

BEAUTIFUL



HOW GOD REDEEMS

PEOPLE

REGRET, HURT, AND FEAR

DON'T



JUST

IN THE MAKING OF

HAPPEN

BETTER HUMANS



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A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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Beautiful People Don't Just Happen

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BONUS MATERIAL

Key Quotes

If you like to share book quotes on social media or otherwise, or if you just appreciate having key quotes all in the same place, here is a collection from *Beautiful People Don't Just Happen*:

From Prologue 1

“There is a bright blue sky of forgiveness and grace for demoralized, defeated souls. The air space is unlimited and free. Freedom is what God wants for us.”

“Through pain and sorrow, I have been tutored in the counterintuitive nature of [God’s] ways. I have learned that the greatest strength comes through the avenue of weakness, the greatest wisdom through the avenue of disorientation, the greatest joy through the avenue of sorrow, and the greatest worship through the avenue of doubt.”

“The human soul under the disciplined regimen of God works like muscles do under the disciplined regimen of a trainer. The more the soul is worked and stretched to its limits, the more able it becomes to endure suffering and enjoy God all at once.”

“True words are more easily received and metabolized when offered in a setting of empathy, understanding, and love.”

“We are not Home yet. That’s the hard news. The hopeful news is that Home awaits.”

From Prologue 2

“Many Christians have been drawn into the abyss of turning party platforms into their doctrine, pundits into their prophets, and politicians into their Jesus. Outrage is at an all-time high, and some people are at the end of their wits.”

“Every person you meet is fighting a hard, hidden battle.”

“No matter how hard we try to make it so, this present world refuses to be our paradise. We cannot make heaven happen for ourselves because heaven can only be given and received. When we accept and receive this truth, the revival of our hearts is made more possible.”

“Many of the world’s greatest souls became their best selves not in spite of but because of their own distress.”

“Beautiful people. The ones we admire. The ones who change the world for good. The ones we like and want to be like. These people do not ‘just happen.’”

“So many of the books—both Old Testament and New—were authored by someone who was enslaved, seeking asylum, in prison, facing persecution, or under another form of distress.”

“Sometimes the deepest, truest faith feels more like defeat than it does victory.”

From Prologue 3

“God’s better-than-ness dwarfs our trophies and promotions. God’s stronger-than-ness dwarfs our muscle and achievement. God’s God-ness dwarfs our perches of human pride.”

“There is an even bigger mountain that the tiniest bit of faith can move—the mountain of the human heart . . . The greatest mountain to be moved is a needy, tired heart that won’t run to Jesus except as a last resort. All you need is nothing; all you need is need.”

“God is tuned in to the worst things about you and still loves you.”

“Would you dare to believe that God does not hate you? That he sees you at your worst and loves you no less? That if you confess your sins, sorrows, and fears to him right now, you will not be cremated but healed?”

“Would you dare believe that your own regret, hurt, and fear—your not-enough-ness—is not a barrier to God’s healing mercy but the very occasion for it?”

“If ever you’re tempted to hate yourself, be careful. It is a grievous thing to hate a child whom God cannot stop loving.”

From Prologue 4

“We miss out on the best things because we prefer the lesser things. We miss out on the wondrous things because we prefer the humdrum things. We miss out on the adventure because we prefer the safe, contained, controllable things. Gazing at beauty is its own reward. Looking away from beauty is its own punishment.”

“Whether now or later, our hearts are bound to get blistered by grief.”

“The world is both exquisite and terrible.”

“It is a miracle that Jesus endured the cross of death ‘for the joy set before him.’ It is also a miracle when other frail humans like ourselves can do the same.”

From Prologue 5

“Keeping our lamps filled with oil—a metaphor for ordering our lives around *knowing Jesus* through worship with a local church, regular Bible study, and prayer (what some call the formative ‘spiritual

disciplines’)—is imperative for survival when our day of darkness comes.”

