

CHAPTER ONE

The Birth of a Dream

KENNEY

Never since the beginning of written history has fulfilling your dream ever been more important. Dreams that are God-given, full of purpose, expanded with growth and opportunities necessary for the survival of mankind. Not just wanting “things” or going to “places”, dreaming is a vision, a vision with action. Not just thinking about something, thinking does not bring something into existence. We must have a plan for our dreams. Our nation would have never been discovered had it not been for someone who had a dream. We would be unable to call our nation “free” had it not been for men and women with a dream of a better life. A better life allows you the ability to wake up every morning, have your coffee or tea, read your daily newspaper, and go off to work or play with some assurance of a peaceful society.

What can be said about this new generation of dreamers? You know the ones I’m speaking of: the technology gurus! These guys that spend hours and hours behind their computers, discovering how much quicker and easier they can make life for us. These guys have passionate dreams about increasing

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the response time on the Internet from ten seconds to one nanosecond! Wow! This group of dreamers wasted no time getting to their dreams!

So what's wrong with dreaming? Nothing, absolutely nothing! What's wrong with having a dream hidden deep in your heart and never letting it peek through to your conscious mind? Everything, absolutely everything!

I firmly believe we have an obligation to find a place in our busy lives to analyze what we may be afraid to talk about out loud. Maybe we're afraid that we might fail. (Let's hope we do fail. It helps us get better at what we do!) Maybe we think we're afraid that we're not "qualified" to see our dreams through. Maybe we're afraid that we might succeed—then what would we do! Possibly, we feel as though our priorities will not allow us the luxury of a dream.

Well, ladies and gentlemen (if a gentleman is brave enough to be reading this book), I've got a news flash for you. No matter where you are in your life's circle, you have an obligation to listen to your heart. You have an obligation to reach into the unknown depths of your soul and discover what dream God gave *you*, just you and you alone—not your husband, not your neighbor, not your coworkers, not your boss, not the milkman (gee . . . do we still have those?), not the corporate executives who appear to have all the wisdom, knowledge, and money! *You* must begin the process, the process that takes time to understand. This process may have been working "in you" since you were in short britches!

"*I have a dream!*" is a phrase that has been heard by almost every American, Christian, politician, man and woman on this planet. Dr. Martin Luther King made history with these four words. Was Dr. King a dreamer? Oh, yes, Dr. King was truly a dreamer. And sometimes, dreamers get their dreams taken away before completion, which, in my opinion, makes

our dreams more important.

My dream is that I can be a catalyst for women in business and in the homes of America, to realize that they have a responsibility to live their dreams. And do you know what? It will take all of us helping one another—crossing the line drawn in the sand between business and God—to make it happen. No one else will achieve this important passage. We, as a group of women, must take the “bit” in our teeth, yank out the treasures in our dream drawers, organize our resources, and begin the process. Our men cannot do it. Our government cannot do it. Our churches cannot do it. No one but women of faith, purpose, and design can alter our world’s direction. Change the direction of the universe by living out our God given dreams!

The Time is Now

I was standing in the shower on Saturday, January 16, 1999, when it suddenly hit me. Why did I think that fulfilling my dream was to come from another source other than me? Why was I always waiting for the right time, the right investor with deep pockets, the right interest rate environment, my husband to develop a perky attitude, our family’s perfect financial position (ha), to help me *do* my dream and really figure out what I wanted to be when I grew up? One would think by now, I’d surely be grown. But do you know what? I don’t think we are ever truly “grown up.” We are just preparing for life’s completed purpose.

After all I, like you, have read many books, heard hundreds of stories where the timing was perfect; the people were in place; and money was not an object. Okay, I guess I thought that someone else would advise me when to leap, run, jump, or get out of the way. Or, I presumed that God

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would give me this big sign telling me when and what to do so that I could see timing was perfect, etc.

Well, while standing in the shower on that Saturday, I finally got it. It finally came rushing to the right side of the brain. (At least I think that is the side for bulletins.) Nevertheless, I discovered without any other person in the room (who would be brave enough to be in the room while I was in the shower?), without standing in lights on a stage looking out over a huge audience, without my bank account bulging with money, even without printed business stationery proudly displaying the name of my company . . . I finally got it!

