

YOU ARE HERE

Opening the door to your own rebellion

Simple ideas and unbelievable dreams. First steps and great miracles. Ordinary teenagers and a God who still uses young people to accomplish His big plans.

That's what our first book, *Do Hard Things*, is all about. *Do Hard Things* shows how young people can take hold of a more exciting option for their teen years than what society suggests. We wrote the book to counter the Myth of Adolescence, which says the teen years are a time to goof off and have fun before "real life" starts. We invited our peers to choose to do hard things for the glory of God and, in the process, turn the world's idea of what teens are capable of upside down.

We were nineteen when we wrote *Do Hard Things*, twin brothers who wanted to follow God's call and challenge our generation. We're twenty-one now and sophomores in college. We still dream big dreams, still want to follow God completely, and still believe just as strongly that God wants to use our generation to change the world. (And, as you might have guessed, we're still twin brothers.)

Whether or not you've read *Do Hard Things* (we'd recommend it—but, of course, we're a little biased), this companion book continues the *Do Hard Things* message and piles on stories, practical suggestions, and detailed how-tos. You can use it either on your own or in a group setting, depending on your situation.

In other words, *Do Hard Things* marked the beginning of a movement. *Start Here* is your personal field guide to jumping in and getting involved.

The Rebelution Movement

The concept of doing hard things actually started as a blog we created when we were sixteen. We called it The Rebelution—a combination of *rebellion* and *revolution* to create a whole new word with a whole new meaning. We defined *rebelution* as “a teenage rebellion against low expectations.” (By the way, the blog still exists. Check it out at TheRebelution.com.)

Since *Do Hard Things* came out, the Rebelution movement has exploded. In the past year, rebelutionary teens have raised tens of thousands of dollars to bring the gospel to and dig wells in Africa, won prestigious film festivals, fought human trafficking in the United States and around the world, and made it on the cover of *ESPN The Magazine*. Around the world, young people are moving out of their comfort zones—whether that means standing for Christ in a hostile classroom, raising money to build a dormitory for orphans in China, or mending relationships with parents or younger siblings.

Maybe you're part of the Rebelution already, or maybe you

just want to find out more. Maybe you're asking one of the questions we get most frequently from readers: "Where do I start?"

This book is about taking the next step. It includes ideas from us and dozens of other young people on topics like:

- how to stand up for what you believe
- strategies for overcoming stage fright, fund-raising fright, and phone-calling fright (hint: it gets easier as you go!)
- ways to get going when you feel stuck and keep going when you feel discouraged
- how to understand God's will and glorify Him through your efforts
- God-honoring ways to think, feel, and act *after* you've completed a big project

In short, this is a handbook full of practical steps and real-life stories to encourage and equip you on your journey of doing hard things. We want you to feel as if you're at one of our conferences, or in a small group of people talking about doing hard things—which you may be!

All the questions in the pages that follow come from people just like you, collected on our website and through personal conversations. We'll do our best to answer them with stories and insights from our own lives. We're traveling alongside you in this adventure—and we want to share with you what God has been teaching us these past few years.

But just like *Do Hard Things*, this book isn't about us. It's about the incredible, seemingly impossible things God is doing in our generation. That's why in *Start Here* you'll find dozens of true stories from rebelutionaries who are making a difference in their homes, at their schools, and around the world. We love

sharing other young people's stories because they challenge us as well—and remind us that we're not alone. We also love the way real-life stories provide a glimpse of the diverse ways God wants to use each of us to do hard things for Him.

Toward the end of the book, we'll be sharing the stories of two rebelutionaries in particular: Ana Zimmerman and John Moore. As you'll see, Ana and John took on very different hard things, each with the purpose of glorifying God and helping others.

At the age of fifteen, Ana raised more than six thousand dollars and organized an event called Love the Least in her hometown. The event introduced her community to the work of Abort73, an organization that exists to show the injustice of abortion.

With a group of fellow teens, John Moore wrote, produced, and directed his own feature film at the age of nineteen—and went on to win the \$101,000 grand prize at the San Antonio Independent Christian Film Festival.

John and Ana faced many of the same hurdles and questions you're encountering. Their stories provide an in-depth look at the beginning, middle, and end of the "do hard things" process. We think you'll be encouraged and inspired.

Pursuing Faithfulness, Not Success

As thousands of young people around the world are discovering, doing hard things is the most satisfying, thrilling way to live some of the best years of our lives.

So where do you start? As you'll find in the pages that follow, the answer is: right where you are. Being a rebelutionary means committing to doing even ordinary things extraordinarily well.

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As each of us is faithful in that, God will be faithful to prepare us for whatever calling He has for us.

For some of us, that calling will be big in the world's eyes, and for some of us it will be small. Whether it is big or small, God will be glorified—and the world will be changed by a generation that gives up seeking worldly success to pursue a life of faithfulness.

That's when the ordinary becomes extraordinary. And that's what this book is about.

Ready to start?

GETTING STARTED

What that first step looks like

If you're feeling lost in trying to figure out where to start, you might be asking practical questions about how to create a plan, get others involved, and make your project work. Those are good questions, and we'll be tackling all of them (and more) in the next chapter. But most of the time, those *aren't* the right questions to be asking—at least not at first.

The best question to ask right at the beginning is “*Why* am I doing hard things?” When we remember that we're doing hard things to glorify God and become more of who He created us to be, it puts the “How do I start?” question in a different light.

As you think and pray about what God wants *you* to be doing, keep in mind that you don't have to fight God in order to do hard things. He *wants* you to do hard things! The Bible says that He has prepared good works for you and has prepared you for those good works (see Ephesians 2:10). God is far more concerned about His glory, your good, and the good of those around you than you are. That means you don't have to engineer something—you can trust Him, be faithful, and be ready for *His* timing.

So here are some thoughts on responding to what God is already eager to do in your life.

I'm ready to get started—on *something*! What should I do now?

When we think or talk about doing hard things, it's easy to think only about the big stuff. If we assume that being a rebelutionary means fighting slavery, digging wells in Africa, running a political campaign, or writing a book, then it *is* hard to know where to begin!

But if our goal is to glorify God—to point other people to Him and show more of what *He* can do—then our first priority is to be faithful with what *He's already given us to do*, not embark on a big new adventure. *What* we're doing doesn't necessarily change right away, but *how* and *why* we're doing it will change dramatically.

Let us introduce you to the first of many real-life stories we'll be using in this book. As you'll see in Elisabeth's story, the place we start doing hard things is right where God has us already—such as sitting in a car on a snowy night.

