

If I Only Had...

Wrapping Yourself in God's Truth
During Storms of Insecurity

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Dedication

*To my husband, Jeff, for his loving support of my ministry
and writing pursuits. Thank you for your patience.*

—Lisa Burkhardt Worley

*To my husband, Arthur, who gave me the support,
love, and time to pursue my dreams.*

—Catherine Weiskopf

Awards for *If I Only Had...*

Next Generation Indie Book Award Finalist

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Preface

The Root of Greatness

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN insecure about accomplishing something God called you to do? Well, relax; you're in good and holy company. Many of the great personalities of the Bible demonstrated extreme insecurity when God placed a call on their lives. Moses is a prime example.

Imagine Moses, a murderer who has found peace and anonymity in a distant land, getting the call. Just as he's relaxing into his life with a wife, children, and a shepherding job, his world takes a dramatic turn. He spots the flames shooting out of the bush, and God utters the words Moses doesn't want to hear in Exodus 3:9–10: "And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Moses begins to mumble and stutter out numerous excuses as to why he can't accomplish such a task, starting in Exodus 3:11: "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

Many of his excuses, rooted in insecurity, are the same ones you and I use in our own walk with God. How often do we respond

with those same words? *Who am I? I don't do anything well. I will just mess it up.*

Throughout my life, I've always related to Moses. When God asked me to take on various tasks, I sounded like my ancient friend. *Who am I? Why would God want to use me?*

This book is based on a series of Bible study lectures God called me to present in the context of the women's ministry of my local church. I remember when the Lord first prompted me to write the material. Like Moses, my first thought was, *Who am I to take this project on?* followed shortly by other excuses: *I don't have enough time. I don't think people will attend the study. I don't have enough to say.* Worried that it was too great a job, I asked another speaker to help me write and present the lectures. After praying about it, she said, "I can help you, but I believe you're the one who is supposed to do it." Still uncertain about my calling and ability, I left my fate in the hands of our Bible study leaders. They were three strong, opinionated women, and I knew they would all be brutally honest about their feelings. I asked God to make their decision unanimous if I was to write the teaching material.

All three said the same thing. "Lisa, you are supposed to do it."

A bit weak in the knees, I began to write a series of lectures on overcoming insecurity. I wondered whether Moses felt this same trepidation when he set off with his sheep herding staff for Egypt. Then I remembered the rest of Moses' story. After God called Moses, he did not leave him stranded in the wilderness. No, he never left his side, guiding him every day until Moses' call was completed. Writing the lectures was the same. God provided the messages, one after the other. At the completion of the study, several attendees asked whether anything else could be done with the material so other women could benefit from it. I made the decision to write this book, and thanks to my co-author, Catherine Weiskopf, the lectures were transformed into *If I Only Had...*

Yes, Moses and I have much in common. We both had our list of excuses springing from insecurity. Moses' list continued with, *I don't have enough knowledge to do this; I don't have the skills*; and toward the end, he tells God, *Find someone else!*

But God had answers for all of Moses' insecurities and rationalizations, and eventually, the pillar of faith said yes to the call of God; he did a great work for which he will forever be remembered. Because Moses was God's choice, he equipped him to manage a mighty project for him. To demonstrate God's supernatural power, the Lord transformed Moses' staff into a snake, and one day, Moses would use the staff to part the Red Sea as the Israelites escaped captivity.

God also does not leave us empty handed as he calls us out of our safe lives to bold lives for him. While he doesn't provide us with a knotted staff, he does bestow a pillar of strength in the gift of his truth.

When we go out into extreme weather, a scarf protects our lungs. For the winter cold, a thick scarf keeps chilly air at bay. People who live in the Middle East and experience sand storms also use scarves to keep sand from blowing into their nostrils and mouth. Like a person heading out into bad weather, do you take enough time in your day to wrap yourself in God's truth?

Throughout this book, look for powerful **scarves of truth** based on Scripture to protect yourself as you make your escape from the pounding storms of insecurity.

Time and time again, the theme repeats itself. Instead of God's scarf of truth, we wrap ourselves in deception. We follow our emotions and get pulled every which way believing something or someone else will make us secure. Instead, unwrap the slander, throw it in the laundry, and replace it with God's scarves of truth.

Just as Moses lifted up his shortcomings to God, we must do the same. This book also provides you with **prayer gloves** to slip into after each chapter as you offer your insecurities to God.

Ephesians 6:18 encourages us to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Being real, needy, and urging about our insecurities is no exception. Wesley said we should persevere in prayer until “we come to the end of this holy exercise.”