Standing there quietly in my birthday suit (which by the way continues to be altered as the years pile on), God “whispered” in my ear. It was quite eerie. After all, I am a preacher’s daughter. I was reared on the piano and organ bench as far back as I can remember. Born with a microphone in my hand, I am still serving God; only now, I truly want to, and don’t feel that I must because it is “my place” or my duty. I’ve heard about all these stories where people get “spoken to” in a small subtle, but inaudible voice. Actually, I thought most of these voices were dramatics to a story or a bad inner ear infection.

It was downright spooky, but exhilarating too. It was *my duty* to fulfill *my dream*. It was *my responsibility* to get in touch with the design of my destiny. Wow! Go figure. I guess I assumed all these years that, because God had given me a dream, He would send me plenty of notice and an order of occurrence before unleashing this very special bulletin. I had work to do! And, do it quickly!

Getting started is the hardest part. That’s where you, the reader of this book come into action. *You* and your dreams are the answer to *my dream*. And because you are the answer, maybe between both of us, we can play a part—just

a tiny part—in helping each other fulfill our passions and determining our dreams.

I remember, in my younger days, hearing a sermon in my young adult days from a preacher who had stood behind a pulpit for sixty-five years. It has taken about twenty-five years, and numerous attempts to identify my dream, to understand the value of his statement. He said, “God will not fulfill a dreamer’s dream *unless he helps someone else with their dream.*” Do you know what? That’s so true.

One other thing, I use the word *dream* because that’s how I have used it up until now. I’ve only dreamed. In today’s language it could be called a goal or even an objective. But to me, it’s a dream. I firmly believe that *dreams escort you through the difficult times.* They make getting on the other side of life’s struggles just a little easier. Dreams seem to camouflage cold harsh reality and seeming impossibilities. I know one fact; however, it takes courage to dream. It takes more courage to bring dreams to the front of our priorities. But dreams can test us too. After all, we can’t have courage unless we have something to test us, right?

My Dad was especially sensitive to ensure my work ethic was top drawer. Demanding time frames for me were as normal as drinking a glass of water. I lived in mortal fear of being late from a date, or late to a church outing. It was not tolerated in my circle. But it was these small, teeny-tiny little habits that helped prepare me for life—the good life, the complete life, the valuable life. It requires it, demands it, and pays eternal dividends.

The First Seed

Let’s fast-forward to my first, real, honest-to-goodness paying job. At the ripe old age of seventeen, I had the privilege of working for a small bank in my hometown. Not quite old

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enough to be trusted behind the teller's counter (*God was taking care of me there, and probably the customers, whew*), He placed me in a position that first prepared me for the early development of my dreams. Actually, at that time I wasn't too certain as to where I really wanted to go with my life.

I was a credit clerk. That's right! I was a credit clerk. I actually got to call the credit bureau and handwrite, getting information via the telephone, complete credit reports, not exactly like today's technology, where we order a credit report and, within fifteen seconds, their entire credit history appears on the computer screen. In those days, there was not nearly as much information, and a whole lot more work to be done; but it served the same purpose and served it well. How time had changed! These were customers buying new automobiles, refrigerators, houses, you name it, and we did it!

For once, I felt I was contributing a valuable service to help others get what they wanted, maybe their dream. I remember specifically a very sad situation that I believe were the first steps in making me aware of what I wanted to be when I grew up. And I am convinced that because of this encounter, my life was forced into the process of plotting a course for my future.

It was May 1966. The weather was terribly hot and muggy (no surprise for anyone here, for Texas in May). I received a handwritten application for a loan. It was almost impossible to read. With it, my supervisor sent a credit check request for a loan in the amount of \$650. It was for a single woman with three small children. It's possible she could have been a widow, but I'm not sure.

When I looked out in the lobby from my *closet* office (no kidding this had been a coat closet converted into a mini-office), she appeared worn down and very tired. I remember it as if it was yesterday. Her hair was pulled back in a

tight bun. Her clothes were extremely soiled, her kids hanging off her worn blue sweater. But she had a horrified look on her face, like this was the last train stop and she was getting off.

Her loan application request showed she worked three jobs. Her primary job was as a waitress at our local “Red R” coffee shop. She has another job as a helper at our local drug store, stocking shelves at night. And finally, she took care of an elderly woman, essentially for free. The old woman would give her a dollar or so, as needed, for milk or food. However, she was to begin a new job within the next week as a receptionist at a local dentist’s office.

