



FROM HECTIC TO HEALTHY

THE JOURNEY TO A BALANCED LIFE

CRAIG & MARY JUTILA

FROM
HECTIC
TO
HEALTHY

THE JOURNEY TO A BALANCED LIFE

CRAIG & MARY JUTILA



For more information and
special offers from Regal Books, email us at
subscribe@regalbooks.com

Published by Regal
From Gospel Light
Ventura, California, U.S.A.
www.regalbooks.com
Printed in the U.S.A.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Other versions used are

CEV—Contemporary English Version. Copyright © American Bible Society, 1995.
GOD’S WORD—Scripture taken from *GOD’S WORD*. *GOD’S WORD* is a copyrighted work of God’s Word to the Nations. Quotations are used by permission. Copyright 1995 by God’s Word to the Nations. All rights reserved.

KJV—King James Version. Authorized King James Version.

NASB—Scripture taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

NCV—Scriptures quoted from *The Holy Bible, New Century Version*, copyright © 1987, 1988, 1991 by Word Publishing, Nashville, Tennessee. Used by permission.

NIV—Scripture taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2010 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

TEV—Scripture quotations are from *Today’s English Version*. Copyright © American Bible Society 1966, 1971, 1976. Used by permission

© 2012 Craig and Mary Jutila
All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Jutila, Craig, 1965-

From hectic to healthy : the journey to a balanced life / Craig and Mary Jutila.
p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-8307-6222-4 (hardcover)

1. Simplicity—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Work-life balance.
 3. Quality of life. 4. Time management—Religious aspects—Christianity. 5. Families—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Jutila, Mary. II. Title.
- BV4647.S48J88 2012
248.4—dc23
2011053488

Rights for publishing this book outside the U.S.A. or in non-English languages are administered by Gospel Light Worldwide, an international not-for-profit ministry. For additional information, please visit www.glww.org, email info@glww.org, or write to Gospel Light Worldwide, 1957 Eastman Avenue, Ventura, CA 93003, U.S.A.

To order copies of this book and other Regal products in bulk quantities, please contact us at 1-800-446-7735.

*To our children
Cameron,
Alec and Karimy,
and Blake*

You are the light of our life and the light of the world. We love you and believe in you. Our hope and our prayer is that you each live a life in proper balance and with the right spiritual perspective. You don't have to change the world, but you can make a difference by living a life filled with God's grace, love and mercy. We love you!

Blake, your life reminds us that this earth is not our final destination and our time here is limited. Not only do you live in heaven with Jesus, but you also live in our hearts forever. We can't wait to meet you when together we can see Jesus face to face.

CONTENTS

Foreword by Dr. Jim Mastellar.....	9
Preface.....	11

Section 1: Understanding SPIN

1. Seasons	15
<i>The Journey Begins</i>	
<i>Retracing Our Steps</i>	
<i>A Short Attention Span</i>	
<i>How God Got My Attention</i>	
<i>Jacob Chose Seasonal Living</i>	
<i>Journals Don't Lie</i>	
2. Priorities.....	29
<i>Me, Myself and I</i>	
<i>Dead Man Walking</i>	
<i>Healthy Thoughts or Maybe Nots</i>	
3. Isolation.....	41
<i>Alone, or Isolated?</i>	
<i>Counseling or Cornered?</i>	
<i>We're All Messed Up</i>	
4. Neglect.....	53
<i>Why SPIN Leads to Sin</i>	
<i>The Drift of Neglect</i>	
<i>Marriage Drift</i>	
<i>Happy Together</i>	

Section 2: Learning STOP

5. Slow Down	67
<i>Busy . . . How About You?</i>	
<i>Compassion Fatigue</i>	
<i>Multi-taskmaster</i>	
6. Think Ahead	79
<i>Wherever You Go, There You Are</i>	
<i>Are You a Workaholic?</i>	
<i>I Am NOT Stressed! I'm NOT! I'm NOT! I'm NOT!</i>	
7. Open Up	93
<i>How to Fake It</i>	
<i>Guys Don't Talk in the Bathroom</i>	
<i>Courageous Words</i>	
8. Pause Often	105
<i>Sabbath Shmabbath</i>	
<i>I'll Be There in a Minute</i>	
<i>What Time Is It?</i>	

