Children, obey your parents in the lord [that is, accept their guidance and discipline as His representatives], for this is right [for obedience teaches wisdom and self-discipline]. "Honor [esteem, value as precious] your father and mother" [and be respectful to them]— which is the first commandment with a promise— "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

— Ephesians 6:1–3

Reachers' kids are often a bit off, some even a couple degrees from crazy as they try to find their own way. My dad is Dr. Tony Evans, founding pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas. For the past forty-two years he's preached all over the world, having been heard on the radio, seen on TV, and even authored more than one hundred books.

My beautiful mother, Lois, has stood right beside him and supported him every step, running the business of ministering behind the scenes. The family has gone to Mexico on mission trips, been in the streets of downtown Dallas helping the downtrodden, and seen the need in the various places we have been a part of. There have been many unexpected places for my family, but we always knew it was God's plan and we trusted Him.
those eighties TV shows where trials were always an opportunity for life lessons, the family pulled together, and things turned out okay in the end.

As a kid, you take everything for granted, but now I realize how much work it took for my parents to be as solid as they were while running such a big and busy ministry. Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship was already blowing up by the time I was born, so I never knew anything different. Truth is, if there was one problem for me growing up as the son of a famous pastor, it was this: I wasn't all that crazy about church.

I'm not talking about the church. I loved God and Jesus and God's people. I just wasn't a big fan of church activities twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Every child has their own particular struggles and sensitivities.

My family: me, Priscilla, Mom, Dad, Chrystal, and Jonathan
CHAPTER 3

THAT'S THE WAY
I watched Pilgrim pull back, buck and snort and fight that fence post, thinking about all the ways I resisted God's plans—all the ways I didn't fully trust and obey Him yet. I thought I knew about horses by that time, but Swanee's lesson was something new. Resisting the process made Pilgrim that much more miserable. And it was that much longer before he could be used in service. But Swanee and his team of wranglers were patient. They wouldn't give up. They would keep on working with Pilgrim until his training was complete.

Even though Swanee was head wrangler, he wasn't above doing the lowest job. He'd always say, "Whatever you put your hand to, do it with all your might and do it right." I think he saw I could be a bit distracted, so he was always looking for ways to teach me excellence by example, to push and challenge me in my relationship with God. If something wasn't right, we'd do it over and over again. If I

Swanee (Tim Alderson) and me
Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

— 2 Peter 1:10 esv

I graduated from Duncanville High School, drove away from campus, and cried my eyes out—two things heavy on my mind. First, most of my close friends like Casey, Brian, Kyle, Brandee, Charlene, and Josh were juniors, and I was wishing I had failed twelfth grade so I could stay back and chill with them for another round in the Duncanville Duffers (a sort of fraternity of guys that assisted and escorted the cheerleaders and occasionally performed skits for the pep rallies. I don't tell many people that because they all say, “You were a cheerleader?!”).

Second, the thought of “what's next” was seriously freaking me out.

My plan was to attend Texas A&M, major in animal science,
They can survive most anything. Even if lightning strikes the tree and burns it to the ground, it can still come back to life. Olive trees can produce a harvest for centuries to come. They’re very versatile: the wood, the leaf, the fruit.

I realized that because of my parents’ faithfulness, the burden to be okay wasn’t all on me. I didn’t have to have everything figured out or pretend to be doing better than I really was. God would help, and there was grace for the messed-up parts. It didn’t matter whether I was singing to a thousand people or shoveling out stables. It wasn’t about what I was doing. It was who I belonged to.

I hung up the phone and walked back out to the barn. I saddled up Atlas and rode down to where the trail passed by Lake.
I've put my life in your hands. You won't drop me, you'll never let me down.

— Psalm 31:5 msg

My next gig with Kirk after London was at the Grammy awards in Los Angeles. Kirk didn't explain why we were there, just to show up and meet him at a certain time.

"Anthony, come with me," he said when I got there. He led me around the back of the Staples Center, through the maze of walkways lined with dressing rooms labeled with the names of everyone at the top of music. We rounded a corner, and there was a group of guys standing around looking cool in their shades and leather jackets.

