

KAY BURNETT

Voyage

Trusting
JESUS
in uncharted
waters



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Names have been changed in instances where it was important to protect the privacy of the individuals mentioned.

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CHAPTER 1

The Voyage Begins

“When everything else changes, God’s presence never does. You journey in the company of the Holy Spirit.”

—MAX LUCADO

Why did Paul embark on this voyage, in this season, on this particular vessel? As a prisoner, he had appealed to Caesar to hear his case, which forced Festus, the governor, to send Paul to Rome. But what seems an obvious reason for a journey often involves more than its original purpose. Was this merely a trip to get Paul, on assignment by God, into Caesar’s court in order to preach the gospel before the highest in command? Was the decision to voyage by sea based on choosing the fastest route?

From a human perspective, Paul’s guard, Julius, and the captain of the ship made the decisions and charted the course based on what they understood to be the most efficient route. Paul was innocent of any crime. As a prisoner, his life was in the hands of ungodly political leaders, Roman soldiers, and a ship’s captain and crew. But his life remained in the hands of God. Who truly set the course for this voyage? God’s unseen hand directed every detail of the journey.

The story of Paul’s journey is more than a narrative of facts and dates. Behind it lies a greater purpose. As Matthew Henry wrote, “It was determined by the counsel of God, before it was

determined by the counsel of Festus, that Paul should go to Rome; for, whatever man intended, God had work for him to do there.”¹

God never wastes a voyage. Only He can capitalize on mishaps, error, or disaster and use them for great and loving purposes. Only He can protect His children from an earthly enemy as well as from our spiritual enemy.

Leaving the Shore Behind

When Paul stepped on that ship it appeared to be the start of a journey arranged by human authorities for political reasons. Though people did make the decisions that placed him on that particular vessel at that particular time, God was working above all, beneath all, and on every side to accomplish His plans. There was much in store for this voyage, and the One who rules “over the surging sea” (Psalm 89:9) would orchestrate all the paths and purposes.

If you embrace the perspective of life as a voyage, a first step must be to choose who will be the captain of your ship. In our daily lives, a variety of people with their personal assignments and agendas may be in positions of authority over us, but for the surrendered follower of Christ this doesn’t define who is *truly* at the helm of the ship. We must know and believe that He is at the helm; He is the only One who can lead us in perfect wisdom and love.

Understanding this principle gives us peace. When we know that Jesus is guiding the ship, our hearts are filled with confidence and hope—especially when we have no control over our circumstances. We can trust that He will take care of every detail of our lives. When He leads us on a new leg of our journey, we must be grounded by our own version of Christopher Columbus’s

simple statement: “Following the light of the sun, we left the Old World.” In our case, we follow the light of the *Son*, which means we do, indeed, leave the “old world” behind.

Perhaps the toughest part of the voyage is the start, when we cast off and leave the shore behind. It is one thing to recognize that “deep calls to deep” (Psalm 42:7), knowing that God is pulling at the invisible ties of our souls, tugging on us to step out of the safety of the harbor into something more than the pursuit of our own dreams. It is another thing to get in the ship, cast anchor, and turn the helm over to Him.

His call is always active in our lives, no matter who we are, where we live, or how small the next step might seem. His purposes and plans go beyond all that we can imagine. Our perspective of destiny is so different from His—so much smaller. He sees the depth and breadth and height of all eternity! His perspective stretches from before this finite earth was created all the way to the eternal life that awaits us. Only He can knit together the lives, paths, and appointments that will fulfill His plans.

He compassionately encourages us to embrace a dependent way of life and allow Him to write our story. He longs for us to let Him lead our voyage. When we surrender to Him to be the captain of the ship, we have no reason to fear—no matter our enemy, no matter our storm, no matter the seas on which we travel. He commands the high seas. He speaks, and the winds and waves obey. He alone set the sun, moon, and stars above.



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If we fully acknowledge both God's power to do the impossible, as well as His unconditional, unfailing love for us, we move closer to a position of trust. At some point, it simply becomes an invitation to step off the dock and onto the deck of the ship. When life makes it challenging to leave the shore and let go of the helm, we can trust God in every way.

To step off the dock and leave the familiar shore behind is a joyful, adventurous leap for some. For others, a step into the unknown requires supernatural help and boatloads of encouragement. Letting



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go of what we know, what we want, and what we can control can be a monumental leap of faith.