Section 3: **Setting PACE**

9. Practice SoulCare	117
<i>Guard Your Heart</i>	
<i>A Tale of Two, Maybe Three, Cities</i>	
<i>Try That on for Size</i>	
10. Act Accordingly	131
<i>Hey, Jesus Was Single</i>	
<i>You Can't Do That</i>	
<i>Doesn't Everyone Play Soccer on Saturday?</i>	
11. Come Together.....	141
<i>Come Together with Your Spouse</i>	
<i>Come Together with Your Friends</i>	
<i>Come Together with Others</i>	
12. Enjoy Life.....	153
<i>It's a Journey, Not a Destination</i>	
<i>The Art of No</i>	
<i>The Science of Laughter</i>	
<i>Some Proverbial Wisdom</i>	

Section 4: **Continuing WALK**

13. Watch Out.....	167
<i>It's the Prowl, Not the Roar</i>	
<i>Forgive to Live</i>	
<i>It's in Your Job Description</i>	
14. Answer Him.....	179
<i>What Do You Want Me to Do for You?</i>	
<i>All the King's Horses and All the King's Men</i>	
<i>A New Day</i>	
15. Look Forward	193
<i>Reaching Forward</i>	
<i>Start at Home</i>	
<i>You Can Go Again</i>	
16. Keep Perspective	203
<i>Crisis Comes, and Sometimes We Linger</i>	
<i>Called to the Other Side</i>	
<i>There Is Always Hope</i>	
Conclusion	213
Endnotes.....	215
Recommended Reading.....	217
Acknowledgments	219

FOREWORD

By Dr. Jim Mastellar

The curse of busyness is mentioned by many but dissected by few. There are even fewer who are willing to expose their own struggle and near demise to this curse, as the Jutilas have done. I commend their courage in being willing to be vulnerable. More than that, I commend the work they were willing to do in facing their struggles. God in His mercy confronted them, and especially Craig, with the destructive path he was on. And I believe God does that for each of us in our areas of need. But, we all must make that critical choice: Will we humble ourselves, face our brokenness and join God on a healing journey? Or, will we continue to make excuses, blame others and defend or deny our brokenness right into our own destruction?

Your journey, and mine, may not be identical to theirs, but there are points of commonality that will always allow us to learn from one another. My prayer is that you will be open to these points of connection with the story you are about to read. You may find some things here that frustrate or discourage you. You will certainly find reason for hope, for praise and for encouragement as you go forward in your own journey.

Going forward always involves effort and struggle. But be encouraged—it is worth it! God has “given us everything we need for living a godly life” (2 Pet. 1:3). The question again is: Will we avail ourselves of this help? Craig and Mary opened themselves to the support and challenge of others, to extended therapy, to books and to the humility of being honest with each other and with God. But finally and primarily, they opened themselves to the truth of God’s Word and His healing love.

If I could wish for one thing for you as you read this book, it would be this: I pray that you would be willing to look deeply into your own soul and face honestly the brokenness that is yours. And that you would then look up to see a God who loves you, and look out and see people who love you just the way you are. Your true self! You don’t need to hide; you don’t need to prove anything; you don’t need to impress anyone. It is okay to just be you. Let God do what He loves to do for those who are

willing. He wants to love you, heal you and give you an abundant life. May this book be part of your journey toward wholeness.

Dr. Jim Mastellar

CEO, Center for Individual and Family Therapy

Dr. Jim Mastellar is a licensed marriage and family therapist and founder and CEO for the Center for Individual and Family Therapy. He received his master's degree from Dallas Theological Seminary and his doctor of ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary. Jim also served as a pastor for nine years and has served as director for CIFT for the last 20 years. His wisdom and unique insight help hurting families make life-changing decisions that restore life and hope to those who need it most.

PREFACE

If you are a well-balanced, life-giving, emotionally and spiritually healthy person who thrives daily without complaint or fault, you will probably use this book to balance out an uneven couch, or as a coaster for your coffee cup. But if you find yourself nodding in agreement as you read through these pages, you will find comfort in knowing you are not the only one living a life of burnout and spin. In fact, we have hundreds of written responses from conferences where we have spoken that indicate you are actually in the majority.

