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Invitation to a Journey



Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

WIDELY ATTRIBUTED TO MARK TWAIN

What on earth have I gotten myself into?" A jumbled mess of nerves and excitement, I plopped down on the worn mattress for a breather. My courage faltered as I noticed the sorry version of myself in the mirror. My NYU T-shirt stained with sweat. My hair a hot mess. Surrounded by a sea of yet-to-be-unpacked boxes, bags, and suitcases.

Just hours before, Dad had dropped me off in New York City to officially begin my life as an adult. Unfortunately, he had to stay in our red Ford Pinto so it wouldn't be towed, which meant more trips to unload than I could count.



Up. Down. Up. Down. Lugging all the stuff I had *thought* was essential for this new chapter of life. It's amazing how quickly that perspective changes traversing five flights of stairs!

Amid the noise and traffic and crowds, Dad slipped a piece of money into my hand. "For emergencies," he said with a smile.

Then, with a hug and a kiss and misty eyes, he started the engine, maneuvering our little Pinto out into the flow of taxis and buses.

And just like that, he was gone.

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. I'd done it! I'd left my tiny Pennsylvania town, Littlestown (no, I'm not joking!), to pursue my dream of becoming a Broadway star. If I squeezed my eyes tightly enough, I could see it—my name in the Playbill as member of the cast in *Annie* or *The King and I*.

Sirens screeched below my window, bringing me back to reality of life as a *grown-up*. Earlier that day, I'd been riding along with Dad, singing Barbra Streisand songs at the top of my lungs. As we drove through the Holland Tunnel, my heart was about to beat out of my chest with anticipation.

Now it was just me . . . in my tiny closet of a room. The city was abuzz with life just below my window, and I was part of it. I was right in the middle of it.

Have you ever found yourself surrounded by people . . . but completely alone?

My roommate, whom I hadn't met yet, wouldn't be arriving for a whole week. As I stared out at the busy street below, I began to have second thoughts. Having grown up in a town of barely three thousand, New York's teeming metropolis of nearly 8 million was just a bit of a culture shock.

How do I make friends in a huge city like this?



How will I ever fall asleep with the sirens and honking and construction drills?

Is it safe to talk to anyone on the street . . . am I safe?

Anxiety turned to fear, and fear grew to sheer panic. I think I was half convinced my own personal bogeyman would break down the door at any moment. I fumbled to find that little folded treasure in my jeans pocket. To my amazement, it was a \$100 bill.

“For emergencies,” his words echoed in my head.

Well for sure, this is an emergency, I told myself.

Walking all the way up 5th Avenue to 42nd Street—forty-five blocks—I found the Amtrak station as the sun was setting. With a one-way ticket in hand, I boarded the train just in time.

Home. The trip was four hours, giving me plenty of time to practice my spiel. Within less than twenty-four hours of leaving, I was standing once again in our kitchen.

“I made a mistake. I can’t do this. Me . . . a Broadway star? It’s just a crazy dream.”

“Oh, honey, c’mere.” Mom put her arms around me and held me tight.

After four days of tearful conversations, pep talks, and prayers, I boarded yet another train. Only this time, I had not one, not two . . . but three folded squares of bills. One from Mom, one from Dad, and one from my sweet grandma.

I don’t think they each realized the others also gave me cash, but hey, it worked out fine on my end! And far more than the money, I left with my “love cup” filled up.

You can do this. We believe in you. Their words echoed in my mind as I pressed my face against the glass, the skyline of the city looming ahead.



THE COURAGE TO CONNECT

My roommate Karen and I hit it off surprisingly well, even though I was a night owl, and she was in bed before nine o'clock. After a few minor spats over the light switch, she invested in a sleeping mask, and all was well.

Karen was Jewish, and I was a Christian—or at least a churchgoer. Having grown up with an “us versus them” mentality (*us*, of course, being Christians, and *them* being everyone else), I began to realize as I hung out with Karen how narrow-minded and naïve I'd been. Karen was intelligent, easygoing, funny, and a good listener.

Though we held to differing faiths, we connected over roomie talks that often ended in silliness and raucous laughter. Just being together was fun. We discovered a sublime hole-in-the-wall pizza shop right around the corner and quickly decided that it was *way* better to split a pizza than eat alone . . . even if that did mean eating ridiculously early dinners for her sake.