Her income was a solid \$235 per month, gross. Her application for \$650 was for the down payment of a headstone and funeral expenses for her elderly friend, the same old lady she had taken care of in her “spare” time for several years. The elderly companion had died essentially penniless. There was no known family or friends, except for this generous young comrade, now my loan customer.

After one look at her credit report, I was really concerned if she would be able to pass the “sniff” test required by the bank. She didn’t have much going for her. She was a woman, strike one. She was not married, strike two. She barely made enough money to pay her rent and feed her children, much less pay for an old woman’s burial, strike three. If four strikes were allowed in this scenario, it would be that her credit could not make the Dun and Bradstreet A1 rating system.

According to what I read in the report, she always repaid her debts. For instance, at Zales Jewelry she had borrowed \$59 for a watch and ring. The repayment had been consistently fifteen days late. But at least it was always paid. Her gas had been shut off several times, but she always paid the balance. Not exactly the stellar credit rating the bank was looking for on a

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non-collateral loan, but she had paid her bills! I think in today's language we would call that a "cash flow" problem.

After my supervisor laughed out loud at the woman's loan request, I remember feeling so, so sorry for this dear woman. As I look back now, she was probably in her late twenties or early thirties, not exactly ready to hang up the old apron. Here she was, barely scraping by, and she wanted to give a proper burial to someone who had no one else in the world. She was willing to work overtime, more jobs, whatever it took to give this trusted friend a gravestone with her name on it.

I was livid. My supervisor's comments about the "white trash" the bank sees from time to time was more than I could stomach. I decided, at that moment, that I must get involved. Remember, my "big" job was to just write down the credit report information, not to stick my nose where it didn't belong.

Even at the ripe old age of seventeen, I could feel the injustice of what was happening to this woman. I think it began when my supervisor said to me, "Run this credit application even though we have no intention of making a loan to this lady. When you have it completed, hold it for a while, and I will speak with her when I return from lunch."

A little confused at the chain of events, I asked my supervisor, "Should I have Mrs. Murray come back later?"

"No," said the big man, the supervisor. "Just have her wait in the lobby until I return. That way she will think we thought long and hard about her foolish and stupid loan request." As he strutted out of the bank's back door with his nose high in the air, I prayed for rain. (This is an old Texas saying: if someone is "snooty" and walks around with their nose high in the air as if to imply they are "hot stuff," the theory is that the rain will fill their nose, and well . . . you figure out the rest!)

Okay gang, now this is when I decided that even though

I had difficulty adding two plus two with an adding machine, I was seriously considering a career change from music to finance. At that moment, I made a commitment that I was going to learn how to add, subtract, and all that stuff. I definitely was going to work harder in math class, so that I could get Mr. Supervisor's job one day!

I did, in fact, go out to the lobby and notify Mrs. Murray of the time delay, and asked if she would mind waiting until the "loan committee" finished its underwriting task. After spending a few minutes with her, I discovered she was quite a lady. She told me stories about the old friend who had died and why she felt compelled to do this act of charity. She also disclosed that she had agreed to keep two other children at night, for some folks who worked the graveyard shift at LTV (a local defense plant), for extra money to repay the loan.

Upon Mr. "Big Boy" Supervisor's return, he walked boldly into the lobby and loudly announced that her credit rating did not match the standards of the bank's requirements and that her loan was declined.

As I watched from the crack in the door of my closet office, I saw Mrs. Murray kindly thank him for his consideration, while trying to hold back the tears of disappointment and embarrassment. She slowly and quietly gathered her children, and with her head lowered, staring at the ground, walked out of the bank as if she were carrying four hundred pounds on each shoulder.

A Lasting Impression

I never quite got over that day. In fact, later when I was placed in positions of authority over loan approval, I implemented a process by which each declined loan was reviewed to see if there were some way we could reverse the decision, or come up with an alternate approval process. It was very

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important to me to utilize my passions, focused upon helping others reach their goals and dreams.

Fortunately, there is a somewhat better ending to this story. One thing I failed to mention about my job in this bank was that the President and CEO, C.P. Waggoner, was the father of one of my best friends in school. You might say that really helped me get the job in the first place. Melissa, my friend, didn't want to work for her Dad, but I surely did. And being the town's preacher's kid didn't hurt either.

Later that same day, near closing time, I saw Mr. Waggoner in the coffee room and asked if I could speak with him for just a minute. Somewhat visibly irritated at the request, he politely agreed, but for just a quick minute. He had other big time business. And, I'm sure that he did. He was also the mayor at the time, and a "bang-up" good one, I might add.