Perhaps you are like us. Mary and I could be described as a “type A” couple that not only enjoys work but also thrives on the adrenaline it provides. We are overworked (our choice), compassion-fatigued people, working more on and in our jobs than on ourselves, or our family. This describes me (Craig) more than Mary. Many books have been written on our chosen topic of moving from a hectic lifestyle to a healthy one, but this book is different. After we spent 18 months in counseling and received the emotionally stabilizing input of supportive friends, the wisdom of wise mentors and a large dose of humility, I was able to regain traction in my life and in my relationships with Mary and our children.

Mary and I wish this book had been born out of what we know rather than what we went through. It would have been easier and far less painful. But it was born from difficulty and a life lived out of balance in many ways. That’s why you can take heart in what you read. Our sincerest hope is that our story will spur you to take action, give you comfort that *none* of us has it all together, and help you experience God’s infinite love and forgiveness.

We realize that most books can either be a “good read” or a “tough read.” Our prayer is that this book will be both—a good read because it’s grounded in gritty experience and founded on God’s unchanging Word; a tough read because you’ve realized your life is spinning out of control with no end or hope in sight.

You will notice that throughout this book there will be humorous stories right alongside the painful ones. That seems to be the way life is sometimes. And though this book is not an answer to every problem, nor is it a simple recipe for finding life balance—we wish there were such a thing—we

sincerely hope and pray that the thoughts, questions and Scripture in this book will be life giving, encouraging and resonant to your soul.

What Mary and I want you to experience in the following pages are hope, help and understanding as you read how we came to the end, did a U-turn and then began walking together again down a much healthier path. No matter where you are in your hurried and hectic life, you have a chance to begin again. You can turn around and start over, even if you have been traveling down the wrong road for many years.

God is a God of second chances, third chances and more. He is able to restore you and your broken relationships. He desires for you to come close to Him and have a healthy relationship with Him and with others. He even wants to walk the road with you, directing you around the obstacles and indicating where to turn.

We aren't writing as a couple that has it all together, but we are speaking from hearts that have been renewed and restored. Because of God's grace, we have something to share with you that can help you live life to the full. It is our prayer that our story will encourage you and inspire you on your journey to a balanced life.

Craig and Mary

SECTION 1

UNDERSTANDING
SPIN

1

SEASONS

*I am not what I ought to be, not what I want to be, not what I am
going to be, but thankful that I am not what I used to be.*

JOHN WOODEN

The Journey Begins

When I opened my wife's journal and saw the words "I hate my husband" penned in black ink, I knew that it was the end—perhaps the end of our life together. In many ways, it *was* over. I knew that if I were to continue down the same road, there would be no chance of reviving a relationship I had been suffocating for the past 15 years. My workaholic lifestyle, my emotional detachment from my family and my overcommitment to outside interests were creating distance between me and my wife, but I was somehow unaware of the severity of our marriage problems. The reality started to sink in when the words from my wife's journal jumped off the page and put their hands firmly around my throat.

The easy thing to do when life starts to crumble is to point a finger and blame others or circumstances. I know. I did that for many years. It wasn't until the end came that I woke up. I had reached the end of myself.

I found out that after digging a hole of relational neglect for 15 years, one can't simply put down the shovel and jump out of the hole. You need someone to throw you a rope and be willing to help pull you up. Here's what that looked like for me. First, I needed to be forgiven by my wife and my kids, and I needed God's grace and mercy for my past choices. Next, I needed to be accountable for my time and I needed to get emotional support to take one step at a time. Last but not least, I needed the power of the Holy Spirit, who brings hope and peace.

If you have been digging an unhealthy relationship hole for a while, it will take energy, time and patience to climb out, especially if your digging was not measured in days or weeks, but in months and years. Mary and I, through the help of a wise counselor, supportive friends and the passage of time, were able to climb out of that unhealthy hole and start digging and even planting in a much healthier spot. In fact, we are now seeing some healthy growth as a result.

The truth is, when a person is faced with the harsh reality of losing everything most important in life, he or she has to make a choice. When the end came for me, I learned that it is only after you are broken that you can be put back together again. The important things in my life that were hazy began to get focused and become crystal clear. I felt renewed passion, a desire to refocus my priorities and a refreshed spirit. Coming to the end of something is an opportunity to choose a new beginning.

