

Finding Our Way Forward

When the
Children We Love
Become Adults

MELANIE
SPRINGER
MOCK

Study Guide by Marilee Jolin

***Note:** The author has included short exercises at the conclusion of each chapter. This study guide supplements those exercises with additional topics for individual reflection and group sharing. I encourage readers to complete the exercises for each chapter and share their responses with the group.*



Harrisonburg, Virginia

Introduction

Leaders: The introduction is an opportunity to ground your group in who they are and what they are bringing to Finding Our Way Forward. The questions in this section are intended to introduce the group members to each other, deepen their connection to one another, and prepare them to consider the book's overarching invitation to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly.

1. GETTING ACQUAINTED

The author notes that *Finding Our Way Forward* is written primarily with parents in mind, but has value for others as well:

I hope this book will be useful not only for parents, but also for others who may have a different kind of relationship with young adults outside of family. . . . Maybe there are young adults in your found family; maybe you work with young adults, or teach them, or mentor them. While this book might be primarily for parents, the insights offered here will help anybody who loves young adults. (pp. 20–21)

In what arena do you encounter young adults? Are you a parent? Teacher? Are young adults part of your “found family”? Share a bit about these young adults in your life and how you interact with them.

Why were you drawn to read this book and join this group? What do you hope to gain from *Finding Our Way Forward*?

How do the young adults in your life give you cause for optimism? What worries or fears arise when you think about the young adults you know?

2. FRAMING THE BOOK: MICAH 6:8

Read Micah 6:8, then consider the following passage:

The prophet Micah lived during unprecedented times as well, and knew firsthand what it meant to face a world on fire, the evils of corrupted power and injustice afflicting Israel. Micah 6:8 outlines how people should respond when facing a world on fire. (p. 22)

Does the experience of “the world on fire” resonate with you? Do you find comfort in the simple steps outlined in Micah 6:8 as a response to this?

What does it look like in your life “to do justice, love kindness, walk humbly, love others, and love God” (p. 23)?

3. PREPARING OURSELVES

The author is clear that *Finding Our Way Forward* is as much a journey into ourselves as it is a prescription for helping young adults. As we read, we will be invited into our own self-examination, confession, and transformation.

Finding Our Way Forward is not a how-to book, nor can I provide ready advice about how to successfully guide young adults into a happily-ever-after life. Instead, I'd love you to see this book as an invitation, an opportunity to consider with me what it means to walk beside young people in unprecedented times, and what we can learn about ourselves on this journey. (p. 20)

Throughout this book, the author invites us to identify our own biases, shortcomings, fears, and sins as we explore how they may be hampering our ability to guide the young adults in our lives.

Does this idea excite or terrify you? Or something in between?

Discuss how your group will support each other as you venture into this vulnerable territory together. Perhaps you'd like to establish some ground rules to help participants feel safe as they share about sensitive subjects in their lives. Simple rules like speaking only from your own experience, not interrupting, and being aware of how much space you're taking up in relation to others in the group can help make room for personal growth.

There are many resources online if you'd like more detailed guidelines for group sharing. I like "Communication Guidelines for a Braver Space," available at this link: <https://winrs.nursing.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/627/2022/07/Communication-guidelines-for-a-Brave-Space-Aware-LA.pdf>.

CHAPTER 1

With a Grateful Heart

In this chapter, the author poignantly describes the sorrow and anger felt by many young adults when their lives do not follow the path prescribed by their own expectations and the expectations of those around them. She then invites us into radical thanksgiving.

1. WRITING NEW NARRATIVES

Like so many other people their age, Ben and Sam are fighting against an onslaught of messages reminding them that God's providence is reflected in a narrowly circumscribed understanding of success for people their age: admission to college, the beginnings of a lucrative career, self-sufficiency. And of course, finding true love, preparing for a family, delighting in the accoutrements of independence, like a nice car and a good cell phone plan. (p. 27)

What is the “narrowly circumscribed understanding of success” that you see prescribed for the young adults around you? Consider the proper timing for college and graduate school, expectations for marriage and family, and what types of jobs you see as successful. Are those expectations for success based on “how the world gives” or on how God gives?

