

EXCEPTIONAL YOU!

ALSO BY VICTORIA OSTEEN

Love Your Life

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Wake Up to Hope (with Joel Osteen)

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Exceptional You Study Guide

EXCEPTIONAL YOU!

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7 WAYS TO
LIVE ENCOURAGED,
EMPOWERED,
AND INTENTIONAL

——
VICTORIA OSTEEN



NEW YORK NASHVILLE

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*This book is dedicated to my family, whose love enriches
my life, and to my Lord and Savior, Whose love
enriches my soul*



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INTRODUCTION

When something is exceptional, it means that it is better than good; it is outstanding. The exceptional stands out from the crowd, is extraordinary, and is something to be celebrated. You were made by God to be exceptional.

Scripture says that you are God's masterpiece, formed in His image, and created to do great things. You were wonderfully made, with a purpose and a destiny that is distinctly yours. You didn't come off an assembly line. You're an original. God knew you before you were born and He designed you to be you, unique and exceptional.

But too often we lose sight of who God made us to be. We don't recognize the individual gifts and talents that God has placed in us. If we're not careful, we'll allow our God-given attributes to be reduced in our own minds, causing us to see ourselves as merely average, mediocre, or mundane.

We must understand that God doesn't want us to be ordinary in our thinking or in the way we live our lives. He wants us to be exceptional in every way. God wants us to expect more from ourselves and from Him. He wants us to strive for more and to be the very best that He created us to be.

Every day is a new day with God. His mercies are fresh every morning, regardless of where you find yourself or the difficulties

you may be going through. God is by your side. He is always offering us a new beginning and a fresh start.

When I think about the challenges and difficulties I've faced in my life, there were times when I would become discouraged and ask myself, *Is this worth it? Does it even matter?* But today I've realized that when I press through the challenges with faith, I discover the exceptional qualities that God placed in me, and I learn valuable lessons in my life.

We all face challenges and unfair situations, but if we are willing to take steps of faith and place them in God's hands, that's when the exceptional in us is produced.

I've noticed that when I put certain practices in place and incorporate them into my life, I feel myself stepping into my exceptional self each and every day. I've written this book to show you the seven practices that keep me reaching toward the exceptional. They are applications that can keep you encouraged, empowered, and inspired along the way. My hope is that you would read them and put them to use in your life.

God has each of us on a path. No two are the same. But the destination God has for all of us is victory. When you are faithful with what God has placed in your hand, and you don't allow it to become mundane and ordinary, you are living exceptionally. I pray this book is a blessing for you. That it leads you closer to God and nearer to who He made you to be. You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Live this truth today: You are Exceptional.

SECTION I



Know That You
Are Chosen



CHAPTER 1

Put on Your Crown

I have a good friend named Jim, who I've known for many years. Jim told me a story one day that has stayed in my heart ever since. It's the story of when he met his baby sister for the first time. Jim was eight years old. He had been an only child for quite some time, and he was incredibly excited about having a sister. Finally the day came when his father showed up at school and took him out of class to head to the hospital. As his father drove through the streets of the town, parked in the parking lot, and then walked Jim down the long hallways of the hospital, Jim's stomach was rumbling with anticipation. They came to a stop in front of a large nursery window. Jim peered through the glass and saw rows of little babies all bundled up like burritos in their bassinets. A nurse looked up and recognized Jim's father. She smiled and walked out of the nursery, right up to Jim, and bent down to his level. She put her hand on his shoulder and said, "That's your baby sister right there," as she pointed out which baby belonged to his family. As Jim saw her for the first time, his face lit up with joy. There, at last, was his baby sister.

Later that day, recognizing how meeting his sister had made

such a strong impression on his son, Jim's father decided to tell Jim about the day that he was born. He sat down on the sofa right next to his precious boy. He looked into his eyes, making sure he had Jim's full attention, and said, "Jim, when you were born, your mother and I looked through a large nursery window at all the babies, kind of like you and I did today. But something different happened. The nurse told us, 'You can have any baby in this nursery that you want.' We looked at all those babies and we chose you."

You see, Jim is adopted. He didn't know it until that moment. But his father wanted to communicate something very important that day. He wanted him to know this truth: "Jim, you were chosen to be our son. You are so valuable and important to us that we handpicked you to be a part of our family."

Throughout his life, Jim's father always made sure Jim knew how much he was loved and how grateful they were that he was in their family.

That is what your Heavenly Father wants you to know today. You are chosen. Ephesians 1 describes God's great love for you.

God chose to adopt you because it pleased Him to call you His own.

