

thriving

Trust Your New Momentum

Thriving: Prosperous and growing; flourishing.

Believe you can and you're halfway there.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

Who am I and where am I going?

I think we all have dazed moments in this journey, perhaps as we're approaching a curve in the road where we start asking ourselves if we're going the right way. Are we fulfilling whatever it is we're here to do, or have we somehow taken a wrong turn and ended up on the wrong path?

Any uncertainty can be reminiscent of those recurring nightmares about junior high, when you can't find your locker, or you forgot to show up for a class (for the entire semester, ha!), or you panic because you've arrived at your first-period class only to discover you forgot to wear pants. Bless.

I wish the *Who am I, and why am I here, and did anyone notice I forgot my pants?* phase could be left behind along with everything else from those awkward years. We all long to feel confident, assured that our heart, head, and feet are aligned and on the right path to our one true calling.

But roads twist and seasons change. Sometimes as we come around the bend, we question ourselves or make unexpected, interesting, or even unnerving discoveries.

Whether we're beginning a new job, facing an unexpected life change, starting



Finding
our footing
wherever we are,
with a hopeful
vision for where
we're headed,
is a part
of our journey
to well-
being.



a family, watching kids leave the nest, or are simply turning 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, and beyond, we find ourselves trying to transition gracefully into the next season and embrace it.

When our kids were little, my husband and I decided one of us would be home with them as much as possible. Sometimes he was the one home while I worked, and sometimes I was at home while he worked, but doing whatever we could to be home with our kids was a commitment we both made for our family. Juggling it all was a bit hectic at times, but we had no regrets about being present at home with our kids, whether it was one of us or both of us.

As they say, you can do many things right now, in this very season in life, but you cannot do all things in every season. It can sometimes be difficult to decide which things to do, determine what to pare down, or know which battles to fight. During our childrearing season, my husband and I made sacrifices in our finances, careers, and schedules to focus on our marriage, our children, and our home.

We didn't always hit home runs, and we often blew it by biting off more than we could chew. (In spite of our priorities, life gets hectic!) But we gave it our best shot. We knew it was our one and only season for raising our kids. Eventually they would grow up, and a new season would begin for us.

Just when we think we're finally getting in our groove and comfortable in a current season, we'll hit that fork in the road that makes us reassess everything we thought we knew. If we have to turn on a road we haven't been on before, no wonder we might be unnerved. Jerry and I have found ourselves facing many forks in the road. Many of them were difficult, and we didn't always navigate well. But we all learn as we go, and if our goal is to grow, we'll find ourselves better for the journey.

Even if we're on a road we never wanted to be on, it's where we find ourselves. Will we use unplanned or unpleasant circumstances to become a *better* person or a *bitter* person? How we choose to respond to and flow with each new season we face influences our future and the people around us. We need to learn to handle every one with care.

It's easier to navigate transitions of life when we understand we were created for a purpose. Do you know why you're on this earth? Let me assure you, it isn't just

to fulfill your role in a job, or to keep up on the laundry so the family has socks to wear, or to bring home a paycheck so they can spend it. (We all have to deal with wayward socks, but that's not the mission.)

We must look to the core of who we are, not the tasks we perform or the situations we experience. The tasks we do can change, life can take an unexpected turn, and we can make mistakes, but we can always grow and become stronger if we choose to bend and not break.

*A new road doesn't define you;
it refines you.*

To experience fulfillment and authenticity, we must lean into our real purpose and embrace what we were created to do. We don't have to be defined by one season, one mistake, one set of limitations, one role or job, or one skill or talent. The twists and turns of our journey are less confusing if we remember to take an "above the sun" perspective on everything that happens. Resting in the certainty of purpose carries us and refines us even in the difficult transitions in life. Changes help sharpen our vision and direct us to more fully embrace and become who we were designed to be.

