

© Copyright 2009 - Robert Stearns

All rights reserved. This book is protected by the copyright laws of the United States of America. This book may not be copied or reprinted for commercial gain or profit. The use of short quotations or occasional page copying for personal or group study is permitted and encouraged. Permission will be granted upon request. Unless otherwise identified, Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scriptures marked NIV are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved. Scriptures marked NASB are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Scriptures marked ESV are taken from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scriptures marked KJV are taken from the King James Version. Emphasis within Scripture quotations is the author's own. Please note that Destiny Image's publishing style capitalizes certain pronouns in Scripture that refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and may differ from some publishers' styles. Take note that the name satan and related names are not capitalized. We choose not to acknowledge him, even to the point of violating grammatical rules.

---

DESTINY IMAGE® PUBLISHERS, INC.  
P.O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310

*"Speaking to the Purposes of God for this Generation and for the Generations to Come."*

This book and all other Destiny Image, Revival Press, Mercy Place, Fresh Bread, Destiny Image Fiction, and Treasure House books are available at Christian bookstores and distributors worldwide.

For a U.S. bookstore nearest you, call 1-800-722-6774.  
For more information on foreign distributors, call 717-532-3040.  
Reach us on the Internet at [www.destinyimage.com](http://www.destinyimage.com).

---

ISBN: 0-7684-2754-1  
ISBN: 978-0-7684-2754-7  
For Worldwide Distribution, Printed in the U.S.A.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 / 13 12 11 10 09

## DEDICATION

*For Ana,  
Sweetheart, you are every bit as wise  
and beautiful as the heroine of this book,  
and I am blessed among men  
to have you at my side.*

# CONTENTS

Special Note From the Author . . . . .	15		
Foreword . . . . .	19		
Chapter 1 One Life Makes All the Difference . . . . .	23		
Chapter 2 Three Strikes . . . . .	37		
Chapter 3 The Danger of Distraction . . . . .	49		
Chapter 4 The Malignancy of Denial. . . . .	63		
Chapter 5 The Cry of Mordecai . . . . .	79		
Chapter 6 Esther's Transformation . . . . .	97		
Chapter 7 Breakthrough #1—Recognizing Reality . . . . .	111		
Chapter 8 Breakthrough #2—Crying Out . . . . .	127		
		Chapter 9	Breakthrough #3—Determined Convictions . . . . . 143
		Chapter 10	Breakthrough #4—Courage . . . . . 159
		Chapter 11	Breakthrough #5—Divine Strategy . . . . . 177
		Chapter 12	For Such a Time as This . . . . . 191
		Chapter 13	Becoming an Esther Generation . . . . . 211
			A Call to Action . . . . . 227

## CHAPTER 1

# ONE LIFE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

*An unused life is an early death.*  
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

*How wonderful it is that nobody need wait  
a single moment before starting  
to improve the world.<sup>1</sup>*  
—Anne Frank

“The news is reporting that Benazir Bhutto has been assassinated.”

I hung up my cell phone and immediately headed toward a television. As I did, my mind flashed to the recent memory of sitting at lunch with Mrs. Bhutto, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, at the Presidential Palace in Kiev, Ukraine. We were both speakers at the Inaugural Summit on Peace and Tolerance. I had been privileged to share two private meals with her, and also had several other opportunities for conversation during that three-day conference, which had taken place just eight months earlier.

I had been watching now for many weeks, along with the rest of the world, as she had triumphantly returned to Pakistan and was standing up against the government, calling for fair and democratic elections. Now, watching the news coverage of her death on the screen in front of me felt...it

felt surreal. Certainly I did not know her as a close friend; and yet, having spent time with her as she shared her story with me, the tragedy being played out on the television in front of my eyes seemed unbelievable. The juxtaposition of remembering a personal lunch with someone who was sharing about her children and personal aspirations over coffee, and seeing now a world leader assassinated, was mind-numbing.

She told me that her native Pakistan had been filled with turmoil and unrest “forever, it seemed.” Her father, brother, and uncle had all been killed. When we were together in May 2007, she was still living in political exile, dividing her time between England (where her son, Bilawal, was studying at Christ Church Oxford), and Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from where she was attempting to stage her political return to Pakistan. She had spoken glowingly and with obvious pride about her son, whose image I now saw on the screen, mourning beside his mother’s lifeless body.

She was a strong woman, completely dedicated to her cause. Believing that the fate of her people rested in the decisions she did or did not make, she chose to turn her back on the comfortable life in the West—where she could have given speeches and written books about her experience as the first and only woman to be elected Prime Minister of an Islamic nation—and return to her homeland to fulfill what she believed was her destiny. In so doing, she knew that her death was very possible, and perhaps likely.

