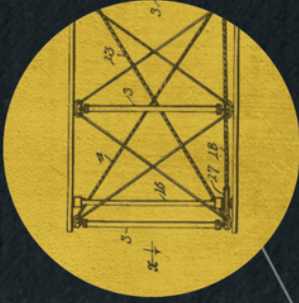


“A super, startling, step-by-step guide for Christian men.”

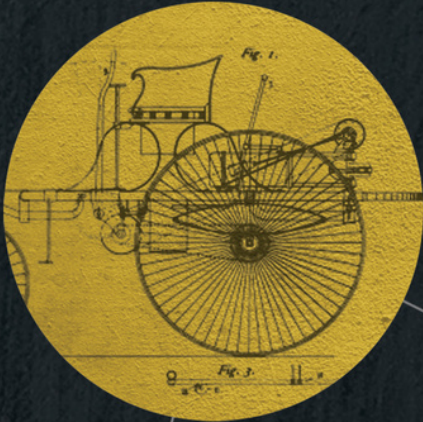
—ERIC METAXAS, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Bonhoeffer*



Break Free
from the Culture
Hell-Bent on
Holding
You Back



INVENTiON



JUSTIN CAMP

Part of the WiRE Series for Men

What people are saying about ...

INVENTION

“You were born to change the world. You know that, right? *Invention*, written in the heart of Silicon Valley, is a super, startling, step-by-step guide for Christian men ready to rise up and join the real change-the-world movement—the one launched 2,000 years ago. This book is a blueprint for how to discover our God-given identities and engage life with energy and courage.”

Eric Metaxas

New York Times bestselling author of *Bonhoeffer*;
Nationally syndicated radio host of *The Eric Metaxas Show*

“This book is for anyone who loves God and senses there is more to life than work and busyness. *Invention* will help you find that more, even in the ordinary moments, so your life may become extraordinary.”

John Ortberg

Bestselling author of *The Life You've Always Wanted*

“Discipleship of men is vital work—as men go, so go our families, our churches, and our communities. I believe that one of the enemy’s greatest attacks on Christian men is to convince us to live in identities that are disconnected from who God says we are. *Invention* will inspire men and guide them on a journey to discover their true, God-given identities.”

Kris Dolberry

Leader of LifeWay Men;
Editor of *Stand Firm*, a monthly
devotional magazine for men

“Justin Camp has written a wise book on one of the key issues men face—their identity as creations of God and new creations in Christ. *Invention* is a thought-provoking, practical, and creative book—and if you open your heart, it will change you.”

John Sowers

Author of *The Heroic Path*

“*Invention* is creative and brave. It’s for Christian men ready to escape the mundane, boring routine and start really living.”

Jim Candy

Church planter at Ascent Community Church;

Author of *Can I Ask That?*

“Justin Camp gets men. He knows how to speak to us. He’s an expert at peeling back our false assurances and macho mantras and addressing our true needs with life-giving truths. *Invention* is the perfect antidote to the ‘quiet desperation’ most modern men feel. I hope many men will read this book and discover the fuller, more meaningful life Jesus promised them.”

Drew Dyck

Senior editor, CTPastors.com;

Author of *Yawning at Tigers*

Break Free
from the Culture
Hell-Bent on
Holding
You Back

INVENTiON

JUSTIN CAMP

DAVID  COOK™

transforming lives together

INVENTION
Published by David C Cook
4050 Lee Vance Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80918 U.S.A.

Integrity Music Limited, a Division of David C Cook
Brighton, East Sussex BN1 2RE, England

The graphic circle C logo is a registered trademark of David C Cook.

All rights reserved. Except for brief excerpts for review purposes,
no part of this book may be reproduced or used in any form
without written permission from the publisher.

The website addresses recommended throughout this book are offered as a
resource to you. These websites are not intended in any way to be or imply an
endorsement on the part of David C Cook, nor do we vouch for their content.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from ESV® Bible
(The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway,
a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All
rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the King
James Version of the Bible. (Public Domain.); THE MESSAGE. Copyright
© by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress. All
rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.; NIV are taken
from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All
rights reserved worldwide; NKJV are taken from the New King James Version®.
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Control Number 2019946238
ISBN 978-0-8307-8102-7
eISBN 978-1-4347-1265-3

Copyright © 2017, 2019 Justin Camp

The Team: Michael Covington, Rachael Stevenson,
Paul J. Pastor, Nick Lee, Susan Murdock
Cover Design: Connie Gabbert

Printed in the United States of America
First Edition 2017

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

081519-KEP

THEN THE LORD GOD FORMED THE MAN OF DUST FROM THE
GROUND AND BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH
OF LIFE, AND THE MAN BECAME A LIVING CREATURE.

— AN ACCOUNT FROM MOSES

I DO NOT ASK THAT YOU TAKE THEM OUT OF THE WORLD,
BUT THAT YOU KEEP THEM FROM THE EVIL ONE. THEY ARE
NOT OF THE WORLD, JUST AS I AM NOT OF THE WORLD.

