

CHAPTER 2

The Reason We Can Be Uncommon

*F*ive hours later, the surgery was over. My husband, my parents, and my dear friend sat waiting to hear something—anything. And as the doctor walked toward them, hope sprung up in their hearts.

“We cannot find any signs of ovarian cancer. We’ve cut and cut and cut. We ran pathology on biopsied parts during surgery, but they came back clean. And while we’re sending some samples off to a lab for further testing, I feel confident we won’t find anything.”

Wait, what? Four different pathologists from four different labs found cells of concern that indicated cancer. Tests revealed lymph nodes of concern. And the surgeon found. . . *nothing?*

When he called a few weeks later confirming the post-op test results were indeed clean, he said no follow-up treatment was necessary. “So that’s it?” And he replied, “That’s it.” I hung up the phone feeling gratitude, relief, and confusion—all at the same time.

Thank You, Lord.

I’ve often asked God how this fits into my testimony. Even today, I don’t really understand what that season in my life was all about. Did He want my full surrender? Did sharing the diagnosis and asking for prayer within my community change someone’s heart? Maybe I won’t know the

details this side of heaven, but He wanted this story in the book. And maybe it's because I believe it was a miracle.

There are many people today who believe miracles don't exist. They believe in doctrine that says spiritual gifts—like healing—ceased with the original twelve apostles. They don't believe God performs signs and wonders anymore and think the New Testament miracles happened merely to prove a point. The term for this is *cessationism*, and I don't subscribe to it.

Now that doesn't mean I think every good outcome is a miracle, nor do I believe everything bad is courtesy of the Enemy. But friend, I've just seen God move too mightily in my life to have any other reasonable explanation for the disappearance of cancer. Maybe you have had the same experience. I look back at my life and see God's fingerprints all over it. And I'm humbled by all the ways He has worked in my circumstances—and in my heart. So I'm giving Him the glory and thanks for the favorable outcome. I firmly believe He answered prayer and healed my body.

The truth is we can't fully understand God. He is unpredictable. We don't know why He heals in some situations but not in others. We can't explain His actions, and so often His will and ways confuse us more than make sense. God just doesn't perform for us like some genie in a bottle. Our Father in heaven is the essence of uncommon, which by definition means He is exceptional and remarkable. And at some point, we have to embrace that truth and appreciate He cannot be boxed up or figured out.

Psalm 115:3 (MSG) reminds us that “*our God is in heaven doing whatever he wants to do.*” He is sovereign. And even though I may not understand the details surrounding my

diagnosis, the miraculous outcome, or why I had to face the harsh consequences of surgical menopause at a young age, I trust His reasoning. Romans 8:28 (VOICE) is why I can: “*We are confident that God is able to orchestrate everything to work toward something good and beautiful when we love Him and accept His invitation to live according to His plan.*”

Chances are you’ve been confused by God in your life, too. And while He is never predictable, He is always trustworthy. God embodies everything uncommon. There is nothing normal about Him. Think about it. He doesn’t react to circumstances like we do. He is quick to give grace, always acts justly, lives in peace, and has no sin. God’s wisdom and understanding lack nothing. His ways are good and beneficial for all involved. Here’s the perfect example.

To make a way for a renewed relationship, God’s Son put on human skin and stepped out of a perfect heaven into an imperfect world. He allowed Jesus to die in brutality to bridge the gap left by sin. The cross was an uncommon way to show His love. God’s complete forgiveness in that moment was an uncommon response to our sin. And Jesus’ resurrection three days later was an uncommon way to validate Himself to humanity.

Here is where I am going to blow your mind. Ready? You—with all your flaws, faults, and failings—have the ability to be uncommon, too. And Genesis 1:27 tells us why.

In that short yet powerful scripture, we are told that we’re created in His image. The Hebrew root of the Latin phrase for *image of God* is *imago Dei*. It means shadow or likeness. Simply put, you are a reflection of God.

That means because God is uncommon, you and I are uncommon, too. It’s undeniable. We may not have His

power, majesty, and authority, but we do have uncommon DNA running through our veins. You don't have to earn it. You can't lose it. And with the Holy Spirit's guidance, you have everything it takes to be uncommon. And it's not only an honor but also a responsibility.

Please reread that last paragraph. I need you to fully understand the truth of who you are because it's foundational. You were born to be different—to stand out. We all were, but we all won't. You have to make the choice to live that way, not perfectly but purposefully.

Being an uncommon woman means. . .

