

chapter 1

The
Story of
Life Word

In the movie *Secondhand Lions*, Walter, a 12-year-old boy, is dropped off with his “crazy uncles,” Hub and Garth, for the summer. This turns into a wild ride of discovery. Legend has it that his uncles have lived an incredible life of adventure, victory, and defeat, love and loss, and great fortune. But rumors swirl that they are bank robbers or even worse and that they are sitting on top of millions.

The movie unfolds with unbelievable tales of adventure as the young boy tries to determine what and who to believe in. Along the way he is raised by and comes to love his valiant, heroic uncles and learns first-hand what it takes be a man and live life to the fullest. The final scene culminates with the uncles dying at the age of 90 as they try to fly a plane upside down through a barn.

As Walter arrived at the barn he met up with the grandson of a sheik who had been part of the epic tales. There he was asked, “So these men from the stories really *lived*?” To which he responded, “Yes, they *really* lived.”

That's what *Life Word* is all about—ensuring that we *really* live.

When we're young, we have big dreams about changing the world and pursuing greatness. We are told that we can “be whoever we want to be” and we can “do great things,” but inevitably the reality of life—the responsibilities and stress and busyness—often distracts us from our dreams and robs us of our sense of purpose and passion. We begin to lose focus on what is possible, what we're made for, and what we're passionate about. We settle for the “easy” road. We often become complacent and play it safe. We're directed by the expectations of others instead of our God-given purpose and path. And worst of all, we lose sight of that vision to use our unique gifts and talents to make this world a better place and leave a lasting legacy.

Australian nurse Bronnie Ware spent several years caring for terminal patients in the last 12 weeks of life. Her patients experienced a

phenomenal clarity of vision as they neared death that we must learn from. From this experience she compiled a list of the top five regrets of the dying. The number one regret that people shared when looking back on their lives was—*I didn't live the life I was made to live*. Somewhere along the line they got off track and had lost sight of the vision they had for their life. They described countless unfulfilled dreams and knew it was due to choices they had made; they took their eyes off their purpose and lived a life others expected of them instead of pursuing their dreams.

By helping you discover your *Life Word*, we give you a telescope to see far into the future of your life. We help you discover your unique purpose and path. And you'll choose a *Life Word* that will help you stay on track and live a life of impact. In the end you'll make a mark that makes a difference and you'll pass on a legacy worth leaving behind.

We've all heard it said that life is short. It's like a vapor that appears and is gone; it's like the steam that rises from the pot of tea. Or the

morning fog that settles just above the ground, but quickly disappears with the rising sun. And because it's short, we are compelled to make the most of it!

Life is short. Make the most of it!

Discovering your *Life Word* changes your perspective entirely. It helps you begin with the end in mind, see the big picture, and discover the purpose of your life. It's discovered at the intersection of the answers to three big three questions—Who, Why, and What:

Who am I made to be? Why am I here? What energizes me?

And, it captures all of that into a single *Life Word* to help you navigate true north and live a life that leaves an impact. No matter what stage of life you are in, your *Life Word* will help you discover your purpose, maximize your opportunities, and leave a positive, lasting legacy.

Our own experience with this process has been transformational. We'd like to share our stories with you.

Dan's Story

When I think of legacy, I think of one person . . . my father. He was an incredible man who lived well and died well. He passed away in 2008, but his legacy lives on because he lived life with passion, enthusiasm, and intensity. Battling leukemia for 18 months, he was still focused on finishing well, fighting the good fight, and running the right race. Days before dying, he wrote in his journal, "I'm absolutely convinced that I'm able to stay positive due to the ongoing prayers of all of you! I am enjoying daily the final laps of my life." He lived life to its fullest—to the very end.

My dad lived every second of the day as if it were his last. Not just when he became sick, but throughout his entire life. His favorite quote was, "Life is God's gift to us. What we do with it is our gift back to Him." That became his life's ambition. He made an impact on everyone around him and you never forgot Ed Britton.

Live each day like it's your last.