— A PRAYER OF JESUS

CONTENTS

Before You Start	1
001 Flesh and Blood and Burnout	3
002 Pine and Paint and Fellowship	13
“You’ve got this.”	17
003 Nickel and Glass and Faith	31
“Trust what you can see and touch.”	36
004 Spruce and Aluminum and Confidence	55
“Become someone else.”	61
005 Silver and Mercury and Truth	77
“Make a name for yourself.”	84
006 Copper and Acid and Significance	99
“Look out for you.”	106
007 Grease and Gasoline and Restoration	123
“Stop and enjoy life ... later.”	130
008 Oak and Steel and Adventure	145
“Don’t do anything crazy.”	152
Appendix A. Spiritual Gifts	167
Appendix B. Calling Funnel	185
Illustrations	201
Notes	205
Acknowledgments	211
About the Author	213

BEFORE YOU START

This book is built around seven nano-histories—brief profiles of seven inventors who lived and worked during the Industrial Revolution. These sections are meant to engage your curiosity and interest but also to enrich the examination of your own God-given identity. Each one opens with a short piece of creative nonfiction. Because many details from the lives of these fascinating men have been lost, I reimagined certain scenes from their lives, reconstructing them in ways that reflect the essence of actual events or qualities of their character.

More importantly, though, the book is stocked with sections entitled “Switch On.” These sections turn the focus to you. If you’re serious about breaking free into your true, God-given identity, these sections are “must-do.” If you engage in the exercises found there, you’ll discover much about yourself, your life, and your Inventor.

I promise.

Justin Camp
San Francisco Peninsula

001

FLESH AND BLOOD AND BURNOUT

I CAME SO THEY CAN HAVE REAL AND ETERNAL LIFE,
MORE AND BETTER LIFE THAN THEY EVER DREAMED OF.

(JOHN 10:10 THE MESSAGE)



A man sits in his kitchen. Elbow on the counter, forehead resting on the thumb and fingers of his left hand. He holds a cereal spoon in his right. A phone lies next to the bowl. He uses his right pinkie to scroll through the news, trying not to drip milk on the screen.

Elections in far-off places, a war trying to wind down, wildfires—even these stories are a welcome escape.

Mornings are tough. It's inertia that keeps him moving these days. An object in motion ... his internal drive is gone, his passion too. His life has turned into steady advance toward some unseen wall: head down, don't think about it.

He's gotten good at the grind. And he's getting good at acting like everything's just fine.

But he's getting weary too.

Pulling out of his driveway, he can barely remember any details from the walk he just took. Two blocks and back, dropping off a first grader. The board meeting is in an hour, and his mind is always turning—churning—on work.

And, in the back of it all, there are questions ... and a slight, edgeless gloom.

Is this what life's supposed to be?

The board meeting goes well. Good guys; a new team. The slides projected on the screen are positive, arrows in the right directions. They've closed a few important deals. Is it going to be enough?

He stops for a *barbacoa* burrito on the way back to the office. Sits by himself at a counter near the window. Lots of hot sauce. Another few minutes of escape, distracting himself from the distraction of the food with the ever-present screen. *Come on*. He swipes through articles about college football and the opening of the NBA season.

In the car, waiting for a light to change, the questions return, softly.

Is this all my life's going to be about?

Back at a conference table, he's got meetings with new companies, one after the other—potential new investments. He keeps them to an hour each. They invigorate a bit. Optimism, passion. Not his anymore, *theirs*. But it's something.

At his desk, he works through emails in the late afternoon sun. Every time he hits “send”—every time his mind breaks focus—the questions creep back.

Is this really what I want for my life?

Coming through the front door, later than promised, he's worn. Hungry again. He needs only a few minutes to take down all the food under the foil. And then he goes to the fridge for a bit more.

The two youngest are already asleep, but he helps his wife put their oldest son to bed. “These kids are amazing,” he says. Goodness and joy (and exasperation). Bedtimes never go smoothly. And his voice gets loud so easily these days. And the tension in the room gets thick.

But when the two meet on the couch, minutes later, the strain eases. She leans against him. He tells her she's amazing too.

As usual, though, they leave much unsaid, much unaddressed.

After a show, after a kiss, after too-few minutes reading, he falls into bed—and the questions come again, *full-on*. They tumble in the dark and still.

What's wrong? Nothing. I guess. But something is wrong. Isn't it?

Sometime after midnight, his mind slows enough to slip into sleep.



This was me. Bewildered. Burned-out. Brokenhearted. And it might be you.

Or, for you, right now, maybe there's no question ... you know *exactly* what's wrong. I've been there too.

Maybe you're facing a crushing loss—of a job or a career, of financial security, of a loved one or a marriage. Maybe you're struggling to finish school. Or land a job after graduation. Or to keep one, long after. Maybe you're struggling to get a career started. To find your place. Or maybe the place you *have* found—this career you've gotten yourself into—is never going to be the right one. Or maybe you're facing addiction. Too much work ... or escape. Flesh on a screen. Medication from a bottle or a pipe.

You know who you are. You know how you hurt. How the questions haunt you. Questions of potential and greater things.

We're in this together. Only the details are different.



I grew up near Silicon Valley's geographical center. For college, though, I went south. For law school, east. Then a short time on Wall Street. A young lawyer rushing through halls and conference rooms, trying his best to close mergers and acquisitions. It was a

heady time, the late 1990s, at Cravath, Swaine & Moore, a big corporate law firm.