“If your story includes anxiety, you know what it is like to grow weary from meditating on imagined worst-case scenarios. I’m here to tell you, there is no sustained way to confront those scenarios without the presence of a steadily nourished, full reservoir of biblical truth.”

“The long-term *worst* case scenario is that all sad and hurtful things will come untrue. Just as certain as Christ’s empty tomb is this: We too will rise from death’s dark into a world where every day will be better than the one before.”

“Don’t underestimate the power of formative habit. What you take into you is what will come out of you when the days of trouble come.”

“Abiding in Christ, who is the light of the world, is your safeguard from getting lost in the dark.”

“We use our fingers to write notes, brush hair out of our eyes, tie a shoe, scratch an itch, floss teeth. But God? God uses *his* fingers to create, sustain, and govern square inches as well as whole continents, heads of hair as well as whole populations, tiny particles as well as unseen galaxies.”

“Jesus, the Maker of the moon and the stars, stoops to wash your dirty, tired, demoralized feet.”

“Jesus will come again—this time not to defeated followers in a remote region but in unmistakable power and a glory so weighty and

expansive, and with the inauguration of a future so bright, that it makes a dying man want to wear happy socks.”

From Prologue 6

“Jesus takes center stage as the Hero in the happily-ever-after Fairy Tale that is also true.”

“In our singing, we delight in the goodness, beauty, love, and excellencies of God. We also delight in and spur on one another’s enrichment and flourishing.”

“For as long as I have been a pastor, I have noticed that every time we sing ‘It Is Well’ in church, the ones who sing the loudest are the sufferers.”

“Being a daughter or son of God is a gift granted by his grace and mercy alone. It has nothing to do with our opinion of our worthiness. We are welcomed, embraced, and kept by him on our best days and our worst days, when we succeed and when we fail, when we love him and when we resent him, when we receive him and when we resist him, when we are pursuing him and when we are avoiding him. This is why he calls himself our Father, as opposed to our fair-weather friend. This is why he relates to us not on the basis of a contract but of a covenant.”

“God’s love for us is consistent not because of the fickle goodness that is in us but because of the familial and fatherly goodness that is in him.”

“[God] cannot love you more and he will not love you less. There is nothing you will ever be able to do to change this.”

From Prologue 7

“[God] breathes life into us as he tends to us in our weakest, most humiliating, and most vulnerable places. He lifts us up off the ground and invites us to sing of his love, step onto the dance floor, and take our honored seat at the marriage feast.”

“[God’s] answer to our sin is not condemnation but grace. His answer to our shame is not rejection but tenderness. His answer to our repeat failures is not last-straw cancelation but never-ending embrace. His answer to our slowness to listen is not disgusted retreat but pursuing kindness. His answer to the grossest things about us is not to shout us down and shut us out but to quiet us with his love.”

“Have you ever stopped and marveled at how the Bible, including God’s chosen family, is filled to the brim with screwups? This is my favorite thing about the Bible. All the screwups that are in there.”

“If God is going to do anything good through human beings, he will have to do so in spite of compromised ethics, mixed motives, and hypocritical realities.”

“It is impossible to be a Christian and *not* be a hypocrite, if by hypocrite we mean someone who lives inconsistently with who they claim to be and what they claim to believe. But our hypocrisy does not negate our Christian faith. Instead, our hypocrisy establishes it.”

“We are not saintly people who have earned our place. Rather, we are sinful people who have been saved by grace.”

“If God only worked with people who are not hypocrites, he would have no one to work with besides Jesus.”

“A broken hallelujah is still a hallelujah. In the ears of God, it is a sweet sound.”

“It’s impossible to be too much of a sinner for church, because the church is *for* sinners and sinners only . . . church has nothing to offer to those who don’t believe themselves to be sinners. The same is true of Jesus.”

“Sometimes if you give Jesus one inch of your trust, he will respond by giving you a hundred miles of love and affection. Sometimes if you give Jesus one thimbleful of pleading, he will return to you an ocean full of compassion and care.”

“Everything in us that has been lost can be found again.”