Praying is talking to God directly about our needs. The gloves of prayer in each chapter acknowledge our intent to come to the Master Carpenter first for the fixing of our insecurity issues. God wants to protect us from the storms of insecurity. God wants us to toss aside the excuses and be willing to allow him to heal us.

Insecurity was at the root of Moses’ greatness, and God can use our insecurity, as well, to achieve greatness for him. When we feel God tapping us on the shoulder, he’s got a job for us, and we can count on him to equip us.

Through the pages of this book, we will work through some of the “if onlys” that prevent us from being all God has called us to be.

Lisa Burkhardt Worley

One

If I Only Had . . . More Confidence

FROM THE DAY WE are born until the day we die, external forces chisel away at our confidence, and our “if onlys” begin. Our external forces could be family members, friends, tragic circumstances, or a gawky childhood. A hammer of harsh words here, a pounding of neglect there, and pretty soon we feel more like a demolition site than a child of God. These holes of insecurities create cracks in our lives and threaten to affect how we respond to what life tosses us.

Yes, we seemed doomed to deal with the same issues over and over again and to suffer from the same lifelong insecurities.

But there is hope for restoration. There is someone who can fix our holes and shore up our cracks—the Great Carpenter.

My “if onlys” took root two months before I was born, on a typically warm Sunday afternoon at the Brackenridge Park Polo Fields in San Antonio, Texas. My father, Dr. William L. Burkhardt, who liked to be called “Bill,” was a successful physician who loved to play competitive polo on the weekends. The usual smallish crowd, made up mostly of the players’ family members, attended the match. My mother, in full bloom with her pregnancy, and my fourteen-year-old

half-sister were both on hand to cheer my father on, but with the competition in full swing, a hush fell over the spectators. They watched in disbelief as my father keeled over and fell off his horse. There was a great deal of confusion at first. No one knew what happened to my dad until paramedics figured out it was his heart.

My father didn't survive the trip to the hospital, dying swiftly from a massive heart attack at age thirty-nine. My mother's "if onlys" started that day. *If only my husband had not died, I would not be reliant on alcohol and prescription drugs to get through the day. If only he'd had life insurance, I would not be destitute. If only Bill had lived, I could be stronger for my daughter.*

My father's death was one of those external factors no one could control, but it set the stage for my lifelong struggle with fear of abandonment and a propensity to overachieve.

What external forces have shaped your life?

Our insecurity roots run deep. We are born into and grow up in an environment where repeated messages give us a picture of who we are and how the world works. This programming, as it is often called, is powerful and difficult to overcome. To change it, we need to undergo a bit of remodeling.

I am reminded of an episode of *This Old House* in which remodelers rewired a historical home. Old electrical lines are fire hazards. Similarly, old messages we tell ourselves are dangerous to our lives. We must take the old messages of insecurity and replace them with new messages based on God's truth. We must rewire our old house.

One holy rewiring in the Bible involved Gideon. The story begins in Judges 6:11–14:

The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior."

"Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."

The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"

Now listen to this carefully, because here's the insecurity and lack of confidence: "'Pardon me, my lord,' Gideon replied, 'but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.'" (verse 15)

Why do you think Gideon believed he was the "least?" Most likely he was only repeating the messages he received over the years from his family members and extended clan. Was he a little guy? Was he picked on? Gideon accepted what people told him and carried this negative messaging into adulthood. In contrast, remember how the Lord addressed Gideon. He called him "mighty warrior."

Scarf of Truth: God knows our potential, even if we don't.

I remember the first time I spoke with well-known writer, Max Lucado, in San Antonio. I had worked with his literary agent for a short stretch, trying to get a children's book published. At the time, I was on-air at a local San Antonio television station, and Max probably knew me from that, but when I introduced myself, he said, "Oh, I know you; you're Lisa Burkhardt, the children's book writer."

He was a successful Christian author who believed in my potential as a writer. God also knows our capabilities, even if we don't, and he wants us to hang out in the land of the possible. As Isaiah 64:8 reminds us, "Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."

Do you feel like a lump of clay? Remember, God already sees you as a finished work of art.

Scarf of Truth:
The Lord is with us, even when we lack confidence.

In Judges 6:16–18, God reassures Gideon in the midst of his insecurity: “The LORD answered, ‘I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.’”

Gideon shows his insecurity again in his response to God’s directive. He replies, “‘If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.’”

The Lord obliges and chills for a while until Gideon returns.