I informed him about Mrs. Murray's request and her kindness to this old woman who had died. I tried not to make it sound like Mr. Big Boy Supervisor was a jerk, but I'm sure it showed in my body language and the tone of my voice. He listened carefully and asked me to get her application and lay it on his desk. He would review the request personally and call Mrs. Murray himself if he could work it out.

This wonderful gentleman looked at me and said these words, which I shall never forget, because these words birthed the passion of my dream. "That was a real sweet gesture on your part, Kenney, for trying to help this woman. But I don't want you to interfere with bank business again. The bank knows best who has earned the right to secure a loan. Women don't always understand or comprehend when it comes to money issues. That's something only men can grasp. It is not in the bank's best interest to make loans to single women. But I will look into this for you, and because her request is not for her own gain, I will see what I can do."

Just for the record, those statements, so sincerely spoken by Mr. Waggoner, would probably end up in a court of law today.

Later I found out that Mrs. Murray received her loan, but it had been reduced to \$450. Mr. Waggoner had called the local funeral home (the bank held their loans), and had them reduce their fees to help Mrs. Murray. The bank was protected by less exposure to an outstanding signature loan, and Mrs. Murray's friend got a proper burial. And, to be sure, the funeral home made brownie points with the bank's president. Well, we all got what we needed as it was completed, but it surely was a long way around to accomplish a simple goal. Of course, I was elated! Being a novice at exercising my passions, my dream seemed to be mine, ready to conquer.

I felt good, real good. I just wish I had seen Mrs. Murray's face when she received the call about the approved loan. I would have loved to see her face lit up, her shoulders pulled back, and her head held high; because of her courageous success, she had helped her old friend.

God has a way of engineering our lives from the day we hit this earth. Your dreams, or deep desires, which are planted by God, are pretty much left in your care from then on. This awesome trust is meaningful and full of purpose. It is the road to *that* dream, and begins very early in life. Even before you recognize there is a dream, it is taking control of your whole person.

Think with me for a minute how this experience started a lifelong dream for me. It was the birth of my desire to accomplish God's direction in my life. My dream taught me that if you push the envelope a little, you may just get what you ask for, or at least a portion thereof. More important, I have learned that helping people achieve their goals felt downright good! I was just beginning the first steps for a lifetime of preparation. Those preparations would usher my dreams into reality.

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What about you? Think back in your early years as a young adult. There may have been a “Mrs. Murray” whom you had the opportunity to help in some way. Perhaps it was an assignment in school that began the early formation of your passion. You may have read a book, saw a movie, or met a challenge in your young life that pushed the passion button for reaching inside that very special window of your heart. Maybe it was a teacher who began the process. Maybe it was an old boyfriend, or best friend during your school days. But somewhere in your past, if you allow yourself to reminisce about important events that made a difference in you, or the things around you, the process of identifying how God has started the work in you will help you usher *your dreams into reality!*

MARLENE

My mind filled with questions,
My heart beat with anticipation,
My being stirred by its potential,
It seems as though it was yesterday . . .

In the stillness of the night I sat staring out the window. I was overlooking the lights of our quaint little California town, met by the waves of the ocean, blended into the dark sky, filled with an array of bright stars that seemed able to guide me somehow. Have you ever had a “stillness of the night” experience? I am sure you have. Isn’t it amazing how vivid the memory is, and how that tiny moment impacted your life?

At the tenderness of the moment, a warm tear spilled onto my cheek, and my heart cried out into the depths of that night. “God, use me! I have dreams of doing something significant for You. What could they possibly be?”

“What is my purpose?”

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“What are Your plans?”

“Oh, please God, give me a dream, and fulfill that dream in me.”

I was sixteen years old, a preacher’s kid, and yes, I was a little overdramatic! I guess I still am. For this evening, while propped up in my bed with Ginger (my little puppy) cuddling beside me, I can almost smell the salty air, hear the seals barking, and feel the intense emotion of that moment in past time. *I felt so ordinary, but longed to be extraordinary!* As I see it now, that has been, and continues to be, the theme of my life, the golden thread which holds it all together, spinning and weaving the portrait of my soul. I now not only look forward with great anticipation and beating heart, but also look backwards with deep reflection, as so much of my life has already unfolded before my eyes.