I was ready to go out and conquer hard projects. Big responsibilities. Things far outside my comfort zone. I prayed for God to work through me in big ways. He answered me, but not quite in the ways I expected.

For instance, one night on the way home in a blizzard, my dad and I stopped for a few minutes to pick up some necessities at the store. I waited in the car and surveyed the nearly empty parking lot until my eye caught a lone car with a person scraping off snow. As I looked closer,

I saw that it was an elderly lady trying to scrape off her car while leaning on a cane. She wasn't making much progress because the snow was falling faster than she could wipe it off. I felt instinctively that I had to help her. I ran out with my scraper, and soon a few other people joined me in clearing off her car.

Nothing outwardly significant happened then, but this was the first time I had strongly heard God's voice and responded to it. As I tuned in, I began to recognize His voice at other times. I sensed that I should go talk to the girl who was crying in the bathroom at school—it turns out she was pregnant and needed help. Or that I should offer tips to someone who was trying out for the sports team—it turns out she needed advice on deeper areas of her life that she normally wouldn't have opened up about.

What I have found is that in order to do hard things and conquer big challenges, we need to be willing to listen to that little voice the Holy Spirit uses. The more you listen, the clearer it becomes. And in order to do the great things, you must first be a servant.

—Elisabeth, age 17

Raymond, Maine

Even though Elisabeth had dreams about the hard things *she* wanted to be doing, she was tuned in to God's voice when He spoke. God answered her in ways she didn't expect, but she was ready to hear Him. And with one simple act of obedience, Elisabeth became aware of many other opportunities for doing hard things.

When your heart and mind are alert, you can see opportunities to do *hard things* in *everyday things*. It might start with a renewed commitment to excellence in your schoolwork or a decision to help more around the house. School and chores are things you probably do already, but now, as a rebelutionary, you are doing them with a new attitude. Your primary goal isn't to do something extraordinary but to do all things, even the ordinary things, extraordinarily well.

We want rebelutionaries to dream big, but we've also observed that God often passes over the person with grand, me-focused plans in favor of the one who has a heart to love others, to trust Him, and to do the small things for their own sake.

Doing hard things doesn't mean being preoccupied with something bigger, different, and more exciting all the time. It means being ready and willing to obey, no matter how big, small, or hard it might be. Elisabeth's openness to God's leading made her available to several unexpected opportunities to show the love of Christ. Faithfulness in small hard things is always the fuel for bigger hard things.

If we say we want to do hard things for God, but we're not satisfied with pursuing excellence where He has placed us (at home, at school, and at work), it's likely that we're really more interested in getting glory for ourselves than in getting glory for Him.

So where do you start? Right where you are—with a new attitude, a new heart, and a mind open to how the everyday hard things available to you right now will lead you to the next step.

How can I tell the difference between good hard things in general and good hard things I should be doing?

Every rebelutionary has asked this question at one time or another. We know *we* have, whether it was when we were trying to decide if God was calling us into filmmaking the summer before we started the Rebelution (He wasn't) or when we were trying to decide whether to write this book the summer between our freshman and sophomore years at college (we did).

Sometimes the struggle is due to the fact that there are so many options and so many needs. We know God doesn't call us to do *everything*, but we don't know how to identify the things we *are* supposed to do.

Charity's story offers some great ideas and questions for discerning what hard thing to tackle next:

Ever since I was about eight years old, I have loved to crochet. I often made things as gifts for newborn babies. I had been pondering for a couple years how I could serve others through crocheting but never came up with a concrete plan.

Once I heard about the idea of doing hard things, I thought I should quit trying to come up with a perfect idea and just do something simple. So I decided to collect handmade hats for orphans overseas. After talking to my parents about my idea, I came up with a plan to collect two hundred hats by Christmastime. That gave me three months to carry it out.

I live in a small town of eight hundred people, and at that time I could count on one hand how many people

I knew who could knit, crochet, or sew. This meant that I would either have to make way more hats than I possibly could or I would have to find people who I didn't know to make hats. There was a little doubt in my mind as to whether this could happen, but I put it in God's hands and let Him decide the outcome.

I realized that I needed to get in contact with someone who could distribute the hats for me. For years, I've packed shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child, which is part of Samaritan's Purse, an organization that sends gifts and necessities to children overseas. I have always dreamed of helping them distribute those boxes someday. I couldn't think of a better organization to distribute the hats.

After getting things figured out with Samaritan's Purse, I began to collect the hats. First, I posted my idea on The Rebelution.com. To my amazement and delight, quite a few girls promised to make hats and send them to me for the project. They were all so encouraging and energetic that it made the project a lot of fun. Many of them invited their friends to help out. One was even able to get her school to make hats! Another girl told her mother and grandmother, and together the three generations made over forty beautiful hats.

As I talked to other people where I live, many wanted me to teach them to crochet in order to make a hat. Not only did these people learn how to crochet and give me a couple hats, but they also continued crocheting and are now still making things and giving them away as gifts. I never dreamed anything like that would happen, but it did.

By December, I had over three hundred and fifty hats to send to Samaritan's Purse. People from Australia, Japan, and the United States donated to this project. I can't believe it when I think of all the people who donated. I didn't even know the names of many of them. Isn't it great how God can use the simplest idea and make it a success?

—Charity, age 18
Glennallen, Alaska

Take a look at some of the questions Charity asked as she set out to do hard things.

What Do I Like to Do?

Serving God does *not* mean being miserable. Yes, doing hard things is challenging, but as Charity discovered, it often involves doing something we are gifted at and something we enjoy. God may be calling you to something totally outside your current area of interest or expertise, but it's more likely He's calling you to *take the next step* with something you're already doing.

If people comment on how welcoming you are to others, could God be calling you to reach out to new students at your school? Maybe you're good at making an argument but hate public speaking—could God be calling you to use your gift of debate to stand up for a good cause? Or maybe, like Charity, you have a talent or hobby that could be used to serve others in a greater way.

In other words, you don't start doing hard things just *where* you are but also with *who* you are. The gifts, interests, and talents God has given you all provide clues to what hard things He is calling you to do.

Who Can Help Me Think This Through?