Read John 14:27 and consider the kind of peace Jesus is promising.

Do your definitions of success align with this type of peace—or are they rooted in a capitalist understanding of safety, security, and classism?

If we could write new narratives, we might see that providence extends beyond our simple definitions of what life should look like. Because until we believe that each young adult is a unique expression of God's favor, it will be difficult to look on some young people's lives—and our own—and deeply believe that those lives are worthy of thanksgiving. (p. 29)

God is with us no matter the direction we take. It seems like this alone would be grounds for gratitude. (p. 34)

What might a new narrative for the young adults you love look like? Are you open to redefining your expectations for them?

2. NOTICING THANKSGIVING

The author invites us to offer thanksgiving for the seemingly small and even “banal” moments, “praising God for the pure joy found in the fleeting hours before Christmas, when a kitchen smeared with frosting and gingerbread dust feels magical” (p. 38). She also invites us to cherish the times when “thanksgiving comes easily” (p. 31).

Where are the moments of easy thanksgiving in your life? Can you recall moments similar to what the author shares on pages 37–38, where your cup is overflowing and you are filled with gratitude?

Take a moment to reflect on and celebrate these moments in sensory detail as a form of prayerful gratitude. Remember the smells and touches of those moments, the sounds and tastes. Write them in detail or draw or paint them, and consider sharing with the group.

3. TRUSTING A PROFLIGATE GOD

Throughout *Finding Our Way Forward*, the author describes God as “profligate,” meaning recklessly extravagant or wasteful in the use of resources (p. 34).

How does this description of God resonate with you? Have you experienced God as extravagant or even wasteful in relation to you? If you find that your image of God is not one of extravagance, reflect on why that might be. **Do you feel called to form a more profligate view of God?**

CHAPTER 2

To Discovering Your Calling(s)

In this chapter, the author examines our approach to calling and vocation, noting areas where our expectations may drift toward classism and away from God's true calling in our lives. She asserts that our conflation of calling with career makes us exert undue pressure on young adults.

1. DIRECT AND CIRCUITOUS ROUTES

The chapter opens with a powerful personal reflection on the author's own winding journey to settle into a career. She felt pressured to respond to God's calling but never felt strong alignment between the job options she was moving toward and the ease-filled, heaven-sent experience of calling she was taught to expect.

My route to adulthood was definitely circuitous, and your own pathway to adulthood no doubt included stops and starts, redirections, ill-informed decisions to change purpose, choices distilled through a white-hot process of anxiety and second-guessing. This is normal, despite the persistent efforts we make to help young adults choose a calling. (p. 44)

How did you experience the path toward career and calling as a young adult? Do you have a similar story to the author's, or did you follow a more circumscribed path? What were the stops and starts in your journey to adulthood?

2. CLASSISM IN CALLING

Reflect on the story on page 51 about a student who left university to become a beautician. Imagine you were guiding this student as a mentor, auntie or uncle, or parent.

How would you have handled the young person's decision? Consider this quote:

After all, our culture insists that success for young adults looks like a clear plan for the future, a well-paying job, and independent living—a vision of success that has, ironically, created a student debt crisis whereby countless young people take out hefty college loans to fund the degrees they presumably need to unlock doors to a good life to which God calls them. Could being a beautician really advance God's kingdom? The answer is yes, absolutely. (p. 51)

Do you agree with the author's pronouncement that applying makeup and doing hair can advance God's kingdom? Or do you feel resistance to the idea?

Classism is defined as prejudice against or in favor of people who belong to a particular social class.