God's stirrings in our hearts can be a catalyst to help us embrace His invitation to a new assignment. We feel uncomfortable with the idea of remaining where we are, but we might not feel ready to set sail. His Word assures us that we will weather storms on our journey, and we know the voyage can include sickness, danger, or other unknowns.

Saying yes to God will take us into new seasons, with new opportunities and new responsibilities. Our best plan of obedience is to step into what He asks and be faithful, keeping our eyes on the long view of the horizon, while not losing sight of the needs of the moment. This is a spiritual principle.

Jesus, Our Example

The circumstances of our lives often mirror Paul's as he embarked on this voyage. We may feel as if all the decisions that affect our lives are being made by anyone but ourselves or God. It may seem as if our voyage is at the mercy of others, with no consideration for our safety and security. Yet, in the life of a believer, nothing could be further from the truth!

Yes, our journey may be impacted by the poor decisions of others or ourselves, but God is above all, over all, and bigger than all people, events, and circumstances. He will never leave us. The Enemy wants us to believe that God is not at the helm, that we must chart our own course. Or, the Enemy would have us believe that he has the power to determine our destiny. He wants to convince us that we are at his mercy.

We can respond to the Enemy's message by doing what Jesus did. Our Lord relied on the Word of God and its promises, such as:

- The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him. (Psalm 37:23)
- The plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. (Psalm 33:11)
- You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence. (Psalm 16:11)
- Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you. (Psalm 55:22)

Jesus is a perfect example of one who left the helm in the hands of the Father, who planned each step of Christ's earthly journey.

Jesus infused eternal purposes into every hour of every day. He viewed others as valuable, regardless of how they interrupted His daily responsibilities. He remained faithful to God's vision.

How? Jesus met daily with the Father, no matter the press of the crowd or the needs of the day. He made it a priority to worship in the synagogue and to develop relationships with others who were seeking to follow God. He reached out to the lost. He created space to mentor and prepare His disciples. He kept "first things first." No one provides a better example of a purposeful, intentional life lived for the glory of God. Jesus was steadfast in His daily walk with God, which enabled Him to be steadfast in His life's journey.

Our Mighty Captain

God *is* the Captain of our journey when we say yes to His invitation and join in His purposes. He is no human captain, limited by what He sees or learns from studying the weather and conditions of the seas through navigational instruments. The Mighty Captain who seeks to lead our voyage is Creator of both the seen and the unseen worlds. He created the oceans and all they contain. He knows each wave that pounds and each rocky shoal that threatens the ship. He knows the best routes for our journey because He navigates with a perfect mix of sovereign power and human partnership. He knows what storms are on our course and promises protection through each of them.

The safest place for us to be is smack-dab in the center of God's will. If we invite Him to captain our journey, surrendering our will and ways to Him, we can count on His presence, His

help, and His care when storms assail us. He knows what lies ahead and has promised to guide us in every season of our lives.

As I journey with the Captain of my ship each day I pray:

Don't leave me to my own devices, Lord! Give me a heart that wants what You want; give me a heart that trusts You to the uttermost. Chart my voyage, oh God. Captain my entire journey! Place me on a ship with You at the helm, and let's set sail together.

God Provides for the Journey

God is for you! He wants to strengthen you for your success, your joy, and your delight. He knows what you need for the journey. He can help each one of us to set our hearts and minds on the right, good things each day. God can help us cultivate disciplined, godly habits so we can fulfill His will for our lives.

When we were in our twenties, my husband, Jim, worked a rotating shift for a large company while I stayed home with our two children. His schedule was anything but normal. He worked seven days straight on the midnight shift with one day off, then seven days on the evening shift followed by two days off, and seven days on the day shift with four days off. This cycle repeated week after week for three years. My poor husband didn't know if he was awake, asleep, going to work, or coming home! It was so disorienting.

During this season, God encouraged Jim to pray more effectively and to read his Bible more faithfully. Jim didn't tell many others that God was speaking to him about going into full-time

ministry. It was a key season in his personal walk with God, a time when he needed a routine to help him spend time in God's presence each day. If ever he needed to study the Word of God, to hear God speak and bring clarity, it was then. But how on earth could he have any semblance of routine with such a crazy work schedule?