From Prologue 8

“Hitting bottom, if we survive it, awakens us to the fact that we never grow past our need for healing. Admitting we are frail and incomplete is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength. It’s what makes the healing possible.”

“Admitting self-defeat is key to successful recovery. It involves raw honesty about your worst qualities and the destructive decisions you have

made. It requires you to make amends with those who have suffered because of your choices. Recovery is built on the foundation of embracing weakness and your lack of control, which is the first essential step to getting well.”

“For God to be known truly, he must reveal himself to us, not be created or recreated by us. He must do all the censoring, revising, and correcting to align us to himself. We are unwise when we attempt to relate to him in the reverse.”

“We don’t really believe that to err is human, because our hearts tell us we should be perfect—as if the law of God were somehow already written on our hearts.”

“Our failure to measure up even to our own standards leaves us feeling defensive, ashamed, and prone to medicate and hide. It makes us bristle at things like scolding, shaming, and condemning, while also—and ironically—turning us into people who scold, shame, and condemn.”

“Like anyone else, we pastors believe and we doubt. We listen patiently and we lose our tempers, we give selflessly and we act selfishly, we preach and we gossip, we pray and we sometimes cuss. We can be kind and hurtful, hopeful and cynical, tender and abrasive, loving and hateful, courageous and cowardly, faithful and frail, hardworking and lazy. Even at our best, we are a duplicitous bunch.”

“Why do we bully others? Is it not because we are terrified ourselves of being crushed? Why do we act so big toward our frail and imperfect human peers? Is it not because on the inside, we feel invisibly small?”

“Self-esteem is overrated. Only an esteem that comes from beyond us—from the forgiveness, acquittal, and favor achieved for us on the cross—will be able to help, hold, and sustain us.”

“Rejoice. You are a train wreck. You are also more loved than you ever dreamed.”

From Prologue 9

“Some people believe that words like sin, guilt, judgment, wrath, and confession don’t belong in the human vocabulary anymore. Such words seem regressive, arcane, primitive, unsophisticated, unenlightened. Too negative, morose, depressing, defeating. But are they?”

“The grace and love of Jesus confirm that he is invitingly approachable. The truth and law of Jesus confirm that he can also be transcendent and dangerous.”

“The most ‘disabled’ among us are the ones who lack self-awareness and experience no guilt. At least those who admit their guilt know there is a better version of themselves to wish for and become.”

“When sin ceases to be wretched, grace ceases to be amazing.”

“Some days, I feel less holy and virtuous than I did when I first believed in Christ. Some days, I feel more fraudulent in my faith than authentic, more disingenuous than real, more bent than straight.”

“The more mature we become *in* Christ, the deeper we will feel our need *for* Christ. The stronger our faith in Christ becomes, the weaker in ourselves we will feel. ‘The feel of faith is not strength but dependent weakness.’”

“It is good to be reminded often that God has bad taste. That he welcomes even—no, especially—the wretched into his circle, family, and heart.”

“God reserves special attention and tender loving care for those who know that they miss the mark. Likewise, he takes issue with those who think of themselves as morally superior, popular, shiny, rich, well networked, or intelligent. This is no doubt why morally upright people can be so difficult to reach with the message of Christ while morally flattened people are often easier to reach.”

“Weary sinners have no energy left for . . . fakery. Instead, they receive every truthful word with thanks, especially the ones who declare that God is good and they are not.”

“Jesus welcomes and receives us not despite the worst things about us but because of them. His favorite thing to do is to *undo* our self-inflicted regret with his grace, tend to our self-inflicted hurt with his mercy, and quiet our self-inflicted fear with his love. That’s who he is, and that is what he does.”

“I am able to know [Christ] best in the context of safe, accountable community.”

From Prologue 10

“If the Bible is a party, then Ecclesiastes is the party pooper.”

“No human soul was made to bear the weight of fame except the soul of Jesus. Jesus alone has the character and capacity to stand on a pedestal and not get crushed by it.”

