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HIGH LOW *Buffalo*



The Power of God-Centered Perspective

Chapter One

High

As you reflect on the close of each day and consider the day's findings, you may wonder if anything you did made an impact and moved you forward. Some days you may find yourself in the same rut as the day before. It begs the question, do you need to make a change, or just view life through a different lens? This is where *High, Low, Buffalo* comes in—it's time to refresh your perspective.

Whether our family is together for a day or an extended period of time, my daughter, Sarah, challenges us to share a *High, Low, Buffalo*. The *high* represents the exciting and best part of your day, with the *low* representing a disappointment or less than desired experience. The final part is your *buffalo*, or that random, unexpected blessing you experienced—a welcome surprise. It is a fun and reflective way to close out your day, even though deciding what to share takes a good bit of consideration and intentionality. What you choose to be your *High, Low, Buffalo* is all determined by the perspective you choose to have as you reflect on your day. Perspective is everything.

Positivity defers you from thoughts that send you into a downward spiral. It provides a strong mindset to override the negative talk you tell yourself. A positive Christian is a contagious Christian—one who draws deep joy from Christ to draw others to Him.

After living through the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic that began in the spring of 2020, you can most likely ramble off a lot of lows, but if you look deeper, you can find the highs and some really great buffaloes. I think we all can agree that each time we enter a new year, we have no idea what it will hold, but 2020 took the cake on surprises. Never did we expect the

reality of 2020. Some were paralyzed by the seclusion, while others were energized. No matter where you found yourself, life looked different, and we all seemed to be on a leveled playing field. It was an unprecedented time that required an unprecedented response—a time to get creative or remain in disappointment.

Each day, the perspective you choose to have greatly impacts your heart and subsequently your actions. Ultimately, the choice is yours. Yes, no one can make this decision for you but you!

For me, 2020 left me missing the face-to-face gatherings of women, speaking at live events, hugging friends and family, and people-filled holidays. But as I reflect specifically on this season of life and More of Him Ministries, I see many *buffaloes*. This ministry unexpectedly expanded, stretching me beyond what I thought I could do. Although we may not know when things may feel “normal” again, this life experience has left an impact on each of our lives. Regardless of what that may look like, we can continue to fulfill God’s call and move forward in His strength. We must continue to move forward! It all depends on our individual perspective.

Your *high* will be different from my *high*, but it will most likely be the best part of your day or week. Some of your *highs* will transfer into life-changing, memorable moments that will impact your life and those around you. Mark Batterson, in his book, *Win the Day: 7 Daily Habits to Help You Stress Less & Accomplish More*, made this statement, “Time is measured in minutes. Life is measured in moments.”¹ This is pure truth. It’s the small moments that link your days, months, and years together to create your timeline.

There are days you don’t feel that our actions make much of a difference, but this couldn’t be further from the truth. It’s in the ordinary that God uses you for extraordinary opportunities. It may not be the timing you hoped for, but God’s timing is perfect. When you’re obedient in the small things God requires from you, He will build upon each action to create the destiny He has marked out for you. And your ability to walk in this obedience all begins with your mindset. What perspective will you choose?

Looking back over my fifty-plus years, I have seen God’s hand upon every step I took to bring me right where I am today, and each season built upon the next in God’s timeline for me. It’s important to appreciate each season and embrace change. Or you could find yourself sitting in a heap of lows wishing for the next season. Maybe you are in the season of:

- Wiping little faces or reading the same children's book for the millionth time.
- Serving in a ministry you thought would look different.
- Working in an unfulfilling job.
- Battling a disease and fighting for your life.
- Mourning the loss of what were once dear friendships.
- Celebrating the high you are walking through.

No matter where you find yourself, if your perspective can be one grounded in, "I want to be obedient to the Lord and become more like Him," God will use each moment, day, and opportunity to build upon the next and reveal Himself to you in ways far above and beyond what you could imagine.

May our heart's prayer be, "God, You are great, and there is none like You! Nothing or no one can compare to You. Nothing that we have heard with our ears or seen with our own eyes can stand in comparison to You. Therefore, You are great and greatly to be praised" (2 Samuel 7:22)!

Recently while reading Jon Gordon's book, *The Shark and the Goldfish*, this statement hit me like a ton of bricks: "If you think your best days are behind you, they are. If you think your best days are ahead of you, they are."² Talk about perspective!

Prior to reading this statement, I was longing for the days of the past in ministry and missing what was. I thought, *If we could just go back . . .* Yes, it feels like the past was wonderful, but what if God has something new and exciting around the corner? Am I ready to have a new perspective—that God holds my days and works for my good? What perspective will you choose as you move forward in obedience?

This I know: God's on the other side of your uncertainties. Yes, it seems like we live in uncertain times. Although I still believe this is true, I am starting to accept that we all live uncertain lives. Indeed, God's truth and our eternal destiny in Christ are certain, yet many other factors in our lives are a bit unpredictable and unclear at times. It is the nature of the journey.