As a Christ follower, I can be confident that my ultimate purpose is to know and serve God and to point others to Him. That mission doesn't change with what season I'm in, but how that mission is accomplished may look different in each season. I just do the best I can with what's in front of me.

Transitions can be exciting or perplexing or even scary, but they are the stretch of road we need to be on to get to the next season. Friend, if you ever find yourself in that desolate time in between, where you question who you are, you feel unsure about where you're going, or you aren't even clear on what you bring to the table

anymore, remember this: You are worthy and were created for a purpose. You are unique and have much to offer.



Dwell Well: Write your responses to these questions in your journal so you can revisit them for inspiration and guidance:

- Which priorities do you feel belong in this season of your life?
- What is it you truly want to do in this season?
- What are the passions, needs, and responsibilities you can focus on now, and which of them could wait for a future season?

WAITING EXPECTANTLY

A season of waiting—when you feel as if there are no answers or that you're going no place at all—can be either the biggest threat to your overall well-being or the most valuable season for cultivating it.

Just as cultivating soil is important preparation for the eventual health of our plants, the hard work for and anticipation of the good things to come our way result in a harvest throughout our lifetime. The waiting develops strong character and is a chance to invest in our personal well-being.

Real growth comes from *how we grow through the waiting and the season we're in*. Our well-being and that of everyone around us is affected by the mind-set we cultivate today, even *as we wait*.

Those of us who have had plenty of years and opportunities to be shaped know that waiting for the good stuff in life is hard. And wading through the hard stuff is even worse.

As kids, we're taught about the expectations and rewards of waiting. We had to wait our turn. We were expected to keep our composure and stand quietly and

patiently in line when it was time to leave a classroom. Our teachers asked us to raise our hand before we were invited to speak.

At home, we had to follow the rules to reap the reward, such as an ice cream cone if we ate those disgusting veggies. On the playground, we had to wait for the other kids to finish their turn before we could take our place on the swings.

If you've ever watched a group of preschoolers waiting for anything, you've probably made a few interesting observations. Maybe you'll see the two sides of yourself too.

Kids show their emotions with actions. They might start quietly humming to themselves to pass the time and rocking back and forth, anticipating how much fun it will be to get on to the next activity. Some kids may have trouble keeping their bottom firmly planted in their seat as they raise their hand because they're so excited to have the opportunity to speak! Facial expressions often reveal their inner enthusiasm.

When a situation isn't going their way, or they're not looking forward to an experience, they often can't keep their composure. That's when we'll see those oh-so-fun toddler meltdowns. They fall on the floor wailing at the top of their lungs, legs flailing every which way!

Two of my kids would invariably have meltdowns in times of transition. The unknown was just too much. When kids are mad, they stomp their little feet and clench their hands into fists (adorable, isn't it?). They might throw something, push or yell or cry, or refuse to cooperate. They might hide so Mama can't find them.

Toddler-sized tantrums aren't fun for anyone. If we don't patiently teach them the rules or help them handle the ups and downs of life, they'll become adults who can't deal either. So we try to support our little friends in finding a more productive way to cope. We want them to gain perspective on their situation. We show them how to soothe their fear of the unknown or trust that the wait for good things is worth it. We validate their emotions and help them express how they feel with words and less drama.

You've likely observed enough toddlers to know they're just mini versions of us. They feel all of the same emotions and frustrations we do; they might just express

them a little differently. Obviously, they haven't yet had the experiences or opportunities they need to be shaped into maturity.

Lessons can be learned in every season and from every situation throughout our entire life. Maybe you still feel as if you're prone to having toddler-like meltdowns of epic proportions when life doesn't go your way. (We're all entitled to a few of those, right?)

We may wait with tension because we don't like how things are right now. We may wait with anxiety and fear of what might take place. We may wait with impatience because we want to be in a different season, or with frustration when we don't believe we have everything in place or all of the information we think we need to move forward.

Even though waiting is hard, do we live *expectantly* for the good that's to come? If we don't cultivate that positive perspective, we won't believe we can do anything on our own to facilitate the growth coming our way. Expectation is participatory. It means we believe good can always come out of something.