As a result of the legacy he lived . . . and left, I discovered my *Life Word*. I realized that my motivation is to live every day as if it were my last. To show up with everything I have and pour out my life every single second, minute, hour, day, week, month, and year. I want to count every day so that I make every day count.

My *Life Word* is ***Passion***. I desire to infuse life into every circumstance, every meeting, every relationship, and every encounter. It's about living life with reckless abandonment. When it is all said and done, I want someone to say about me, "Dan was passionate about God and passionate about others."

Jimmy's Story

I've always loved rooting for the underdog. And I love the big upset when the team with little to no chance of winning actually makes it happen! Heck, I loved being the underdog.

Being the smallest kid in my class until I was a junior in high school made me work super hard to compete against the bigger kids. I would get home from school, put down my books, pick up a ball, and go to work; I put in thousands of hours of extra work just to be my best on the courts or fields. I did it because I loved it. I was routinely underestimated and it fueled me to be my best.

Growing up playing Little League baseball, our team was from the town that didn't splurge on full uniforms, so when we played in tournaments, we looked like a ragtag, mismatched bunch! That made it even more exciting when we would walk away with the trophy as our opponents shook their heads in disbelief.

I love gritty inspirational movies like *Rocky*, *Miracle*, *Rudy*, and *October Sky*—the ones that show us what's possible with enough hard work, passion, and persistence. The movies that inspire you to dream bigger dreams, take bigger risks, and believe in the impossible; to overcome incredible obstacles and challenges and face your fears.

Dream bigger dreams, take bigger risks, believe in the impossible.

I love the stories of superheroes and everyday heroes and I'm inspired by them. I've been inspired by my parents, teachers, coaches, those who have sacrificed in the military, and people on the streets. People who take a stand for what they believe or defend the defenseless—they inspire me, too. Even today, I want to be inspired and inspire others.

That's why my *Life Word* is **Inspire**. It burns in me to inspire others to explore and experience God's best for their life. This focuses and motivates me whenever I write, speak, or develop leaders and it influences every relationship and interaction. I want to live in such a way—using my gifts, passion, and platform—to inspire people to live life to the fullest.

Jon's Story

I'm not naturally positive. People think I am because of the books I write and talks that I give, but I have to work hard at it. I often joke that growing up in a Jewish, Italian family with a lot of food and a lot of guilt didn't help. In my late twenties after struggling with my own negativity, fear, and depression, I remember asking God why I was so miserable and what was I born to do?

Writing and speaking came to me and so did the mission of becoming more positive and sharing positivity with others. Over the years I realized my gifts were in teaching, communicating, writing, and inspiring. I found my purpose in teaching what I needed to learn and creating a more positive world, one person at a time. I discovered I'm passionate about helping leaders, organizations, teams, and people from all walks of life become more positive.

Creating a more
positive world,
one person at a time.

My daughter recently wrote her college admissions essay. She started it like this. “When I was young my mom struggled with her health and my dad struggled with himself. He was very negative and unhappy, but I watched as he worked to become a more positive person. Then he started writing and speaking and sharing positive messages with others. I saw how he changed and how other people changed. I know if he can change and they can change, the world can change.” I teared up after reading her words, because I saw how my path of becoming more positive impacted my marriage, my children, my work, and those who read my books.

I know without a doubt that being positive not only makes you better, it makes everyone around you better. I know that **Positive** is my *Life Word*, calling, and mission. Every day I wake up I know my job is to live it and share it.

Your Story

Your *Life Word* gives you a simple, powerful reminder to make sure that you live on purpose, align your priorities, and live with passion to

make a difference for others. It acts as a lighthouse of sorts to help you stay focused on the things that matter most.

We believe there is a *Life Word* that's meant for you. It's a word that captures who you are, why you're here, and what drives you. It captures your hopes and dreams mixed with your gifts and talents. It helps you live well and leave a legacy that you are designed to leave—a legacy that will change the world and make it better in some important way. What's your story?

