

# LAUNCH YOUR LIFE

Creating a Life in Service of God

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Carpenter's Son Publishing

Launch Your Life

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*To Elise, Carrie, Allison, and Rose:  
you are more inspiring to us than you know.  
PEACER!*

# Contents

I-P-A: What Is That? .....	11
If Peter Can Change ... ..	15
<b>PART I: IT STARTS WITH GOD</b>	
<i>Chapter One: Dare to Soar</i> .....	21
<i>Chapter Two: Prepared By God</i> .....	39
<i>Chapter Three: The Foundation Formula</i> .....	57
<b>PART II: YOU AND YOUR INTENTION</b>	
<i>Chapter Four: The Complex You</i> .....	87
<i>Chapter Five: Your Brand Equity</i> .....	103
<b>PART III: TAKING ACTION TO MOVE FORWARD</b>	
<i>Chapter Six: Practical Planning and Spiritual Choices</i> .....	133
<i>Chapter Seven: Journey On</i> .....	165
<i>Chapter Eight: The Lion and The Gazelle</i> .....	207
Bibliography .....	213
Notes .....	215
About the Authors .....	217

# I-P-A: What Is That?

*What one does is what counts, not what  
one had the intention of doing.*

– PABLO PICASSO<sup>1</sup>

A few years ago, we discussed traveling to Europe at some time in the future. In that conversation, we expressed the same desire as one another, going so far as to lay out our thoughts on our five favorite cities and countries. London, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Scandinavian countries were all on our list—along with some other contenders. But we landed on a trip to Paris as our top choice, the beautiful City of Lights. Thoughts of making the trip, climbing the steps of the Eiffel Tower, gazing upon the Mona Lisa, walking the Champs Élysées to the Arc de Triomphe, and strolling the gardens of the Palace of Versailles were enough to bring a bit of wonder to our thoughts and dream that it could come true. It would be a goal for some years ahead, we knew, but we had our intentions firmly in place.

After a couple of years, we revisited the thought of planning the trip, starting with seeking a definitive answer to this question: could we make this trip a reality? Perhaps in the months that had passed since we first discussed the possibility, our thoughts had moved from “if” questions to the more practical “how.” We both wanted to make the vacation happen, but there had been other matters that had developed that we would need to consider in our planning. These were mostly financial and timing issues, so we needed to decide if we thought this

would be money and time well spent. Additional concerns on the length of time and scope of activities also needed discussing. But we launched into the task. We began planning with excitement!

There are dozens of fantastic museums, palaces, and old cathedrals to see in the Paris metropolitan area. So, finding a place to stay that is within easy proximity to the rails that would allow access to the surrounding area was imperative; walking and rail would be our two modes of transportation while there. After much online searching and recommendations from a Parisian who is a friend, we found a quaint one-bedroom apartment on the third floor of a building nestled in the heart of Paris. It was walking distance to some sites, but more importantly, an easy stroll to two separate rail stations. The flights and other travel details were also researched, then chosen. But the pinnacle moment came when the planning turned into action and a credit card was used to pay for the flight and apartment reservations!

Later, we packed and made our way to the airport. We were going to Paris.

Picasso was right. We had the best of intentions, and we talked about them in detail. But without the planning, the intentions would have just been passing thoughts. Further, without the action, the intentions and the planning would have remained much-deliberated dreams, and we never would have needed to pack our bags. If you want to Launch Your Life, you need all three: Intention, Planning, and Action—or, *I-P-A*. If you are legal to drink and enjoy an occasional beer, you may be familiar with those three letters: I-P-A. But our I-P-A, *this I-P-A*—Intention, Planning, and Action—will provide you with many more life opportunities and benefits than an India Pale Ale.

While writing this book, we found several thoughts that touched our hearts in ways that challenged us in faith, action, and character. In the same way, we expect that you will find opportunities for growth in your character, spirituality, or life in general. Keep the thought of *I-P-A* at the forefront of your mind. Do you want to find a new college major or a new job? *I-P-A*. Would you like to enhance your career development or consider additional education? *I-P-A*. Have a desire

to learn more about God's Word? *I-P-A*. Do you want to grow closer to God or a friend? *I-P-A*. Want to go to Paris? *I-P-A*.

This book will help you directly with the I and the P, and we hope it will inspire you on the A, but the follow-through ultimately will be up to you. Heed Picasso's words as you read. We want you to hear the call to faithfully move forward in life and feel empowered to do so. Imprint *I-P-A* on your heart, engrain it in your mind, and make it part of your soul. And where one door shuts, keep moving forward and looking for another that opens.

If "plan A" in your action plan doesn't go as hoped, remember there are twenty-five more letters in the alphabet—and more than three thousand characters if you're in China!

This book is not about your future. It is one *for* your future. So let's make it count.