How could it be! Where has the time gone?

You ask yourself that question frequently, don’t you? It might seem as though you have just taken down your Christmas tree, but today you find yourself planting petunias and scrubbing the barbecue. Then just blink twice and it will be time to drag out the Christmas decorations again.

I find myself in that season of life that is sometimes referred to as “midlife.” Midlife? Excuse me? Several years ago I was talking with one of our young pastor’s wives whom I adored (or at least I used to). In the course of our conversation, she blurted out very naturally and matter-of-factly, that I was “middle-aged.” MIDDLE-AGED! I felt my eyes glazing over. My ears grew vacant of her words. I gasped for air, and almost fell over in a dead faint!

In the next second, I remembered the phrase “never let them see you sweat!” So in a flash, I smiled warmly, gave an understanding nod, and shared the youngest, most contemporary bit of advice I could possibly muster. But to this day,

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I have never stopped sweating!

How could it be? Where has the time gone?

Where is that little girl with the big dreams?

Where is the little girl *in you* with the big dreams?

Well, mine is still here, peeking out through the window of my eyes—only those eyes are now surrounded by dry skin and lines of character. Tired seems to be my middle name! Ginseng and ginkgo are my best friends. (Yours too?) However, hope still glimmers like a candle in my soul.

Yes, many of my dreams have been fulfilled, somewhat. Yet, they seem to only lay the foundation for the greater dreams to come.

You know what? This middle age thing has turned out to be pretty wonderful. I am realizing it is a season for doing . . . being . . . fulfilling. Only months ago, a dream became a reality. *And you are holding it! You are looking at it! You are absorbing it!* Wow! I wrote a book! I actually wrote a book—and *you bought it!* I dared to dream a dream with a dear friend and kindred spirit. Her dreams seemed to parallel my dreams. Our spirits began to soar, and we did it together. We actually did it!

Now tell me: What is your dream?

Where is that little girl with the big dreams, and the fairy tale fantasies? Is she peeking out through the window of your soul? I think so—I'm sure of it! *Recognize her, acquaint yourself with her.* Allow her to push through the fog of doubt. Allow her impish grin to reignite your fire.

What could you dare do?

What could you dare be?

Maybe you think you are ordinary—just like me. Everyone is ordinary in extraordinary ways. That is the wonder of humanity. I once read that “It takes so little to become above average.” That is so true! I have never

forgotten that profound statement by Florence Littauer.

As women, we have so much to give! Do you want to make a difference in your world? Well, so do I! So does Kenney! What do we have to lose, time? Life has a way of stealing our time! *Let us take hold of today! Let us take hold of our tomorrows!* How many times have I said that, only to let one more day escape?

Enough is Enough!

One day not too long ago, Kenney and I decided *enough was enough!* Things have got to change! No one else is going to float into our lives and do it for us. If anything is ever going to happen to fulfill our shared dreams, we must start today, so that is exactly what we did: one step at a time, one foot in front of the other, one hand reaching out. That is all it takes, one thought, one action, and one moment going above and beyond.

We are now a little closer to fulfilling our wildest dreams, our hearts' deepest desire. And you can experience this ecstasy too! Put your dream or dreams into motion, slowly at first. With time, the momentum will amaze you. *You will make a way! God will make a way. There are people around you who will help you make a way!* The life experiences in this book remind us of that. Isn't it wonderful? Even the mere imagination of it all, do you believe it? Do you believe in yourself? *God does!* And we certainly do! That is the entire purpose of this book, *we believe in you!*

However, sometimes it is not that easy, is it? Sometimes it is very hard to believe in yourself. There are times when it is so much easier to remain in stale ordinariness, rather than to venture out into unknown territory where we might fail.

I remember, as a young bride, having a job in an office. Now if you knew me, you would laugh out loud; for I have absolutely no office skills whatsoever, nor do I want to learn. However, at the time I was thrilled for the job! Working in an

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office is what girls do, right? My task was to sit at this gigantic typewriter machine that hammered out addresses on metal plates. I think it was called an Address-o-Graph. I simply would pound them out, one at a time, hour after hour. That's it! I would go stark-raving mad doing something like that now; but at the time, it was just fine temporarily, and it was safe.

