

When twenty-five-year-old Greg flung himself in front of a speeding train in San Diego, devastated family and friends struggled for explanations. Why would a gifted, selfless person, with a winning sense of humor, end a promising future that began as a valued staffer at a distinguished Christian college? Unknown to all, beneath Greg's mask of cheerfulness hid a lifelong battle with personal significance. His diaries revealed the clues: *I'm unwanted . . . I'm lonely now . . . I will never be able to keep a job . . . Lord, help me!* His anguished cry expressed, "Lord I feel so small!"

And his cry mirrored my own.

Are these expressions isolated? No. A significant number of adults and teens fight a daily struggle to discover their place under the sun. The world's false yardsticks downgrade their worth. Feelings of insignificance overwhelm them. Daily battles with giants of fear, rejection, and comparison drain them. Lies hold them in bondage, aided by an enemy who deceives them of their true worth. The world, their families, and they themselves are robbed of their giftedness.

Is it possible to travel from the tortured lies of smallness to a sunrise of rock-solid confidence in God?

With God's help, our cries of anguish can be turned into shouts of victory.



**LORD**

**I FEEL**

**SO SMALL**



# LORD

## I FEEL

### SO SMALL

USING GOD'S YARDSTICK TO CONQUER SELF-DOUBT

JON  
DRURY

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To Beverly, my wife, love and greatest friend,  
and most insightful counselor, and to all those who hurt,  
grasping for truth and God.





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You are invited to visit Jon on the web at <http://www.jondrury.com>. Additional resources related to *Lord I Feel So Small!* can be found there, including a more complete set of study questions that may be useful for a study group on significance. Digital and audiobook version should be available at Amazon.com.

# PREFACE

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“I WAS FEELIN’ pretty small!” said my friend, Ken, at a vulnerable moment in his life. The statement clung to my memory because it crystallized my own lifelong battle with significance. As a Christian, I was supposed to know and live the answers. At times I would glance at my Bible, a red one with my name on the cover. I knew that it had all of God’s answers. I just couldn’t figure any of them out. My spirit cried, *Lord I feel so small!*

Since childhood, I have desperately sought to find my place under the sun, my unique contribution to the planet. We are all launched into this puzzling maze called life, and find it complicated by a variety of dead ends, clues, and periodic progress. How can we fulfill the powerful, unique call that the Lord has on our lives unless we know what it is? God Himself longs for the children He has begotten to know Him, know His plan, and make a powerful impact in the world around us. He longs for us to find the fulfillment every parent wants for their child.

No doubt for some finding significance is an easy pursuit. Perhaps just do what dad did. For me it was a huge, humiliating mystery, haunted by the shrieks of the other voice: *You are nothing.*

#### XIV • LORD, I FEEL SO SMALL!

*You are a loser and always will be. Your life is not significant. It is trash. Others may find their place, but you will never find yours. You are just a dust ball blowing around on the planet for a little while, of no importance to anyone. Though others may have a place, you have none and you never will have.*

In my quest to find my place, the world's false yardsticks demeaned and devastated me. Daily I battled giants such as despair, fear, rejection, and comparison. For decades I studied the pages of Scripture, as a Christian, pastor, and counselor, but could not solve the puzzle. Often I had answers for others, but inside I traversed a dark tunnel, with very little light of day.

One day, in a rare moment of clarity, I stopped the car and scribbled on a scrap of paper all the things I believed about myself. I was a failure, desperately small in the human scheme of things. My scrawled notes shocked me. I saw that though deeply felt, compared with what I knew of God's love and purpose, they were all lies. Yet they clung to me like a dark cloud I could not rise above.

Are there answers? In the daily turmoil of emotions, conflicts, and doubts, it may seem there are no answers, and the only option is living confusion. It may seem that God is withholding the clues we desperately need. I concluded the answers were there, but my own confusion had blocked the channel of communication.

I was the problem.