Now, Cravath is a pretty cool place. The men and women there represent the likes of DuPont, DreamWorks, IBM, Starbucks—but it's an old firm too. It has history. During the Industrial Revolution, it represented Samuel Morse (the inventor of the single-wire telegraph and Morse code); Cyrus McCormick (the mechanical reaper); Elias Howe (the sewing machine); Charles Goodyear (vulcanized rubber); and even Thomas Edison, the dean of all American inventors.

I'd chosen law because of my mother, who I love very much. She thought I'd make a good lawyer—and said so a few times while I was growing up. I had a talent for arguing, I think. Mostly with her, I guess.

I'd chosen Cravath, though, because of the competitive culture of law school. From it, I extracted this not-so-subtle advice: to go to the best firm that would take me. So, at the end of a full day of interviews at Worldwide Plaza in Manhattan, when the hiring partner gave me an offer, I took it.

I wasn't the best lawyer at Cravath, not by a long shot. But I was as good as any of them at *acting* as if everything was fine ... great, in fact. It didn't always feel great. Sometimes it felt very ungreat. But our culture told me—the voices *I* was listening to, at least—that I was right where I should be. They told me I'd found what I should be doing with my life.

But if that was the truth, why did I feel so ... *this*?

Something was off, I can see that now. I was anxious. I was just beginning to feel that faint, hard-to-get-a-hold-of gloom. I had plenty of confidence, but nearly all of it was an act. And when questions began to emerge, I just pushed them away. I figured that was what life was supposed to be—exciting in some ways, but confusing and unfulfilling in others. Deals I worked on showed up on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*. That was cool—so I just ignored a nagging feeling that I might actually be in the wrong place.

Man up. Head down. The inner voice said. Every day.

My relationship with God wasn't great. My wife, Jennifer, and I went to church sometimes, but we didn't belong to one. We weren't in community. I prayed some—but my focus was on my career. I spent many Sundays in the office.

About when the millennium turned, my father asked a question. He wondered if I'd consider joining him, back in California. He's a technologist, to the core. He loves the next big thing. And he's wired, too, for investing and taking risks. So, we started kicking around the idea of starting a small venture capital firm.

It made sense. It felt like the change I needed, especially professionally. And things were booming in the Bay Area. Everyone, it seemed, was heading there—my home—to start internet companies.

On top of that, it wasn't just my father back on the West Coast; the rest of our families were there too. And if we were going to start a family ourselves, it would be good to be closer to them.

So we came home. And for the next fifteen years, I raced up and down the San Francisco Peninsula, investing in high-tech startups.

Now, working with my father was a great gift—no question. But it wasn't long before that subtle gloom returned, with those still-unanswered questions. Just like before, life was exciting in some ways, but confusing and unfulfilling in others. I got to invest in some amazing people and some exciting businesses. That was cool. So, again, I tried to ignore that by-then familiar nagging—that this might not be my place either.

We joined a great church in Menlo Park. We heard some helpful teaching. But we still weren't in community—not really. I had no idea who I was—not at all, actually. I sure knew who I *should* be. Culture told me, all the time. And I listened, all the time.

Head down. Grind.

Whenever the stress and burnout spiked, I turned to food. Watching sports. Internet pornography. Escape.

"Man up"?

Man down. This was not the life God intended.



God creates with passion and precision ... and *purpose*—just like those great inventors, those long-ago clients of Cravath.

When God set the foundations of the world, he dreamed. He made plans. He “formed” our constituent parts and “knitted” them together (Ps. 139:13). We were “fearfully and wonderfully made,” just like King David—“intricately woven in the depths of the earth” (vv. 14–15). And then, with great anticipation—just as he did with the first man—God “breathed” into us life (Gen. 2:7).

We’re his beloved creations, made with painstaking care and can’t-miss-this intentionality—for us and for our lives. We all are—in common. And we each are—uniquely.

So, why the disconnect? Between the life we’re meant for and the life we’re living?



You know the life I mean.

Deeply, we long for confidence, because we’re designed to *be* confident—confident in *who* we are, *where* we are, and *why* we are. Confident we have a place, a position in this world; a purpose and part to play in its story.

But mostly, we aren’t. We feel unsure. Undistinguished. Sometimes it feels like God’s made a mistake. Left something out. So, we cover that pain up with whatever is convenient. We resolve to work harder. We spend too much time at the office or too much on the road—to feel like we’re keeping up. Or, we just numb our sense of inadequacy. We turn to alcohol, drugs, sex. We compete, or become complacent.

I know you feel you have to prove yourself, every day. *You don’t.*

Deeply, we long for significance, because we’re designed to do work that matters. We’re designed for assignment, to be necessary

parts of something larger than ourselves. We're designed for adventure, to take big risks toward worthy goals.

But we've been taught to be fearful and careful. So, we try to control everything. And we mostly just focus on minimizing risk, avoiding pain, surviving. We've forgotten what it's like to take real risks. We wonder if there are any worthy goals that need big risks anymore.

I know how you feel restless, underutilized. *You are.*

Deeply, we long for joy, because we were made for it. We're designed for wholeness and fullness. For freedom. We're designed to move through life with intention.