Retracing Our Steps

At the beginning of a journey, especially life's journey, you must have a starting point and a plan. I (Craig) had neither. I had hopes, dreams and aspirations, but no plan. Well, no plan for my family. I had incredible aspirations for my work, ministry, leadership and for changing the world; and I even had a plan and incremental goals to reach those objectives. Yet, I had no real strategy for life balance or family success.

I set an early pace and an unhealthy lifestyle, which Mary resisted graciously for 15 years until she'd had enough. She had been forced to live as an emotionally single mom raising a family without a father. I was emotionally absent, pursuing dreams outside my family's season, which set the course of our family life into a spinning mode.

When life starts to spin, it begins small and slow and gains power and momentum over time, just like a tornado. "Life spin," as we define it, is when your life feels like it's moving too fast and you can't seem to catch your breath or find time for healthy rest and relaxation. It's all consuming. We use the acronym SPIN to represent these elements: Seasons, Priorities, Isolation, Neglect—all of which must be in balance to enable a person to make healthy life choices.

How you deal with SPIN predicts how well you will move from hectic to healthy. But it's more than that; it's about relationships, friends, soul care and forgiveness. They are all interrelated. Mary and I have experienced that when life starts to spin out of control it's not simply about getting control of your calendar or finding time for rest. These are healthy choices, but they are only a small part of what you need to do in order to move from hectic to healthy. Let's take a closer look at the SPIN acronym.

Seasons

"Season" is whatever life stage you are in. Are you married? Single? Married with kids? Single with kids? Your lifestyle should reflect your family's season—a concept we refer to as Seasonality. When you live life out of its correct season, life begins to SPIN.

Priorities

Where do you spend your time and money? Where is your heart? A person's priorities are often reflected in his or her calendar and finances. The key to setting healthy priorities is not found in aligning them but in balancing them by giving the appropriate amount of time to the more significant people in your life—namely, your family.

Isolat**ion**

Do you feel isolated, or alone? Taking time to be alone to refresh and refill is very productive and healthy. But withdrawing from others in an effort to hide increases life SPIN because it removes accountability to others.

Neglect

Neglect isn't always an obvious choice. Most people would not willfully neglect their family. However, neglect can be a byproduct of doing too much in another area of life that, by default, brings neglect to those who are most important to you. When this happens, life can pick up speed and quickly become unbalanced.

When you live life out of its *Season*, and spend most of your time on wrong *Priorities*, you begin to live an *Isolated* life and drift into the *Neglect* of your soul care and your relationships. This combination of SPIN creates a perfect storm that can leave a significant damage path as it moves through your life. Nothing good can come from it. The faster you SPIN, the more you are in danger of hurting others and your own soul.

Without a doubt, SPIN will eventually lead to sin. With that in mind, Mary and I want to talk about *more* than SPIN and recovering from it. We want to talk about what's next—you know, life *after* the effects of SPIN. But first you need to know the process that got us there.

A Short Attention Span

It wasn't too long ago that I was sitting in a staff meeting at church discussing a book on balance that we had decided to study as a team. To be honest, I was answering the questions around the circle that day pretty well. I would give myself an 8 or a 9 on a scale of 1 to 10. My answers were quick, biblical and subtle enough to not cause any heads to turn. You could hear an occasional "Hmmm" and "Yes, Lord" coming from me, and others in the room, to add that spiritual kick to the study, but that was about it.

The irony was that this six-week study on balance took us 12 weeks to finish because we were all too busy! When the 12 weeks were up, so was the margin. We all went right back to doing more with less, stoking our workaholic tendencies—excuse me, workaholic *traits*—and our emotional and spiritual unhealthiness. For me, gaining some form of life balance was something I did in a short study or maybe for a season or summer at most.

Fast-forward a few years. Mary and I were having a pretty strong disagreement about my time commitments away from home. I told her that she married a pastor, and like any other pastor, I didn't have a 9-to-5 job and never would. I said she would have to continue to get used to my schedule. After all, there were people who needed Jesus; and we had programs to run, volunteers to lead and problems to solve.

When you are "working for Jesus," things like soul care, relationship management, spiritual health, balance and margin are right at the tip of your tongue but often far from your heart. At least they were far from mine. I talked about them and even had good intentions about making them happen. I have 11 devotional books on my shelf to prove my intentions, and I can talk "spiritual" with the best of them. But the bottom line is that deterioration happens over time. The word itself implies falling from a higher to a lower level in quality. So, I guess you could say that my ministry was healthy, but I was not. My spiritual and emotional life was deteriorating—going from a higher quality to a lower one, and it was impacting the people I loved the most.