Proverbs 20:29 says that the glory of youth is “their strength” and that the glory of the old is their “gray hair”—or accumulated wisdom (NIV). As young people, we have a lot of energy, but we don’t always know what to do with it. Sometimes we have trouble choosing among all the options. If we’re not careful, we can even use our strength in ways that are destructive to ourselves and others by moving forward without considering the implications of our actions. That’s why God gives us parents, older siblings, teachers, pastors, and mentors to help us tell the difference between a good hard thing, and a good hard thing *we* should be doing.

Charity found encouragement as well as practical advice when she turned to her parents with her idea. They helped her settle on a solid goal for how many hats to collect and provided a sounding board for her ideas.

As you work to understand God’s calling, seek out the advice of others who are living godly lives—and who can share the wisdom of their own life experiences.

Would This Conflict with the God-Given Obligations I Have?

God is good, and because He is good, He doesn’t give us conflicting obligations. There will always be enough time to do everything He has given us to do—and no time to waste.

As young people, we’re in the season of preparation. Our main focus during this season is to prepare for mature, effective adulthood: work, marriage, family, service to others, leadership, and ministry. This doesn’t mean that we can’t work, lead, or minister to others as students, but those things are not the main focus. Our preparation is.

Understanding this concept changes our question from the fuzzy “Is this hard thing something *I’m* supposed to do?” to the more helpful “Does this help me to prepare for adulthood or distract me from my preparation?” If it is a distraction, you shouldn’t feel bad about passing on it. Sometimes doing hard things means saying no.

As an eight-year-old, Charity may not have been ready to organize a hat drive for orphans overseas, but those years learning to crochet prepared her for a hard thing God called her to do as a teenager. Faithfulness in one season prepares us to step into the next season with strength. Who knows what God is preparing for her (and for you) next?

In chapter 3, we’ll be looking at a few more guidelines for when to say yes and when to say no to a specific hard thing. For now, remember that being faithful in the season of preparation means saying yes to some hard things and no to others. More specifically, it means saying yes to preparation and no to distraction.

But don’t overanalyze. If God gives you an opportunity to do a hard thing, your parents or godly mentors are supportive, and it doesn’t conflict with your other God-given obligations, trust God and go for it! Just as He did for Charity, He will provide what—and who—you need to fulfill this new responsibility.

What if I just want to join other people in what *they* are doing?

In America we’re taught to admire the rebel and the loner. While going against the flow of a lost culture is good, allowing the go-it-alone mentality to pervade our thinking can be dangerous.

Because whether we're leading or assisting in a project, it's not about us.

I've loved computers forever. Looking back, I don't know what made me contact Leslie and Lauren Reavely about designing a website for their organization, H2O, but I did. That's obviously where God was working "behind the scenes."

H2O—which stands for Hope 2 Others—distributes lunch bags to homeless people and panhandlers across the country.¹ I didn't have a ton of experience in web design (I was thirteen), but I was willing to help.

I honestly thought Leslie and Lauren would reply with a no since I'm some guy on the other side of the country who they don't know. Also, I'm not really talkative or a very good communicator. But somehow God was able to use me to reach out and help these two girls who were doing incredible things for God.

We launched the new Hope 2 Others (H2OBags.com) site on New Year's Day last year. It's been amazing to see the response. We had over five hundred unique visitors within the first couple months, and the response continues to grow.

I must admit, it hasn't always been easy. During the six months it took to get the site going, God enabled me to overcome the fear I had of communicating with people I didn't know. He helped me get through all the uninteresting parts of designing the site that I would've preferred to skip. He also taught me perseverance.

Then last April, my family and some good Christian friends started a church plant. My dad pastors it, and last

November I designed the website. My mom and I were up until six the morning we launched it. While only about thirty people attend our church each week, God has richly blessed us.

Recently, other people have asked me to work on their websites as well. It's quite different having someone come to me versus the other way around. But God is doing amazing things, and I'm thankful that He has allowed me to be part of them.

—Matthew, age 15

Charlottesville, Virginia

God didn't make us to be independent but *inter*dependent. Think about a nation, a business, an army, a sports team, or a family. A quick look around shows clearly that we were created to depend on others and have others depend on us. Matthew offered his gifts to others—and the founders of H2O were humble and wise enough to receive them.

As young people, we're called to do hard things as part of the family team in particular. We honor and obey our parents by joining them in the work they're doing—whether it's putting on an event at church or cleaning up the yard.

What is your family doing right now that you could be an active and willing part of? It doesn't have to be helping with a church plant like Matthew did. Teaming up with your family might mean doing something as simple as having a good attitude about setting the dinner table or taking care of your siblings so your parents can take a break.

Yet even more important than our role in our family or on a

team is the fact that we are part of the church—the body of Christ. The apostle Paul wrote, “God has so composed the body...that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Corinthians 12:24–26).

We’re *all* part of someone else’s project: God’s. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to be united, striving side by side for the gospel. Rather than caring about who gets the credit, we’re commanded to “outdo one another in showing honor” (Romans 12:10). God’s plan is for us to work together in community.

It can often be harder to work with others than it is to work on our own. We have to share the credit, deal with people who are sinful and crabby, and let others see our own faults and shortcomings. But joining with others to do God’s work is the way His biggest plans get accomplished. It’s also one of the best ways for us to grow in Christlike character and bring glory to Him. And that’s why we do hard things.²

So as you try to follow God’s calling, remember that you don’t have to be doing your own thing to be doing something hard for God. God might be calling you, as He did Matthew, to join someone else who needs help with a hard thing.

Do small hard things really count?

To answer this question, take out the word *small*. Do hard things really count? Of course! Remember, *small doesn’t mean easy*. We should still be stepping outside our comfort zones, going above and beyond expectations, and doing what is right, even if our

actions don't seem all that impressive to most people. Why? Because big or small, the hard things God calls us to do are about Him, not us.

That's why, to fully answer the question, we have to ask a bigger one: what *ultimately* counts? If the answer is "being famous" or "what people think about me," then small hard things don't matter much. But when we read God's Word, we find that small things have great significance, not just to prepare us for bigger things, but also for their own sake. And sometimes small hard things are the hardest things of all.

In Colossians 3:23, Paul writes, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (NIV). In 1 Corinthians 10:31, he writes, "Whether you eat or drink or *whatever you do*, do it all for the glory of God" (NIV). What Paul is saying is that everything—even something as simple as befriending someone in gym class—can be done for God's glory. And that means *nothing* we do for God is insignificant.

This year I started attending a new public high school.

It was in one of my PE classes during the first month of school that I began noticing the "outsiders." As part of the class, we had to warm up by running five or six laps around the school track. For most of the kids in the class, including me, this was no problem. But not everyone was in the greatest shape after a long summer.