Wait, that dude in the red sunglasses kinda looks like... And that one over there with the black cap—hold on. Seriously? I'm standing backstage with freaking U2?
to our ride at a chill pace and get to the hotel where I could stretch out and stare at the ceiling for a few.

Daylight flooded the cabin as a flight attendant pushed open the door. The sticky, humid air hit me halfway down the aisle. I was standing just a little behind Kirk in the aisle, fighting to get my overhead luggage out of the bin. There was nothing I wanted more than to get off that flying soda can. Slowly, passengers started to exit down one of those tall staircases they roll to the airplane door. Exhausted, we grabbed our bags and made it through customs.

I walked out through the automatic exit doors, trying to get to the van as quickly as possible. A loud racket broke loose. Thinking something was wrong, I stopped and looked over to see a huge group cheering.

Kirk and Tammy Franklin; my sister Priscilla and me
CHAPTER 11

BIG HIT LIFE
Leading worship is both a passion and a calling.
for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. — Philippians 2:13 esv

I'm an outdoorsman at heart. Ever since I was a kid at Pine Cove Camp, I've loved horses and always hoped and prayed for one of my own. Horses calm me. They're therapeutic. Only problem is, I'm a big guy, so I knew if I was actually going to have my own horse, God was going to have to send a really big one.

I spread the word around my community that I was looking for a plus-sized steed. One day I got a call. The voice on the other end was excited. “Anthony, you’re not going to believe this!”

“What is it?” I asked.

My friend told me they’d located a good deal on a five-year-old gelding that was nearly two thousand pounds. He had gotten too big for his owner but just might be the perfect fit for me. Now I was excited! I jumped in my truck and headed for the country.
“Sure thing,” Matt said.

Matt dug his spurs into Gideon’s side. The giant laid his ears back and his tail began to swish. Oh- oh. Pinned-back ears and swishing tail is universal horse speak: big Gideon was getting mad. But Matt had a horse to sell, so he dug his heels in deeper and in true cowboy fashion cried, “YAAHHHH!”

Feeling the spurs, Gideon exploded! He bucked around that arena with Matt hanging on for dear life. Man and beast went to war, Gideon’s hind legs kicking higher as he twisted one way and then the other. Matt spurred harder, gripping the reins tight. I’d come for a horse, but suddenly I had a ticket to the rodeo. Matt tried his best to gain control, but Gideon bucked harder until finally he launched the cowboy over his head, pitching him face first in the dirt.

Gideon and me

Gideon and me
Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, but a good (encouraging) word makes it glad. — Proverbs 12:25

Even with all my church experience, I wasn't prepared for the dazzling lights of that now-famous blind audition stage at The Voice. It's as nerve-racking as you might think! Being alone on stage in complete silence, the room full of energy and millions watching at home— but you're singing to the back of four coaches' chairs, praying for just one to turn around. Years of preparation for that one moment, and you've got a minute and a half to show them your best.

I was confident leading worship; you're not trying to impress anyone but God. But now I wasn't trying to engage people's hearts or get them to sing along with me. I would be covering Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On," and the audience wanted to be impressed, not engaged. Christian singers are supposed to come from a place of...
They brought me back to Los Angeles that December for the next phase of the show. One night there was a knock at my hotel door. “Time to get dressed,” the producer said. “Christina wants to have you guys over for Christmas dinner.”

Christmas at Christina Aguilera’s house? That’s a pretty crazy turn of events for a church camp kid from Dallas. The runner drove us over to Beverly Hills, and Christina’s house was one of the most festive, elaborately decorated places I’ve ever seen. Sky-high Christmas trees and winter wonderland scenes, snowmen and angels, giant silver bells and garland everywhere. And lights! Not like the string lights you buy at Target either. Big, beautiful ones everywhere."
CHAPTER 26

PASSION OVER PERFECTION
that my family works together and blesses one another and despite our shortcomings, we love and accept one another as we are.

My mother and father were sitting in the front row. Jonathan and Chrystal sat behind them with all my nieces and nephews. It felt like so much. So much to be thankful for. I couldn’t stop talking.

The power of God and gratefulness brought me to my knees. It was a moment, a church full of people putting aside their problems to offer thanks.