Inwardly, and gradually through my suffering, a purpose grew that if I found the answers, I would attempt to follow them. It had to be an improvement on my daily agony. I do not think the determination came initially, but gradually as I agonized through the turmoil of daily existence. I longed to find my place under God.

Slowly, out of my brokenness, perhaps every year or two, the Lord would enable me to resolve one of the desperate emotions I faced. And each successful resolution opened a new world of hope. In my realm of need each one was revolutionary and life-changing.

I found my answers in the Bible, given by God as His provision for fragile human beings. The answers became the basis of a whole new realm of living.

When I had resolved a number of them, I had a growing desire to see others healed as I had been healed. I published an article entitled “Significant to God,” summarizing my struggle and God’s powerful answers. Larry, a friend who experienced similar conflicts, read the article. He commented, “This article is so helpful, I am going to read it every day.”

Could the story of my desperate struggle and God’s solutions be helpful in book form for a wider audience? What I have written records my sixty-year emotional struggle; my hope is the book will be of great help to others. I do not claim that my answers are new, previously unknown, or profound. But they were life-changing.

Why deal so deeply with human weakness? Why expose my own humiliating flaws? A student at a recent workshop I led found it incomprehensible that a pastor could struggle in these arenas. All of us grapple with daunting challenges in our humanity. Depicted here is my journey. My purpose is to help free others to find their joy and fulfillment in Christ, and that God be glorified.

The Bible? To my surprise, the answers to God’s call and His plans for a human life, were and are all there, readable, and comprehensible. God longs for each of His beloved children to know them.

I invite you to journey with me as we discover together, and walk into a new sunrise of hope, fulfillment, and joy. “*Lord, I Feel So Small!*” moves from our agonized cry of smallness to explore twenty battlegrounds of significance. It seeks to expose the lies that demean, discover the miracle of God’s purpose, and equip us for a life of unshakeable confidence.





# **CRAFTING THE FOUNDATION**



## CHAPTER 1

# “LORD I FEEL SO SMALL!”

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**W**HEN TWENTY-FIVE-YEAR-OLD GREG flung himself in front of a speeding train in San Diego, devastated family and friends struggled for explanations. Why would a gifted, selfless person, with a winning sense of humor, end a promising future that began as a valued staffer at a distinguished Christian college? Of medium height, with dark hair, Greg loved gatherings with others, including my children, and we loved having him in our home. After college, it was no surprise he took a staff position with Point Loma Nazarene.

Greg’s diaries and letters revealed the clues. Beneath his mask of cheerfulness hid a lifelong battle with significance. In diary entries he cries *I’m unwanted . . . I’m lonely now . . . I will never be able to keep a job . . . Lord, help me!*

### THE LYING VOICES

Is Greg’s cry isolated? No. A significant number of adults and teens fight a daily struggle to discover their place under the sun. Those of us who have faced the battle know it well. We often cry, “Lord, I feel so small!” I know the daily emotional struggle, because

for decades I viewed myself as a failure. Sadness overshadowed my life like a rain cloud on a sunny day; it was simply too obvious to ignore. Daily I could see little beyond a dark tunnel of hopelessness. In a

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For decades I viewed  
myself as a failure.  
Sadness, like a cloud,  
overshadowed my life.

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crisis seven years ago, it seemed I could not go on. I thought the only thing I could do to benefit others was to give blood. I have given over twenty gallons.

For those who know me now, this will seem strange in the extreme. I am a former Air Force pilot, I have a master's degree, have pastored for thirty-three years, and am considered very successful by most. But I lived in constant slavery to this sense of smallness. Voices within echoed, *You're a failure. You will always be a failure. You lack the gifts and strengths of others. You are a small person, unworthy of love, and have no role or place on the planet.* Tragically they drowned out the high call of God.

Do these voices sound familiar? Only those of us engaged in this personal, bloody combat for our worth know the daily, moment-by-moment anguish that sometimes takes a life. More often it saps us of joy and fulfillment, and sentences us to wage a lifelong warfare to find our role in life.