I am like Gideon when I receive what I perceive as a message from God. I want to make sure he’s talking to me. It takes three similar holy communiqués before I am confident it’s God’s direction. I don’t fault Gideon for asking his Maker for a sign. Remember, he was coming into this from a vulnerable position, a lifelong history of insecurity. He thought he was the least in his family. He was convinced his clan was the weakest. He was probably thinking, *Why would God want someone like me to do that?*

Isn’t this what many of us say when God calls us to accomplish something out of the ordinary? *I am not good enough to do that. I am not equipped. Surely there is someone more suitable for the job.*

If we let the lack of confidence hold our attention, we can miss God’s call. Many people let insecurity stop them from living their God assigned adventure. Deanie almost missed out on God’s call on her life because of her lack of confidence.

Deanie remembered sitting in her front yard as an elementary school child, cozying up to the invisible boundary separating her yard from her neighbor’s. She wasn’t supposed to cross the line, invite others over, or venture into the homes of friends. There were

rarely visitors at her house because her parents were painfully shy. "Growing up there was always the sense we were separate from everybody," she said about her childhood.

Deanie married during college, and for the next fifteen years, her identity came from taking care of her husband and children. She immersed herself in being a mom. She loved on her children, volunteered for countless jobs, and always had a group to lead.

When she and her family moved to North Texas in the early 1990s, her active life changed. "The neighbors all worked. I didn't have the PTA to get involved in. I didn't have any outlet." Lonely and depressed, she went to a counselor who asked her the simple question, "What do you love to do?" Deanie couldn't answer the question initially but eventually realized her great passions in life were theology and bringing urban and suburban churches together.

When Deanie was forty-six years old, God called her into ministry and she stood on the edge of a precipice. "This was my last chance," she said. Behind her was her old life, and she knew it was killing her. Doubts raced through her mind as she thought of taking the big leap: "Is it too late? What skills do I have? Can I possibly do this?"

"For me, it was life-or-death emotionally," she said. "So I broke our biggest family rule and borrowed money to sign up for seminary." When she paid her fees and walked out, she looked around and wondered what she was doing. "I'd been hanging on and waiting all my life, but at that moment I broke out."

Unfortunately, the self-doubt didn't go away just by taking the first step. Her hands shook during her first test as she hoped twenty years out of school hadn't been too long.

At the end of her first year at seminary, Deanie worried about the next big leap of getting a job when she graduated. She had volunteered and raised a family, but never worked outside the home, which caused her to wonder who would hire her. She felt she was trained for nothing. Because of this, she scheduled an appointment to meet with the district superintendent of her church.

Their meeting started with formalities, and then dramatically took a turn. When the superintendent asked Deanie about preaching, she answered that she didn't want to preach.

"Then what do you want to do?" he asked.

"I didn't come to talk about what I really want to do, but since you asked, I'll tell you," she said. "I really want to connect urban and suburban churches."

Her passion for her calling spilled out. As she talked, his eyes widened, and he was riveted. She later learned it was the superintendent's passion, also. She left his office with a job, a direction, and a new sense of God's involvement in her life. "It was stunning how it all fell into place so quickly," Deanie said. She had no confidence, but God was with her and provided the opportunity she needed to fulfill her calling.

Like Deanie, Gideon lacked confidence and was apprehensive, but he worked through his fear. He gathered up all the items for the offering he promised God, and after he arranged it just right, fire flared from a rock, consuming the meat and the bread. That's when Gideon realized he had been up close and personal with God and had seen the angel of the Lord face-to-face. The Lord knew Gideon was overwhelmed, so he says to him in Judges 6:23-24: "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die." So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord is Peace."

We all need peace, don't we?

Now that God had Gideon's attention, he asked him to tear down his father's altar to Baal (a false god) and replace it with a proper altar of reverence to God. Gideon did as God requested, but didn't want an audience. Because he was afraid of the men in the town, the still-undercover warrior put on his most inconspicuous robe and snuck out in the middle of the night with ten of his servants to do some altar-smashing. Having a God encounter didn't mean he was healed of his self-doubt. Insecurity had deep roots in Gideon's life, just as it does in ours.

**Scarf of Truth:
It may take many encounters
with God to overcome insecurity.**

Growing up plump, with short blond hair and thick brown glasses, my beauty wasn't the topic of conversation at the lunch table. I hated my looks so much I cut my face out of my sixth-grade class picture, but at some point in my adolescent journey, I believed I was attractive enough to pursue a television sportscasting career. Working in the public eye didn't remove the insecurity about my looks. I complained about my appearance while having lunch with a friend, but she reminded me they don't put ugly people on television. Like Gideon, it took many repeat messages before I believed I wasn't that homely sixth-grader anymore. It may also take you many encounters with God to overcome insecurity.

We are not a one-shot, got-it-the-first-time people. We think we've learned, but we constantly fall back into the same old ways of viewing ourselves. Each time we feel insecure, we live on the edge of danger because we often reach for a quick fix to deal with the uneasy feeling.