After finishing my laps, I was standing around and saw a girl who was behind everyone else. She was struggling to keep up. At first I didn't give her a second thought, but as I saw how much she was hurting, the Lord put her on my

heart. I sensed that God was saying, *Hannah, I want you to go run with her!*

I felt really, really weird. I immediately argued back, *What, Jesus? Are You serious? I've never even spoken to that girl! I don't even know her name!* But I knew I had to obey Him, even though everyone else in the class might think I was dumb.

So, saying a silent prayer, I jogged out to the girl. She was crying and struggling to breathe, but her face radiated with surprise and thankfulness as I came up beside her. Even though I didn't know her, the love of the Lord brought us together, and we finished those laps strong.

—Hannah, age 17

Chesapeake, Virginia

We doubt anyone in Hannah's class patted her on the back, and her story certainly didn't make the newspaper. Was it still worth it? It depends on how you answer the question we asked earlier: what ultimately counts?

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (an early Q and A about Christian beliefs) says, "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever." That means that simple acts of obedience, like Hannah's, matter a lot. It also means that it is possible to dazzle people with the hard things we do and still waste our lives if we're doing those things only to impress others and bring glory to ourselves.

Small hard things might have "small" results in this life, but as Paul encourages, "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9).

God will bring a harvest—whether in this life or the next—if we persevere in the everyday things He has given us to do at school and at home.

Do you feel God calling you to do something big for Him? Don't despise the day of small beginnings. Not only are big hard things usually made up of a lot of small hard things put together (so you're getting good practice!), but also God has a way of opening new opportunities when we least expect it.

Big hard things often start with one small step. Just ask Jaime Coleman.

A few years ago, Jaime's church partnered with a missions organization that uses humanitarian projects to share the gospel in rural Kenyan communities. Her church adopted the town of Karogoto, and Jaime soon discovered a pressing need in the town for something that most of us take for granted: shoes.

Jaime figured that her family wasn't the only one with shoes in the closet they didn't need. She set a goal to collect 150 pairs of shoes. Her plan was to kick off the drive with a Barefoot Mile at her high-school's track. People would come, donate shoes, and walk four laps around the track barefoot. Some adults questioned whether anyone would show up—but it didn't take God long to prove them wrong.

"There were definitely low expectations," Jaime tells us. "It was discouraging, but I knew God could make it happen. On a rainy Saturday, fifty people showed up at the track—with 1,164 pairs of shoes! By the time the drive was over, God had brought in over 4,200 pairs of shoes for the people of Karogoto."³

Why do we share Jaime's story in response to a question about "small" hard things? Because Jaime didn't set out to collect 4,200 pairs of shoes. Her desire was to participate in the work of

her local church. Her goal was small: 150 pairs of shoes. And even now, when we talk to her, she refuses to take credit for what God has done.

Stories like Jaime's remind us that God wants (and will use) faith, humility, and availability—not glory seeking, pride, or a preoccupation with our own ideas. If Jaime had thought, *A few dozen pairs of shoes isn't going to make enough of a difference*, she would have missed a chance to see God do *incredible* things with a simple idea. If Hannah had second-guessed God's prompting to do a "small" hard thing in gym class that day, she would have missed an opportunity to show His love to someone else.

Nothing we do for God is insignificant. When we have this as our mind-set, then we won't get proud if God allows us to do something big and we won't get discouraged if we feel stuck in the small things. Remember, neither fame nor obscurity is the goal. The goal is obedience to God, effectiveness in whatever He gives us to do, and a heart that glorifies Him.

Whether we are called to live life on a big stage or behind the scenes, we cannot forget the words of Jesus in Matthew 23, who modeled this mind-set for us: "The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (verses 11–12).

**I know God wants me to do something with this idea,
but I'm not ready for it now. What can I do to get ready
for doing this hard thing later?**

What do you mean when you say, "I'm not ready"? If you mean, "I don't feel adequate," you might just be making an excuse. No

one is adequate to do the kinds of things God calls us to do. In fact, God tends not to use people who feel adequate because they are usually full of pride.

Are you really meaning, “I’m afraid,” or, “My motivations aren’t pure enough”? The day will never come when we stop feeling afraid and our motivations are perfectly pure. True courage is not the absence of fear; it is refusing to allow our fear to control our actions. And while keeping our motives in check is a constant battle, good motives now are better than perfect motives when it’s too late. (As one rebelutionary told us, “When I am scared or unsure about doing something hard, I think about the person I want to be when I am older and how doing this hard thing will help me become more like that person.”)

On the other hand, if you’re saying, “God has put something on my heart but wants me to be patient about beginning it,” this might be a season of preparation rather than completion. Preparing *now* to do a particular hard thing *later* is not only helpful on a practical level, but it also keeps you prayerful and alert to see when the right time comes.

What parts of your project suggest that you need to wait? Do you need more time, money, or experience than you have now? What *is* available to you now?

For example, maybe you feel that God is calling you to make a film that honors Him, but the specific project you have in mind is way beyond your current resources or abilities. You know you want to do it, but you’re not sure you can do the project justice until you’ve gained further experience. Ask yourself what practical things you could be doing now to prepare for the day when you can complete that hard thing: What smaller projects might you tackle in order to gain the skills you’ll need later? Who could

you seek as a mentor in this field? How should you be praying about the future?

Ian's story captures another aspect of what we're saying here:

Last year, when my dad was in the hospital, I realized that there was no hope for him on Earth. I turned to the only person who could help him: Jesus.

I made my way from my dad's bedside to the hospital chapel to pray. The door was locked. That was how I felt. Locked out from God and locked out from hope.

Thursday, May 13, Dad died. The funeral came and went, and my grades started to slip. I was usually pretty good in school, but now I was doing the bare minimum, just enough to pass each class.

Every Friday night, I went to a youth club in my church, but I never took much interest in it. Then one night we went to a Christian festival. I was blown away by the amazing worship, the amazing sermon, and the amazing thought that was planted in my head—that God really does love me, the guy who doubted Him, the guy who put out little effort at school, the guy who never loved Him.

At the end of the night, there was an appeal for those who wanted to accept Jesus as their Savior. I grappled internally. My heart told me that I loved Jesus and wanted to take Him in. My mind told me that it was too big a commitment to make. That night my heart won.

I went away that evening with hopes of seeing my dad again. He was a Christian, and I realized that a Christian

friendship doesn't end with death—death is just a brief pause in an eternity-long friendship.