I needed renewal. When people talk about spiritual renewal, they often think "get right with Jesus." That's what I thought. However (and I may step on some theological toes here), it's more than that. Yes, it's about being spiritually and emotionally healthy, but it's also about having your priorities in the right order and being accountable for those priorities to someone who truly cares about you. So how do you go about spiritual renewal, or getting back to a relationship with Jesus that's alive and vibrant again? You allow Him to control your choices and permeate all areas of your life.

How God Got My Attention

I believe that a person changes because he or she hurts enough to be motivated to change, or learns enough to want to change. The latter was not true for me. I "knew" how to change; I had even preached and taught on the subject. I knew so much about how to "act" that I didn't have to change—I could fake it.

For me, change usually comes through pain: the death of one of our children; my wife in the hospital for 52 days in a row; a severe injury to one of our sons, whom the doctor said would be blind. God seems to get my attention through hurt and pain. I had to run my wife, my kids, my friends and myself to the edge of destruction before God got my attention.

During the last year of serving in ministry at a church, there were a number of times when I would just break down and cry in my car for no apparent reason. I couldn't put my finger on anything specific. I started to withdraw from friends and what was left of an emotional connection with my family. The clinical term is depression. I was depressed. No hobbies, no outlet, no margin, no balance, no laughing, no close friends, no kidding. To put it mildly, my life was ready to go *splat*.

When I left my position at church, I had accrued just under 300 hours of vacation time—that's a little more than seven weeks. It's what I call "accumulated sickness," and it warranted a trip to a counselor to help me get a healthy perspective on life.

Mary had been trying to get us in to see a counselor for years—asking kindly and gently; prodding, praying and then conceding that it wouldn't happen because of my rationalization that people in ministry didn't go to counselors; it would acknowledge that we *didn't* have it all together.

Well, I eventually hurt enough that I had to change. My addiction to ministry (yes, you can be addicted to ministry) was like any other addiction: it was unhealthy. The definition of addiction is "the state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or to something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming to such an extent that its cessation causes severe trauma."¹ This addiction, manifested in my desire to *do* the best and *be* the best, put me in a situation that, over time, was less than healthy. I became bitter, angry and unforgiving. In fact, I was downright toxic.

Lack of time alone with God and with my wife and family were unhealthy trends that invaded and then defined my life. These trends threatened my marriage and permeated my very being. I was dangerously close to crossing lines outside of my marriage that could not be erased. Something radical had to be done. Something had to change. I was tired, on edge, finished . . . but not done.

I had to face the reality that my wife had become a single working mom who was trying to run our company and nonprofit ministry and raise three kids. I was a dad who was there in the morning and back in the evening, and that's about it. I didn't help around the house or help the kids with schoolwork. I was constantly argumentative and generally on edge. I didn't want to go home because there was always something to be done at church or in one of our outside ministries. I didn't want to open email, because I didn't want to engage another problem or deal with someone who disagreed with me or had a "word" from the Lord for

me. However, when I was faced with losing the ones who were most precious to me, I had to change.

Fast-forward five years. I am finally on the road to emotional and spiritual health. At least I'm far enough down that road to know what health looks like. Let me tell you this: it isn't easy. But I can at least take a vacation and not feel guilty. And I would rather be with my family or do things with my family than be anywhere or do anything else. Not only do I say that, but I have also started to practice it. I don't say it from a position of arrogance but from lessons learned through pain.

We spent 18 months in counseling. We still have a lot to learn about being emotionally and spiritually healthy, but we are progressing. We, especially me (Craig), have a lot to learn about priorities and how to really live them out without guilt or pretending that we have it all together.

So how do you find renewal? How do you find balance? How do you find health? I guess I could say something like "have a daily quiet time" or "pray more authentically" or "read a book on balance," but honestly, aren't we past that by now? How about letting the pure power of Jesus Christ take control of you? How about actually living the priorities you talk about—God—family—ministry? No formula, just one broken person talking to another, saying, "I love you, and we are going to do this journey together, no matter what."