Highs and lows and bends in the road are a part of our stories. The lows, while unpleasant, can signal that growth is ahead. How we live and react will either pave the road to something beautiful or leave you feeling stuck on the side of the road. Believing the good is still ahead will help you to round the corner with grace. Soon this season will be behind you. As you look in the rearview mirror, you'll have more perspective and empathy for others who are where you once were.



Dwell Well: Keep that journal open. We're doing some great exploring in this chapter. Sit with these questions and spend some time writing out your answers.

How can we use the situations we're in to bring light to those around us? What can we do even now to bless others? How can we use the wait to become better people?

It is rare to see a life prescheduled to only 80 percent, leaving a margin for responding to the unexpected that God sends our way.

RICHARD SWENSON

A NEW SEASON

Have you ever walked out your front door and smelled rain in the air before you could even see it? The year leading up to my fortieth birthday felt like that, as if the seasons were changing and something new was on its way. (Smelling rain before you can see it isn't only a talent Seattleites like me have. It's an actual, scientific thing!)

Change was, in fact, evolving all around me. Our son, Luke, had just entered all-day kindergarten, and the house was unusually quiet. My girls were responsible teens and in school all day, so I had more margin in my life than ever before.

In our newly quiet house I started to sense (quite urgently, I might add) that it was time to step out and do something new. What that would be, I had no idea. While I believe variety can be the spice of life, I prefer to know where I'm headed before I answer the call to a new adventure.

There's a nine-year age gap between my middle and youngest child, so as I was approaching that fortieth birthday, I'd been living the mom season while juggling part-time work for 18 years.

In case you're wondering why there was such a long age gap between my children, I'll go on a little rabbit trail to give you the backstory. Even though I had always wanted to have three kids, my husband and I decided years earlier that our two little girls had made our family wonderfully complete.

Then, as much as we enjoyed watching our daughters grow into little ladies we knew would eventually spread their wings and fly, we realized we weren't looking forward to being empty nesters. So, essentially, we gave ourselves an extension! We chose to extend our young family life for another 18 years when we had our little guy. It sounds exhausting to write it, but living it was worth it!

For many of those childrearing years, I worked for a publishing company to help make ends meet. I had a flexible schedule that allowed me to be home much of the time. Even though I didn't really want to work outside the home, it was an opportunity to be home more than not.

I loved being a mom. A wife. A homebody. I was quite content with my life as it was, so what was the new adventure stirring in me? Who was I supposed to be?

Even though I had plenty of experience to find a different job for a new or more challenging experience if I wanted to, I just wasn't interested. I was happily making a difference for the people I cared about the most, and that felt like enough. But I knew clinging to my comfort zone wouldn't help me grow, and the intensity with which I felt I was being nudged to step out in a new direction was only increasing.

That sense inside that there was something new to do made me start to question my purpose.

After a confusing year of searching, praying for answers, and long chats with my husband (who patiently tried to help me wrestle through who I was supposed to be in this next season), I discovered my answer to the restlessness inside.

Unlike how a midlife tale often plays out in the movies, in my story I didn't have to get plastic surgery or try to become someone I wasn't. The shocking reveal wasn't that I would have to leave behind everything in my homebody life for an exciting new existence, perhaps traveling the world (although if my life were a movie, I think I would have been discovered somewhere in a castle in the south of France).

No, the dramatic conclusion of that chapter in my story was that who I was, was enough. The seasons of refinement and tending to my home and family were *exactly* what qualified me for what was to come! Embracing the unknown still felt like a big, crazy leap of faith, but I had to believe that, one way or another, if I started flapping my wings, I'd learn how to fly—at 40.



Those of us who have reached the age of 40 have had to come to terms with the reality that the first 20 years of adult life are over. There is no going back! Yet look how far we've come! Beautiful things in us are just beginning to blossom and seeds can still be cultivated. We have both a story to tell and so many things we are prepared to accomplish.

