

Grace Maps

OUR JOURNEY GUIDED
BY GOD'S GRACE



CARMEN HORNE



Grace Maps: Our Journey Guided by God's Grace

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www.carmenhorne.com

ISBN: 978-1-7332627-3-6 (Paperback)

Published by Cotton Port Publishing, LLC

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Cover and interior design: Typewriter Creative Co.

Author Photo: Misti Mixon Stone

I dedicate this guidebook to my momma. You never missed an opportunity to travel. You could pack your little bag in minutes. So there should have been no surprises for us when Jesus called you to come to live with Him, and you went as fast as you could. Going places was in your DNA. P.S. I sure do miss you.

And to all the women who feel as if they journey their path alone. After creating your personal Grace Map, may your spiritual eyes be opened to God's footprints alongside you through the years.

You are known and loved.

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From Me to You

“Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story...” Psalm 107:2 (NIV)

Have you ever looked intentionally at your life with a panoramic view? As most of us do, I have zoomed in on individual circumstances and events, especially tough situations, with regularity. However, viewing my journey with an eternal perspective — a big picture lens — has not happened consistently.

Over the years, I have thought about my life timeline. Recently, my occasional thought became an exciting challenge. How can I create a process to help us see God’s divine care for us, even through the pea-soup fog of difficulties? We need a tangible reminder. We need *Grace Maps*.

What if the unexpected delays and detours in our lives are not random? *Grace Maps* takes us on a journey to uncover God’s grace in every situation of our lives. Too often, we believe the things we face happen to us and assume God is silent. In reality, our lives are a well-planned journey, and the detours and roadblocks are divine directions and recalculations because of personal choices. *Grace Maps* is our guidebook to help us better understand how connecting our past journey with our present course reveals God’s consistent presence along our life path.

Reading maps has never been my thing. Tasking me with the navigation on a trip will probably mean ten seconds after we pass the exit I will say, “Oh wait! I think that was our exit.” I’m a planner that can get off the plan when an opportunity for a good spell of visitin’ presents itself. Thank goodness we now carry GPS wherever we go on our mobile phones. My lady is named Lola. She has no problem saying, “Turn around,” or, “Make a U-turn when possible.” Lola is the keeper of the map.

So, you can see how creating a map of my life was a challenge. I can become sidetracked and get caught up in areas that need a map the size of a world atlas

to adequately diagram the situation. But I did contain myself, and now I have a written testimony of God's goodness through the years. That's what I want for you – a written testimony.

God has been so good to you. Are you in a spot where you can realize that?

In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus commissioned each believer to present the Good News, Jesus' offer of salvation, to all.

Along with that, for me, comes equipping the saints, specifically women. God has offered me many pathways to encourage His girls. Yet, my ministry has gradually begun to focus on the power of our perspective. A change of perspective is not something I simply study but a practice I'm learning to live.

Our stories are powerful when we share our personal experiences with the proper perspective. When you think about planning a vacation, you want to hear reviews from people you know who have actually been where you're going. It is no different with our life journeys. Sharing our stories of God's grace for our journey will help those navigating similar circumstances. Your story brings hope to the next generation of road-weary travelers.

As we begin, may I pray for you, for us?

Heavenly Father,

Your Word tells us in Revelation 12:11 that we overcome Satan's influence in our lives by our relationship with Your Son, Jesus, and our testimony. Help us see our lives with an eternal perspective. Comfort us when we are sad and fill us with joy as we see Your hand guiding us throughout our lives. Let not one moment of pain be of no gain. Use each of our stories as the backdrop that illustrates Your providential care. Hold our hand, sweet Lord. We depend on You!

We ask all these things in the mighty Name of Jesus Christ. Amen!

Your personal Grace Map is a creative way to see life as a beautiful memoir instead of a series of short stories. So why don't we create one together?

With great anticipation,

Carmen

2022



Beginnings

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. Psalm 139:14 (ESV)

The day I was born seemed like a good day for a party. My parents were barely adults. At that age, when your friends want to pile up (southern for gather) in your room, eat hamburgers, and laugh loudly, there seems to be no reason to stop the fun — unless you were born in the 1960s. Did you know there was a “no fun in childbirth” rule during that era?

I doubt any of us can remember the day of our birth, but most of us have probably heard stories about that day. Maybe you are adopted and don't have details about your day of delivery. Please take a moment to recall what you have been told about your adoptive parents' excitement as they met you and you became their child. No matter the details, not one of us is an accident.

“You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.” Psalm 139:16 (NLT)

In Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, he offers an explanation that may put those of us who were unplanned at ease, "While there are illegitimate parents, there are no illegitimate children. Many children are unplanned by their parents, but they are not unplanned by God. God's purpose took into account human error and even sin."¹ Thank you, Pastor Warren.