Jim simply prayed about it and listened to what God said. Jim knew he could spend time with God on the mornings when he worked the regular day and evening shifts. But when it came to the weeks when he worked nights, he knew he needed to come home and go to sleep immediately; on these weeks, he just wasn't able to use mornings for his time with God.

As a maintenance pipe fitter, he checked the machines and performed routine upkeep during the night hours. If nothing needed to be repaired, his work could be done in a few hours. The rest of the time he was on call in case something broke down. So he began to spend these quiet hours reading his Bible. He walked the isolated hallways of the maintenance area of the building, praying and worshipping God.

In this season Jim grew closer to the Lord and learned to be sensitive to His voice. He devoured the Word of God. For six years Jim worked a job he didn't like; for three of those years he worked the crazy, shift-changing schedule. It was incredibly difficult, but through it all God was building Jim's spiritual character, teaching and guiding him through prayer and Bible study.

Years later, with a life that is routinely disciplined in the Word of God and prayer, Jim looks back at that season as a significant catalyst for his spiritual maturity. God used that time to train him for ministry, even though his job as a pipe fitter had nothing to

do with ministry. Most people would have given up on spiritual development with such a strenuous schedule, but Jim used the hardship to develop spiritual discipline. He knew he wanted more of God, and he knew he needed time in God's presence.

Do you need a better way to pray faithfully and to study God's Word? Your Heavenly Father has the answer. Do you need help in knowing when to meet with Him because your work schedule is nontraditional or you feel challenged by everyday routines? God knows what you need and how to deepen your walk with Him. Just ask Him; He will guide you and help you follow through.

God is the original Problem Solver! He knows what you need to complete your life journey successfully. Ask Him to guide you and to help you know what to change. Ask Him for discipline to obey what He tells you. You will never regret it—never, ever. Launch out with Him into this new day, and you'll be amazed at what He will do *for* you, *in* you, and *through* you. It's time to set sail!

REFLECTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND JOURNALING




1. Do you remember a time when you decided to chart your own course in life? What was the result of that decision? How did it affect you?
2. As you look back on your life can you see how God redeemed that season?
3. Have you ever handed over the “helm of your ship” to someone else? What was the result of that decision?
4. Describe a time when God supernaturally steered the ship of your life into a result you could never have imagined.
5. What default areas might cause you to jump ahead of God’s plans or hold back from leaving the shore?



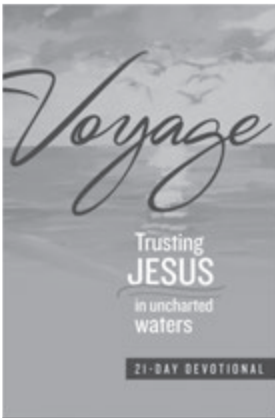


About the Author

Kay has served alongside her husband, Jim, in full-time ministry for more than twenty years as staff pastors, church planters, and lead pastors. Eight of those years, she served as the Women's Ministries director for the Arizona District Council. She is currently serving as the national Women's Ministries director for the Assemblies of God. Jim and Kay are the very proud parents of a son and daughter, and grandparents to four beautiful grandchildren.



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the journey?*



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"It's time to put out to sea with your Captain and let the wind of His Spirit fill your sails. Will you trust Him to lead the way?"

Do you find that some days are joyful and exhilarating, while other days are marked by storms and rough waters? The voyage of life is anything but predictable and safe.

Using the story of Paul's journey to Rome as a guide for the journey of life, Kay Burnett shows how God calls each believer to this voyage and invites us to relish every moment of it with Him. With keen insight and practical application, Kay reminds us to trust in God, our Captain. Through these biblical principles from Paul's journey, you will:

- **Learn to be obedient to the duties and disciplines of your spiritual life**
- **Discover how to hear the voice of God and be confident in His guidance**
- **Have the faith and courage to say yes to God's direction for your life**

Through the vivid details of each chapter, you will understand in a fresh way that God never wastes a voyage. He uses even our mishaps and mistakes for great and loving purposes.

Are you willing to step off the dock and place your life in the hands of the One who spoke the seas into existence? He alone is trustworthy to chart the course for your life.

Your voyage awaits!



Kay Burnett is the national Women's Ministries director for the Assemblies of God. She is a writer and speaker, and is passionate about leading women into a deeper relationship with Christ. She has served as a church planter, pastor's wife, and district leader in Arizona.

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