But mostly we're just busy and worn-out. Our lives are filled, but not *full*. Work is work. And there's so little time to rest, to restore, to do anything we love to do. So our senses have dulled. We don't smell the trees, the rain when it comes, the wood smoke. We've come to dread Monday morning and barely feel the freedom of a Saturday afternoon anymore.

I know how it feels like something's been lost. *Something has.*

Deeply, we long for good, strong relationships with God, because we're designed for them—for their intimacy and protection and strength. We're designed to laugh, to pray, and be ourselves with Him. We're meant to be known, all the way—and be loved still. We're designed to walk with him and work with him and know him, right back.

But mostly we just keep to ourselves. Reluctant to drop defenses. Fearful we'll hear something we won't like. Fearful we might not be good enough. Fearful we might be diverted from our goals. Unwilling to trust. So, we isolate further.

I know how it feels like something's got to give. *Something does.*



You know that sense that something's wrong? You know that feeling that you might be made for more than what you're living now?

Well ... you're right. Something *is* wrong. You *are* made for more—a lot more.

And that disconnect? It's because God's purposes for us go beyond this broken, fallen world. He's made us for something bigger and better. He's made us for a world *restored*—perfect and eternal. And it's simply not yet come. This one's not yet been restored. It will be. Jesus' work has begun. And he'll finish it. But as of now, it's only partially done.

So, here we are. In a world we're not made for.

What's even more, for now, this world “lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Jesus rules us—you and me—his followers, and he'll rule the world to come. But, for now, right now, Satan holds sway.

And we're designed by God to join Jesus in his work of restoring things—to do our parts in pulling this world out of crisis. It's a tremendous gift and profound honor—but the evil one hates it. For the very last act of restoration will be his overthrow. And, as the ones through whom Jesus works on earth, by the power of his Holy Spirit, Satan's scared of us.

He's scared of you. And he's right to be.

But he's not standing by, either. No, he's set the culture of this world against us. He uses culture as a weapon—a weapon to defend the current order. And here's how he does it: he promulgates a set of lies, “for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). He disseminates them into and through our culture. He shapes it—in the hope that it will shape us.

He's clever. He's motivated.

For he knows, when and if we discover *true identity*—who we're made to be and what we're made for, by God—then we also discover *true confidence*, significance, joy, relationship. We discover what Jesus promised: more and better life than we ever dreamed of.

But we also discover *impact*—we discover exactly how we're meant to do our parts to restore this world, and uniquely where. And so, Satan knows, when we discover true identity, we become dangerous.

So, he's hell-bent on thwarting us. He pummels us, again and again, with lies—telling us who to be and what to do. His false messages are everywhere. And they're insidious, because they don't sound so bad ... at first, at least.

But, of course, if we believe them, if we follow them, they work to hold us back—from life, from goodness. They debilitate us—keep us unsure of ourselves, merely surviving, tired and underutilized, isolated. And, eventually, they lead us to our deaths.

So, we're here. In a world screaming for redemption, with a vicious enemy, with the odds stacked against us—against us ever living the way our God designed us to live.

Things look grim. And that's mighty good news for men like you and me—men built for opposition, men just itching for an honest challenge.

We're here. Where finding ourselves is fighting back. Where thinking differently, where *living differently*, is the best kind of rebellion—faithfulness to our true King.



A few years ago, I'd finally had enough. Nearly a decade after Jenn and I had come back out West, a desire grew in my heart—to stop trying to *man up*. And another one did too—the desire to turn toward God.

He placed those desires, he increased them—but, then, I finally did my part.

I surrendered. I began to let God fill in my blanks. I allowed my Inventor to begin to tell me why I was, what I was, who I was.

And it changed everything.

It can for you too.



“I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of” (John 10:10 THE MESSAGE).

Jesus said that. And the “they” he’s referring to is us. “They” is me. *“They” is you.*

This book is an invitation. Join me and a small band of renegades and revolutionaries, change-makers and troublemakers—men who don’t accept the world as it is, because they know they’re made for something better. It’s an invitation, just for you. It’s a guidebook to begin living. It’ll help you see the lies that obscure. It’ll help you reconnect with God and find the truths of your identity.

It won’t be easy. It’ll be so much better than that.

© Copyrighted Material

002

PINE AND PAINT AND FELLOWSHIP

The place has dark wood floors, plank walls, and high white ceilings. The air smells of smoke and machine oil. Fumes drift through a maze of motion and noise—a bustling office, a library, and then the machine shop. The shop is amazing—jammed with all kinds of anvils, forges, lathes, drills, and other machines, each steam-driven by an ingenious web of leather belts lacing their way through the building. Men work everywhere—shouting, laughing, and occasionally nursing cuts and bruises to fingers and hands.

Upstairs is one long room, dark wood and white paint too. It's organized around wood tables and workbenches, covered with magnifying glasses, microscopes, glass beakers, and crucibles, all kinds of gear and bits of apparatus. Wooden chairs and iron stools are pulled up or pushed away. Walls between bright sash windows are lined with shelves holding thousands of bottles, rainbows of glass and chemicals.