Since our Creator intricately plans all our births, let's pause to celebrate. Today may be the very first time you realize this freeing fact. Let me repeat it. You are not a mess-up or a mistake. You are born for your generation, at your place of birth, and into your family. God may not have trusted your biological parents to raise you, but He used their DNA to create you. If this brought tears to your eyes, that's OK.

Your salty tears will help heal the wounds that often come with wondering if anyone wanted you to squeal your first cry.

How does the understanding that you are not an accident or mistake make you feel?

Read Zephaniah 3:17 and write it here.

¹ Dr. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Zondervan, 2002, 23

God was one happy Daddy when you were born. He did not pass out cigars, but He wrote you a beautiful lullaby that He continues to sing over you daily.

Speak the scriptural affirmation I provide in each section over yourself when you need a little reminder of how your Daddy God feels about you.

Scriptural Affirmation:

I am not a mistake. God planned every moment of my life before my birth. I bring Him delight, and He sings a beautiful song over me. (cf Psalm 139:16, Zephaniah 3:17)

Our mommas listened intently as their doctors confirmed what most of them already suspected; a new life had begun within them. And just like our mommas, a young peasant girl named Mary was also given a life-changing proclamation when the angel Gabriel visited her to announce she was pregnant. Jesus' birth was a surprise to Mary but not to Father God. Jesus' human, earthly beginning ushered in the greatest gift of grace we will ever experience.

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

After Gabriel's announcement, Mary responded with faith, trust, and the belief that God's grace would help her meet every challenge — the challenges she knew she would confront and the struggles she could not yet comprehend. Challenges await us all, even along the paths God gives us the green light to travel.

“And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’” Luke 1:38 (ESV)

Unknowns are certain in beginnings. Unknown to us but not unknown to God. Looking back over Mary's life, we see God's gift of grace carried her through the ups and downs of her journey. As we reflect on our lives, we will also see God's sustaining hands of grace carrying us. (2 Corinthians 12:9).

LET'S CREATE

It's time to be creative. No worries if you are like me and can't draw a straight line. Thank You, Lord, for rulers! You can illustrate your Grace Map in as much detail as you choose. I'll give you some tips along the way. Be bold. Use magazine clippings, stickers, and maybe even whip out your colored pencils and draw.

At the end of each life stage, I have included pages to create your Grace Map for that stage. There is a link at the end of the book to get a printable Grace Map template. You can take your smaller maps and combine them into one beautiful drawing.

On your piece of paper, draw a horizontal line (like the one on page 30), leaving a margin on each end and room on the top and bottom of your line. You need space to write.

Remember, your line will be much larger than my example. It needs to be proportional to your map size. Keep this in mind as you decide on your paper size when combining all your smaller Grace Maps into a larger one. You can use butcher paper, blank paper taped together, or art paper from your local craft store to create your map. Go for what you love! I am setting you free on design. If you are interested in a beautifully designed map template to create your personal Grace Map, you will find a free one on Carmen's book page, www.gracemapsbook.com.

We will divide our map into five stages of life:

- Early Childhood (birth to twelve)
- Teen/Young Adult (thirteen to twenty)
- Adult (twenty-one to forty)
- Middle Age (forty-one to sixty-four)
- The Golden Years (sixty-five and forward)

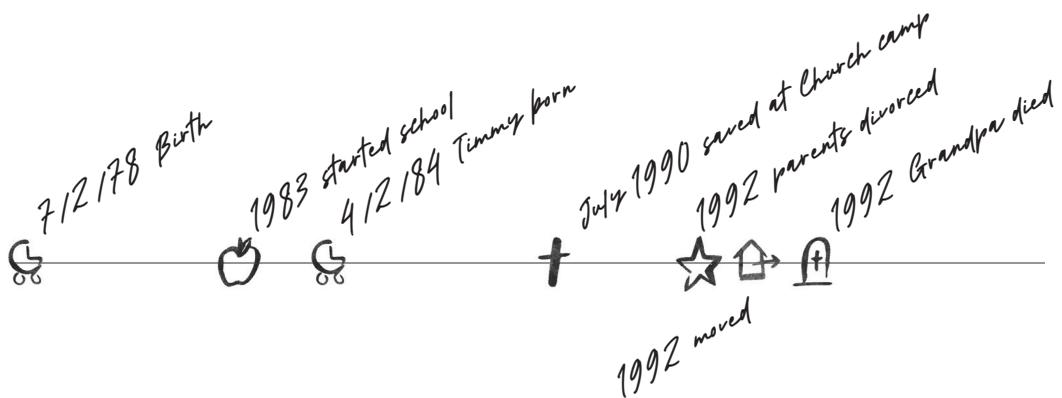
Feel free to work through these stages back-to-back if you can set aside a whole day to create or in smaller chunks of time spread out over several weeks. If you haven't reached one of the stages, you can stop your Grace Map with your current season. Or, you can spend some time contemplating how you would like to answer the questions in your future seasons when you do arrive. Be sure to read "Life Beyond" and "A Beautifully Crafted Story" to finish well.