How is it possible that a person would accept a verdict that places him far below the place of honor and uniqueness God has for him? Why would he believe the lies? What is the true picture of one's significance?

## ONE FELLOW STRUGGLER

For those of us that struggle, we are not alone. Elijah, the prophet of Israel, faced the same battle in 1 Kings 19. If you are not familiar with the Bible, stick with me. I think you will understand

where I am going, and will find the prophet one with whom you can identify.

After years of powerful leadership as a prophet, fear gripped Elijah, and he ran for his life when threatened by Jezebel the vindictive queen. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant, abandoning needed companionship, and fled into the desert. He came upon a juniper tree, sat down, and prayed that he might die. Listen to his self-deprecating words: “I have had enough, LORD,” he said. ‘Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.’ Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep” (1 Kings 19:3-5).

Why would a powerful prophet cut and run after his greatest victory, the confrontation at Mt. Carmel? Following the dramatic firefall, the people cried, “The Lord He is God,” (1 Kings 18:39).

He could only conclude that his nation had finally come to faith in God. Afterwards, threatened by Jezebel, I believe he realized the acknowledgment of God he heard from the people was only a sham. Conditions would continue much as they had been with an idolatrous king and queen ruling a godless nation. The death of his lifelong dream crushed him, and he yielded to despair, considering himself a failure. He said, “I quit!”

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“I have had enough,  
LORD,” he said.  
“Take my life....”

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### I CAN'T GO ON!

Just as Elijah faced his crisis, I faced one in June 1998. During a vacation in Yosemite National Park, I received distressed calls from my church that areas of my ministry were falling apart. It reinforced the lies within, and already emotionally depleted, I felt I could not go on. This crisis was nothing new. I was frequently at the end of my resources, yet always seemed to persevere, despite pain and desperation.

I cried out to God in my inward darkness. In the coming weeks, the Lord began not only bringing light, but also to diagnose the

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Why would a person accept a verdict that places him far below the high place that God has for him?

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root problems that had chained me most of my life. I started with the book *Search for Significance* by Robert S. McGee. At a point of great need, I grabbed the book like a drowning man. Unexpectedly, each sentence of diagnosis and cure was a burning sword plunged into my heart. I found every sentence painful as it revealed the code of lies I had lived by.

I also found that those deceptions about my place in life had given birth to individual battleground issues such as despair, fear, and worry. In the pages ahead, I will take you to these areas. They may be the same ones you face.

These areas represent lies about God and us. But the central lie that empowers all the others is unbelief in God, who He is, what He has said, and what He has revealed about the human race He has created. The individual lies are symptoms, but unbelief is the real disease.

In contrast, God details our significance as exemplified in Luke 15. The religious leaders, angered that Christ was associating with people they considered unholy, grumbled among themselves that He received sinners and ate with them. Their hatred toward Him could be cut with a knife. The practice of the religious leaders was to disdain association with such people and display a false mask of holiness.

Christ tells three stories that illustrate how each person He created is priceless; the religious leaders had missed learning the infinite value of one person. It is interesting that the despised tax collectors and sinners were freely coming to Christ. They were drawn by His love and esteem for them.

### YOU'RE INSIGNIFICANT!

The world says: *You're just one in six billion, of no importance to anyone!*

To these leaders of the Jewish faith, Jesus answered their accusation by asking a question about a single lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7). One sheep out of a flock of one hundred is missing. Someone might say, “Why bother? It’s only a 1 percent loss. Forget about it!” But Christ and His hearers knew that in their pastoral society, the shepherd would go to great lengths to seek even one that was lost. When found, it would be tenderly cared for (the animal may have been injured), and the subject of rejoicing.

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Not only do the Father  
and I receive sinners,  
each one is valued  
beyond measure.

---

Jesus’ story reproved the religious leaders, who were not only willing that the majority be devalued, but also actively drove them away as unworthy. They based their evaluation on a flawed judgment that the common people were rebels against God, unworthy of His care. They missed the truth that God seeks all, even rebels and self-righteous religious leaders.