When I told my minister that I had become a Christian, he gave me a copy of *Do Hard Things*. After reading the book, I had a vision of changing the future, but I realized that I would have to change myself first.

So instead of scraping by, I am now releasing my full potential. I am working hard to get good grades in every class I take. I learned how to play the guitar, and I play in my church's praise group several times a week. Every day I encounter obstacles, peer pressure, and temptation. But every day of my new life is a blessing. I hope, by the example I set, that others will come to know Jesus and live a life for Him.

—Ian, age 16

Belfast, Northern Ireland

“I had a vision of changing the future,” Ian says, “but I realized that I would have to change myself first.” Doing hard things involves a paradox: we dream big about changing the world, and we believe that God will help us do it. And we have to start with ourselves, right where we are. If that means putting “bigger” plans on hold for a time, we can still look for ways that God can prepare us for those plans right now.

WHEN YOU HAVE A GREAT IDEA

Practical help for making it work

Once you start doing the hard things God has put right in front of you, He might give you an idea for a brand-new challenge or a bigger vision for what you are already doing. At this stage, you probably have a lot of questions—and that's a great place to start.

When we decided to start doing Reblution conferences in 2006, we had a ton of questions. We'd never organized an event before, spoken in public for more than ten minutes straight, or coordinated a team of volunteers from hundreds of miles away.

But as we asked questions (and asked for help!), things started coming together. Today we've hosted sixteen regional conferences attended by over thirty-five thousand teens, parents, and youth workers. Our comfort zones have expanded—and we've learned a lot.

This chapter brings together many of the very practical lessons we and other rebelutionaries have learned along the way.

What kind of planning do I need to do before I launch this thing?

Sixteen-year-old Joshua Guthrie had read that nine hundred million people around the world face death because of a lack of clean water. He'd heard that water-related disease kills more than 3.5 million people each year, the great majority of them children.

He knew he wanted to do something.

He started by talking with a family friend who led Baptist Global Response, an international relief and development organization working with just the kind of ministry goals that Joshua had. Joshua got advice on what it would take to drill a well in Sudan and tips on how to raise money.

"I thought that paying for a well would be a cool thing to do, but a teen really can't save up eight or ten thousand dollars for a well," Joshua says. "I knew I would have to raise it with the help of others."¹

Joshua decided he would ask fellow teens to give up one drink so they could give one dollar to help build one well. His goal was to raise eight thousand dollars by Christmas. With his parents' support, he reserved a domain name, registered his new organization—Dollar for a Drink—as a nonprofit, and got a website up.

The fund drive took off—not through large donations, but through churches and individuals across the country giving one-, five-, and ten-dollar bills. By Christmas, Dollar for a Drink had

raised more than ten thousand dollars. The final check to Baptist Global Response totaled over eleven thousand dollars. Now six thousand people in Sudan—who previously had to walk four hours to get clean water—draw water from the well this money bought.

“I learned you actually have to take the first step forward,” Joshua says. “Starting something like this was kind of intimidating. But Dad and I sat down and made a list of five things we needed to do. They were real simple things, and then we just kind of got going with it.”

Joshua’s next hard thing is to raise twenty-four thousand dollars to drill three wells in Sudan. “You’ve got to trust God that it’s possible to do something like this,” he says. “So often people think, *Well, that person is exceptionally gifted, or, That person really had the right resources. I couldn’t do that.* I’m just a completely ordinary guy, but I serve an extraordinary God. It’s possible for God to use you, if you’ll let Him do His work.”

Joshua Guthrie could have chosen many ways to help people in Africa—he settled on a fairly *big* goal! But with the help of others, he asked the questions needed to accomplish his goal. These are good questions for all of us to consider, especially when the hard thing we are called to do involves the money, time, and efforts of a lot of people.

What Are My Limits?

An important part of embarking on a project is knowing how to scale it to what you can realistically do. Recognizing your limitations does not mean questioning what God can accomplish through you or restricting yourself to doing what comes easily. It means practicing wisdom.

For example, it's better to set a goal to feed a few hundred people at your local homeless shelter *and do it* than to set a goal to solve world hunger and not accomplish anything. After all, as you are faithful to do what you can creatively and effectively, God might turn your outreach to the homeless in your community into something that reaches the poor and hungry around the country—and even around the world. When we focus on doing what we can do with excellence, it can open the door for God to do the impossible.

A good exercise in planning a hard thing is to first ask yourself the question, *What would I do if I had unlimited time and unlimited resources?* That question helps you identify the big target—your vision as large as it can be.

Then ask yourself, *What could I do toward reaching that goal within the limitations I face?*

Finally, in light of the answers to the first two questions, ask yourself, *What should I do?*

The first question is a visionary question about what you *would* do. The second is a practical question about what you *could* do. And the third is a moral question about what you *should* do. All three questions are important.

Joshua's huge vision might be to provide clean water for the entire continent of Africa. Within his limitations, he was able to raise money to dig one well that provides drinking water to several African villages. Now he is increasing his goal slightly and hoping to raise money for three wells next year. By not allowing what he would *like* to do to get in the way of what he *can* do, Joshua is leaving the door open for God to do even greater things through him.

What Do I Bring to the Table? What Can Others Contribute?

Before you begin, ask yourself what experience or skills you have that relate to the things you want to do. What parts of your project will you need the most help with, and what will come most easily?

Asking these questions requires you to be honest about your strengths and weaknesses and to be thoughtful about which people can fill in the gaps where your knowledge or ability falls short. Joshua had the passion to help provide drinking water to people in Africa, but he learned from others how to do it and why it was needed.

Remember not to overlook the “home field advantage.” Do any of your family members or extended family members have particular skills, resources, or connections that could help you? How might your siblings be good team members? How could your parents or grandparents mentor you in your challenge?²

You can also learn from those who are working in a different field but have expertise in some part of your project—filing for nonprofit status, for instance, or making T-shirts, or getting group rates on transportation. Gleaning information from others frees you to devote more time to moving your big idea forward.

What Are Others Already Doing? What Can I Learn from Them?

As we suggested in chapter 2, if you like what others are doing and think joining them would be more effective than starting from scratch, become a part of their efforts! You might be just the encouragement (and boost of energy) they need.