Do you see classism reflected in how we talk about calling? Are young adults pushed toward higher-paying/higher-class jobs and away from lower-wage work? **Do you feel uncomfortable with the idea of someone being called to be a waiter or a farm worker or a bartender?**

3. DOES CALLING EQUAL CAREER?

On page 47, the author decries our tendency to focus only on career when we speak of God's calling:

Yet I often contemplate a more complicated understanding. It's not one call that has made me become more who God created me to be, but the multitude of callings to which I have committed my life, to following the teachings of Jesus and all that following entails. Those who answer these other calls, the Gospels say, are the ones who will truly be blessed. So why this intent focus on career, rather than the many other ways we are called by God?

Do you believe that our culture overemphasizes career as our primary calling, especially to young adults? **How have you experienced God's call in ways that are not related to your career?**

On page 58, the author suggests a different way of approaching calling with young adults:

Is it possible to acknowledge that we are called, all of us, to a beautiful life completely divorced from our vocations? How might our own lives model for young adults an openness to the moment, rather than angst about finding our next productive role? How can we embrace the simple rhythms of daily living, of accepting the gift of each day without deciding we need to know our calling beyond loving God and loving each other?

Have you overemphasized career with the young adults in your life? How might you expand your definition of calling to encompass a more holistic view of the gospel call in our lives?

CHAPTER 3

Through Lament

Reflecting on the deep sadness we may experience as our young adult children leave home, the author invites us to not shy away from our grief but to embrace it as a path to transformation and an opportunity to move toward true hope for ourselves and for the young adults we love.

The Bible's narrative arc reminds us that lament gives way to hope, that mourning will be replaced by joy. In Psalm 22, the poet's grief yields to rejoicing in the recognition that God has not forsaken him, that God's providence reigns, that the poor will not be hungry forever and the downtrodden will find God's favor. The resurrection story itself announces that the lament on Good Friday prepares us for the joy of Jesus' return, of life conquering death. Without the bitter agony of the crucifixion, we would not have the luminous good news of Easter Sunday.

Lament isn't the end of our story. (p. 76)

1. ACKNOWLEDGING LAMENT

There is much to lament in both our individual lives and the world. The author details many things to lament on pages 70–72, including climate change, the threat of gun violence, the global COVID-19 pandemic, ideological divisions, lack of justice, and the economic and emotional struggles for young adults setting out on their own.

What does it look like for you to mourn these things? Are there additional laments you experience in the world for which you feel called to mourn?

The author asserts that it is essential to acknowledge and fully feel our own sorrow as the young adults in our lives grow up and our relationships and lives with them shift.

If we simply suggest that all is well when our kids leave home— that, in fact, we rejoice in their absence from our homes—we circumvent the opportunity to fully experience the love we have for them, as well as to know God's deep love for us reflected in our children. Lament provides us an honest reckoning with a shift in our lives, compelling us to realize we can't ever go back to the way things were. Rather than just moving straight to a new normal, we might do well to honor what causes us to mourn and create rituals which acknowledge that sadness itself is sacred. (p. 66)

Does this approach—to fully feel, rather than brush past our sadness and lament—beckon you? Have you been encouraged to ignore or move on quickly from sadness? Are you interested in offering a different model for lament to the young adults in your life?

What rituals, prayers, or practices might you engage to honor what causes us to mourn and create sacred space for lament?

2. OFFERING HOPE

The author suggests that embracing our own sorrow allows for deeper intimacy in our relationship with God and young adults. Lament increases empathy and compassion and discourages us from offering easy answers or dismissing others' pain. Opening ourselves to lament also enables us to more fully receive the experiences of the young adults in our lives.

Where are the opportunities in your life to be more honest and vulnerable about the sorrow you feel? **Do you believe that doing so could deepen your capacity to listen empathetically to the young adults you love?**

The author believes that lament pushes us toward action and greater faith in God: "Nevertheless, we should lament. And then, from the anguish of our souls, persist in making a better tomorrow, where God is sovereign" (p. 78).