Recently our pastor shared a portion of Brennan Manning's book, *Ruthless Trust*, in which his daily devotional brought the point of uncertainty home for me. He shared the story of

John Kavanaugh, the noted and famous ethicist, who went to Calcutta, seeking Mother Teresa . . . and more. He went for three months to work at “the house of the dying” to find out how best he could spend the rest of his life.

When he met Mother Teresa, he asked her to pray for him. “What do you want me to pray for?” she replied. He then uttered the request he had carried thousands of miles: “Clarity. Pray that I have clarity.”

“No,” Mother Teresa answered, “I will not do that.” When he asked her why, she said, “Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of.” When Kavanaugh said that she always seemed to have clarity, the very kind of clarity he was looking for, Mother Teresa laughed and said, “I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God.”³

As my pastor continued his devotional, he challenged us with these words, “There is something in all of us that always wants clarity. It is part of our sinful ego and a common expression of our insecurities. Clarity can become an idol that replaces authentic trust in God. In many ways, we would rather understand the details of the road ahead than rest in deep intimacy with the God who has promised to direct our steps.”

The Bible tells us, “Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us” (Psalm 62:8). We must pour out our hearts and all they contain: praise, gratitude, worry, fear, doubt, and, yes, uncertainty. God is our in-the-moment refuge—our quick prayer receiver, but not always a divine GPS system revealing the details of each turn we might encounter one year down the road. Thus, we must trust Him at all times and watch for the buffaloes He will surprise us with along our journey.

As I look back on the road traveled, I am thankful God didn’t reveal the highs, the lows, or the buffaloes of my life in one viewing. If He had, I am not sure I could have endured. Instead, He gave me portions of my journey as He revealed His ways through each day of my life.

No matter what you are facing, He wants to be at the center of it all. He wants to be your guiding light, your deepest longing, and brightest reflection. He wants to be the *high* in your day! “Those who look to Him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces” (Psalm 34:5 NLT).

Your one act of obedience may not only impact those who walk with you but also a generation that follows. In 1996, while I was sitting in the audience listening to the speakers at a Women of Faith event in my hometown, the words of a counselor who cared for me during one of my hospital stays for three months during my illness ran through my mind: *Someday you will be sharing your experience with others.* It was at that event I felt God calling me into a teaching/speaking ministry. I didn't share this with anyone but my mother-in-law, who attended the conference with me.

Even during my battle with Cushing's syndrome, I knew there was more to life than "just" surviving. I felt that God may use my story in a way that would encourage others. At the time, it was hard to understand God's will in it all, and even when I felt His call, I didn't know what it would look like. Yet, I still trusted Him with the outcome . . . or did I?

Although I felt God's call on my life in 1996, it was a twelve-year wait until I received my first invitation to share at another church. Honestly, there were times I wondered *why. Why, God, have You not opened the door yet?* But during this twelve-year period of preparation, I would feverishly immerse myself in God's Word through multiple Bible studies, as well as work in various ministries. Each experience built on the previous one and prepared me for the open door God called me to enter through years later.

Sometimes I felt discouraged that God didn't move a little faster in the process. I wanted to hurry Him along. But through a tough lesson, God showed me that He wanted me to be willing to speak to one woman first rather than a multitude. What God wanted and what I thought were very different. Humbled by a song I was listening to while waiting to pick up my then preschooler, I heard God speak to my heart, "Are you willing to speak to one person?" When I finally bent my knee to His plan and became willing to speak to just one person, God began His plan, not mine. What I thought would be a call to reach multitudes, God meant for an audience of one. However, today God has expanded that audience of one to a larger gathering. It is your obedience in the small things that will be the gateway for God to open doors for expanded use and greater impact. Likewise, at times you may wonder, *Is this what God wants from me?*

His calling on my life seemed to take longer to develop than I anticipated. Yet, through the waiting, I came to know God in a deeper way. He showed me more about Himself, and I realized that the preparation time was necessary for this season of my life. If I had stepped ahead of God, it would have been a complete train wreck. I would definitely not have been prepared. Yet now, in His timing, I am walking in the fullness of His calling. I don't always know the next step, but I've learned to trust Him and just follow Him for the day ahead of me. One moment of obedience becomes a stepping stone to the pathway of God's destiny for your life—a life committed to fulfilling His call.

I share this personal story to say that God builds upon some of your darkest and lowest moments in order to accomplish His will. I know you may find it hard to embrace some of your experiences as God's plan. However, in every place a purpose exists, and it's up to you to experience this purpose to its fullest. Regardless of the situation, you can control only one thing—your attitude, which you will read about many times throughout this book. Oh, others can affect your attitude, but you get to choose how you will respond. Will you have a Promised Land attitude, or a wilderness attitude? One of expectancy and joy, or one that displays complaining and “Woe is me”?