It says that before the foundation of the world, it pleased God to adopt you as His very own child. He looked through the corridors of time and knew you by name. He handpicked you and brought you into His family through Jesus Christ. He didn't have to adopt you. God chose to adopt you because it pleased Him to call you His own.

Jim's father would often tell him, "Jim, you were chosen. Don't let anyone tell you any different."

Just like Jim's father reminded him, you need to get up every

day and remind yourself that the Creator of the universe chose you and you are valuable to Him.

Don't let your mistakes, failures, or other people talk you out of who you are.

Life has a way of trying to bring us down, discount us, and cause us to forget our true identity. People may judge us, leave us out, and make us feel unqualified. None of that determines who you are—God has already called you and qualified you. You may have made some mistakes. We all have, but that doesn't change your value in the eyes of God. He loves you. Not because of your performance, not because you do everything perfectly, but because you are His child. Take off the negative labels and let go of what people have said to you. Quit beating yourself up for things you can't change. God wants you to move forward in faith, believing that you are chosen, exceptional, and well able to do what He has called you to do.

Know Who You Are

When King David was a young shepherd boy, he was out in the fields tending his father's sheep when the prophet Samuel came to his house to anoint the next king of Israel. Jesse, David's father, brought in all seven of David's older brothers and had them stand in front of Samuel, saying, "Take a look at these fine young men. I believe the king is here." Samuel looked at those tall, strong men and said, "Jesse, the king is not here. Are these all the sons you have?"

I can hear Jesse saying, "Well, there is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep." Perhaps Jesse didn't think that David was old enough or strong enough to be chosen by God to be king. But

when David walked in from the fields, the Lord said to Samuel, “Rise and anoint him. He is the one.”

Can you imagine how David felt when he walked in the house and saw all his brothers were first choice and he came in last? David could have been offended, thinking, *Why didn't my dad even consider me?* He could have been upset at the thought of being overlooked or put his head down, thinking, *I guess nobody believes in me. Why should I believe in myself?*

But David didn't have that attitude. He decided, *If I am chosen to be king, I am going to believe that I am a king.* God had already chosen David to be king of Israel long before he was tending his father's sheep out in the fields. Just because David's father didn't recognize the calling on his life didn't change the fact that he was already chosen. His family might have counted him out, but God had already counted him in. They didn't think he looked like the next king. He was too young; he didn't have the training or experience.

But God knew what was on the inside of David. God also knows what's on the inside of you, because He put it there. He knows what you're capable of. If you have ever felt the sting of rejection like David, remember who you are. You are called and chosen by God. Nothing disqualifies you from God's plans, not even a father who doesn't believe in you. Your family may not see your potential, you may not feel appreciated, people at work may not recognize your gifts and talents, friends may leave you out, but don't get discouraged. Like David, God sees you, He knows exactly where you are, and He is calling you in. No one can take your place. Nothing has the power to change God's plan for your life. Don't let other people's actions cause you to question what God has placed on the inside of you. Stand up tall; God's

hand is on your life. He has chosen you to do great things. God being for you is more powerful than the world being against you.

God being for you is more powerful than the world being against you.

To be exceptional, you have to know who you are and Whose you are. Now, just because you've been chosen doesn't mean everything happens right away. There is often a period of waiting required. Those times of waiting can be hard. You may feel as though you're out in the shepherd's field today. Don't give up because of challenges or obstacles you may be facing. When David was anointed king, it took him thirteen years before he took his position on the throne. He went back to the shepherd's field. He faced challenges and struggles. He found himself hiding out in caves and running from his predecessor, King Saul, who saw that the "Lord was with David" and was jealous of the favor on David's life and wanted to kill him. There were several times when David could have killed King Saul and vindicated himself for all Saul did to him, but David walked in integrity. He resisted getting even because he knew who he was and he knew he carried an anointing. He was honoring God by protecting what God had placed on his life. David could have given up and wondered why he was facing so many challenges and he could have doubted the call of God on his life. However, he continued to remind himself that he was chosen and did not allow any of the difficulties to change his mind.

Now it's your turn. Do you believe you're chosen, or are you allowing people to talk you out of what God has called you to do? It is so important that you protect what is on your life. You carry a great anointing. Don't try to vindicate yourself and get even. Don't fight battles that aren't yours. Hold your head up high and put your shoulders back. Scripture says you are a "royal

priesthood” and “God’s special possession.” That means you are royalty. Adjust your crown and wear it like you know who you are.

My friend Jim is a successful man today with a beautiful wife and lovely children of his own. He would tell you that one of the greatest things he did for himself was to believe that he was chosen and valuable. He didn’t let anyone disqualify him. He remembered his father’s words that he was handpicked. In fact, Jim built such a strong foundation of belonging that when his sisters would say to him, “Jim, Mom and Dad love you the most,” he would reply, “Of course they do. They had to take you. I was chosen.”