As you answer the questions about each stage of life, you will gather information to add to your Grace Map. You may want to use your journal for overflow answers or the pages I have provided in the back of the book for notes.

I think we can all agree that our vantage point here on earth can be pretty limited compared to God's view of the world. The ultimate goal for our *Grace Maps* is to see our lives with a panoramic view. We want to lay down stones of remembrance to enable us to recognize God's faithfulness and grace toward us in every leg of the journey. You can read more about how God commanded the Israelites to erect stones of remembrance after crossing the Jordan River into the promised land in Joshua 4:19.

Remember, you don't have to answer every question. I provide them to prompt your memory. If you think of important milestones not covered in the questions, feel free to make notes of them, too.

You can see an example of a Grace Map on the following pages.



Use this space to summarize how you now see God working in your life during these years.

I see God working in my life as a child when he placed love of church camp in my heart. I began attending when I was old enough to go and got saved at church camp just two years before my parents were divorced. He knew I would need the support of my church and the Holy Spirit in my heart to not fall into the wrong crowd and mess my life up.



Adult — Twenty One to Forty

“This man’s name was Nabal, and his wife, Abigail, was a sensible and beautiful woman. But Nabal...was crude and mean in all his dealings.” 1 Samuel 25:3 (NLT)

I wonder if Abigail knew of Nabal’s cantankerous disposition before marrying him? Did she even have a choice in her mate selection? Her dad probably thought Nabal was a catch for his daughter. I doubt Abigail felt that way. Her name means “father” {source} of joy. In contrast, Nabal’s name means “fool.” We can imagine the only respect he enjoyed was the kind his money purchased.

Abigail’s story (1 Samuel 25) fits nicely into our third season of life — ages twenty-one to forty. Most of us embark on our careers, marry, and begin our families in this time of life. Some of us are delaying marriage or choosing to live single. Many of us also struggle with unexpected challenges like divorce, infertility, and unfulfilling work experiences. We have made it to adulthood and realize life is not always what we thought it would be, especially regarding relationships.

The first lady of Nabal’s home awoke daily in a miserable household. She lived in

trying circumstances. The writer of 1 Samuel describes Abigail as wise. She had brains as well as beauty. She was a fantastic negotiator, and her servants loved and respected her.

Abigail loved God and trusted Him to help her. Not only is she a woman we can respect, but we would do well to follow her example of keeping our joy in challenging circumstances.

Let's think back over this time in your life. As you look at these years, I pray that you will see how God walked along with you through the good and bad times.

Answer the questions that will help you add important markers to your Grace Map.

What key events happened during this phase? (i.e., divorce, deaths, births, salvation, moving, illness, changing schools, friends lost or gained, world events, etc.)

How would you describe your relationship with God at this time?

Adult

In retrospect, can you see ways God redeemed your difficult memories? If so, how?

How could you describe this differently than you have in the past?

Did you learn any valuable lessons?

Grace Map



Use this space to summarize how you now see God working in your life during these years.

Adult

Optional Map Key



House



Birth



Grad



Salvation

AΩ God

A line-art icon of a briefcase or suitcase.
Job



Marriage



School



Event



Church



Death



Move

Meet the Author



Carmen Horne is a board-certified Advanced Christian Life Coach for women, author, and speaker who uses her gifts to encourage women. Carmen is passionate about supporting women through life's challenges as they learn to embrace, with hope, the unexpected.

Healing her own damaged heart taught her the hope she now offers to the brokenhearted. Likewise, plowing through unhealthy thinking in her own life shaped Carmen's understanding of the power of perspective. The early seeds of her ministry began with mentoring, lay counseling, and listening ears. Carmen continues to use those tools to offer encouragement.

Carmen is the author of *Out of Words: 31 Prayers of Hope for Your Hurting Heart*, a contributor to *101 Secrets to a Happy Marriage* — Thomas Nelson Publishers, Sweet to the Soul Ministries', *Faith Magazine*, *Warrior Devotional* — Declare Conference, WEGOM's, *The Message Magazine*, *Just Between Us Magazine*, and many online websites and blogs.

At the ripe old age of sixteen, the Bayou State native married her high-school sweetheart, and they consider their beautiful daughter their biggest blessing. Carmen is a dark chocolate nibbler and a beach sitter. But her favorite activities are those she participates in as a wife and mom.

Connect with Carmen on her website at www.carmenhorne.com.