# IF PETER CAN CHANGE . . .

*Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say” (Acts 2:14).*

It was a moment Peter would never forget. The insights and unshakable faith that Jesus gave him when they walked together were ready to be unleashed through Peter’s voice. Jesus was gone. The fresh memories of Jesus’ life, crucifixion, and resurrection had to be at the forefront of Peter’s mind as Jesus’ ascension had taken place only a few weeks before. Consumed by the Holy Spirit, Peter and his peers began to share the good news of Jesus and the power of the resurrection. Before Peter were thousands of souls, many of whom had traveled a long journey from their home to be in Jerusalem. Men and women watched and intently listened as Peter called them to do.

The crowd was vast. It had to be an eye-opening moment for Peter and the people as they would collectively understand the connection between their sins and Jesus’ death. And through Peter’s words they would turn and become followers—disciples—of Jesus, an astounding thing to consider. Peter must have thought back to the day he was on a boat and Jesus shouted to him to throw his nets to the other side. That action turned a fish-less night into a night so full of fish that the nets began to burst. Peter saw this kind of thing again and again with his Lord. But now, while Jesus’ presence was felt in Spirit instead of the flesh, he was still seeing marvelous things happen. And Peter was



beginning to see how he would impact the world.

There was little chance Peter pictured himself in this position years earlier. The loudmouthed fisherman had grown substantially since the beginning. His heart and character had changed since he dropped his nets to follow Jesus. He wasn't known as a leader, for it was later written in Acts that Peter and some of the others were just unschooled, ordinary men (4:13). After all, he was a simple fisherman. The gospel paints a picture of his flawed character, one that was rash, quick in judgment, irrationally emotional. And on the positive side of his character, he was willing to help others, take a stand, and surrender to God's will for his life. And through this journey with Jesus, Peter saw that miracles could happen.

At some point in his time with Jesus, he resolved to use his whole life, including his dreams, for Jesus' more significant cause. He resolved to be a fisher of men.

We assume you have already read about Peter in God's Word, so as you begin this book, consider the incredible conversion you see in his life. He started as a man throwing nets into quiet waters with a few others, just a regular guy at work. He *became* a faithful disciple who thousands would look to for guidance and a plan of salvation. The Spirit, combined with Peter's words, moved the hearts of the thousands who listened on that one particular day to respond and be baptized (Act 2:40-47). Amazingly, the transformation did not end there, or even in his lifetime. Far beyond what Peter would have thought at the time, his words are still read two thousand years after being spoken, and they continue to change lives for those who listen to them. Today, millions read his words, see hope in the gospel, and realize what God can do through one soul.

But how did God take Peter and change him into a compelling, bold speaker? What did God do to grow him from a dime-a-dozen fisherman into a one-of-a-kind fisher of men? We see in the gospel how God guided his dreams, his gifts, and his temperament. We can also see how God used difficulties and challenges to guide and focus his dreaming. Finally, we can see what *didn't* happen. Peter didn't just

wake up one day and—*poof!*—he was the leader, preacher, and teacher we see in Acts 2. Peter's desire and dreaming qualities were combined with a willingness to learn. He surrendered himself to be the leader that Jesus called him to be, allowing him to change and grow.

Maybe another way to think about this is to consider how God blessed Peter and planned for this life long before it was visible. He was knit together in his mother's womb for this exact moment. The raw material was there, but it had not been developed or sharpened before his time with Jesus. In his sinful ways, he neither recognized his gifts nor realized how to use them for God's higher calling. He likely hadn't spent time dreaming about what he could do for God before he met Jesus. But Peter had a soft heart for God's will as he walked with Jesus and as Jesus taught him. He had a heart that God would use for His purposes. Jesus showed him what it meant to fish for men, to be a disciple of his Lord, and then honed his talents and gifts for the future.

Without choosing Jesus and discipleship, Peter would have amounted to nothing but a nameless, impetuous fisherman. We would not know him today.

Peter's story is an incredible one—it is characterized by transformation and growth. He grew from an insignificant, ordinary guy to a world-changer. It is doubtful he would have seen anything like this coming in his youth.

Believe it or not, in a similar way, you have a chance to participate in the incredible story of *you*. Your account will be unique and can also be a story of unimaginable impact and faith. Are you ready to open your eyes?

You have more similarities to Peter than you probably think. Peter learned to tie knots to prepare a net for his job. Perhaps you are a budding designer, plumber, or engineer. Maybe you're a budding you're-not-sure-what! Peter had hopeless nights where his work didn't go well. You have had tough times in school or at work as well. He learned how challenging it is to keep his eyes on Jesus; you've struggled to persevere in your faith. He had successes and failures. You've had them too. Peter gained inspiration from how special it was to be chosen by