- 1) You rely on God more than yourself.
- 2) You find hope in the hard places.
- 3) You stand up for what's right.
- 4) You hold on to joy no matter what.
- 5) You're not afraid to step out of your comfort zone.
- 6) You're willing to risk your reputation as you live differently.
- 7) You don't give up or give in.
- 8) You don't live tangled by your past.
- 9) You look past your circumstances.
- 10) You understand there is a calling on your life.

Uncommon living isn't a call to be perfect. Perfection is a lie, and it's nowhere close to God's heart for us. Instead, uncommon living means we choose to live with passion and purpose.

Right about now, some of you might be struggling to feel worthy of such a call. All the times you've messed up are coming to mind. You feel sure past mistakes have wiped the

uncommon-ness right off you. And maybe you've been told how very unspecial you are by mean-spirited people. The thought that someone like *you* could be exceptional seems silly because you feel as common as common gets.

And just when we think our past choices or current season of sinning disqualifies us altogether, we intersect with this passage of scripture. It's a powerful reminder that even in our messy lives, we have the ability to *be* uncommon. If you would allow me a little wiggle room to make a point, I want to show you what I mean. As I was writing this section of the book, God highlighted the scripture below and re-framed it in my mind, which deeply encouraged my heart! I hope it does for you, too.

Every time we run across the word *blessed* in the scripture below, we're going to replace it with the word *uncommon*. Just so we have the same frame of reference, the dictionary defines *uncommon* as something not often seen or experienced. It's remarkable and exceptional and is always above the ordinary. Now, sweet friend, soak this in from Matthew 5:1–12:

When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

“You're blessed uncommon when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

“You're blessed uncommon when you feel

you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

"You're blessed uncommon when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

"You're blessed uncommon when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

"You're blessed uncommon when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

"You're blessed uncommon when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

"You're blessed uncommon when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

"You're blessed uncommon when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

"Not only that—count yourselves blessed uncommon every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, I do! And

all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.”(MSG)

If you need to put the book down and dance around for a minute or shout a huge *amen* to the heavens, go ahead. I can wait. Seriously though, Jesus is telling us that being uncommon means we do life differently. It’s seeing life differently. It’s responding to life differently. And it doesn’t mean life has to be perfect, and neither do we. It just encourages the heck out of me.

Before we move on, let me back up and set the stage for that mic-dropping passage. The Messiah’s popularity had been on the rise, and everyone craved a piece of Jesus. They wanted to see Him. They wanted to hear Him. He was a big deal, and the disciples knew they were keeping company with a real celebrity A-lister. They were part of the “it” crowd now.

Can’t you just imagine the huge temptation they faced in considering themselves superior to the common folk? Gosh, wouldn’t you? Having Jesus as a flesh-and-blood friend would have easily exalted them in the eyes of others, and so He decided to address the temptation now. . .before their egos got the best of them. The goal in sharing the Beatitudes with them was to align their hearts with His truth and set them up with realistic expectations for the cost of being with Him.

These men needed to understand that walking with Jesus would open them up to persecution. They’d be misunderstood for choosing to live differently than the cultural norms. And because they chose to follow Christ, it also

meant they were choosing not to seek worldly recognition and reward. He wanted to drive this point deep into the marrow of their bones. But He didn't stop there.

Jesus was an amazing communicator who knew when and how to bring perspective into a situation that would be a catalyst to shifting attitudes and hearts. And so He finishes with a powerful assurance to His followers. Jesus guarantees that their choice to live in uncommon ways would be fully acknowledged—if not in this life, then in the next. In other words, it would mean something. Their choice had great value in His eyes.

These Beatitudes should be an encouragement for us, too. Jesus uses them to contrast the differences between having an eternal focus (*which is uncommon*) and having an earthly response (*which is very common*). He is making a strong case for navigating life through spiritual eyes and ears, and Jesus wants us to understand that our hard choices aren't for nothing. Living uncommon is not a waste of time because God sees it all.

Every faith-filled *yes* is credited to us. And because His hope is for you and me to live with purpose and passion, we're cheered on by a cloud of witnesses as we choose an uncommon way of living in the real world. Jesus' challenge and guarantee wasn't just for the disciples. It wasn't only good back in the day. It is for us, too—here and now.

No one would argue that the way God wants us to live gravely contradicts with the boundary-pushing climate of the world we live in today. We'd be hard-pressed to find much commonality between the two. That means that living in uncommon ways will absolutely go against the grain. It's not meant to be a discouragement or to present a mountain

too tall to get over. But like Jesus did for His disciples, I need you to know it may not always be easy. But I can promise you it *will* always be worth it. And friend, you can do hard things.

With the state of the world right now, I can't think of anything we need more than women who have the guts and grit to let their lives reek of Jesus.