If there is one thing I have learned, it's this: We are *all* messed up. I think that's why Jesus came—to give His life for ours. Yes, He came to pave a way to heaven, but He also came to provide us with hope in this world, not just hope in the next. So how do you get spiritually renewed? It's not simply from a book, sermon or lecture; but it could be a combination of learning enough that you want to get renewed, or hurting enough that you have to get renewed. Either way will work.

It could also come from an unknown direction. Perhaps from someone's story of being broken and then rebuilt—someone who had to come to grips with the reality around him and make a change.

Jacob Chose Seasonal Living

The idea of living your life according to its season—the principle of *seasonality*—is a biblical one when it comes to crops, planting, harvesting and even people. When you understand SPIN and what causes it, you will be in a position to not only STOP, but also to construct a healthy PACE and

continue to WALK through each season. We will talk about seasonal priorities in chapter 10, but it's important to provide a foundation at this point for what it means for you to live in YOUR season. To do that, we would like you to take a look at Jacob and Esau. You know their big story, right? About deception, a pot of stew and a birthright? The story we want to highlight is, in many ways, a small continuation of their epic birthright drama, and it's an important one.

But first let's revisit the well-known story: Jacob and his mom, Rebekah, cheated Esau—his brother, her son—out of his birthright by conspiring to deceive Jacob's dad and her husband, Isaac (yes, there were even dysfunctional families back then) to give Jacob, Rebekah's favorite son, the birthright that should have gone to Esau as eldest. Well, you know the story. Mom cooks some stew, Jacob throws on some of Esau's clothes and adds a little hair from the goat skin to the back of his hands and neck. The stew and the disguise combined with Isaac's exceptionally poor eyesight created a diabolical plan of deception that was successfully executed.

We remind you of these highlights of the story so that we can emphasize Esau's response. Clearly, you don't need a *Birthright for Dummies* book to see that Esau is going to lose it big-time when he finds out that his dad, Isaac, blessed the wrong son, not to mention that his brother and mom were in on it.

This entire saga plays out in the book of Genesis, chapter 27, but take special note of Esau's last recorded words about his brother: "I will kill my brother Jacob" (Gen. 27:41, *NIV*). Those are not endearing words. We bring this up because the next time it is recorded that Esau and Jacob see each other is an amazing story of fear, assumption, intrigue, tension and surprise (see Gen. 33). It would make a great movie.

After Jacob received the firstborn birthright blessing from his father, Isaac, he left Beersheba and traveled north to Uncle Laban's house. While living with Laban, Jacob married Leah and then her sister, Rachel. It is recorded that during that time Jacob had 12 children—11 boys and 1 girl. Brother Esau left Beersheba as well and traveled south to see his Uncle Ishmael, and he married one of Ishmael's daughters.

Now Jacob is on the move with his entire family, his herds, groceries, house (tents). This is no easy task. He is also traveling south . . . toward Esau. Genesis 32 gives us some insight about how Jacob was feeling as he started this road trip.

Jacob sent messengers to his brother Esau, in Edom, the land of Seir. He told them, “Give this message to my master Esau: ‘Humble greetings from your servant Jacob! I have been living with Uncle Laban until recently, and now I own oxen, donkeys, sheep, goats, and many servants, both men and women. I have sent these messengers to inform you of my coming, hoping that you will be friendly to us’” (Gen. 32:3-5).

Did you see the last part of that message? Jacob is “hoping that you [Esau] will be friendly to us.” Apparently, Esau’s last recorded words—“I will kill my brother, Jacob”—were still on Jacob’s mind.

The messengers returned with some intimidating news. They told Jacob that Esau was on his way to meet him and he was bringing an army of 400 men! Genesis 32:7 tells us Jacob’s response: “Jacob was terrified at the news.” Verse 11 records his prayer: “O LORD, please rescue me from my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to kill me, along with my wives and children.” Jacob sent one more gift to Esau to try to ease the impending blow, but Esau kept coming. Genesis 33 records Jacob and Esau’s reunion, and it didn’t go as Jacob had thought . . . it went much better.

Once Jacob saw Esau coming, he went out to meet him and bowed before him, expecting the worst. But Esau grabbed Jacob and gave him a hug! *What?!* They were both in tears. Jacob’s tears were tears of “Praise God! I’m not dead.” We can only assume that Esau’s tears were tears of joy in seeing his brother again, although it’s not recorded.