And through it all, a man paces. His hands are grimy and acid-stained; his hair disheveled. His face, quick and changeable, is streaked with ash and grease and dirt. His eyes sparkle and penetrate. Around him swirl machinists, mathematicians, physicists, chemists, draftsmen, and glassblowers—and he directs them all. He jokes, he corrects, he even sings.

“Once,” a workman says, having to shout a bit over all the noise, “he locked the doors for two days ... until we solved this customer’s problem ... until we got the purchase order filled.” This is directed to some reporters in from New York, gathered and waiting for a chance to interview the man who would do such a thing.

That man stops his stride, way across the room, amid the chaos. His hand rests on a workbench for a moment. He looks lost in thought. Far away, in his mind. Preoccupied with some problem, no doubt.

But after a moment, he’s back. His eyes come back into focus. He takes a long survey of the entire room, finally seeing the newspapermen for the first time. He straightens and makes his way over.

This is Menlo Park, New Jersey, and the man is Thomas Edison.



In the 1870s, while still in his midtwenties, Edison was living in a row house in nearby Newark. He’d been working odd jobs, including that of a telegraph operator. He’d done some inventing too—a stock ticker machine and an electric vote recorder—but only in his spare time. But he’d made a decision—he was going all in. He was going to devote everything to the work of inventing.

The world was in the midst of a great age of invention. It was the second phase of the Industrial Revolution, and Newark had established itself as a hub of industry: iron, leather, shipping. The city was also a center of innovation. A pioneering plastics factory had just opened in the city. But as its population swelled, like many large cities of the time, Newark became overcrowded and a bit hazardous. What it lacked in modern sanitation, it made up for in grime.

The age suited Edison. He was ambitious and impatient. He opened his first workshop in a rented factory building in the bustling, bursting city. In there, he and a few employees worked long hours to improve the very kind of telegraphic gear he’d used as an

operator. But he soon wanted to expand his operation, and for that he would need more room—and perhaps a more peaceful location.

So in 1876 he bought thirty-four acres out in the New Jersey countryside, in a place called Menlo Park. It was quiet and unpolluted—but also an easy trip to New York City or Philadelphia. The main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad bisected the nearly nonexistent town and the “Pennsy” rumbled through on a regular basis.

In Menlo Park, Edison hit his stride. He was bold and daring. He knew what he wanted to do with his life, and he had a sense for how to do it. He built an impressive, state-of-the-art workshop atop a hill overlooking the countryside and the train station. He called it his Invention Factory.

And from that shop, he pushed the human race forward.

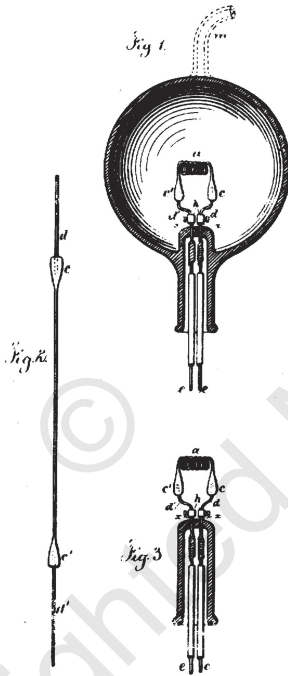
Over the next five years, Edison and his men did things people thought could never be done. They created wondrous things. They invented things unique and novel, and they upgraded things that others had invented, making them better and cheaper.

Edison applied for about 400 of his 1,093 patents while working out of that Menlo Park workshop, including a couple of his best: the phonograph and the first commercially viable electric light bulb.

T. A. EDISON.
Electric-Lamp.

No. 223,898.

Patented Jan. 27, 1880.



Witnesses
Charles Smith
Geo. H. Mackay

Inventor
Thomas A. Edison
By Lemuel W. Serrell

eng.

U.S. PATENT N° 223,898
ELECTRIC-LAMP

LiE:

“YOU’VE GOT THIS.”

You’ve been told: *real men are self-made. They’re independent. They don’t need anyone. In any situation, they can handle themselves. They can handle anything. When life gets tough, they do what they need to. They work harder. Longer. They escape when they need to. Why? Because they have to—they know no help is coming, and that’s just fine with them.*

You’re one of these men. You’re on your own—but that’s okay. You’ve got this.

These are lies, and they’re holding you back. **Think different.**



The mystique and mythology of the self-made man cemented into Western culture during the nineteenth century. Self-made men, people began to proclaim, shaped themselves, their lives, into whatever they wanted. With enough hard work, imagination, initiative, *anything* was possible.

“No boy, however lowly—the barefoot country boy, the humble newsboy, the child of the tenement—need despair,” declared John D. Rockefeller. “I see in each of them infinite possibilities. They have but to master the knack of economy, thrift, honesty, and perseverance, and success is theirs.”¹

If a man can just find his bootstraps, all that’s required for success is a lifetime of pulling himself up by them.

The self-made man became an essential American figure. Edison and Rockefeller embodied it, and they became American heroes—as did Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln before them, and Henry Ford and Walt Disney after. The figure shows up more

recently in the stories of men like Ronald Reagan, Sam Walton, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, and Barack Obama. Their stories are told and retold. Their biographies become models of self-made upward mobility. Models, we all learn, that boys and men should emulate.