But let's be honest with one another. Sometimes we need more than a *rah-rah let's be different* cheer to make us change from the status quo. It may all sound good and great. . .but when life is pretty comfortable and familiar, why should we shake things up? Sometimes we like being snarky and cynical. Sometimes we enjoy holding on to offenses. And so often, it's easier to accept the ever-changing morals of society than stand up for what's right. We wonder if we have the ability to change anything anyway.

For me—and maybe for you, too—there has to be a rock-solid, hard-core, life-altering, kingdom-building reason before I'll change it all and live differently. Change is hard, and it's messy, and I like the security of the known and familiar. I need the *why*.

Then I read the next section of Matthew 5, and verses 13–16 hit me right between the eyes and offer me the compelling reasons I need in plain English. Buckle up.

*“Let me tell you why you are here. **You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth.** If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage. Here's another way to put it: **You're here to be light, bringing***

*out the **God-colors** in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—**shine!** Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.”*
(MSG, emphasis mine)

And there it is—*plain as day, fully explained, and deeply compelling—the why!*

You and I are on planet earth to be salt-seasoning and light-bearers. This passage tells us to be generous with our lives, investing in and encouraging those around us. God created us to stand out in the world! And when we make the choice to live our lives differently than the group-think of society, it will release the unique God-flavors and God-colors into the world.

But we can say no. Uncommon living isn't mandatory as a Christ follower. Instead, it's a choice. And next to salvation, the second-best gift the cross gave us was the power to make choices. We get to make them every day and in every situation. But it's important to understand what will happen if we choose not to live uncommon.

In verse 16, Jesus addressed that thought. It tells us that when we choose to be uncommon in our words and actions, it will prompt others to open up to God. That means your life has the power to point others to Him. So if we

invert that truth, when we choose *not* to live differently. . .an opportunity to influence our corner of the world with the Good News is missed.

If we want to make a difference for the kingdom, we have to decide to be an uncommon woman. We don't have to be perfect, but we must be purposeful so we flavor and light the world. And when we do, it will point others to the goodness of God. That is why you and I are on planet earth. Read this paragraph again. Let it sink in for a moment.

Here's truth. This way of life may be risky to your reputation. You might be called a prude or a goodie-two-shoes or even a Bible-thumper. It's not always the most popular path to take because it calls us to walk above reproach. And breaking from the norm can bring criticism and judgment our direction. It can strain relationships, especially when you're in one that's not glorifying to God. But here this loud and clear: it's so worth it.

We're invited to be a part of something bigger—something God planned in advance for us to do. You're alive on the kingdom calendar now for a reason. There's something in you that God needs the world to have now. And sweet one, He is asking you to help bring heaven to earth.

Being uncommon in *this* world takes a strong woman with some guts and grit. And yes, you have what it takes because God has outfitted you. He doesn't call the equipped. He equips the called. And you are called.

For too long, we've been living just like everyone else. Common people act the same, don't they? We've strived for the wrong things. Our moral compasses haven't been trained on God. We haven't stood up for what's right. We've wanted to blend in. . .fly under the radar. . .and avoid the negative

spotlight. We've been trapped by our insecurities, afraid to stand out or stand up. And I'm tired of it. Something tells me you are, too.

In these next chapters, we're going to unpack the different ways we can live uncommon. Let's find out how to live with purpose and passion so we can impact the world for good. It will be a choice—every day and in every situation. And saying yes will set us apart and call us out of the ordinary.

To illustrate, I'm going to introduce you to women in the Word who were known for living in uncommon ways or making choices that went against the grain. Scripture is rich with women who faced societal stereotypes, family dysfunctions, fear, and rejection and chose uncommon responses anyway.

So often, we think those named in the Bible have “saint” status—like they were extra special. But they weren't. They are just like you and me. Personal situations and cultural circumstances may have been different, but they faced all the same insecurities we do today. They faced hard choices, too. Don't miss that. I want you to see how very real they were. Because doing so will deeply encourage your heart, remind you you're not alone, and give you motivation to take a stand in your own place in history.

So rise up, friend. Whether you are wealthy or poor. . . with children or without. . . married, single, or widowed. . . connected or an outcast. . . prominent or obscure. . . a homemaker or businesswomen. . . disenfranchised or determined. . . a leader or follower. . . you have uncommon DNA running through your veins. Let this be your battle cry. You are not weak. It's not too late. And nothing from your past disqualifies you.

Together, we can take a stand for what is right.
We can influence our corner of the world to live better.
We can make choices that point others to our Father in
heaven.
And God will give us everything we need to live. . .
uncommon.