The third short exercise by the author on page 79 asks you to list three action steps you could take to "turn your mourning into activism, creating a more just and equitable world for all young adults." Share your action steps with the group. **Do you feel called to join any of the actions shared by other members of the group?**

CHAPTER 4

Alone and Together

As our lives change, we often experience loneliness. The author shares about her own intense loneliness as a young adult as well as her more recent experience of loneliness after her sons moved out. Loneliness is a normal part of life, she asserts, but when we give in to the stigma and shame around loneliness, we may end up increasing our isolation instead of taking steps to find the connection for which we long.

1. LONELINESS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Do you relate to the loneliness the author describes so poignantly on pages 81–83? Recall a time in your past (or present) when you longed for human connection and struggled to find it. Perhaps you are experiencing it now: perhaps your young adult children are leaving home and you find you have more time but fewer natural opportunities to connect.

Like the recent graduate who realizes that sustaining adult friendships takes effort, I've discovered that I also have to work to stay connected, and that sometimes it's far easier to watch Netflix alone in sweats than call up a friend and meet somewhere for dinner. (p. 89)

In your current or past season of loneliness, did you experience God meeting you, or did you feel disconnected from the divine? **How can this experience help you relate to and support young adults experiencing isolation and loneliness?**

On page 85, the author asserts that apps like Tinder condition youth “to see relationships as something established instantaneously,” and thereby increase our shame around experiencing loneliness.

Now, I wonder how the internet and social media might have complicated my loneliness, making me feel even worse—how filtered photos of beautiful friends out together, or gazing lovingly at their partners, might have made my life seem significantly bleaker than it actually was. At the time, I couldn't have fathomed tools that put me immediately in touch with others, inexpensively, through a digital screen. But I also wouldn't have dreamed about all the ways that smartphones, apps, and other such technology exacerbate loneliness, making people feel even more isolated. (pp. 85–86)

In what ways do you think social media and dating apps have exacerbated the experience of loneliness by creating a stigma around it? Have you seen any benefits to social media and dating apps for establishing relationships and decreasing loneliness?

If you are not currently experiencing isolation and loneliness, consider the author's suggestion to embrace hope by reaching out to others, “using the privilege afforded by an already established community to pull someone else into your orbit” (p. 97).

Do you feel a divine invitation in this? Whom could you reach out to this week?

2. LEARNING FROM OUR LONELINESS

The author sees loneliness as an inevitable part of life and an important opportunity to learn more about ourselves. Consider this passage from page 95:

Psychology tells us that solitude might even be crucial to individuation, and that only in our aloneness can we truly understand who we are and who we hope to be. Psychologist Carl Jung especially prized solitude as a significant way we get in touch with our truest selves.

Have you learned more about yourself during times of loneliness? How could you share that with young adults in your life who might be struggling with the stigma of loneliness?

CHAPTER 5

Walking Humbly

As the young adults we love grow up and begin making more of their own life decisions, their choices may not align with our values or beliefs. In this chapter, the author shares her own confusion and struggle with some of her sons' life choices. She invites us to consider how the biblical call to walk humbly requires us to release our biases and attempts at control.

1. IDENTIFY OUR BIASES

The author's experience when her son enlisted in the Navy taught her that what we consider our values or beliefs can sometimes become biases that keep us from seeing the larger workings of God in the lives of the young adults we love.

Are the young adults in your life making choices or considering choices that do not align with your dearly held beliefs or values? How have you responded to this?

Consider the author's reflection:

Perhaps the ground shifting under us was what we needed—what I needed—to recognize what walking humbly with God might look like: being proud of a son whose deeply held convictions challenge my deeply held biases, compelling me to change. And then, having the humility to be transformed. (p. 115)

What “deeply held biases” are you carrying? Could these biases be hindering the young adults in your life from pursuing God's unique call on their lives? How might you approach a shift? Are you open to the kind of transformation the author shares?