Before the end of my first week, I was invited to enter the inner sanctum of the front office, where the "big boys" ran the operation with their private staff. None of us in the back room were ever allowed in that portion of the building. It had a separate entrance, restroom, and lunchroom. As I was ushered through the sacred double doors, I was filled with trepidation, my heart beating wildly. You see, the bosses had a mean reputation! I felt as though I was being led into the den of lions. They proceeded to offer me the position of front office receptionist, and training would begin immediately. Now tell me, how hard could that have been? What was the big deal? However, I vividly remember the thumping in my throat, the terror in my eyes. All I could think of was that I might make a mistake—like disconnecting the big boss on the phone. Then he would yell at me—oh, horror! So, I whimpered something like "thanks, but no thanks" and crawled sheepishly into my safe hole in the back room. My supervisor was flabbergasted I had rejected such an offer, and during the short time I was there, the opportunity to advance never came my way again.

I have thought about the experience and my self-doubt many, many times since then. Why couldn't I believe in myself enough to at least try when the advancement was literally handed to me on a silver platter?

I had risen to many positions of leadership and responsibilities in church. But that was church! That was volunteering, and it was my comfort zone. The people in that office

obviously saw in me, potential and qualities they admired. Who knows what other doors that advancement would have opened for me (no matter how small). I have kicked myself ever since. How could I have possibly been so insecure? You would never have known just to look at me. I exuded confidence.

Now that I ponder the situation from my budding youth, maybe, just maybe, if that had not happened, I would not be communicating with you through my pen this evening. Did I miss the boat because of my insecurities? Perhaps God's hand was on my life that day—fulfilling His purpose in me. Perhaps it has taken me time and maturity along with many such experiences to see and appreciate the qualities in myself that those people saw. To this day, I often have moments when I ask myself, "What am I doing with so many responsibilities?" "How can I do this? I don't know." "Who do I think I am?" So what qualifies me for leadership and mentoring?

Well, one simple fact does. I believe this is God's plan for my life, the life I dedicated to Him in front of that window overlooking the night sky at the age of sixteen. And the other simple fact is that I care so, so much. Therefore, He has equipped me. I am passionate about girls and women who need to know how very special they are, and understand what a difference they can make in their world if they only go slightly "above and beyond." When women are motivated and inspired, there is no limit to their beauty, their talents, and the impact upon the lives around them.

At this moment, as I stroke my pen on this tablet (notice I am not using the computer—my computer is not friendly enough for me right now), I am overwhelmed with passion for this endeavor. That is not because I have it "all together," but because I believe I am called by God for this purpose. *I believe everyone has a God-given purpose, and that is where your dreams originate.*

As Seen Through Young Eyes

One warm July, when I was a teenager, a very special lady named Lillian Trasher came to stay with us for three weeks. Now, if you have never heard of her, she was truly a legend in our time. As a young woman in her early twenties, she traveled into Egypt and began one of the largest orphanages in the world. She accomplished this by simply loving one baby at a time, until at last, a large Christian organization emerged and was founded. In our denomination, she was an icon! At the time of her visit, I was in my prime! I had people to see, places to go, things to do! She, on the other hand, was a very old, and a very plump dear missionary lady who was going to cramp my style for three whole long weeks. What could she possibly know about having fun?

Well, on the first day of her visit, I was in my room primping, and then primping some more in preparation for a fun church beach party. I squeezed into my very favorite pink-and-green-checked pedal pushers. Then I pulled on a matching pretty pink cardigan sweater. As was the style, I began buttoning it up in the front, leaving the first three buttons undone. I stood in front of the mirror and tossed the sweater slightly over my shoulders so, of course, no cleavage would show.

I was so cool! Suddenly it dawned on me that Lillian would be sitting on the couch, and she would probably check me over once or twice with raised eyebrow. Even a possible hint of cleavage would never pass her test, I was sure. I rolled my eyes, gave a disgusted sigh, and buttoned the top three buttons, feeling slightly choked and uncomfortable.

Hoping not to be noticed, I floated through the living room. Lillian called me over to the couch and patted the cushion beside her. *Oh great*, I thought, *now I'll be late!*

She wore a little black pillbox hat, and shoes that tied up to her ankles. As she sat on our couch, her flowered blue-print dress was pulled down far past her knees. (Knees that just wouldn't stay together, I might add.) But it formed a perfect fluffy lap for little children and babies back at her home.

"Now tell me about this party," she politely inquired. I plopped down beside her (heavier than I meant too) and gave her as little information as possible without appearing rude. After all, I wasn't a total brat; I just had an attitude.