Receive this truth in your heart: You are chosen by God. He anointed you and put a calling on your life that is irrevocable. You are exceptional because He made you that way. He declares that His plans for you are for good, to prosper you and not to harm you. He has plans to give you a future and a hope.

God Has Packed Your Bags

I’ve been blessed to do a lot of traveling in my life. We have participated in over 195 Nights of Hope in arenas all over the country. No matter how many years I’ve been traveling, I still don’t enjoy packing. You’d think I would have grown accustomed to it by now, but I still find myself looking in my bags the night before, thinking, *What have I left out? I don’t want to get to where I am going and not have what I need.* Even today, every time I shut my suitcase, I say to myself, “I hope I haven’t left anything out.”

I think we can all feel that way at times, as if we are missing something or that somehow we are lacking. We wonder if we are

talented enough to land that job or receive that promotion. We question if we are smart enough to further our education, pretty enough to marry the man of our dreams, or funny enough for people to like us.

Can I tell you that God has packed your bags and He has left nothing out? You have everything you need to succeed in this life. God does not want us to doubt our worth and abilities. Don't go through life from a position of lack when God has made you more than enough. You have the qualities you need to have successful relationships, a good career, and a strong family. You have the right gifts, the right talents, and the right personality.

In the Bible, there is a man named Jeremiah who God had chosen to be a prophet to the Nations. Jeremiah felt unqualified and didn't know if he had the ability to speak to the people. He questioned God, asking, "How can I speak? I am only a child." Jeremiah didn't think he had what he needed. He felt empty and lacking. God did not leave him in his doubt and disbelief. The Lord told Jeremiah that he was equipped and He would go with him and tell him what to say. God was saying, *Jeremiah, I packed your bags. I chose you and completed you. You are lacking nothing.*

I know it is easy to be like Jeremiah and doubt yourself. When I was a young teenager, my mother wanted me to work with her at my family's jewelry store on the weekends. I didn't feel like I knew enough about fine jewelry and I was sure that I would embarrass myself and my mother if someone asked me a question and I didn't know the answer. But my mother lovingly encouraged me, even as I dragged my feet to the store each weekend. What I didn't realize was that my mother understood my fears and insecurities, but she also knew my gifts and talents. She knew I had everything inside me to succeed, but I had to move

forward in faith one step at a time. She trained me through the years, and I began to learn more about the business and feel more confident. I wasn't lacking anything; I had within me the skills to be a good salesperson and spokesperson for the store. It was in that jewelry store that I met the man of my dreams. He came in for a watch battery and I sold him a brand-new watch. Over thirty years later, I am still crazy about him. It looks like Mother knows best after all.

My experience at the jewelry store taught me that God had already packed my bags but it was up to me to unpack what He had put on the inside of me. I had the right gifts and talents for each assignment. It was up to me to push past my fears and insecurities. You too have the right gifts and talents. Your bags have been packed for your special assignments. The problem is too many of us are walking around with our bags packed but unopened. To unpack our bags, we have to push past fears, mistakes, and excuses in order to develop what God has placed in us.

Reaching new levels isn't always easy. Sometimes God will use people, new experiences, and even uncharted territory to nudge us out of our comfort zone. You may feel pressured today. Perhaps you feel some discomfort in your job or with your family. You may be facing a career change or an important decision about your future. Remind yourself that you have everything it takes. Reach deep inside of your bag and unpack what God has placed inside of you. Your faith may feel as if it's being tested and pushed to the extreme. Remember, it's the trial of your faith that brings out the lasting character in your life and builds confidence you cannot attain any other way.

The only difference between a piece of black coal and a precious diamond is the pressure it has endured. It is the pressure

that it is under that turns that ordinary piece of coal into a rare and priceless jewel. The truth is the pressure you may be facing isn't going to break you—it's going to make you. It's going to develop you and give you experiences you need to build your confidence. Honor God and believe you have what it takes to shine brightly for Him.

Honor God and believe you have what it takes to shine brightly for Him.

Some of our talents and gifts are easy to recognize. They're just natural to us. But some things are still on the inside in the form of seeds that need to be developed and nurtured.

I have a huge oak tree in my front yard. It's so beautiful. The branches spread out forty feet, but that tree didn't start out that way. Sixty years ago, it was just a tiny acorn and it didn't look like much. It would have been easy to overlook it, thinking it was insignificant. However, hidden in that tiny acorn was a magnificent tree; it just had to germinate and develop. The gifts and talents God put in you are in seed form, just like that acorn. It's easy to overlook them. They may seem small and ordinary. But when you recognize what God has put in you and see it as significant, you take time to nurture it and develop it. What seems small has incredible potential. Sometimes we pray for an oak tree; we ask for the finished product, but God gives us an acorn.