One night while watching *Man in the Arena—The Life of Tom Brady*, a documentary about the well-known quarterback, with my husband, I was surprised how drawn into his story I became. It was not the story of football that captured me, but the close-knit family that was his foundation. Through the trials and heartaches their family went through, his one sister made a comment I couldn't shake off. As she shared about their mother's illness and cancer diagnosis, her outlook was compelling. Her approach to the situation indicated one of optimism and hope when she said, “Rather than saying, ‘Why is this happening *to* me?’ ask, ‘Why is this happening *for* me?’” This one little word switch, *to* to *for*, can change your perspective. It goes from an infliction to a benefit, a negative to a positive—a low to a buffalo.

If you can view your disappointments as Paul did in the first chapter of Philippians, it will help you walk out the days ahead of you. Verse 12 says, “Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.” Like Paul did

regarding his imprisonment, can you look at what you have gone through and consider it steppingstones to all God has for you in the future? Paul continues in Philippians 1:21-24:

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

God has kept you alive and given you opportunity for fruitful living. Yes, fruitful living! So, what are you going to do with it? Are you going to live your life to your fullest potential? Or are you going to settle for ease and comfort? Revelation 3:7 (NIV) says, “These are the words of him who is holy and true . . . What He opens no one can shut, and what He shuts no one can open.”

Aim to please God and not man. If you choose to trust God alone, you will end up right in the middle of what God has called you to for this specific time and place. “Behold, [He] will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? [He] will even make a roadway in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert” (Isaiah 43:19). God can turn the lowest part of your day into a high if you allow Him.

We are not meant to live on mountaintop experiences all of our days, although the highs we encounter with God will certainly strengthen us to be able to walk through the valleys. God will be with us through the valley and give us strength to carry on. A valley is most likely between two mountains. If you are walking through a valley experience right now, be watchful, because there is a new mountain on the horizon, one God wants you to experience. The climb will be so worth it, my friend.

Psalms 23:4 reminds us of God’s faithfulness to us: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” His rod and staff are your guide and protection. He will carry you through and walk beside you, so you will be able to laugh without fear of the future (Proverbs 31:25).

Consider Ezekiel, a prophet in the Old Testament that prophesied to the Jews exiled to Babylon because of their rebellion against God. His message was less than favorable with lamentation, mourning, and woe as the Israelites lost the presence of God among them. However, Ezekiel also prophesied of a coming restoration that would take place in the millennial kingdom. You may deem the prophecy of Ezekiel as a low, but prior to sending him to the Israelites, God revealed Himself to Ezekiel in an amazing vision of the Lord's glory through a whirlwind, fire, brilliant lights, four creatures, wheels, beautiful gems, wings, and God's presence. When Ezekiel saw it, he fell face down and heard a voice speaking: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to the rebellious pagans who have rebelled against me" (Ezekiel 2:3).

I fully believe God gave Ezekiel this great vision and high experience prior to sending him to the wolves so he would have this glorious vision of God to carry him through some rough days ahead with a bunch of hard-headed, stiff-necked people. Aren't you thankful that God allows us to experience His presence and *highs* so that we are able to walk through the lows? Without Ezekiel's encounter with God, I often wonder if he would have been able to carry out his assignment. You and I may not experience visions as Ezekiel did, but through God's Word we are strengthened and encouraged by His promises to us. Also, there are moments in the quietness of your devotional time with Him when God reveals Himself and touches the innermost part of you that changes your attitude, commitment, confidence, and strength.

And like Ezekiel, we can move ahead with the strength of the *highs* God allows us to encounter. However, we cannot stop seeking God and stay in one particular high. We must continue to seek Him with fervency and determination to know Him deeper. And as we come into a deeper relationship with Him, He will reveal Himself to us in new and fresh ways. So, we must not put God in a box but rather expect some buffaloes in places and situations that may seem uncommon. We just need to have a willing spirit, open mind, and watchful eye for His appearance, which can come in unconventional ways as well as in the most ordinary of days.

Our highs can be defining moments if we embrace them as *kairos* moments. Ephesians 5:15-16 encourages us, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil." Time can be categorized as *chronos*, which is sequential—past, present, future. In other words, it is linear, moving in only one

direction. It's how humans measure time, yet God exists outside the space-time dimensions He created. The second word for time is *kairos*, and it refers to the opportune time, which characterizes Ephesians 5:16. *Chronos* counts minutes, *kairos* captures moments. It's the critical moment or the appointed time—"for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). It's *carpe diem*, "seize the day."⁴

Seizing the day will take great intentionality. It will require you to be where your feet are—from the grocery store visit, to a well-planned vacation, and everything in between. It's about being aware of your surroundings and capitalizing on the moments you're given because you never get that time back. Ugh . . . I know what you may be thinking, *Boy, have I blown it*. Don't be so hard on yourself. I have also missed one too many opportunities.

But we can move forward, watching for opportune times and embracing the ordinary moments with a fresh intent to make a difference in the lives of people with whom God intersects our days. It may mean a slower pace of life, a more watchful eye, or having a different focused outlook. Whatever it is, we should embrace the moment and thank God for another chance to make a difference in our lives and others'. Your day's high will be the highlight of your focus, and in turn, produce a grateful heart.