So we try. (I sure did.)

If we want something, we go after it. If we want to do something, we do it. If we lack talent or skill, we figure it's just a question of effort: more is needed. We convince ourselves we can accomplish anything.

For a while, at least.

You see, the problem is when we do this, we're trying to live a myth. Because no one is self-made. No one.

We're God-made.

That's the beautiful reality. But it's a reality we miss when we examine the lives and accomplishments of men we admire but don't look for God too.

Do you want to know something? Even Edison did not make Edison.

When we look just at the man, we miss his Maker standing behind and above him. It was God, after all, who wired the curiosity, tenacity, restlessness, irreverence, and everything else that made him the inventor he was. Edison had nothing that God did not give him—and neither do you or I.

If we miss this reality, we miss everything. Because, while Edison's achievements are interesting and impressive, they all but disappear when measured against the mighty movements of God. And all of a sudden, the importance of being "self-made" shrivels in light of living according to true purpose, deepest identity.

And what we're going to learn—here, now—is how this beautiful reality is real for each of us too ... *and why we'd be absolutely crazy not to choose relationship with our Maker.*



Edison's passion for inventing is just a pale reflection of God's heart for creating. Edison dreamed and designed and built things, because that's what God does. God just does it on an unfathomably larger scale—the scale of worlds, of geologic ages, of human lives.

Once, while searching for a filament for his light bulb, Edison made a surprising discovery. "Sitting one night in his laboratory reflecting on some of the unfinished details, Edison began abstractedly rolling between his fingers a piece of compressed lampblack until it had become a slender thread."² Lampblack is the fine black powder from kerosene smoke that collects on the glass chimneys of oil lamps.

Looking down at the thread, it struck the inventor that it might be exactly what he'd been looking for. So, he tried it.

And the entire world changed.

Within a few months, Menlo Park was lit by twenty-five electric lamps. Edison had taken something dark—to all appearances useless—and turned it into something *beautiful*. He brought light out of darkness. And multitudes came to see.

Long before that night, God too took something dark and seemingly useless and created something beautiful, something also meant to radiate light. When God created Adam he "formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature" (Gen. 2:7).



We don't make ourselves. No one does. It's not a matter of trying to be smarter or working harder or more efficiently. It's simply this: God is the one who dreamed us up, who made plans for us before we were even born.

While our choices matter—and we can take some credit for hard work and grit—we have nothing without God. We're *his* workmanship. It's his hand that wrought us—not our own.

So the figure of the self-made man is a myth—but it’s worse. It’s a counterfeit too. It looks right, sounds good, but it deceives. It lies to us. It convinces us to become men who go it alone, men who don’t know our Maker. Men whose only option when things get tough is to *man up*.

But that’s just not how God designed us. He designed us not for isolation and self-reliance—but for God-relationship and God-reliance.

Of all that God’s made, only we humans have the capacity for relationship with him. Only we are able to know him—to know the One “who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (Ps. 146:6). And too often we take that astonishing fact way too lightly. It should be the thing in our lives we hold most dear—not our smarts or success or anyone else’s.

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.” (Jer. 9:23–24)

We must avail ourselves of this unique and awesome functionality of ours, this ability to know him. We all have it—but what matters is that we actually *use* it.

In this chapter, we’ll learn *why*. In this book, we’ll learn *how*.



In 1884 a twenty-seven-year-old Serbian stepped off a steamship and into the jam-packed streets of New York City. The man had skills—both mechanical and electrical. He had a sharp mind, a splendid

imagination, and a photographic memory. And he'd come to meet Thomas Edison.

This man was Nikola Tesla. In Paris, he had been working for the Continental Edison Company, where he had impressed one of Edison's close personal friends. That man offered an introduction. Meeting Edison, Tesla knew, was an opportunity he couldn't pass up. So he sold his possessions and set off across the Atlantic.

The two men met. Edison hired Tesla to work in the Edison Machine Works—a new factory constructed on a rough street, amongst the teeming tenements of Manhattan's Lower East Side. Edison needed a factory that could keep up with the raw demand for electrical illumination. Now everyone wanted electric lights. So the world now needed massive machines, things like jumbo dynamos, which could supply electricity on a wide scale.

Why did Tesla sell everything and sail to America? Because he wanted to know Edison—to work for him and beside him. He wanted to be where the action was. He wanted to work on things that were exciting, things that mattered. He wanted to tackle tough problems and learn. He sought truth and wanted to make an impact on the world—and he didn't want to do it alone.

Tesla would go on to become a celebrated inventor in his own right. But it must have been an amazing thing for the young Tesla to get personal access to the world-famous Edison, to be given the opportunity for a relationship—even if it was short-lived.

But the thing is, what Edison offered Tesla comes nowhere close—nowhere even remotely close—to what God offers us. In him, we have the colossal and incomprehensible honor of a relationship with our Inventor, the Most High God.

We're invited to get to know, to work for and beside someone who, in every way imaginable, dwarfs Thomas Edison and every other human. Even the richest, the most successful, the most accomplished. He dwarfs them all—and even that's a monstrous understatement.