In the next few minutes, something very interesting happened. I began noticing how sincerely interested she was in me. Her voice was so warm within the framework of her sweet smile. I found myself melting in her presence, and almost wanting to climb into that soft, fluffy, plump lap of hers. Of course, I was way too sophisticated for that!

The next moment I was shocked when she leaned over and unbuttoned the top three buttons of my sweater. "There, that's better. Now go have a great time and please tell me all about it in the morning."

"Oh," she added, "would you like to go shopping tomorrow?"

"Sure!" I quickly replied as a honk came from the little black T-Bird outside the front curb. With my girlfriend waiting, I bounded out the front door, dazed at what had just happened.

Isn't it silly, but from that moment on, that lady—that dear old plump missionary lady—had great credibility in my eyes. I totally fell in love with her! She was so cool!

For the next three very short weeks, she mentored me. She poured the love of the Lord into me. She developed within me a passion to serve Him as never before. She instilled within me a dream of what I could be . . . what I could do.

The day she departed for Egypt, she inscribed beautiful words of encouragement in my first red leather Bible. I still treasure those words to this day. That evening, shortly after

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she left, was the evening I sat in front of my window overlooking the star-studded night sky.

My mind filled with questions,
My heart beat with anticipation,
My being stirred by its potential . . .

“Oh, please God, give me a dream and fulfill that dream in me.” It was then I experienced the birth of a dream to serve the Lord with my whole heart and soul. I didn’t know exactly how, but I knew *why!*

Right now as the memories and emotions flood my mind, I can almost feel her hug envelop me as only Mama Trasher could. I can almost hear her whisper in my ear words of confidence about what I could be when I grow up. And you know what? I am still in the process of discovering, dreaming, and growing into that person.

Think about one particular person whose significant touch on your young life helped you to “become.” Perhaps they made an intricate contribution toward the birth of your dream. Stop for a moment to think of that special person’s name. Did you have a Mrs. Murray or Mama Trasher that touched your heart? Bring to your mind the story surrounding their significance. I’m sure you have a great story too. Appreciate every moment of it! Bring it back to life!

The mighty hand of God put His call on my life that night. There have been seasons when I thought for sure that He must have stepped away and left me floundering. As I reflect through the years, at this moment, I know better. I know He was there all the time, grooming me, directing me, leading me, and urging me. And, I can say with confidence, *God has not brought me this far to leave me now.* Remember, birthing is a process. It involves conception, development, pain, and a dark unknown canal before it can burst forth into life. And, that’s only the beginning!

At fifty-ish, the foundation for what God has accomplished

The Birth of a Dream

in my life, and the discovery of who I could be, are only a springboard for the future. God has led me into a life to inspire and motivate women. You may have all the talent and ability in the world; but if you are not motivated to go above and beyond yourself and your self achievements, or if you are not inspired to push your imagination to higher limits, you will fulfill only a small corner of what you could be—and more important, what you were born to be!

What *do* you want to be when you grow up?

Do you remember? Do you know? Have you asked God what kind of ideas He has for you? Did you once have a God-given dream that is yet to be fulfilled? You may be close, very close. Or you may need to step on the brakes, flip your turn signal, and begin swerving the direction you should be going. Kenney and I suggest you do some deep heart-searching before you move on to the next chapter. The entire book will be far more meaningful if you take some valuable time to reflect.

Now, what is it you want to be when you grow up?

WHAT DO WE WANT TO BE WHEN WE GROW UP?

YOUR TURN

Power Point

“Everyone has a God-given purpose—and that is where your dreams originate.”

Internalize

Allow yourself the luxury of reaching deep within and getting “in touch” with your dream. Open these treasures, and spend time thinking about how insignificant pieces of your life may very well have been in preparation for your dream. Capture the emotion and allow your spirit to soar.

Strategize

Write on a piece of paper, or in your personal journal, your dream that is most exciting to you. As any plan of action, you must develop a strategy that will propel your dream to a place that it can be constantly reviewed, analyzed, and altered. Identify the strengths that will allow you to drive your dream into action. Remember, you must be willing, ready, and able to apply or acquire all the skills necessary for success.

Realize

God creates within you that burning desire. Therefore, He will direct you towards your purpose for life as you yield to His calling. Allow God the privilege of working miracles, to bring you to a new level you never thought possible.

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”
(Rom. 8:28 KJV)*