With the horror stories I'd heard about roommates, I was very thankful to discover a true friend!

The city was still new and overwhelming, but I found myself a little bit less anxious with each passing day. I had found my niche. I fell in love with theatre and music all over again. And yet, something was “off.” No matter how many parties I went to, pizzas I consumed, or plays I auditioned for, I could never escape a deep sense of loneliness. Like a black hole that sucked everything away, leaving me completely, utterly alone.

It's hard to exactly put into words, but I wonder if you've felt it, too—an ache for more that you just can't seem to shake.

Our twenties and thirties are an especial time—not the only



time, of course, but a unique time—of pursuing our questions and facing our fears head-on, rather than burying and avoiding them. And so I did.

I rubbed the sleep out of my eyes one Sunday morning, following a late-night concert, and decided to go exploring. To my surprise and delight, I soon found myself in an old opera house—turned sanctuary. I felt like Alice who’d just fallen down the rabbit hole into Wonderland.

Huge chandeliers hung from an expansive gold-plated ceiling.

Heavy velour drapes framed the stage.

The plush theatre-style chairs seemed to go on endlessly.

The opening hymn brought me back from my reverie, and the tune was a familiar one. It seemed rather strange and wonderful all at the same time, singing church songs in a theatre.

I was no stranger to religion. I practically grew up in a church pew. But I always had a lot of questions. *Where does God live? Does Jesus sing? Is He a tenor or a bass?* Mom and Dad were wonderful parents and great role models, but they didn’t talk much about faith. They mainly told me about the Golden Rule and the importance of being a “good” girl. I’d tried so hard to be a Goody Two-shoes, but somehow still always managed to track in mud.

After the service was over, I made my way through the crowd to talk with Pastor Paul. My heart was pounding hard.

“I’m new in town. Honestly, I have no clue where to start—with God, with life, with anything, really. I need help. I can’t do this alone.”

It all tumbled out haphazardly from a place deep inside me . . . a place I wasn’t even fully aware of. Seconds later, my brain



caught up, and a part of me wished I could stuff that string of words right back in.

You're not a kid anymore, Jayme, my inner critic sneered. Gosh, play it cool, will you? This is awkward. Stop now before you make it worse.

But in that moment, I hoped beyond all hope to find a friend. Someone who had walked in my shoes, who wouldn't be scared off by my messiness and questions. Someone who could help me figure out this thing called being a *grown-up*.

DREAMS AND DECISIONS

Perhaps you can relate. You're an adult, technically. You pay bills. You live on your own. You may even have a diploma hanging on your wall. And not a month goes by that you don't give a cut of your paycheck to repay student loans.

But life is . . . well . . . way more complicated than you ever thought.

Alone in a brand-new city, trying to make it in the real world. Your Facebook statuses highlight adventure and excitement, but on the inside, you're feeling a bit unsure of yourself, trying to network, launch your career, make friends, or get a date.

Maybe you've hit the glass ceiling at work and find yourself overworked and underappreciated, just because you're a woman.

Maybe you're stuck in a dead-end job or relationship, and sometimes catch yourself daydreaming of something more. What . . . you're not sure.

Maybe you're newly married, and marriage so far has been the furthest thing from happily ever after.

Or maybe you just broke up with the man you gave your



heart to, and now you wonder if you can ever love again.

A recent study by Barna Group found that nearly 75 percent of women are not sure that they are making the right decisions in life.¹ If that's you, it's most certainly not a mistake that you're reading these words at this moment and place and time. Whether you're sitting in a coffee shop or on the subway, plopped down on your bed at 2:00 a.m., or soaking up the afternoon sunshine at the beach, I believe this book holds a life-changing key to your journey forward.

What are your twenties and thirties for? Having fun? Establishing your career? Seeing the world? Finding the love of your life? Sure, these are all good pursuits. But I would argue that they are each secondary.

I believe that the single most important influence in your life during these years is not what degree you pursue, what job you take, or who you date . . . but who is pouring into your life and shaping you.