This was a woman, a wife, a mother, a leader who chose to fight the forces of radicalism and extremism within Islam, who chose to hear another call and take a difficult path.

It is not hard to draw comparisons between the late Benazir Bhutto and the biblical Esther, Queen of Persia. Both gifted, intelligent, beautiful young women who found themselves in

high-level positions of national influence at a time when much was at stake. Like Benazir, Esther was a woman who took a stand for her people. Her brave actions ultimately saved the Israelite nation from extinction. These two women had other options in life, but they chose to live for the greater good.

Over the past several years of my life, I have been absolutely captivated by the story of Esther, who was an everyday, ordinary girl, with nothing (other than her beauty) remarkable about her. She possessed no qualities that would set her apart for greatness or political involvement or national leadership. She was an average person who found herself in an historic, world-changing moment. She discovered, through the persistent voice of her Uncle<sup>2</sup> Mordecai, that the events of her life, which had brought her to the palace at that particular point in history, were not arbitrary. She had been positioned by an unseen hand for a yet unknown purpose.

Men and women throughout history and today have chosen to make a difference in their world—both for good and for evil. Have you ever thought about how the monumental events of history are inextricably linked with the names, faces, and life stories of commonplace, flesh-and-blood people? No one can tell their children the story of the American Revolution without mentioning the name of Paul Revere. It’s impossible to remember the events of 9/11 without envisioning the passport photos of the 19 hijackers who flew the planes into the Twin Towers that Tuesday morning in New York City.

One individual life matters. One individual’s choice makes a difference. My life, your life, our lives, and the choices we make every day about how we use the gift of life we have been given, make so much more of an impact than we realize. For better or worse, history really does change because regular, everyday people—mothers, fathers, workers, teachers, grandparents—make decisions to use the resources they have been given to effect

change in the world around them. The doors of history hinge on the extraordinary decisions of ordinary people.

~ THE DOORS OF HISTORY HINGE ~  
ON THE EXTRAORDINARY DECISIONS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE. ~

### OPENING THE DOOR

It is not a difficult task to prove how history changes, for better or worse, because ordinary people make principled decisions.

How much longer would slavery have been tolerated if William Wilberforce hadn't won his 20-year-long battle to end the British slave trade? The 2007 film, *Amazing Grace*, was a tribute to his Christian faith that prompted him to become passionate about social reform. He and others campaigned for an end to the trade in which British ships were carrying innocent people from Africa, in terrible conditions, to the West Indies as goods to be bought and sold. Wilberforce lobbied with dogged determination for 18 years, and despite the constant censure of his peers in Parliament, he insistently pushed for anti-slavery motions until success was won.<sup>3</sup>

We all think of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as the towering prophetic leader of the civil rights movement. A powerful, well-educated orator, he had the charisma to lead perhaps the most massive social justice movement in our nation's history. But don't forget that it is Rosa Parks who is nationally recognized as the "mother of the modern-day civil rights movement" in the United States. Born the daughter of a carpenter and a teacher, Rosa grew up to also become a teacher and married Raymond Parks, a barber. Together they worked behind the scenes through organizations to improve the conditions of their people. Her refusal to surrender her seat to a white male passenger on a Montgomery,

Alabama, bus in 1955 triggered a wave of protests that reverberated throughout the country. The simple, courageous act of a commonplace schoolteacher changed America, its view of African Americans, and redirected the course of world events.<sup>4</sup>

After seeing the conditions outside her classroom window, Mother Teresa left the convent school where she had been teaching to devote herself to working among the poor in the slums of Calcutta. She depended on "Divine Providence" and started an open-air school for disadvantaged children. From humble beginnings, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu (Mother Teresa's given name) dedicated her every thought, desire, and breath to helping the poor. She eventually established the Society of Missionaries that has spread worldwide, including former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, providing assistance to needy families in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The religious order left in place by this one faithful woman now offers relief work in the wake of natural catastrophes, such as floods, epidemics, and famine. The order has houses in North America, Europe, and Australia, where they care for shut-ins, alcoholics, homeless, and AIDS sufferers.<sup>5</sup>

The power to make choices that impact the direction of history applies not only to lives committed to righteous causes, but also to those advancing purposes of wickedness. Humankind's natural tendency, when not tempered by the transforming power of absolute truth, is to lust for power and self-gratification. Many in history (and many today) succumb to the evil inclinations within their souls and are led by these tendencies to make a difference in their worlds as well.

In the late 1970s, Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge party, a prime example of the staggering evil that human nature can generate, killed more than a million Cambodians "to create an idealized agrarian communist society." Along the way, he crushed social institutions such as banking and religion to reach his goal.<sup>6</sup>