2. RELEASING CONTROL

The author beautifully sums up the courageous call she has felt in relation to releasing control of her children as they become adults:

Letting go of the expectations for our children takes extravagant courage because it means relinquishing control to what seems an impetuous universe, where powerful leaders can drop bombs on civilians and live in luxury while others starve. We are forced to decide: Will we live by the illusion that we can protect our children, and ourselves, from the vagaries of a threatening world or will we respond with faith that God's love is ascendent despite what threatens, even when our young adults choose values that differ from our own? (p. 118)

... could I possibly possess the humility to trust that Benjamin's life is his own, and that his own choice to step aside from the values his parents embraced was also part of God's will? (p. 111)

Do you agree with the author that we are called to give up the illusion that we can protect our children?
How could releasing control be an act of love and faith?

In what other areas of your life have you been led to release control? Have you felt liberation in that release? Was it a difficult process?

Try the practice of holding opposites. In this chapter, we encounter the seeming opposites of the author's staunch pacifism and her firm belief that her son is following God's call. This seems to make no sense—at least not as society usually frames things. But in holding these two opposing truths, the author experienced relief, humility, and a deeper faith in God.

Are there opposing truths you are being asked to hold that will help you relinquish the desire for control into God's all-loving, generous hands?

3. CHOOSING TO TRUST

On page 112, the author expresses her faith that the values her son was raised with will bring God's light into whatever situation her son is in:

Let Ben be a light continues to serve as a prayer that guides me, a hope-filled invocation that will continue to bear fruit, bolstered by the countless childhood lessons we gave Ben about making peace.

What values have you worked to instill in your young adult children that you believe will bear fruit as they set out into the world? Can you trust that God will bring these values to them in divine timing even if you do not see the fruit?

This chapter asks us to demonstrate unconditional love to young adults even when they make choices that we do not understand or agree with. If you are struggling with this, consider the words of the author's student Hannah: "My parents see the light in me . . . even if they don't agree with me" (p. 117).

Write a prayer asking for God's help to see the light in the young adults you love. Share your prayer with the group.

CHAPTER 6

To Loving Mercy

In this chapter, the author reflects on what it means for us to offer loving mercy to ourselves and to the young adults we love. She asks us to consider the times we have fallen short of our ideals, to consider whether we truly believe that God’s mercy for us is extravagant and infinite, and then to more fully embrace mercy for others as God lavishes it upon us.

1. MAKING MISTAKES

The author expresses empathy and understanding for the mistakes that parents make. As she reflects on her own errors, she sometimes prays:

Dear Lord, I have made mistakes.

I say this as an invocation and a confession, an admission of my failures, and a prayer that God and my children and my students will treat me with loving mercy, despite my faults, my blind spots, my inability to love perfectly with the flawless ease I see in so many others. Who, let’s face it, have probably made ample mistakes too. (p. 126)

How could you join the author in this prayer? Where have you striven to be perfect and found yourself wanting? **Do you trust that God, and others, will treat you with loving mercy?** Or does it seem unlikely or too risky?

On pages 131–32, the author shares examples of times she fell short in her desire to offer loving mercy to her sons.

Where have you fallen short in offering loving mercy to the young adults in your life? What might it look like for you to cultivate an “open-hearted desire to understand” (p. 132) rather than an impulse to judgment?

As we come to terms with our own mistakes, the author believes we become better at offering loving mercy to the young adults we love. We are often compelled to prevent our kids from making mistakes because we do not allow mistakes for ourselves, either.

When in your life have you made a mistake that taught you something, something without which you would not have grown or transformed? Can you trust that your children’s mistakes can similarly offer them important opportunities for growth and self-knowledge?

2. ON BEING GOOD

We live in a world that often tells us that we “get what we deserve”—that good things should happen to good people (and bad to bad). But the author defines goodness differently.

Our fundamental goodness is not derived from anything we can do. . . . We are good just because we exist, inherently worthy because of our creation as an image of our Creator. (p. 135)

Our primary identity is not in our goodness, but because we are beloved. (p. 136)

When you were growing up, how was goodness defined? Does the author’s definition of goodness resonate with you?

Write down what you now believe makes us good, then share it with the group.