Are you overlooking gifts and talents, discounting what God has given you? Have a new perspective. Your acorns are full of potential. There's an incredible oak tree in them. It may be small now, but don't discount it. Take time to develop it, nurture it, and watch it grow.

Remember Your True Identity

How you see yourself will determine whether or not you reach your potential. God has created us in His image and crowned us with favor. But too often we allow our limitations and weaknesses, things that have happened to us, how we were treated, and mistakes we've made to distort that image. Rather than seeing ourselves as exceptional, full of potential, chosen by the Most High, we see ourselves as ordinary, thinking we've reached our limits. If my friend Jim would have seen himself as unwanted, if David would have seen himself as not qualified and left out, or if Jeremiah wouldn't have trusted that God would be with him, then we wouldn't be talking about them. So take a moment to really consider: How do you see yourself? Have you taken on an image of yourself that is false, based on something that happened to you rather than the promises of God? We all face disappointments, we all make mistakes, but that's not who we are.

There is a legend about a young queen who was famous throughout the world for her beauty and was loved and admired by her people. One day she was abducted and carried away to another country. With all the confusion and trauma, she was afflicted with amnesia. It was like a switch was flipped and she had no memories of her previous life. She couldn't remember who she was, didn't know her name or where she came from. She ended up living in desperate conditions on the streets. No one who saw her would ever have dreamed that she had royalty in her blood and was a respected and adored queen.

Those who loved her dearly refused to stop looking for her.

Years went by, but her family and friends kept hoping and praying that she was still alive and someone would find her.

One man who loved her deeply and had never lost faith that she was alive finally decided to search for her himself. Traveling far and wide, he eventually found himself searching the streets of a waterfront, where he noticed a woman dressed in dirty rags sitting by the water. Although her face looked beaten up and her hair was tangled and matted, something about her seemed strangely familiar, so before he moved on, he went over and asked her name. She mumbled some incoherent words and looked away. Though he couldn't see her face, there was one thing about her that he had to see. So he asked, "May I see your hands?" He knew the line prints on his beloved queen's hands and would never forget them. As she turned her palms upward, the man stood there, astonished. He whispered, "Helen." She looked at him, bewildered. He said, "You are Helen, queen of our land. You are the queen. Helen, don't you remember?" Suddenly it was as though the switch that had been flipped off had been turned back on again. She remembered who she was. Weeping, she stood up, embraced her friend, and the two of them returned to her homeland, where she once again became the queen she was meant to be.

We are not so different from Helen. We too can develop amnesia through the twists and turns of life. But we cannot forget: We were born into royalty. We were created to reign in life. God crowned us with honor, but we've forgotten who we are. Because of disappointments, unfair situations,

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and setbacks, we've taken off our crowns and are living frustrated, stressed out, and far below the privileges that rightfully belong to us, thinking we're average. Like this man did for Helen, I'm here to remind you who you are. You are chosen; you are exceptional; you are handpicked by God. You weren't made to live defeated, depressed, addicted, and unfulfilled. You may have temporarily forgotten what being royalty means, but I believe things are changing, and you are remembering who you really are.

You are exceptional. You have everything you need. Unpack your bags, stir up your faith, and remember that you are royalty. Now, do your part and put your crown back on.



EXCEPTIONAL THOUGHTS

- ◆ I am a chosen child of God, handpicked by Him and created in His image. He loves me, values me, and has a great purpose for my life. I will not let my mistakes, my failures, or other people talk me out of who I am and Whose I am.
- ◆ I am loved by God not because of my performance, not because I do everything perfectly, but because I am His child.
- ◆ I am anointed and have the call of God upon my life to do great things. It doesn't matter whether anyone else recognizes that calling or my gifts and talents. I will stand tall, knowing that God being for me is all I need.
- ◆ God has packed my bags with everything I need to accomplish the dreams I have for my life. I have the right gifts, the right talents, and the right personality. I am not lacking anything, and I will move forward in faith, knowing that I am fully qualified and well able to do what He has called me to do.
- ◆ It is up to me to unpack what God has already lovingly placed inside me for my special assignments. I will work with God to develop and bring forth the life He has planned for me.
- ◆ Because I am God's child, I am royalty, I am His beloved, and I will walk each day knowing my true identity. I will not allow things that have happened to me, how I was treated, or mistakes I've made to distort that image.