But as you explore what is currently being done, be sure to ask yourself, *What is missing?* Take advantage of your novice eyes. You will be able to look at situations in ways that people who have been involved for years might not be able to. Be teachable and quick to listen to those who are more experienced, but don't be afraid to ask questions like, "Why do we do it this way and not that way? Can it be handled differently?" If the answer is, "Well, that's just the way we've always done it," then you may have stumbled across an opportunity to be a real game changer. You might also find that a crucial niche is being unaddressed by existing groups and organizations.

Whether you join with someone else, as Joshua did, or start out on your own with your new knowledge, understanding what already exists will help you refine your original plan if you need to.

Who Knows More than I Do About This?

We can learn a lesson from the Old Testament account of the queen of Sheba—the foreign ruler who sought out King Solomon in order to benefit from his wisdom (see 1 Kings 10:1–13). We should seek out those individuals who are at the top of the field we want to enter. These people usually write books or articles or speak at conferences related to the topic. They may be relatively unknown outside their field, but within their field, they are among the most highly respected voices.

Once you have identified these individuals, take advantage of the material they have already made available. Read their books; listen to their talks; visit their websites. Then make a solid attempt to contact them or even meet in person—maybe at an event where they are speaking.

Whenever you meet someone you admire, one of the first things you want to be able to say is, “I’ve read your book(s).” These men and women like to talk to people who have been good stewards of what they have already said or done. Then you will have the opportunity to share your vision and ask them the best question in the world: “What would you do if you were me?”

What Can I Read About This Topic?

Our dad always told us, “If you read the three best books on any given topic and you really think about and digest the contents, then you will be more qualified in that area than 99 percent of the world.” Now, we don’t think anyone ever did a scientific study to prove our dad right or wrong, but we’re pretty sure the principle is true regardless of the exact percentage.

Once you find the Solomon in your field, ask him or her to recommend the three best books on your topic—and then read them. You won’t learn everything you need to know, but you will be in a much better position to see your hard thing through.

Also, keep in mind that the best resources might not be books. You might need to subscribe to scholarly journals or read an industry magazine. Whatever the biggest mouthpiece of the movement is, find it, read it, and put its words into practice.

What Is My Goal?

Right from the beginning, envision what your project will look like one year from now. Then walk backward from that vision to the present, answering questions along the way until you get to where you are.

For instance, “One year from now, a new well in Africa will provide clean drinking water to thousands of people. Which means I need to figure out who needs that well the most and how much it will cost. Which means I need to figure out who is building wells right now. Which means...”

Depending on your project, you might envision what it will look like in three, five, ten, and fifty years as well, always working backward to the steps you need to take today.

It’s not that things won’t change. Part of going from plan to action is dealing with the reality of actually getting things done. You might find that what you think will be the hardest part is actually the easiest and what you think will be a breeze turns out to be the most discouraging. But taking the time to think ahead, prepare for challenges, and set goals will help you follow through on what God has called you to do. As Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, “In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”

How do I Move from Planning to Doing?

After all this talk about planning, recognizing your limits, and seeking counsel, we still want to encourage you not to get so caught up in planning that you don’t get out there and do something. You will not know what you need to know until you start. Some obstacles and opportunities will not become visible until you are in the middle of your project.

So get moving! You already have what you need to take the first step. It might not be a big first step—it might be getting a book on your topic from the library or sitting down at your kitchen table with a wise adult, as Joshua did. But that first step

will lead you to new resources, new ideas, and a clearer vision that will help you take the next step after that.

I want to obey my parents, and I also want to make my own decisions about the hard things I do. Can those two things go together?

When you first approach your parents with your idea, take them through the process that got you excited. You may want to recruit somebody like a youth pastor or friend of the family to join you in conversation with your parents about what you want to do. This kind of effort will help your parents realize how much you care about the idea.

Keep in mind that your parents might want to see you grow in other areas before you do the hard thing you have in mind. For instance, they might be most concerned with how messy your room is, your attitude when helping with household chores, and the way you interact with your siblings. They might say that you are not ready for a new project until you have made progress in these other areas or shown how you can follow through on a smaller project. There is wisdom (and love) in such an assessment.

Having said that, our family has always operated from the principle that you don't get it together and go—you more often get it together *by* going. In other words, you could make some sort of agreement or contract with your parents that you are going to raise your level of performance in these other areas of your life in order to gain their confidence in your readiness to take steps toward the thing you really want to do. This puts the burden on you to follow through, but it also demonstrates to your family how serious you are about pursuing your vision.

Consider how Michael's story shows a compromise between waiting to do a hard thing and getting started right away:

Right after I read *Do Hard Things*, God led me to start a charity or organization. I call it Operation Reconstruction, or Hands Out. We would help homeless people or unemployed people find a job.

But then my parents suggested I become a teenage cadet in the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) in the Air Force Auxiliary. At first I was against the idea because I thought it would take me away from doing God's will. I tried to persuade my parents to let me start my organization instead. They said no. Then a man of God in our church suggested I list reasons why I should join the Civil Air Patrol and why I shouldn't. Through that exercise, I realized that God's will was for me to do CAP. I believe He is going to use CAP to teach me organization, leadership, and punctuality.

So this is just my first step in doing hard things. I am taking it in faith and not looking back.

—Michael, age 14

Birmingham, Alabama

Michael had the humility to trust that his parents knew what would help him most at this stage in life—and the wisdom to recognize that God was not saying, “No,” to his idea for a charity but was saying, “Not yet.”

The reality is, no matter how hard you try, your parents might still say no to the hard thing you want to do. Honoring your parents is commanded in Scripture. Odds are that your specific

project is not. When in doubt, side with what God makes clear in His Word.

Even when your parents cannot provide you with a satisfactory reason for saying no, you can trust that God is big enough to work through their decision. If God can turn the heart of a king like a stream of water (see Proverbs 21:1), then He can certainly handle your parents.

So be patient with God, because that is really who you are dealing with. And remember that just because you can't set sail for Africa doesn't mean you can't read books or start getting everything in place in case circumstances change.

Your parents might be offering you wise, prayerful counsel that God is using to shepherd you away from a bad decision. Or they might be holding you back from pursuing a great idea you have. Either way, God is not calling you to live in rebellion against them. Your hard thing right now might be to honor your parents' restrictions and prepare your heart and mind for the next hard thing when the time is right.

How do I ask people to support my cause?

We've heard from a lot of rebelutionaries who say the hardest part of their hard thing was working up the courage to talk to people they didn't know—and we've heard from a lot of these same rebelutionaries that talking to others turned out to be a lot easier than they had feared. Often the first phone call or the first time approaching a stranger is the hardest, but each time you make contact with someone, you gain confidence.