A mentor. Perhaps you've heard the term before in business or academic settings, but the Christian community is often behind the curve here. While we tend to emphasize young professionals' groups and women's Bible studies, mentoring is an entirely different experience.

A mentor is a woman, further along in her walk with God than you are, who sees your potential and walks with you in becoming the woman God created you to be.

Just to clarify, she's not your mom and she's not your therapist. She's not someone you pay to spend time with you.

A mentor is a friend, a guide, and a confidante who offers a listening ear, honest feedback, and spiritual encouragement as you navigate each of the secondary pursuits we mentioned above.



She helps you identify and maximize your strengths and giftedness, uncover your calling and passions, and flesh out the day-to-day reality of following Jesus.

This intentional, life-giving, face-to-face relationship holds profound influence in developing you as a woman of God.

Mentoring is like Miracle-Gro for your life—spiritually, emotionally, and relationally.

BECOMING YOUR BEST YOU

Sure, it sounds good, Jayme, you may be thinking. But who would want to mentor ordinary me? You may come up with a million reasons why it's not feasible, why you don't have time, or why no one would want to invest in you.

But I beg to differ.

Over the last twenty-five years, I've seen time and again how mentoring has the power to change and shape women like you more than any other single thing in the world. Seriously.

I'm not sure about this mentoring thing, you may protest. I'm kind of supposed to have life figured out by this point, right? Says who? Is it immature to say you need a mentor? Actually, it's the most mature decision you can make, because growth always happens best in relationship. The Bible references "one another" over a hundred times—from "love one another" to "build one another up" to "pray for one another."

Mentoring is, at its essence, just doing what Jesus said.

I believe all this because I've lived it. From my very first mentor (who you'll hear more about in the next chapter) to the countless women I've had the privilege of walking alongside over the years, mentoring is my heartbeat.



Each week, I have the amazing privilege of meeting one-on-one with women in their twenties and thirties. Some are business executives, others designers, musicians, and artists. They are teachers, doctors, lawyers, counselors . . . they are on the front lines of shaping culture. They are dating, married, divorced, widowed. Some have cute little apartments, others rambunctious little children.

As we sit and talk over lattes or hot chocolate or sweet tea, I am encouraged and inspired by their courage. Their gut-wrenching honesty. Their eagerness to grow and change and become. Their heart to love people and join God in doing good.

Throughout these pages, you'll meet many of these women and get a front-row seat—an uncut version—as they wrestle with self-doubt and fear, explore their passions, identify their calling, and step into their God-given potential.

My greatest fear is that you would spend your twenties and thirties lonely and striving, trying to find your own way . . . just as I did when I first moved to New York City. You may wear yourself out *doing*, while neglecting to focus on the woman you are *becoming*.

And my greatest prayer is that you'll discover the life-giving potential of mentoring for yourself and feel the speed of your personal growth take off.

I promise I'm not being dramatic when I say this single connection has the potential to shape the trajectory of your life more than any other factor I know of.

In the coming chapters, we'll flesh out the practicalities of when, where, how . . . and more. But for now, be encouraged that it's not only possible to connect with a mentor, it's critical in order to become your best *you*.



That's why I sat down with my friend Laura, a twentysomething herself, to write the book you hold in your hands. Really, it's not so much another book as it is an invitation to a journey.

A journey to become the woman God created you to be.

And you don't have to walk it alone.

Respond



1. Can you identify with Jayme's transition of leaving family and friends behind and moving to NYC on her own? When have you found yourself in a new and unfamiliar environment?
2. "No matter how many parties I went to, pizzas I consumed, or plays I auditioned for, I could never escape a deep sense of loneliness." Ever been there? What helped you during this time?
3. "The single most important influence in your life during these years is not what degree you pursue, what job you take, or who you date . . . but who is pouring into your life and shaping you." What's your reaction to this perspective? Agree? Disagree? Skeptical? Why?
4. How do you feel about asking for help and admitting that you can't do life alone? Many of us have a hard time with reaching out for support. If that includes you, what holds you back?
5. Nearly 75 percent of women are not sure that they are making the right decisions in life. What areas of your

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life do you find yourself worrying and unsure about?
Where do you need wisdom right now? What is your
hope and desire for the journey of this book?