



Starting Something New:
Spiritual Direction for Your God-Given Dream

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“This is sacred work. The creative work of starting something new – of bringing God’s vision to life – is a holy calling and one that can prepare the way for other dreamers. As you embark on your journey of giving birth to your dreams, work hard, do excellent work, and take time to notice those foreshadowing moments when you have the niggling suspicion that you are uncovering a gift that God has for you to find and nurturing it for a far more significant and generative purpose than you even realize today.”

– From the epilogue

“Yes, we are living our dream!”

In 2004 my husband, David, and I found ourselves in a place we hadn’t anticipated: jobless. Because of some soul-crushing experiences related to our pastoral roles within a local church, we both resigned. It wasn’t premeditated. It was simply a choice of survival. Jesus’ words “And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?” (Luke 9:25) described the way we were experiencing our situation. We came to realize that our souls were at stake. And so we both, simultaneously, jumped ship and hoped that God would be there to throw us a line.

For several years after, I pined for a vocational role that fit me the way my role in that church had fit me. It aligned so well with my passion and gifts. I worked with some amazing and creative people. I saw God do the deep work of healing many hearts. I enjoyed tremendous fruit. So, I did what many do when they have lost something important and meaningful. I kept looking for its replacement. And I kept looking where I had found it before – on the staff of a local church. I tried that twice, hoping that I might find my niche, my sweet spot, but both times I had the sense that I couldn’t really root in that soil. It wasn’t my place.

During that time, my good friend Ann quoted Robert Frost to me. She said, “Remember that ‘way leads to way.’” That seemed like wisdom and resonated with me, that each way, though it wasn’t where I would ultimately land, led to the next way and then the next. So, I continued to turn down roads that looked promising and walked through open doors that seemed to have potential. One of the doors was a training course to become a spiritual director.

I met Dave Nixon, the founding pastor of Vineyard Central and a ministry called Sustainable Faith in Cincinnati, when he spoke at our church. In a conversation with him afterward, I learned that he led a School of Spiritual Direction cohort each year, and there was one beginning in just a couple of months. I’d become curious about receiving training to offer spiritual direction after having met with my own director on and off for many years. I’d also become more drawn to ministry with individuals in contrast to the large gatherings that I’d invested so much time and energy toward in my previous roles. So, with a small amount of investigation and a dose of prayer, I jumped on the chance to participate in the School of Spiritual Direction, quite unaware at the time of the significance of the decision.

We met for our first cohort in September at Sustainable Faith, an urban retreat center housed in a former convent. The ambiance of the space was so alluring to me. Built in the late 1800s, it had enormously high ceilings, hardwood floors, exposed brick and generous-size rooms. It was drenched in a quiet spirit that felt sacred – a spirit of peace and welcome. I wondered if all those decades of nuns praying, not to mention Dave, Jody and their community praying, had permeated the atmosphere to the point that shalom was palpable.

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“Most dreams go unnoticed or ignored and quietly die. Others are noticed but not adequately nurtured, meeting the same end. . . What a remarkable gift to have such a wise woman, steeped in the realities of dream-birthing, provide us with reliable ways of noticing, nurturing and birthing the very life of God into this world! Beth Booram has given us a healthy incubator, and I light up when I think about the unaccountable good that many thousands will receive from the dreams that are made incarnate through this book!”

— **David Nixon**, founder and director of Sustainable Faith, founding pastor of Vineyard Central

As I drove away that first time, I found myself thinking about the experience and even saying to myself, *I'd love to do that*. Well, over time and after many returns to the convent, I began to write in my journal about a desire that was stirring within me to start a similar ministry in Indianapolis, where I live. One weekend, more than a year later, I shared my desires with our house church/small group community. We had gone away for the weekend together, and I hadn't really shared with anyone what I was thinking. It felt big and vulnerable to openly declare it. Would they wonder secretly, *Who do you think you are?* Or would they not believe me that I was serious about it, or think that the idea was dumb?

To be honest, I don't even remember their reactions. But knowing them as I do, I would guess that they were lovingly attentive and took me seriously. Most important, David and I began to talk more earnestly about this dream, imagining what it might be like and being realistic about the obstacles in the way. One thing you need to know about my husband is that he is, without a doubt, my strongest supporter. And he never once questioned my dream—for *me*. He made it clear that he was behind me and would support me all the way, but it wasn't *his* thing.