As Rachel writes, "God has shown me that I can do what seems to be impossible." She tells us:

Last year I was diagnosed as a type 1 diabetic. Pumps make diabetics' lives much better, but they are quite expensive. I was blessed to get one, and it makes a world of difference in handling my blood sugar and helping me stay healthier. But I couldn't have my own pump without thinking of other kids who don't have one and might need one even more than I did.

So I put together an organization called Loving Actions and decided to host a charity dinner and silent auction to raise money for another diabetic to buy an insulin pump.

The first thing I did was contact my doctor's office, and they supported me every step of the way. They even hooked me up with a family to help. I asked one of my nurses to speak at my dinner and asked a group from my church to sing. I sold tickets and even got on stage and spoke a little bit.

My goal was to raise \$3,000, but the turnout was greater than I had expected; the generous donations kept coming even after the dinner was over. I ended up raising \$6,590, which was enough to pay for the pump and one year's worth of supplies! The pump and supplies went to an eleven-year-old girl who goes to the same doctor as I do.

I had many doubts in myself because I don't like talking to people I don't know, and I am especially nervous when speaking to adults. God wiped my fears into nonexistence as I just took one step after another.

—Rachel, age 15
Farmington, Arkansas

The exact approach to take when you talk to either friends or strangers depends on what your hard thing is, but the more you know about your project and the more passionate you are about it, the more effective your conversation will be.

Rachel's enthusiasm was catching because the issue was so important to *her*. If you can demonstrate that you are invested in what you are doing, you will motivate others to invest as well.

People are also more willing to help someone they have a positive relationship with. That's why Rachel enlisted the help of a nurse who was familiar with her story and a group of people from her church. They knew her as someone who cared about others, someone they would like to help succeed. As John Maxwell writes in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, "You first have to touch people's hearts before you can ask them for a hand."³

You also want to be creative with how you develop and name your project. Joshua Guthrie, for example, found a "hook" that helped him approach people about the well in Sudan without having to explain a lot. He did a lot of planning, but the idea itself was simple: a dollar for a drink. The name of his organization described what he was asking people to do. It was catchy, intriguing, and simple. He also had a website to which he could direct people for more information.

Keep in mind that whenever you are trying to recruit people to support your cause or project, you run the risk of coming across as someone who is only interested in what other people can do for you. Instead, ask yourself, *How could my project work as a vehicle for their aspirations and interests?* When Rachel asked herself this, she turned to her doctor's office and to another family who could benefit from her fund-raiser.

When we were just starting our blog, we became friends with a more established blogger by promoting something she was doing and then, at her request, using our high-school debate experience to write blog-commenting guidelines for her heavily trafficked blog. Out of gratitude—and without our asking—she put up a permanent link to our blog on her website and later wrote a newspaper article about what we were doing.

Just as doing hard things involves using your gifts, getting other people involved means being aware of their gifts. With this change in perspective, instead of going into a conversation thinking you know how a person is going to help you, you will be ready to engage the person about what he or she is able and eager to do.

What are some ideas for getting my church to participate?

Just like any individual, a church as an institution has goals and interests that your project can serve. Your youth pastor has certain things he wants to accomplish in the lives of the young people in his care. Your pastor may be interested in raising the church's profile in the community. Everyone (we hope) will be interested in furthering the gospel and building up the body of Christ. The more you understand these dynamics, the better you will be able to serve your church through your project.

Kyrstin's story reminds us that serving the church, like all hard things, starts with a change in attitude.

After my family moved from Maine to Arkansas, it was hard to find a home church. I felt lonely, overwhelmed, and discouraged about our new life. Then it hit me. I had

been looking for my pleasure, my church, and my life. I needed to look beyond my selfish perspective and ask, *Where does God want me to serve?*

We did find a church—a hurting church with many areas in which my family could serve. From the second time I attended my new youth group, I found out why God had sent me there.

Our church has a Korean church inside it, and the Korean teens attend our youth group. The first time I went to youth group, I saw a distinct line between the American teens and the Korean teens. Most of it was just a language barrier. So the second time I attended, I decided I was going to meet some of the Koreans and try to break down the walls between us.

Thankfully, God stepped in for a shy girl like me, and some of the Korean girls approached me first. For the weeks following that meeting, I continued to sit with these girls during the Bible lesson and helped them understand the American games we played. I became closer to them than I was to any of the other teens who went there.

Then, soon after getting involved with the Korean-American youth group, I found out that a person at my dad's work was looking for someone to teach a friend conversational English. I quickly agreed and found myself with yet another Korean friend and a lot of great teaching experience.

Little did I know that one attitude change about church was just the beginning of doing hard things! But God knew. I guess that shows how important—no matter what the size—hard things are. Yes, it's hard, but it's

drawing you to be more like Jesus, so it's worth it. And compared to what I ended up doing, the hard things I'd had in mind were quite dinky!

—Kyrstin, age 19

Little Rock, Arkansas

Are you asking yourself, *What can I get out of this church to help me?* Or are you asking, *How can I serve my church through doing this hard thing?* As our dad has always told us, we do well for ourselves by doing good for others. Be open to how *you* can help your church, rather than the other way around. This change in Kyrstin's perspective opened her eyes to the needs of the girls in her youth group and led to other opportunities she hadn't even known existed.

If your hard thing involves first communicating with your pastor, don't pitch your idea as another thing for him to do but as something *you* want to help make happen for the good of the church he cares about. If speaking to your youth pastor, make it clear that you want this to be a student-led project. Few youth pastors will turn down a good idea that doesn't require extra work on their part and provides students with an opportunity to grow and work together.

Remember that if you want to get your church involved in a particular project, check the calendar. Most churches have full schedules of ministry events they have committed to—sometimes a year in advance. If you are ignorant of their schedule or just impatient and end up competing with something already on the calendar, you will have trouble getting any support from the church leadership.

Of course, it will be difficult to convince your youth pastor or

pastor to get behind something you are doing if you aren't already involved in your church. It will come across that you don't care about the church except when it can help you do something you want to do. So if you don't participate because you disagree with the way things are done, then communicate your concerns and share that you want to be part of the solution by putting time and energy into an alternative. But if there are already good things happening in your church that you don't take the time to support, get involved and start from there.