When we get to know him, we're invited out of the lie that we have to or should or even can figure out life on our own. We move

from self-reliance (which, in all honesty, is not very much of anything) into God-relationship and God-reliance (which is very much of everything).

We're invited into where the *real* action is. We get to be part of the most exciting and significant work in the entire world—in *the history of the entire world*. We get to tackle tough problems—ours and other people's—and we get to do it standing right at God's side, God Almighty. We get access to his truth, his infinite wisdom. And we get to make our impact on the world—an impact magnified, multiplied by the most powerful force in the universe.

We *cannot* miss this chance.



For all the glory and wonder, though, there's nothing easy about making this choice, this shift—and it's even harder to do it consistently. Our culture has programed our beliefs and our habits—and our old ways die hard.

Think for a moment, where does your mind go first when the shock of something awful hits—like when you get scary financial news or an unwelcome diagnosis, when you lose a job or tear a relationship? To God? For help? Where does it go when something awesome happens—a major success at work or an unexpected blessing? To God? To express gratitude?

Or does it go somewhere else?

I don't know how many times I've done this, but it's a lot. I'm anxious; I'm working through a problem by talking with Jenn; at some point she suggests we pray, suggests we ask for God's help—and I push back. Usually, ultimately, either we don't pray or I pray through gritted teeth. Whatever the words are, the heart's always the same: *I've got this*. I want control. I want to say who I am, what I'm supposed to do, how I work best. *I don't need help*.

I don't *want* to need help. But I do.

I've only recently been able to accept that. I've only recently been able to loosen my grip on my fantasy of control. I guess enough has happened. I've made enough mistakes, damaged enough relationships. I've spent enough of my life devoting myself to a life and work that, according to our culture, should have given me everything I long for—life to the full. They didn't. They don't. And only when it felt like I was drowning in discontent, only when I had to use sheer will to wrench myself out of bed on weekday mornings, did the idea finally occur to me.

Maybe I haven't got this.

And *that's* when I was finally able to surrender. And *that's* when I turned to God.



When we live as if we make ourselves, we compartmentalize. We attempt to live different realities at different times. We accept God's position and presence and power on Sunday mornings at church. But the rest of the week, at home and at work, we try to live self-made, as if the God of the universe isn't really right there with us, standing behind us and above us, beside us and inside us. We try to live as if God just isn't all that relevant to our goals and all the things we need to get done. (I tried to live that way.)

And do you know why that doesn't work?

Because none of us is man enough to handle life on our own—even portions of it.

We're in over our heads. All of us.

And that's perfectly okay. It's right.

None of us is man enough because we aren't designed to be. We aren't designed to *go it alone*—because we never have been alone, we never are alone, and we'll never be alone, ever. Jesus told his disciples, he tells us, “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:16–20). He promised his Spirit will dwell with us and be

in us “forever” (John 14:16–17). And that’s why the self-made figure, this counterfeit, takes us so far off track.

It convinces us to violate our God-designed, God-given, *with-God* nature.

We think we know what we’re made for. We don’t. Our Maker does. No one understands us like the One who designed us, made us—not by stamping us out on some heavenly production line, but as handcrafted, irreplaceable masterworks.

Because God is Inventor, and we are his inventions, there’s a gulf between what he knows and what we do—and it’s vast. It’s so big, in fact, we can’t comprehend it—“his understanding is beyond measure” (Ps. 147:4–5). “His understanding is unsearchable” (Isa. 40:28). He sees everything, knows everything, and can do anything. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8).

Dallas Willard, the great philosopher and provocateur, wrote this: “Today we think people are smart who make light bulbs and computer chips and rockets out of ‘stuff’ already provided! He made ‘the stuff!’”³

All things that God is, he is infinitely. His love, his power, *his knowledge*—they’re without end. We’ll never approach his level of understanding, even when what we’re talking about is understanding *ourselves*. Trying to live self-made, self-reliant lives is doomed from the start, therefore, because it’s trying to live an impossibility. It’s denying the source of all things that make not only our lives, but *existence itself*, possible.

No wonder our lives are fraught with sadness and suffering—wrong fits, false starts, and broken parts. No wonder we’re unsure of ourselves, merely surviving, tired, underutilized, isolated. No wonder we’re sad, lonely, addicted, divorced, thinking late at night, *Is this it? Is this all there is?*

No. Of course it’s not all there is. What we’re feeling is simply the friction of God’s reality against our paltry attempts at finding

meaning apart from our Maker. Living into a lie has simply begun to unmake our lives.

But living into the truth will remake them.

With God, we have everything we need. We're qualified. Ready to go. With him, we can find what we're made for: confidence, significance, joy, relationship, excitement, adventure, peace, rest, and restoration.

We're going to learn how ... *all of it*.



It was not *all inventing all the time* with Edison. He apprenticed men too. They came from all over the world to work for him in his workshop. Edison called these men his “muckers.” He chose them. He taught them. He pushed them. He laughed and ate with them. He liked being with them, and they with him—most of the time, at least. He cultivated an environment of rough-and-tumble camaraderie—to bring his employees together, but also to provide relief and release from the long hours and hard work.