So, I researched how to write a business plan and wrote one, began meeting with people smarter than me about doing this kind of thing, and began to pray—earnestly and maybe even a little obsessively. I kept writing about my desires and talking with David about what it could be like. The most overwhelming and formidable mountain to climb involved two issues: funding it and figuring out how to do it with my husband's support but not his personal investment.

Then something unexpected happened. I was invited by Cindy Bunch, my editor at InterVarsity Press, to a writing retreat at a beautiful retreat center, the Bellfry, in the mountains of Virginia. David and I had planned a vacation right after, so he came along with me to the retreat. Together, we watched Anne Grizzle, the owner and host of the retreat center, as she offered us her gracious gift of hospitality, leadership and presence. The experience made quite an impression.

We left there and continued our vacation, but our conversation kept returning to our experience at the Bellfry. I knew something had shifted within David when I found him on his computer, an hour after we got home from vacation, looking for properties!

There have been many twists, turns, about-faces and alternate routes taken since that time. I will tell you more about them throughout this book. But what you'd probably like to know, and what I'd love to share, is that on June 1, 2012, we moved into a hundred-year-old home in the heart of our beloved city and have established an urban retreat center called Sustainable Faith Indy. Yes, we are living our dream!

— *From the introduction*



Beth Booram believes that many people have God-given dreams inside them but don't know how to discern what they are and develop them into something real. Many of these dream-bearers are not business people or experienced entrepreneurs. They are sincere Christ-followers who need a spiritual *and* practical guide that will give them courage and confidence.

This book is just such a gift to those people.

How to Pursue Your God-Given Dream

What dream of yours prompted you to write *Starting Something New*?

Beth Booram: Several years ago, I began to pay attention to a dream forming inside me to found an urban retreat center in Indianapolis. As I put my hand to the plow, I discovered a lack of resources particular to me, a non-business person, attempting to start something that required entrepreneurial skills. As I searched for resources, I found only business-oriented ones that felt off-center from the focus and tone of the work I was doing.

Simultaneously, in conversation with many – including individuals that I meet with for spiritual direction – I began to notice numerous people describing longings within their own hearts to start something new or take a new life direction, often involving their vocation, lifestyle, calling or geography. Most people expressed a profound attraction to the idea and a tremendous anxiety about what to do with it.

I took copious notes in my journal as I waded through the process of birthing Sustainable Faith Indy and decided that what I learned might be helpful to others.

What do you believe about God-given dreams, and what will people find in *Starting Something New*?

Beth: I believe that many people have God-given dreams inside them but don't know how to discern what they are and develop them into something real. Many of these dream-bearers are not business people or experienced entrepreneurs. They are sincere Christ-followers who need a spiritual *and* practical guide that will give them courage and confidence; a handbook to help them find their way toward realizing their dream.

How do you help readers move toward their God-given dreams?

Beth: Through reflective questions and exercises at the end of each chapter, this book offers the kind of support one might receive from a spiritual director. And it encourages the reader to work through the process described in the book *with* a spiritual director.

In addition, before and within each chapter, I tell stories of other people who've started something new. The stories are quite varied and inspiring. Readers have the opportunity to find themselves within these stories as they ponder the shape and form of their own dream.

What do you hope people discover about their own dreams in your book?

Beth:

- God deposits dreams within the hearts of ordinary people.



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Given Dream*

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“Starting Something New is a refreshing book of wisdom that promises to support anyone who is daring to let a dream take hold of their life. With engaging insight Beth Booram offers the best of spiritual direction to help us discern God’s creative work in and through us and find the courage and boldness to live the dreams stirring in our heart.”

— **Phileena Heuertz**,
author, *Pilgrimage of a Soul*,
cofounder, Gravity, a Center
for Contemplative Activism

- The process of birthing a God-given dream is both creative and confusing; a process that is not likely to be a straight line from A to Z.
- God cares about the interior work of transforming the dreamer as much as the realization of the dream.
- One of the privileged tasks of life is to discern, shape, birth and sustain a God-given dream.

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