Finally, Priscilla began to whisper the words of the song. He loves us. Oh, how He loves us so. She was passing the baton back to me. I stood and wiped away tears. I felt it all beginning to come together as we sang about the awesome love and mercy and glory of God.

Leading worship with my big sis
Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

— Psalm 82:3–4 esv

I happened to be taking acting classes in Los Angeles at the same time Priscilla was working on *War Room*. I thought acting would be something fun and challenging, stretching different muscles, so to speak. A friend suggested it might be good for me even if I never did any acting, that just the process of getting in touch with my emotions could be helpful, learning how to work with them and channel them toward the good.

My acting coach is well known from Broadway, and one day she got a call from a director to be part of a new faith-based film. She thanked them and said it wasn't right for her at the time, but then she gave me a funny look.

"Hey, do you know of a guy named Anthony Evans?" she asked the caller. "He's sitting right across the table from me now."
I had stayed up late going over my and my costar’s lines so I wouldn’t miss my cues. I had it all down word for word. I was as ready as I could possibly be. The director called, “Action!” I’m running dialogue through my head, trying not to forget what I’m supposed to say next. Loretta immediately starts improvising and going off script. I looked at her like a deer in headlights. What in the world are you doing?!

But I didn’t want to say, “What are you doing?!” to somebody who had acting awards on her mantle at home when I just had some candles and pictures of family on mine. So, I tried to hold it together and act professional. And even though they didn’t really fit the scene anymore, I nervously repeated my lines.

“Cut!” the director yelled. Oh, crap, Anthony! You are messing this up!

I stood there smiling, sweating under my clothes. Loretta looked Such an amazing opportunity and learning experience
It wasn't about perfecting the show so I could take it across the country on tour and build my platform. It was about connecting with people and being alive to God's moment. Just being normal, natural me. Honest. Flawed. Transparent. Messed up. Vulnerable. Real.

It was next level, looking at life and ministry this way. Sometimes it's tempting to phone it in or go through the motions of putting on a show. It's scarier to be spontaneous and put yourself out there, flaws and all.

But I have a strong Coach standing next to me who says, "Don't worry. We'll make it through." And with His help, I can pull it off.
CHAPTER 31

WAITING FOR MERCY

But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?
—1 John 3:17 esv

My friend Ben got promoted to a new position within Food for the Hungry as their mission continued to grow. Ben told me they believe hunger goes far beyond the table, so they try to address a person’s physical and spiritual needs too, regardless of race, creed, or nationality. People hunger for opportunity, to believe they have value. The ministry’s goal is to help a person stand on their own and live out God’s unique purpose for their lives. But you can’t focus on purpose if you’re hungry or cold or sick.

I wanted to continue to support Food for the Hungry’s mission because I believe in those causes and because I believe in Ben. As I mentioned earlier, he married a girl I used to tour with in Truth. We’ve known each other for a long time now.
I wasn't afraid. I promise...
eyes wide and chocolate all over his face. Then he hugged me, cried, and said, “This is the best day of my life.”

I had dates and sessions booked back in the States. It’s bad for your career to cancel things. But I canceled anyway so I could stay a little longer in Peru.

We took Juan home, and I gave him the soccer ball I had brought as a gift. There was a flat slab of concrete in the center of the village where we could kick it around. As we played soccer the ragamuffin kids from the village poured out to play along, and right there, surrounded by all that joy and laughter, I made a promise to myself. This would not be the last time I saw these kids. I called Ben back.

Juan Andre and me
I am convinced and confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will continue to perfect and complete it until the day of Christ Jesus [the time of His return].

— Philippians 1:6

My flight from LAX to Dallas was delayed, but I made it at the last minute. I'm sitting backstage at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, trying to catch my breath. For months now I've been racing. Racing to the studio, racing to the airport, racing across the planet to sing and help sick kids and make movies and lead worship conferences and write a book and do events with my sister. I've had two rounds of forced vocal rest because I pushed too hard. Fonzworth Bentley and the network are still blowing up my phone.

I'm still scattered and struggling to stay focused, every few minutes like—squirrel! My life has been full-on squirrel season...
Me and my hero—Dad