Once the greetings were out of the way, Jacob introduced Esau to his family. After the official greetings, Esau says, “Well, let’s be going. . . . I will stay with you and lead the way” (Gen. 33:12). Isn’t that a typical first-born, driven personality statement? I don’t think he was being rude. I think that was just how he was wired—natural leader with a take-control personality. Either way, it was time to go, according to Esau.

Let’s pause here for a moment. We gave you the background to this story to highlight Jacob’s response to Esau’s statement, “Let’s be going. . . . I will stay with you and lead the way.” Notice that it wasn’t a question. Like most leaders, Esau didn’t ask; he told. He cast a vision and expected Jacob to follow. The natural default of a leader is to lead. They vision cast. They move. Your boss doesn’t ask your permission to do something. Your boss doesn’t ask when you are taking a vacation and then plan changes around your schedule. The boss makes the plans and sets the pace and moves; and you need to gauge your speed accordingly.

Do you see what is happening here in Genesis 33? Before Esau arrived, Jacob was afraid. He was back in the presence of his brother who he cheated out of his birthright. He was afraid when he heard that Esau was coming with 400 of his friends. He had offered gifts, twice, to possibly ease the potential confrontation, but to no avail. Then Esau says, “Move out; let’s go!”

Now Jacob has a choice. For me, it would have been easy. I would have said, “Gals, kids, pack it up; we are out of here.” I would have felt lucky to still be alive and most likely would have simply gone with him. Jacob didn’t do that. He said no! He said no politely, but he still said no. His answer to Esau is found in Genesis 33:13-14: “But Jacob said to him, ‘My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the droves before me and that of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir’” (NIV).

Jacob’s response is something I (Craig) wish I could have mustered within myself when making decisions about life balance and priorities. Jacob’s response is something we should all take to heart and dig a little deeper to see how or if, in some small way, it applies to us.

The point is that we are all in different seasons of life—single, married, married with young kids, married with older kids, married with kids in college. The goal is to make decisions for you and your family in the context of *your* season. We can’t tell you what choices to make. We simply ask that you consider the best possible decisions that will set the pace of your life for each season.

So what did Jacob say that can make so much difference in our lives? It was the statement, “Go on ahead while I move along slowly at the pace of the droves before me and that of the children.” Jacob’s *season* of life was married with kids. His season dictated his time commitments, priorities and decisions. And he made this decision and told Esau about it when not too long before he was scared to death that Esau was going to kill him! The last answer I would give someone I thought wanted to kill me is no. But Jacob knew that traveling at a PACE that Esau (translated boss or leader or pastor or CEO) could and would travel would not be healthy for *his family*. Would the answer have been different if Jacob was single? Maybe, but we’ll never know. What we do know is that his decision matched his life’s season, and it was a healthy choice.

How do we handle season-of-life decisions? I know how I handled them in the past. I simply made the choices that fed a workaholic, dream-setting, goal-achieving only child who wanted to change the world. I inadvertently jeopardized my relationship with my wife and children because I expected them to maintain *my* PACE, not *theirs*. It was an unfortunate decision on my part, but redeemable because we have a God who not only reveals truth but who also redeems it.

What season are you in? SPIN begins when you live your life out of its seasonal balance. The four chapters that make up this section on SPIN describe how fast and out of balance life can become. Living your life out of its seasonal balance is just the beginning. When you add mismanaged *Priorities*, *Isolation* from others and the *Neglect* of your own soul care, you have a perfect storm that moves SPIN from a top to a tornado that uproots anything in its path.

Perhaps it's time for all of us to rise up and say a collective no to *doing* and a collective yes to *being*. I hope you will continue on the journey you have started with this book's content as we unpack life balance together.

Mary and I don't want this to be just another book or study. We hope it will be a transformational process for you of life lived in balance. Are you in? Good. Because what you read next will sound like the beginning of the end for our family. It was actually the beginning of the rest of our lives together.

I've already told you the words I read in Mary's journal. But now we want you to know the details and understand what led her to such desperation.