Charles Clarke, assistant to Edison, described things this way:

Laboratory life with Edison was a strenuous but joyous life for all, physically, mentally, and emotionally. We worked long night hours during the week, frequently to the limit of human endurance ... he breathed a little community of kindred spirits ... enthusiastic about their work, expectant of great results; moreover often loudly emphatic in joke and vigorous in action.⁴

The men pulled pranks and competed in games and tests of strength. They drank beer, chewed tobacco, ate midnight meals together, and held roisterous sing-alongs. Edison even had a pipe organ installed on the second floor of the Invention Factory.



THE INVENTION FACTORY
MENLO PARK, NEW JERSEY, 1880

Edison and his muckers did historic work, created important things. Perhaps the single most astonishing thing created in the Invention Factory, though, was the place itself—the environment, the relationships, the apprenticeships, the men. The workshop, nearly a living organism. Many muckers went on to make significant contributions of their own—to science, research, and engineering. It was a place where many men were formed and some transformed.



Not only are we God's inventions, we're his apprentices too. For just as Edison chose his muckers, God chooses us—to join him, to grow and deepen our relationships, to help him as he remakes the world through the work of Jesus. "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). And his work of forming our physical bodies is not the end of his creation work. Later on, when we begin to follow his perfect invention, Jesus Christ, God picks up his tools and creates again—new men and new lives.

When we make the decision to follow Jesus, he reinvents us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He re-forms us—"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). When the apostle Paul wrote, "We are his workmanship," he was referring to this *re-invention*—"in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:10).

This reinvention isn't figurative. It's real and complete. We're completely overhauled, made new.

In an instant, we become new men—men who *can* become the men God designed us to be. We become men who *can* be taught, *can* be guided, *can* be challenged and pushed, *can* be encouraged and befriended and fathered by God—we become men who *can* be apprenticed. We will spend the rest of our lives living into that reality, but our redesign is complete.

In an instant, we become God's muckers, able to learn how to be like Jesus. Able to learn how to love and serve God, our neighbors,

our enemies, the entire world. The world, his workshop, becomes a place of labor, creativity, risk-taking, problem-solving.

But laughing and joking and singing too.

Work. And joy. The deepest longings of a good man's heart.

What we were made for.



Do you want to discover *your* true identity? Do you want to discover the plans God has for you?

Then stop trying to live a myth. Give it up. Self-made? Not even close. Made. Then, in Jesus, *remade*. Better than the very best work we could ever do on our own.

And simply keep reading. Coming chapters will guide you in how to bring God your deepest questions of identity. The right ones. In the right way.

But first, in the very next chapter, we're going to learn how to *listen*. Listen for the Inventor's voice.

— SWITCH ON —

"GOD MADE"

002

You're an invention of God, made in his image. You're a mucker, an apprentice to the loving God of all goodness and might. He's chosen you. He knows you, and he wants you to know him.

He wants you to know what he made you for. He's desperate for you to find purpose and significance and excitement—joy and peace and rest and restoration. And he's eager for you to make your unique impact on the world.

He wants you to join him where the action is. He wants to pull you into what he's doing in the world. His work. He has assignments for you. Waiting.

If you want all of this—or even any part—tackle the questions below. They're a first step in this crazy, wonderful process of discovery and recovery.

Consider these questions and jot down your responses.

002.1 Describe yourself. Can you do it in just a few sentences—your personality and talents, your hopes and dreams? It's hard. Try.

002.2 How would friends, acquaintances, coworkers describe you?

002.3 Have you ever taken the self-made, go-it-alone approach to life? Have you ever said to God, "I've got this"? Why?

002.4 Where would you put yourself on this spectrum, right now?

<<SELF-RELIANT ----- GOD-RELIANT>>

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

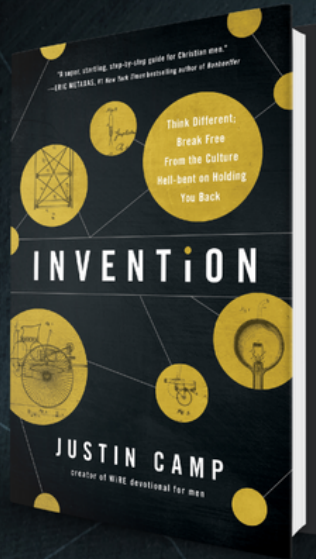
002.5 God wants a relationship with you—close and dynamic. He wants you to become his mucker. You are chosen. You are able. But that apprenticeship will cost you—it might cost you everything you now hold dear. How does that make you feel?

Pray right now.

Jesus my King, not once did you try to go it alone. Not once did you say to your Father, "I've got this." Rather, you said, "I can do nothing on my own" (John 5:30). And so, you and your Father and the Holy Spirit changed the world—in ways infinitely bigger and better than any self-made man ever has, even the most celebrated.

I confess I've wanted to be self-made. Independent. I've wanted to not need anyone. I've wanted to not need you. But I choose now to think differently. I choose to live like you did—knowing my Father God, dependent upon the Holy Spirit. I choose to live as you made me. I want to do the things you made me to do.

Teach me. Guide me. Apprenticeship me into my true identity. I'm ready. Amen.



INVENTION is an invitation to join a band of renegades and revolutionaries, change-makers and trouble makers—men who don't accept the world as it is, because they know they're made for something better.

Click here to order on
amazon