No matter your age, think of all the lessons you've learned and the ways your experiences could encourage, mentor, or bless someone else. Never underestimate the power of sharing a humble, broken, or even imperfect story. Sometimes those are the most endearing and empowering stories of all.

All of the decisions you've made thus far have brought you to where you are. Don't rush to the next season or look back and feel paralyzed with regret over what's behind you. All we have is today, but what you have right now is exactly what you need to accomplish great things.

*You are already qualified
to be you! And that's all
you need to take another
step forward.*

How we live each day is how we prepare for the next. It's as simple as that. Invest wisely every day. Pay attention to what stirs your heart. Nourish your soul and embrace your creativity even as you're tending to your home and your people. Everything you invest with heart and soul can be poured out to create something even more beautiful.



Dwell Well: In your journal, list opportunities you want to cultivate so you can learn something new:

- What does the delightful unknown feel like to you?
- What difficulty are you going through right now that could be redefined in your mind as a gift?

Describe your life as an adventure where the path you're on leads to unexpected joy.

DREAM BUILDING

What are your dreams? Just as it's important to nourish your body with good food, a healthy and happy vision for the future is key to your emotional well-being.

You know you're on the path that makes sense for you when you're drawing on everything within you, even on ordinary days, to create something meaningful. Not just trying to direct everyone to your highlight reel but embracing the bloopers too. Your personality and quirks, your strengths and even your limitations are a part of who you are.

Do you think the limitations you bring to the table might cancel your strengths? Do you fear the whole package of *you* doesn't seem to add up to what you need to build your dreams?

When I think about my perception of the limitations I have, I can come up short (not only because my height is short) because I start comparing them to other people's strengths. My own strong qualities might not even be everything I would choose or need, but my limitations shouldn't stop me from moving forward.

And if I don't have everything I need to follow my dreams, that just means I have areas where I can improve and ways I can grow, or opportunities to let other people shine. The limitations we have are only part of who we are. They don't define or obstruct who we can become.

Y'all, here's the thing: I don't know what "qualities" you assume everyone else has or the ones you think you're lacking, but it's the mix of who we are, the whole

package from head to toe, that makes us uniquely qualified to set off on an adventure only we can live.

No one has our same style or story. No one will live life the way we can. No one can make an impact on the world the same way we will.

Trying to be like someone else or comparing ourselves to others only limits our potential. When we draw on everything in us and around us, it's as if we find our own secret sauce. That's where the magic is—what you have within you and around you are the exact tools you'll need to build the dreams waiting for you.

How can any of us fulfill our own purpose or achieve dreams if we're masquerading as someone else, anyway? What good would come of it if I tried to fool you into believing I'm a rocket scientist? I'm clearly not a rocket scientist, even if I try to make you think I am. I'm still just me, the same homebody, sitting here on my couch in my living room.

When you embrace everything you are as you build your dreams, the sky's the limit for what you can do to seize the adventure of your life! Sure, you'll have things to figure out. Questions you'll need to ask. Answers you'll need to uncover. New skills to acquire. Lessons still to be learned, and a continual refining of your character in the process. Each season will bring fresh opportunities to grow or pursue your dreams in a new way.

Young moms often ask me how I find time and energy to do all of the things I do today. Remember, I'm in a different season than I once was. These days those toddlers I used to chase are now running with me to build our dreams. They still keep me on my toes, but they also carry more of the load.

Believe me, Mama, your littles will grow up too. You'll not only be amazed at what your children can do someday, but you'll be surprised at all you'll be able to do!

Your dreams don't have to wait for someday. There is a season for everything, but you can invest in your dreams in every one of them. I was passionately learning and growing my skills even as a young mom. I just didn't know at the time how they would eventually grow or blossom as the years went on. Embrace the season you're in and be diligent in the opportunities you have in front of you today.