Journals Don't Lie

It was a Sunday evening not unlike any other. I (Craig) went to work early, came home late, ate dinner by myself, got into a brief discussion with my wife—okay, an argument—then went upstairs to turn on Sports Center. I became disinterested with the show during a commercial and started cleaning up the room a bit. I looked under the couch, since this was a favorite place for our boys, Cameron and Alec, to hide Legos, action figures and candy wrappers. What I found was a journal.

I reached for the book and opened it. It was Mary's journal. One night while crying out to God, she noted her thoughts about a God who was deeply connected to her and a husband who was not; a God who would not let her down and a husband who had; a God who would never fail her and

a husband who did. I wish I could say I responded with compassion, grace and empathy, and a true desire to change. Unfortunately, I was not healthy enough emotionally or spiritually to respond that way. Instead, reading the journal made me feel irritated, upset, mad, hurt. And to be honest, a little scared.

The words “I have decided to take the kids and leave” and “I hate my husband” were the ones that hurt the most. I slammed the journal shut and walked downstairs, my heart beating faster with every step. Once I got to the bottom, I was ready for an argument. What happened next was both painful and life changing. Mary tells it in her own words.

I (Mary) pulled into the garage and started unloading the groceries, my mind already on the next tasks ahead: make dinner, get the kids ready for bed, put a load of clothes in the wash. I looked up to see Craig standing in the garage, holding my journal. *Oh no!* I thought. *I sure hope he didn't read that. He wouldn't do that, would he? That's private stuff. And besides, I had shoved it way under the couch upstairs where he would NEVER find it.* The look on his face told me otherwise.

“*I hate my husband.*” He quoted the words I had written in my journal just a few weeks earlier. I knew we were in for another heated argument, and this one was in uncharted waters.

Just three days before this, I had summoned the courage to tell Craig that I had made an appointment with a Christian counselor for the following Tuesday. I told him I had called a friend who was a counselor and asked for a referral to someone who would be a good fit for Craig. She recommended us to Jim, who counseled pastors and also had experience as a senior pastor. I was thrilled to find out that Jim didn't attend our church but had an office not far from our home. It seemed like a perfect fit. I was scared to make the call, but I was desperate. If this didn't work, and I couldn't get Craig to go to see Jim, then *I* was going to need help; so either way, I had decided that I was going to counseling with or without Craig.

After 15 years of marriage and too many arguments to count, I was done. Finished. I was ready to leave Craig. In my mind, it would be easier to be a single mom and raise the kids alone. At least I wouldn't have to deal with his personal issues and ministry issues anymore. I have my bachelor's degree and master's degree in speech therapy, and a teaching credential as well. I was confident that I could get a job in my chosen field. I had already been out looking for a home to rent in a neighborhood that was close to the kids' school. I just needed the courage to go through with it.

Of course, when I told Craig about the counseling appointment, he was upset. He told me that he wasn't going to see the counselor, and I told him that I was going without him. My words to him were, "I'm tired of living a lie." He replied, "What are you talking about? I have no idea what you mean by that."

Now, the journal changed all that. What I had planned to tell him in the security of a counselor's office he had read in the pages of my journal. He knew that I had written the words "I hate my husband"; he knew that I hated the life we were living, day in and day out. I was so disconnected from him that I truly thought I hated him at that point. The reality was that I hated our life together, if you could call it "together."

I felt like we were living a lie inside our fishbowl life. Everyone thought we were this cute couple with a great marriage and great kids—the perfect family. Craig's high-profile job in ministry meant that he was often asked to speak not only at our church but also for other churches and conferences all over the United States. Both of us had written curriculum for children's ministry that hundreds of churches were using in their small groups, not to mention our own church; and people looked up to us. Not only that, but we were small-group leaders of a marriage group, and couples came to our house weekly.

I had to come to grips with the fact that people were going to find out the truth about us—that we didn't have it all together; that our marriage wasn't great; that we fought. That being married to "fun" Craig was not all that fun. In fact, it wasn't fun at all. It was just a bunch of work, and it was lonely. I felt like a baby-sitter, a cook and a maid in my own home. I was a ministry widow at best.

The truth is, Craig and I were business partners who slept in the same bed but never really connected. I felt unloved, unknown and unappreciated. I knew there was a giant wall between the two of us, and no matter how many books on marriage I read, how much I prayed or how much I tried to be the "perfect wife," I couldn't fix our marriage. And I was tired of trying. For me, this *season* was about to come to an abrupt end.