CHAPTER 7

To a Deeper Faith

The author shares her home church's struggle to find unity around LGBTQIA and racial justice issues—a struggle that eventually led the church to split. Considering national research, her own children's experience, and the experiences of her students, the author concludes that many young people are leaving the institutional church, though not necessarily abandoning their faith. While she grieves for the loss of her church and is saddened by the young adults' departures, she also sees this shift calling us into a deeper faith: trusting that God is creating something new and asking us to open our hearts and minds to consider a broader view of what church could look like.

1. A DIVIDED CHURCH

The author contends that young adults are leaving church because of theology that diminishes, dismisses, or harms marginalized people:

When the church's definition of God's chosen people discounts the humanity of everyone save for those who are white, cisgender, and heterosexual, it's easy to see why so many young adults reject organized religion. (pp. 149)

Cisgender: denoting or relating to a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex registered for them at birth; not transgender.

Has your faith community encountered the kinds of struggles the author shares related to disagreements about LGBTQIA people or a response to racism? Do you agree that too many churches define God's chosen people as white, cisgender, and heterosexual? Why or why not? How have you pursued justice related to these issues within your church?

The author quotes Brea Perry, writing for *The Witness: A Black Christian Collective* blog, about why her generation has stopped attending church: when they reject church, they are not rejecting Jesus. Rather, says Perry, "we're leaving misogyny masquerading as mission, capitalism claiming to be calling, and narcissism naming itself fresh revelation" (p. 150).

Perry uses strong words to describe young adults' experience in the church:

Misogyny: dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women.

Capitalism: an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit.

Narcissism: extreme self-involvement to the degree that it makes a person ignore the needs of those around them.

Ask yourself honestly—do you see misogyny, capitalism, or narcissism in how your church embraces mission, calling, and revelation? If you don't see these things, why do you believe so many young adults are leaving the church? What might God be calling your church to do differently?

2. RELIGIOUS TRAUMA

The author also points to religious trauma as a source of young adults' departure from the institutional church:

Another force driving an exodus from churches is the pursuit of justice in response to religious trauma. This term has gained prominence in the past decade because of social media and a growing awareness that some churches have caused immeasurable harm. Their theological positions and their willingness to exert emotional control over people on the margins inflicts further trauma on people who have been victimized. (p. 150)

Are you familiar with the term *religious trauma*? **Does this concept make you uncomfortable? How could naming and understanding this concept help us love others better?**

Consider the personal stories, studies, and research the author presents on pages 151–53 related to the prevalence of sexual assault and abuse within the church and the evidence of how these abuses are regularly covered up.

Thousands of women (and some men) told their stories on social media of being harmed within a Christian context—in youth group, at summer camp, in church sanctuaries and Sunday school rooms—often expressing their outrage and grief that the very place where they should have felt safe traumatized them instead. (p. 151)

Have you or young adults you love experienced such harm in the church? How was this harm handled by church leadership and laypeople? **If this is part of your experience, how have you sought healing for yourself or the young people you love who have suffered religious trauma?**

3. A CHANGING CHURCH

We may need to concede that the traditional ways of doing church are not inviolate, and that those ways no longer work for many people who ardently believe in Jesus' words and his call for justice. (p. 156)

Does this idea make you uncomfortable—or are you eager to learn from young adults and consider the traditions of our forebears with a critical eye? What words would you use in prayer to ask God to help you and your church be less tied to human tradition and more open to divine inspiration?

Consider the many ways the author sees young adults embracing their faith outside of the traditional constructs of church:

The young adults who have left the churches of their childhoods are rebuilding faith, with justice as a framework to guide their efforts. I see this play out on social media platforms, where young adults are crafting virtual communities that might well rival what some experience in churches. . . .

And some young adults are constructing their own kinds of worship experiences: Hiking together in nature they are working hard to protect because they profoundly feel God's presence there. Creating rituals in their homes to connect them to diverse communities that reflect the multifaceted image of God. Pursuing religious traditions more aligned with justice, or conflating several religious traditions into one, finding in the amalgam a new approach to knowing God. Several young adults told me that these unique path-ways to a relationship with God have helped heal the trauma wrought by their evangelical upbringings, and that this healing might, at some point, take them back to church—though not the churches of their childhoods, the places that inflicted the trauma from which they are still trying to recover. (p. 156–57)

How do you feel about these expressions of church? If church looked more like this in the future, what might be lost? What might be gained?

