run off to Tahiti with the pool boy and live on a two-hundred-foot yacht, then honey, that's a whole different story.

But if you have yielded to God and you have this nagging desire within you that just won't go away, then most likely it's from him. And if it is, then he has a way that you can live it out that isn't about selfishness but instead is about service.

Oh, the dream may look different than you imagined. You might be speaking at local women's ministry meetings instead of jetting across the country every weekend. But there is a way for that longing in your heart to be fulfilled that will be a blessing to those around you too.

The people in your life may not always like that you're following your dream. They may even whine about it from time to time. But not pleasing people isn't the same as being selfish. You don't have to make everyone in your life happy—the only thing you must do is be obedient.

Lie #2: “I Don’t Have What It Takes”

She sits in the back row with me as the speaker takes the stage. Powerful words pour forth, and it’s clear the women in the audience are touched. During the applause my friend leans over and says, “See, I could never speak. She’s so much better than me.”

It seems as soon as we give ourselves permission to dream, comparison is nipping at our heels. We look around and see others who are better, skinnier, more eloquent than us. Before we even get started, we disqualify ourselves. We vow to hold back until we’re “as good as they are.” Before we know it, time slips by and our dream still waits for its turn.

This lie is ultimately rooted in the belief that our God-sized dream is the same as someone else’s. When we decide that’s true, it means we’re competitors because there aren’t enough dreams to go around. But the reality is, even if someone else’s dream looks, sounds, or even feels like yours—it’s not the same.

God has a dream for you, your talents, your one life that has never been and never will be duplicated by anyone else.

He doesn’t want you to be a “me too” when it comes to your dreams. He wants the one, original you whom he created to do exactly what he made you alone to do. No one else can fulfill your purpose. No one else can make that dream happen. There is no plan B for what God has destined to come into being through you.

It doesn’t matter if you think you’re not as good as someone else. You have what it takes to fulfill the dream God has for your life, and no one else does.

If the person you view as being the “top” in the area of your dreams were to trade places with you, it wouldn’t work—even if it seemed like they were better at it than you. That’s because God isn’t interested in “better” or “the best.” He can use sticks and stones to do his will if he wants! What God cares most about is



*We're talking of God-sized
dreams.*

About how they are messy, imperfect, glorious, and flawed.
Because we are too.

And one phrase keeps reverberating through my being:

If not for grace . . .

If not for grace . . .

If not for grace, God-sized dreams would never come true.

Because I can tell you from experience . . .

You will cry at the wrong time.

You will say that awkward thing.

You will forget what to do in that most important moment.


And God, in his stubbornness, will carry on with his plan anyway.

*You will fail at least once,
and probably more.*

You will think you are incapable.

And sometimes you will be.

*But God, in his audacity,
will use you anyway.*





You will miss opportunities.

You will take steps you shouldn't.

You will walk through the wrong door and shut the right one.

And somehow, inexplicably, God will get you there anyway.

You will be hard to live with sometimes.

You will fall short.

You will forget to stand tall.

And God, unconcerned about what's cool, will say, "That one's mine" anyway.

*You see, God-sized dreams
don't make sense.*

Not a bit.

*Because they come from the heart of the One whose ways are
higher than ours.*

They flow from the One who stubbornly believes in grace.

If not for grace . . .

we wouldn't take a step

because it's grace that paves the road to God-sized dreams.

And we walk it, unworthy,

utterly broken,

and entirely loved!



your relationship with him, your obedience, your ability to hear his voice and say yes when he asks you to take a step of faith.

You are the only you we have. That means your God-sized dream either happens through you or not at all.

Lie #3: "It's Too Late"

She stands with a baby on her hip, and three others are causing chaos in the background. Above the noise she declares, "Well, I once had dreams, but now all I've got is diapers. It's too late for me." I've heard retired people, those with chronic illness, and many facing difficult circumstances say the same thing—that it's too late. Perhaps this is the hardest lie of all. It locks our dreams into a time bomb, and once we think it's exploded, it seems there's no picking up the pieces again.

It's true that our original vision may not come to pass. The "happily ever after" we pictured in our minds as little girls may have veered off course. But like I said before, I believe as long as we're alive, our dreams are too. God doesn't plant desires within our hearts to let them wither and die. Yes, they may be dormant for a season. And yes, when they finally push through the ground, they may look nothing like what we anticipated—but they're still possible.

I once knew a couple who longed to have children for years, but it never came to pass. The desire never went away, and in their sixties God called them to be "parents" to many children in a country far away. Now their family is bigger than they ever could have imagined. Like for Abraham and Sarah in the Old Testament, the answer to their prayers seemed a long time coming . . . but it did come. And that wouldn't have been possible unless they kept their hearts open to dreaming.

My grandpa Hollie (yes, I'm named after him) is ninety years old. Almost every time we're on the phone, he tells me of another

place he’d like to visit. Then he finds a way to make it happen. He’s an example to me that God decides when we’re done. It’s not up to us to say, “That dream is over. It’s just not possible anymore.” With God all things are possible (see Matt. 19:26).

It’s only too late for our dreams when we decide to write “The End” on our stories and close the book. As an anonymous quote my mom has on her refrigerator reads, “Never place a period where God has placed a comma.”

Lie #4: “I Don’t Deserve to Dream”

The tears trickle down her face, and she reaches for a tissue. “But you don’t understand,” she says with a sigh. “I’ve messed up so much. The life I have now is a consequence of the choices I’ve made. I don’t get to have the desires of my heart—I’m paying for what I’ve done.”