The Israelites did the same thing in 1 Samuel 8:5 when they ask Samuel to appoint a king: "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

They desired a king because they coveted other nations' monarchies, and they thought they'd feel more secure and protected if they copied their competition. Similarly, we tell ourselves we'll feel more secure if we give something else, like looks or money, lordship over our security. But this strategy never works and does not eliminate the problem. To avoid this dangerous path, we must go to God with our insecurities every time.

Meanwhile, the Israelites' enemies are approaching, and Gideon is shaking in his boots again. He asks God to deliver one more sign that

he is the one who is supposed to save Israel. *Are you really sure it's me, God?* In Judges 6:36-37, "Gideon said to God: 'If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised—look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.'"

What's funny here is that Gideon acknowledges God spoke to him, but he still doesn't totally believe it. God patiently took Gideon around the block again after Gideon ordered up one more sign. The next day, the fleece was wet, and the ground was dry. How much more proof did Gideon need?

Scarf of Truth:
In order to overcome insecurity,
we must believe what God says about us.

Did you grow up in a dysfunctional family life and now can't seem to get past it? You need to believe that God is your Father. God provides the recipe for becoming his children in John 1:12: "Yet to all who receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Do you think you are not pretty enough? You are exactly the way God created you to be. Jeremiah 1:5 tells us: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart."

Do you feel you're not good at anything and have no gifts to be used in God's kingdom? Trust Ephesians 2:10: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

You have a gift God wants you to use. If you don't know what it is, ask him to reveal it to you. Many of us acknowledge the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Yet much like the insecure Gideon, we don't always believe the promises of God's words.

After some Holy repetition, Gideon was finally convinced. God worked through him in an extraordinary way to subdue the Midianites. Gideon gathered an army of 22,000 men, but God whittled that number down to 300 so he would receive the glory for the victory. When Gideon and the 300 strong arrived at the Midianites' camp, they held torches in their left hands, blew their trumpets, and smashed the empty jars they carried. Then they shouted: "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"

Scarf of Truth:
**God doesn't always fight our battles
in the way we imagine he will.**

It's a bizarre way to fight, but . . . unbelievably, the Midianites were rattled by the Israelites' actions and ran, turning on each other with their swords. Gideon and his troops captured and killed the leaders of the Midianites. For the rest of Gideon's life, forty years, there was peace in the land. Amazing! Gideon's self-confidence level was no longer short-circuited. God rewired an insecure man from the "weakest" clan into a mighty warrior and hero.

Whatever battle you are in right now, God, the Master Electrician, may not connect the wires exactly the way you imagine. Since God is a creative God who loves surprises, he rarely follows our design or direction. Wouldn't it be boring if God were predictable?

An elegant woman named Karen remembered how a few words from her husband shattered her world before God began putting the pieces of her broken life back together.

Her husband, Mike, had just returned home from a trip and lay across their bed. "I've fallen in love with another woman," he said, "and I'll be leaving next week."

Nausea raced through Karen's body as she stood frozen with disbelief. "I felt it was all a bad dream and I would wake up soon,"

Karen said. "I had many questions and needed answers. Of course, I never got them."

Karen prayed Mike would return, and three weeks later, he did ask to come back. "I agreed to let him come home because I didn't want our family broken up, and I loved him very much. We both agreed to try and work things out. The next two years were difficult because Mike traveled all week, but I knew I had to trust my husband if I wanted our marriage to survive."

About the time she felt secure in their marriage, the same nightmare crushed her heart again. This time Mike was moving to East Texas, where his new lover lived. Karen realized her marriage was over and filed for divorce after much prayer. "Again," she said, "I thought my world had ended. I had always been someone's wife and mother, with no identity of my own. I knew I could not continue to feel worthless and deceived."

Karen began attending a separated/divorced support group at her church. There she realized that many others faced even greater adversity. "Helping others through their grief and tragedy helped me." During this time, Karen met her second husband, to whom she has been married for over fourteen years.

"He is a wonderful, kind, and loving man. I learned that God never promised to keep us from trials and difficulties, but God promises to get us through them," Karen said.

We have our own ideas about how things should go, but God's thoughts are not our thoughts. His ways are not our ways. He wants us to have no doubt he is the reason the battle is won.

There was no doubt God was responsible for Gideon's victory. In an excerpt from *Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary*, it has this to say about Gideon:

While God calls Gideon valiant, he makes him so. God delights to advance the humble. Gideon desires to have his faith confirmed. Now, under the influences of the Spirit, we are not to expect signs

before our eyes such as Gideon here desired, but must earnestly pray to God, that if we have found grace in his sight, he would show us a sign in our heart, by the powerful working of his Spirit there.