You don't have to have everything all figured out to start building dreams. You

don't have to have all of the answers about the future to take a step. When I first started my business at age 40, I literally had no idea what I was doing, how to do it, or where I was headed.

I didn't have a degree in English, design, or business. No instruction manual for what I was supposed to do immediately existed, let alone for what I was expected to do later. It was a figure-it-out-as-you-go kind of deal. I simply had to learn to be a "can do" person rather than a "can not" person.

Our minds are powerful. The thoughts we have about ourselves, the very words we speak to ourselves, can become the reality we believe. If you believe you are capable, you'll become capable. If you tell yourself you don't have what it takes, you'll believe it, and that will be the end of the story.

I love how life coach Marie Forleo puts this into perspective: "Everything is figureoutable."

When you embrace your own path, the beauty you have to offer can begin to bloom and grow. If you're ready to experience a holistic mind-set of greater well-being, it will start to become evident from the inside out. Your thoughts start to change. You become deeply committed to doing what it takes to become the kind of person you want to be. You'll start looking for ways to learn and grow rather than focusing on all the reasons you think you can't.

Maybe you're feeling stirred to leave the comforts of home or your current job to begin a new adventure, but you aren't sure what that means. Why don't you lean into that dream for a bit? Don't automatically shut it down with a list of reasons why not. Let your mind ponder in a fresh direction.



Dwell Well: Grab your journal and turn to a new page. It's time to start a new chapter. Write "Dream Building" at the top. We're not just fantasizing about some sort of impossible feat when we put words and ideas to paper. We're searching for vision and ways to shape our future. We're reminding ourselves that nothing is impossible, so don't

write out limitations or the why nots. It's time to explore the what-ifs.

- What stirs your heart and ignites your passion?
- If you could do anything with your life, hobby, or career, what would you love to do? It doesn't have to be big. It can be as simple as how my own dream began, to fully embrace my calling as a homebody.
- If you're already doing what you love, perhaps you're ready for some refinement or even the next step. As we grow, our perspective and even direction can change. We don't have to keep doing what we've always done, so this might be a season where you redesign what you do.
- Describe your very best life. Where do you live there? What do you do every day?
- Consider the life you'd love to live sometime in the future.
- Picture your life in three years. What would you love to be doing? Ideally, how would you spend your time? Be as detailed as possible. How would you feel?

Even if you're not sure what you would want your life to look like, use your journal to start dreaming.

What season of life are you in right now? Describe it and what you're doing right now to invest in your everyday, ordinary life. Be aware of this season as an extraordinary one. It's where you're developing your skills, discovering your passions, and nurturing your mind-set.

*Find what makes your heart sing
and create your own music.*

MAC ANDERSON

THE DELIGHTFUL UNKNOWN

Now I understand that in order to feel a true sense of belonging, I need to bring the real me to the table, and that I can only do that if I'm practicing self-love. For years I thought it was the other way around: I'll do whatever it takes to fit in, I'll feel accepted, and that will make me like myself better. Just typing those words and thinking about how many years I spent living that way makes me weary. No wonder I was tired for so long! (Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*).

How often do we dismiss or even feel paralyzed by the potential beauty of what our life could be?

My grandma designed the most stunning garden outside her ground-level apartment. When she moved in, just beyond her patio doors was a small but barren corner hillside. Her neighbors dismissed making something of that north-facing space as too daunting, considering it unsuitable for growing anything at all. But she didn't look at what was; she saw possibilities. Her vision, tenacity, and determination to create something beautiful there eventually proved the neighbors wrong!

Over the years, as she cultivated the soil and tended to her garden, colorful flowers and exquisite foliage emerged, surprising everyone who passed by. Her daily TLC brought life to that space. I still drive by that corner and find delight in her example, a reflection of what can be just ahead when we're open to possibilities. If we press forward into the growth that first must take place within us, trusting in the process, something beautiful emerges.