Ultimately, the author asks us to embrace a deep faith that we can trust God with the paths our children take related to church:

I hope that [my sons], like others in their generation, will find a deeper faith, one focused on Jesus and his teachings, on the Creator's encompassing love rather than on God's judgment, on the work to which we are all called: to do justice, love mercy, and walk with humility. After all, discovering a deeper faith with the young adults we love means having faith that God holds them still, even when they reject churches that have done little to make them feel welcomed and known. (p. 159)

Does this deeper faith feel accessible to you? Are there fears you hold for the young adults in your life who are, perhaps, not expressing their faith in ways you are familiar with? **How might you ask for the courage and strength to pursue this kind of deeper faith?**

CHAPTER 8

To a More Perfect Kind of Love

In the final chapter, the author returns to many of the themes addressed earlier in the book, outlining the immense challenges facing young adults today and encouraging us to relinquish the illusion of control over our children's lives while carefully examining whether our approach to their future is founded on love or fear.

1. FEAR AND PRAYER

On page 165, the author lays out some of the sources of worry, stress, and fear for young adults:

We've already explored some stressors: the pressures they feel to be successful, to make their one "wild and precious life" productive; the fraying of their faith communities and the hypocrisy they see predominating in churches who profess Jesus as savior; the isolation they experience, accelerated by the siloing influence of social media and other technologies. They are also challenged by the persistent threat to their very lives.

How does the immenseness of these stressors make you feel? **Have you felt lost in the face of all that there is to fear in this world?**

The author also makes clear that some young adults experience stress, fear, and anxiety from which others are protected by their privileged identities. Consider the author's story on pages 167–68 about racial violence near her campus and the realization of her own safety compared to some of her students: "I was reminded again that my young queer, Black, and brown students face threats to their safety in ways that I and many others in my small town rarely do" (p. 168).

What has your experience of stress and fear been like in your life? How has it been recently? **Do you see ways in which you experience stress or fear differently than others because of your identity?**

The author offers that prayer may be one of our most important lifelines in the face of all the pain and struggle in the world.

For [Anne] Lamott, for me, and for countless others, prayer is one antidote to the chaos we confront every day. Our earnest hope is that the people we love most will feel heard and loved and protected through our prayers. (p. 176)

What role does prayer play in your life? Do you experience it as an antidote to life's chaos and fear? Do you believe committing to prayer could offer you respite and peace?

2. FROM DESPAIR TO ACTION

When we are afraid, it can feel impossible to act. When we feel this way, the author calls us to look to the young adults around us for hope and courage.

Given the state of the world, we may be tempted to despair, but I hope we will remember this. The passion and creativity of young adults can help save us, if only we relinquish control of what we think they should be doing and how they should be responding to the fears they face. If only we let go of our golden calves, those ways of being that we believe are inviolate. If only we allow them to teach us. (p. 179)

Reflect on the analogy used by the author to open and close this chapter: confronting her fear of heights on the Tarzan swing. On pages 182–83, she struggles to take the leap:

“I don’t think I can do this,” I said again.

“You need to change your mindset, then,” one of the young workers said.

Hadn’t I done that already, a million times and more, ever since Ben and Sam were babies, my life turned upside down in all the best ways? I thought about my beautiful boys, brilliant and reckless and brave and maddening, the brightest and best gifts I’d ever received. They’d throw themselves from the swing platform, I was sure of it, with the same fearlessness that had characterized their young adulthood, with the courage they’d manifested in leaving home for their unknown futures.

Like them, like all of us, I had a choice to make, one that would require a changed mindset. Could I do it?

In what ways are you being called to change your mindset? Who will guide and travel with you on that journey? **Are there young adults you can enlist to help you shift your mindset? Ask one today.**