I reach out my arms to her and try to wrap her up in words of grace too. “Your dreams aren’t about you,” I say. “They’re about what God wants to do in his kingdom through you. And he’ll use anyone—just look at some of the characters in the Bible! If adultery, murder, and deception didn’t stop him, then what you’ve done isn’t going to either!”

She laughs and looks up with a smile and perhaps just a bit of hope too.

Yes, you should pay for what you’ve done. So should I. But that’s the beauty of the cross: Jesus took that payment for us. We may live with consequences, but we’re not sentenced to a life of unfulfilled dreams and desires. Jesus said, “It is finished” on the cross so that we don’t ever have to say the same in our lives. We are never finished—only fallen. If you’ve made mistakes, then do what you can to make them right, ask forgiveness, and get back up.

Listen closely, my friend. You have not been disqualified from dreaming. No matter what you've done. No matter what choices you've made. No matter what's in your past. Dreams are about the future. We can say these words with the apostle Paul, a man who had murder, persecuting Christians, and a long list of other sins in his past: "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

Right here, right now, take back your God-given permission to dream and to follow the desires of your heart.

Lie #5: "I Don't Have Time"

I bump into her in an aisle of the local grocery store. I ask, "How's that dream we talked about going?"

She brushes a stray hair from in front of her eyes and sighs. "I really want to move forward with it, but I'm just so busy. Maybe when things get back to normal." I nod my head with understanding since I've said the same thing many times too. And it can certainly be legitimate.

Yet at some point we have to decide that the time for our dream is now—no matter what. Because in today's world, normal never comes. There's always more to do, another "when I . . ." to check off the list, another urgent demand to be met.

If the enemy can't make us deny our dreams, then it seems his next tactic is to make us delay them. Yes, there are seasons for waiting and being still because that's what God has asked us to do. I'm not talking about those. I'm speaking of the seasons when we let procrastination get the best of us (and we all do sometimes). It's a great way to hold back the fear that inevitably comes when we actually pursue our dreams rather than just talking about them.

So, ladies, let’s have a little heart-to-heart confession time. Because the truth is, as the old saying goes, “There is always enough time in our day to do God’s will.” If that dream in your heart really is from him and his timing is now, then somewhere in your schedule there’s space to make it happen.

Hard? Always. But so is living with regret.

You don’t have to pursue your dream perfectly. You only have to do what you can. Efforts that fall short of your expectations are still always better than none at all. God can fill in the gaps.

Only you know if this really is the season for your dream, and only you can decide to truly pursue it. I love the biblical phrase “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14) because it says so much about right here, right now. It’s not “for such a time as then” or “for such a time as that.” It speaks to today and the moments passing us by that will not come again.

You have time. I have time.

If it’s not the season for your dream, then embrace that and focus on what God has in front of you now. That’s honorable and faith-filled too.

But if it’s your moment to take that step, make that leap, birth that dream, then go for it with all your heart and don’t let anything or anyone block your way (or your schedule).

The Truth That Sets Us Free to Dream

She walks through the door with a smile on her face. It seems like she’s standing a bit taller, moving a bit faster, glowing with an inner light. “The lies were so loud,” she confesses. “But I just kept pressing in to Jesus until his voice was even louder.”

The lies don’t ever go away. Every step of your dream, they will chase you. It doesn’t mean that you’re not spiritual enough

or you're on the wrong path. It just means that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). You are in a battle—expect opposition.

But remember this too: You have already been promised victory. Nothing can separate you from God's love. And when you're following hard after his heart, nothing can separate you from his will either.

As I write this, I'm looking at a small print by Dee at Red Letter Words that says, "She knew that many were the plans in her heart but that God's purpose would prevail" (paraphrased from Prov. 19:21). I need that plaque every single day. It reminds me that my role isn't results—it's obedience. It's the willingness to take the risks and let God do the rest.

You, my friend, are a dreamer. Whether you know it or not. Whether you're at the beginning of your journey or sitting exhausted in the Promised Land after battling to possess it.

You, my friend, are an Esther—chosen and placed in your generation *for such a time as this*. Your life matters even more than you know, and you are making a difference even more than you see.

You, my friend, are a warrior. Every day you dare to dream, you fight back the darkness and add a little more light to the world. When you keep your heart open, the kingdom wins.

And you, my friend, are on an adventure that's going to take you to places beyond what you could have even imagined. Places with joy, tears, glory, grace, and most of all, *more of Jesus* with each step you take.

The "more" your heart has always hoped for is what God has wanted to give you all along.

So let's get going.



..... *Go Deeper Guide*

(Download a printable version with lines for writing at www.holleygerth.com on the “Books & More” page.)

1. What were some of your childhood dreams?
2. What messages were given to you about dreaming (both positive and negative) as you were growing up?
3. “Every dream or desire you have that comes from God is an invitation for more intimacy with him.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
4. What’s one of your God-sized dreams?
5. Which of the lies listed in this chapter did you most identify with? What’s the truth God wants to speak to your heart instead?
6. “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12). What’s one thing standing between you and the dream God has placed in your heart right now? What’s a way to overcome it?
7. Think of someone in your life who is pursuing a God-sized dream. What’s their story? What have you learned from them?

— ***Dream It. Do It.*** —

Create a vision board that expresses your God-sized dream visually. You can use photos, clippings from magazines, or images you find online. It can be any size or shape—just as long as it inspires you as you look at it.