Gertrude Jekyll, a famous British artist and horticulturist, was advised by her doctors to give up painting in her late forties because her eyesight was growing increasingly poor. Instead of mourning the loss of a creative outlet, she applied her creative spirit to what became her most well-known careers—as a garden designer and author.

Let no one be discouraged by the thought of how much there is to learn. Looking back upon nearly thirty years of gardening (the

earlier part of it groping ignorance with scant means of help), I can remember no part of it that was not full of pleasure and encouragement. For the first steps are steps into a delightful unknown, the first successes are victories all the happier for being scarcely expected, and with the growing knowledge comes the widening outlook, and the comforting sense of an ever-increasing gain of critical appreciation. Each new step becomes a little surer, and each new grasp a little firmer, till, little by little, comes the power of intelligent combination, the nearest thing we can know to the mighty force of creation.¹

I don't know about you, but at first glance, stepping into the unknown sounds anything but delightful to me. It feels scary, and I don't like surprises. It can be unnerving to figure out how to move forward with grace and confidence through the unexpectedness of life.

Even though the path ahead won't be revealed to us until the proper time, moving forward anyway is how we learn to live more fully with what we've been given.

Return to this question from the start of our journey as you go through your days and face new opportunities for growth: What action could you take to feel more balanced, to find greater wellness and peace in how you live?

We must take a step in the direction we think is right and do whatever we know to do right now, believing the journey is where the real growth takes place. As we learn more, each step becomes a little surer. We see how beauty begins to emerge from barren ground around us, each new corner revealing a wider vision of our own purpose in this world.

So many life lessons can be learned from a garden. Growth in our well-being happens when we make mindful progress toward tending to it every day. It's the result of putting feet on the ground, hands in the dirt, weeding out what isn't beneficial and tending to what matters to our health.

This runs counter to this sped-up, hurry-along, impatient society we live in. Trying to keep up with the constant need for consumption and information sets a pace that ultimately doesn't fill us; it just wears us down. Well-being is found through the

slow nurturing of all we are and an investment in who we're becoming. It's in tending well to our needs and our dwellings—home, body, mind, and spirit.

What if, going forward, we intentionally left more space in our schedules? When you look at the information tag on a shrub you want to plant in a garden, you'll notice the instructions suggest you leave a certain amount of space around the plant so it has room to grow. We have more room to grow in unscheduled and unhurried moments. Being okay with quiet inspires us to trust, listen, and contemplate our next steps rather than continue to run in circles.

When our schedules are always filled to the brim with busyness and activities that aren't meaningful to us fill even our downtime, what are we so busy with? Is our constant activity in line with who we want to be? Our time is precious and valuable. Minutes and hours and days add up to our life.

Well-being can grow in the margins we guarded for the beautiful unexpected in our life to unfold. We need time to explore creativity and curiosity. A frantic pace stifles us from experiencing the abundant life we're meant to *discover*.

If we really want to live a full, rewarding, vibrant, and meaningful life, one that can continue to grow and blossom in the seasons to come, what can we do to plant the seeds today? How can we slow down to cultivate the soil, so our days start to reflect our true passions?

We may not yet fully see how the seeds we plant in this season are preparing to grow and blossom in a future season, but the root of our well-being stems from the life we choose to cultivate with all that we have right now.

Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure... than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Our well-being flourishes best when it's nurtured like a well-tended garden. It thrives with seasons of rest, renewal, growth, and harvest.

Each season is a new opportunity to grow in our potential, to be well in all areas of our life, to transform us from the inside out. When we find meaning and purpose in nurturing what is right in front of us, we not only find a state of well-being improves our own lives, but changes the world around us.

How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.

ANNIE DILLARD





thriving *self-care*

Answer these questions in your journal:

- Who are you at your core, and how can you invest what you have right now in becoming everything you were created to be?
- How can you make the most of your current situation and season? What joy and blessings are already in front of you?
- Do you live out your life purpose with great intention, looking forward with anticipation to the possibilities still ahead?