





A PUNCH
IN THE
MOUTH





† **M**y brothers and sisters, lend me your minds. Get sharp! Hearken, and attend!

The world, and the work, is ours.

That declaration ought to box you in the paunch. Learn it. Know it. Absorb it into every follicle, every eyelash, every tattoo, and every nail. God made the world but didn't finish it. It's a relay race, not a Christmas present. It's an opportunity, not an accommodation. It's your mission, your mandate, your joy, and your hope to work with God and enhance the earth. Make the world truer. Make it more beautiful. Make it more spectacular, more wonderful, more genuine, more adventurous, and more inspiring.

But you've got to do the work.

That's hard to accept. I know you'll have a million questions that I can't answer in a few short sentences. That's why I'm giving you this book. These pages reveal a lifetime of discovery—biblical and theological, personal and creative, relational and civil—all rolled into one spiritual thought-grenade: it's up to you.

With God's help. For God's glory.

The world and the work is ours.

And what do I mean when I say "work"?

Work is what we do. It's the term the Bible uses for how we live, for our contribution, for our investment in the people around us and ourselves.

You might, at first, think that's strange. Most people hate to work. They think of work as something to be avoided. Until you dig a little deeper. Then you discover there's work they love. Work they cannot wait to perform. That's the good stuff. That's the true work.

After all, what are people for?

Why are we here? Why were we made? What makes us the same, and what differentiates us from one another?

God made the world, loves the world, entered the world, and works to redeem the world. God always does this through people. Yes, always. God is so committed to people that God became a person, not only to demonstrate how people should thrive but also to provide a means for all people to fulfill our divine destiny, to experience our original intention, to satisfy our ultimate ardor, to offer us the hope of a better world, a world we create along with God.

If these ideas sound foreign, allow me to put your mind at ease. These thoughts aren't about earning entrance into heaven, or convincing God you're special, or justifying your eternity with achievement. These ideas concern working alongside God to enjoy life as you envision it in your dreams, as you imagine life ripening with justice and beauty, fascination and peace. And you will never enjoy that life if you fail to work for it. Life comes to us as breath, but if

we never exercise our lungs we won't learn to swim in the depths nor scale the mountain heights. Life is meant for living, and abundant life comes to those who grasp the hand of their Creator and join in the ongoing work of Creation.

In these pages, you'll explore scripture through a lens of human development, promise, and hope. It would be a mistake to assume *human* somehow means "absent God's involvement."

Quite the contrary. We cannot be human without God. Not wholly. Not quite.

This book is meant as a guide to help you figure out what you can do and who God is calling you to become. Stop waiting for someone else to fix you, save you, heal you, diagnose you, nurture you, or pacify you. You are a torrent of holy fire, a storm of sanctified provocation. Let the scripture teach you why. Let me tell you how.

And, when you encounter those theological hiccups and philosophical impossibilities that will inevitably disrupt you, press on. Push through. Question. Argue. Shout. Rage. Because your fury, and your fervor, serve God. So, get angry. Get worked up. And channel that energy into making a better world.

After all . . . that's why you're here.

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