“We humans—all of us—are meant to worship versus being worshiped, to stand in awe versus having others stand in awe of us, to bow the knee versus being bowed unto, to exalt Christ’s fame and fortune versus seeking our own fame and fortune.”

“Intimacy cannot happen without honesty.”

“Life is tragic, and then we die. This is the plain, unfiltered truth about the universe and us. None can escape it. Everything is vapor. Everyone is leaking. The wages of sin is death.”

From Prologue 11

“When we bring our sorrows out of hiding, hope follows closely behind. Admitting and owning the diagnosis, it turns out, is the first step in the direction of healing.”

“I don’t always feel at home in my own skin . . . or pretty much anywhere. But as I have gotten older, I have realized that none of us is supposed to feel completely at home in the world as it is now.”

“The world is full of temporary wonder and heartache, but we were made for a world of everlasting fullness and joy. The world is full of pain, but we were made for a world of comfort. The world is full of hurt, but we were made for a world of happiness. The world is full of hate, but we were made for a world of love.”

“Because we are not Home yet, we still ache. We’re not freaks. Just damaged, hurting, and sick for Home. Homesick.”

“Even people who don’t naturally like each other can grow to love each other . . . Joyful types learn to sing and savor songs of lament, and lamenting types learn to sing and savor songs of joy. Some people call this a rare kind of friendship. Other people call it church.”

“The only way to unspoil a spoiled malcontent is to help him or her see that on the other side of every blessing, there is a curse or two from which the blessing is sparing us.”

“Abundance can be appreciated only when seen in contrast to the world’s scarcity, blessings to the world’s curses, newness to the world’s decay, or joy to the world’s sorrows.”

“Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.”

From Prologue 12

“Distressed feelings are underrated.”

“Jesus loves humans, and when the humans you love become injured or threatened, the natural and godlike response is to get angry and feel the swell of energy directed toward righting a wrong.”

“There is a reason why people say misery loves company. Sharing in one another’s suffering binds us together in the deepest form of fellowship. It mysteriously draws us closer to the fellowship of Jesus’ suffering as we, together, become like him in his death.”

“Almost every book of the Bible was written by a sufferer.”

“The psalms contain an abundance of lyrics that sound more like complaining, demandingness, dissatisfaction, anguish, anger, and protest than rejoicing . . . Do you think [God] would be hurt or offended if you start praying these words—*his words*—back to him?”

“Getting real . . . is unsettling, scary, even traumatic. Take the risk anyway and lean in.”

“Sometimes the parts of the Bible we should pay attention to the most, and the parts of the psalms we should pray the most, are the parts that we have decided *not* to highlight or underline.”

“Almost every person is insecure and underencouraged. Almost no person wants to admit it.”

“Expressing distressed emotion in a broken world is a sign not of weak faith but of strong faith. It is a sign not of spiritual immaturity but of spiritual maturity. It is a sign not that we are unlike Christ but that we are like Christ. It is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength.”

“Laughter is God’s gift to us. So are our tears.”

“The call to rejoice in the Lord is not negated by our expressions of distress; it is honored and made complete by them. Our cries of anguish do not make us less human but make us more human.”

“The fact that Jesus will come again is our reason to rejoice. The fact that he has not done so yet is our reason to lament, weep, wail, and hope. Though full and unmitigated rejoicing will come in the morning, now is also a time for tears.”

“In every human heart, there is a God-shaped and God-sized hole. When we try to fill the hole with anything but God, the hole remains hungry and parched, because anything that is God shaped and God sized is bigger than the universe itself.”

“Idols are tricky because they are usually good things. But in our foolishness, we turn them into things we cannot live without. But when we think that we can’t live without something, in truth we are no longer able to live with it.”

From Prologue 13

“People don’t want to be pastored, taught, or led by a damaged person. Or do they? Maybe instead of labeling anxious and depressed people as damaged goods, we should learn from the psalms and Jesus and Paul about the biblical theology of weakness.”

“God is upside down to our sensibilities. Better said, we are upside down to his.”