Gideon worked through his insecurity, probably from his childhood, to accomplish a great task for God. His story has been an inspiration for many, including two men from Wisconsin who met on a business trip in the fall of 1898. John H. Nicholson and Samuel E. Hill checked into the Central Hotel in Boscobel, Wisconsin, thinking they would have separate rooms, but the hotel was extremely crowded, so the two ended up sharing a room. That night, while they were getting to know each other, they discovered they were both Christians, so they joined together for an evening devotion and prayer.

Nicholson and Hill's meeting prompted an idea to form an association to band Christian commercial travelers together for service to the Lord. When they were coming up with a name for their group, they immediately agreed they would be called Gideons, based on the sixth and seventh chapters of Judges.

Just like Gideon, they had a big undertaking ahead of them which they would be able to accomplish only through God's power and direction. In the early years of the association, the men decided they could be the most effective witnesses in hotels by placing a Bible in every bedroom of each hotel. That plan was adopted in 1908. One hundred years have passed since The Gideons placed the first Bible in a hotel room in Montana.

Today, Gideons are organized in more than 190 countries around the world. The Bibles and New Testaments are printed in more than ninety languages, with 1.6 billion Bibles and New Testaments placed in the hotels. 1.6 billion! I cried when I read that number, and was so impressed that it all started with two ordinary men, probably with their own insecurities, who shared the Word and prayed together in a hotel room. It's incredible, and so

interesting they named themselves after an insecure hero named Gideon who finally believed what God had to say to him.

I know many of us still fight the negative messages we received during childhood, but if you've accepted Christ, you are a new creation, and the Lord wants you to be secure in Him. We have to let go of our old selves and trust God's blueprint for our lives. Call it a battle. Call it holy rewiring. Call it whatever you want, but God needs to do some remodeling in us. All our internal baggage from the past is rubbish compared to the assurances of God.

One of my favorite verses is Joel 2:25. It promises us that God will repay us for the years the locusts have eaten. I don't know about you, but there were a lot of "if only" locusts gnawing away at me in my early years, but in order to overcome, I finally had to trust God like Gideon did.

Are you ready to fight back against the obstacles that prevent you from being secure? Do you desire to discard all your "if only's?" Know you can trust God with your battle, and stand firm on his promises as he wages war against the insecurity within you. So let's forge ahead together on that journey to claim victory in our lives. The Lord is with you, mighty warrior princess. The Lord is with you!

Gloves of Prayer: *Lord, please begin a holy rewiring in me, and help me overcome a past that destroys my confidence. Give me your eyes, dear God, to see myself as you see me, not as I feel about myself. Show me how to believe I am your handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works for you. Give me your vision for my life, and strengthen me to be a great warrior of the faith. In Jesus' name, AMEN.*

Discussion Questions:

If I Only Had . . . More Confidence

1. From the day we are born until the day we die, external forces chisel away at our confidence, and our “if onlys” begin. What people or experiences in your life have caused you to feel insecure? What external forces have shaped your life? Like Gideon, what messages have you heard over and over again until they have become truth to you?
2. Like rewiring an old house, we must take old messages of insecurity and replace them with new messages based on God’s truth. What messages of God’s truth can you use to replace the lies of insecurity that fill your head?
3. Gideon felt unworthy of leading the Israeli army to victory. Like Gideon, have you ever felt God calling you to do something and doubted the call and your worthiness? Has God confirmed that calling?
4. When God called Gideon, Gideon reacted the following three ways:

“But Lord, how can I . . .”

“If I have found favor send me a sign.”

He did what the Lord told him, but he did it at night, when no one was watching.

What interaction between Gideon and God do you most identify with?

5. The Israelites asked for a king when they were feeling insecure. What shortcuts or temporary fixes do you tend to gravitate toward when you are feeling insecure?

6. God wants us to hang out in the land of the possible. How can you make changes in your life so you will be more pliable clay in the Potter's hands?
7. Like Max Lucado calling Lisa the children's book writer, imagine God introducing you to someone. How might he describe you?
8. God doesn't always fight our battles the way we imagine he will. Has God healed you from some of your insecurities in ways you never expected? If so, how?
9. The Bible is full of promises from God about who you are and your importance. You may read the Bible and even study it, but do you believe what the Word of God says about you? What do you readily believe, and what do you have trouble believing?
10. Gideon Bibles are placed in hotels around the world and have inspired many people to accept Christ. Do you think John Nicholson and Samuel Hill ever imagined they would influence millions of people? What do you think God could accomplish through you if you allowed him to use your life?