Christ answers their attitude and actions: *You are right. Not only do the Father and I receive sinners, each one is valued beyond measure. They are so prized by me that I give myself to seek and save each one!*

### YOU'RE WORTHLESS!

Another lie is: *You're worthless! You have no value as a person!*

Having asked what a shepherd would commonly do, He now asks what a woman would do. In Luke 15:8-10, Christ describes a woman who had lost one out of ten coins of her bridal headdress,

a gift at her betrothal. For many poor brides of the East, it would have been their most precious possession.

The coins were drachmas, about the same value as a Roman denarius or a day's wage. The loss paralleled losing a diamond in a diamond ring. Searching quickly became imperative; with a dirt floor it would quickly become discolored, disfigured, and harder to find. It might be stepped on repeatedly and eventually become buried.

Notice the extreme personal effort. The search would not be abandoned until the precious coin was found.

When my parents were newly married, at a time of need they pawned my mother's engagement ring as they traveled across the country. We kids always asked, "Why didn't you go back and get the ring?" Sadly, they never made it a priority.

Christ seeks each of us and longs to rescue us and buy us back through His extreme personal effort—His death on the cross. In His work, He shows His evaluation of each of us: you are unique and priceless to Me!

### YOU'RE UNWORTHY!

Perhaps the most damaging evaluation is *I have failed. I am unworthy of forgiveness.*

Luke 15:11-32 tells the story of a young son who asked his father for his share of the inheritance while his father was still alive. His selfish request brought dishonor to his father. Despite the insult, the compassionate father released his son, no doubt with the prayer that he would eventually become a repentant and mature individual.

How far did the son fall? He lived loosely, ruining his reputation, morals, and finances, and dishonored his heritage and his God. The son's fall was complete. But at the bottom of his fortunes he came to his senses—the very thing for which the father (and probably the unmentioned mother) prayed.



Bible scholars say that a similar story was told in Jewish society, with a different twist. When the son returned and said, “I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” the father answers, “I have no son!” and in essence, slams the door in his face.

Christ knew the story and changed the ending to reflect the boundless love of the Father. He showed that unworthy, undeserving people can change and be embraced with rejoicing. *You reject sinners because of their sin. I seek sinners! In their failure is eligibility for my rescue. I change the unworthy into honored members of my own family.*

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You reject sinners  
because of their sin.  
I seek sinners!

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### FINDING TRUE GREATNESS

Truths such as these have proven life-changing for me. I find I must immerse myself, swim in, and breathe them continually to combat the world of lies within and outside of me.

It has not been a short journey; painful battles have to be fought daily, and new truths assimilated into my mindset. However, it has been the most profitable journey of my life since coming to faith in Christ. For me, the answer has enabled my daily thought processes to begin moving from sadness to joy.

My friend, Greg, who took his own life, left heart-wrenching journals that belied his struggle. As I read them and listened to the testimonials at his memorial service, I was overcome by tears. Over and over in Greg’s notes, the false conclusion he reached was, *What a failure I am!* My conclusion differed. I concluded he had missed his own greatness. He couldn’t see what others saw and thought he was nothing. He failed to see he was the touch of God in countless lives around him.

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Are you missing  
the picture of your  
true greatness?

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Are you missing the picture of your true greatness? Have you ever caught a glimpse of that picture? You may not be beside the railroad tracks of decision, but nonetheless facing a desperate daily struggle. If so, I have walked in your shoes.

As we journey perhaps we can learn together. We can begin to defuse the lies that are killing us, and find the significance and greatness God intended for each of us.

### Think It Through

1. Why do so many people struggle with feelings of smallness?
2. What lies about your own significance have you harbored?
3. How are these lies about our own place really unbelief in God?
4. How did Christ's version of the story of the prodigal and his father differ from the one told in Jewish society?
5. How do the lies we tell ourselves cause us to miss our greatness? Who is shortchanged in the process?