“A healer who has not been afflicted is extremely limited in their ability to participate in the healing of others. But a healer who *has* been afflicted is strangely strengthened in their ability to heal.”

“Many of the best therapists have themselves been in therapy. It’s how God works.”

“What feels like the scent of death to us may end up becoming the scent of life for others as we learn to comfort others in their affliction with the comfort that we, in our affliction, have received from God.”

“Being afflicted does not make you ineffective. Being damaged does not mean that you are done.”

“My afflictions may end up having greater impact than my preaching or my vision ever will.”

“Our God is a tender God. He does not break bruised reeds . . . Our guilt and regret trigger his forgiveness, moral cleansing, and welcome. Our hurt and sorrow trigger his maternal tenderness and paternal protection. Our fear and doubt trigger his reassuring mercy and care.”

“[God] has not called me to be awesome or to crush it at life or to be spoken well of and liked or to be a Christian celebrity or hero. These competencies belong to Jesus and Jesus alone.”

From Prologue 14

“Once resurrected, our bodies will assume all the features of immortality, full redemption, unending momentum, untarnished flourishing, and imperishable bliss . . . Because Jesus lives and will never die again, the same must be true of us.”

“Even the smallest amount of faith in Jesus is plenty. Why is this so? Because it is not the strength, nor the quality, nor the quantity of our faith that will get us Home. Rather, it is the strength, quality, and quantity of God’s immeasurable goodness and grace and faithfulness that gets us Home.”

“It is not our repentance that leads [God] to be kind toward us but his kindness that leads us to be repentant toward him.”

“The breath you just took is one more toward your last . . . Life is wondrous and supremely difficult, and then we die. Nobody, even the author of life himself, gets to escape our last enemy, which is death. Until some of us do escape it.”

“The current and coming chapters of our lives—including the ones that seem demoralizing or terminal—are but middle chapters in the Story of God.”

“Death is not the end for us but is rather the final leg of our bent, busted-up, guilt-gutted, hurt-hindered, fear-wearied existence in a fallen world.”

“Jesus Christ conquered and rejected death with a holy rejection. He hates death with a holy hatred. There is comfort to be had in this. On the other side of death, all of us who are in Christ will be able, once and for all and forever, to put erosive and life-sucking vandals like death, mourning, crying, and pain in the rearview.”

“The most remarkable humans with the most remarkable faith are usually the ones who have come to the end of themselves, suffered deeply, and lost much.”

“Beautiful people don’t just happen. But when they do happen, even a wheelchair can become a pulpit, a chemo room a place of worship, chronic pain a path to holiness, burial dirt a plot of resurrection soil, and death a festival on the road to freedom.”

From Prologue 15

“Our long-term worst-case scenario is *not* that we will rot in the ground. On the contrary, our long-term worst-case scenario is resurrection, everlasting life, and an ever-increasing, imperishable bliss.”

“When Jesus says he is making all things new the Greek verb tense is unmistakable. He is saying that in the coming new heaven and new earth, he will make all things new *continually*. He will never stop making all things new. Every single minute, hour, day, week, month, year, decade, century, and millennium—forever and ever and ever—will be better and fuller, more life giving and satisfying, than all of what has come before.”

“There is coming a day when we, his beloved children by faith, will feel younger, stronger, smarter, faster, happier, and more rested, tended to, and full hearted than we can even dream about currently. Our work will be fulfilling, even fun. Our play will be epic and unending. Our connection with God and each other will be a deep source of joy and fulfillment. Honesty will be effortless; deception, backbiting, and conflict will be impossible. Love will be the norm; hate, division, assuming the worst, echo chambers, and calling out to cancel will be distant memories.”

“It is the object of our faith, not the size of it, that will get us Home.”

“Dear sinning, suffering, Homesick friend, I pray God will give you confidence that your best days and years—your most golden, healthy, and happy adventures—are never behind and always ahead of you. In the new heaven and new earth, Jesus will continuously make all things new.”