Kyrstin jumped in to what her church was already doing—building a bridge between Korean teens and American teens. If a specific opportunity like that doesn't come to mind, think on a very practical level. Could you help set up chairs before the service? Offer to mow the lawn, clean up after a potluck, or vacuum the Sunday school rooms?

The most important thing is to show up. Participate in youth activities. Attend services. Becoming a thriving and contributing member of your local church is vitally important, regardless of whether you have a specific ministry project to pitch. (This helps us remember that the house of God is not a glorified networking opportunity!) We will prosper as we help God's church to prosper. And when we are connected with other believers, it will not be long before kingdom partnerships start taking place.

I'm not big on bake sales. How can I raise money for my project?

First, don't write off bake sales. Even if baking isn't your thing, see if you can get your mom (and your friends) to help out. Who

doesn't like homemade cookies, pie, or cake? Second, with a little creativity, there are hundreds of ways to raise money for your project. Here are a few examples to help get you started:

- Turn your bake sale into a fast-paced auction at your church or school—and sell Aunt Martha's famous gooey chocolate cake to the highest bidder.
- Host a silent auction at your church, and have people bid on paper. Don't forget you can sell time or talent: two hours of baby-sitting or yard work, one private violin concert during dinner, tax advice from your accountant dad (get his okay on this one first!), homework help for an elementary schooler. This is a great way to raise money *and* match up the needs and gifts of people in your church.
- Host a pancake breakfast for your community. Sell tickets at the door, and have a donation tin as people leave. You can have different rates for adults, kids, and families. Ask local stores and restaurants to donate food.
- Do a movie night at your local park or gymnasium. Set up a screen and projector, show a classic, and sell popcorn and soda.
- Organize a walkathon, marathon, or 5K race. Have participants get friends and family to sponsor them by pledging money. Ask local businesses to donate prizes—both for the winners and the top fund-raisers.
- Reach out to churches in your area, and ask if you can come and talk to their congregation about your project. If they are supportive, ask if they'd be willing to take a special offering for your cause.

- Design and make T-shirts, silicone bracelets, or other items that can be sold to raise money for your cause. If they look cool and support a great cause, people will be glad to donate—and they'll be walking billboards for your project!

These are just a few ideas. Almost all of them can be tweaked for your situation. Baked goods can be replaced with handmade crafts; a pancake breakfast can become a soup-and-salad supper; a movie night can morph into a live music concert; a walkathon can become a stand-a-thon, jump-a-thon, or anything-else-a-thon.

Be creative! And remember to use each of these fund-raisers as an opportunity to educate your community about your cause. You'll be surprised by how supportive people will be when they're getting something good for themselves (like a pie, a pancake, a movie, a run, or a nifty bracelet) *and* supporting a cause they believe is important.

How can I get my friends involved in a group effort?

Fifteen-year-old Hali Hilts first heard about the chocolate slave trade from a speaker at her school. As she looked into human trafficking more, she found out that the majority of the chocolate she and her friends (and most of us) eat is produced by slaves—often young boys who are abused.

"It's rarely talked about because it's so widely done," she tells us. "I didn't know how I could make a difference in such an overwhelming problem or how I could get anyone else interested. I decided to first make a change in my own life. Maybe that would inspire others. So I started eating only fair-trade chocolate—chocolate that is produced in an ethical way."

Hali's simple choice means she often has to turn down her favorite foods at social events. "My friends started asking me why I wasn't eating chocolate much anymore," she says. "That gave me the opportunity to tell people about it. Now a lot of my friends are only eating fair-trade chocolate. We are raising awareness in our community and starting to work on a website and a pamphlet. It's a practical thing. That's why I like it."

The best thing you can do to get your peers excited about your hard thing is to retrace your own steps. What first got *you* excited about your project?

If you read a book or watched a video online and suddenly became concerned about human trafficking, then share that book or video with your friends. Whatever lit your fuse may light their fuses as well.

Tell your friends how your new knowledge or idea has changed you. Just as Hali did, show your friends that *you* are willing to make sacrifices before asking them to do the same.

Another way to recruit your friends is to just ask them. "Wouldn't you like to make something happen instead of just watching something happen? Wouldn't you like to be a producer rather than a consumer?" The world is full of people whose lives are boring and empty. Some of your friends might fall into this category—they might welcome a vision of living with deeper purpose.

After all, hanging out at the mall together is great, but it cannot compare to putting your hands to the same cause. And people who work together the best also play together the best. You'll have a new level of friendship and camaraderie when you work hard toward a common goal and then go out for pizza.

Along the way, you might discover secret rebelutionaries.

These are the young people around you whose hearts are silently crying out, *God has bigger plans for me than this. There's more to me than what this culture expects.*

Your mission: find these people! They probably won't reveal themselves until you reveal yourself. You may have to do your initial hard things alone. But if you start living as if the idea of adolescence is a lie and start doing hard things, you'll attract the secret rebelutionaries who just needed to hear the battle cry and see a fellow soldier running into the battle.

As Esther discovered, they might pick up their weapons and start running too.

There it was again, staring me down. A heinous image painted on canvas and now hung silently on the wall. In its silence, it said a thousand things.

I lowered my gaze and thought about the rest of the sexual images displayed as "artwork" around school. I wanted to do something. I thought about sending a petition around to my group of friends. If we got enough signatures as a complaint, the paintings might be taken down.

I suggested the petition to a group of friends. I was not alone in my opinion.

"I'll be the first to sign it!" one boy exclaimed. Several people nodded and said they were with me on the project. Then my friend spoke up.

"I'm so with you on this one! If you bring in the petition, I'll go with you to make the complaint, and I'll take it to all my classes and have people sign it." While I was very glad for the backup, something inside me hesitated.

I wanted credit for taking a stand. I was being the Gideon here, the Lone Ranger. Not her. Then I realized that the object was not to climb some mountain of greatness or get my name on a plaque. The goal was to remove the things that cause people to stumble in their walk with God.

“Besides,” God reminded me, “If you’re going to be a true Gideon, you’ll need about three hundred buddies to help you.”

The next day, I brought in the petition, ready for signatures. They came in steadily, and as they did, I began to appreciate my outspoken friend more. Outgoing and friendly, she presented the petition to many people, nearly always coming back with more signatures. The more people we had working toward a common goal, the closer the goal became.

The petition will be turned in tomorrow, and my friends and I wait, praying that it will be recognized. Whether it is or isn’t, I know we have made our voices heard. We fought to defend Christ’s name, and now it’s up to God. I know that God has before and will again use the faith of a group of people—even a group of high-school kids.

—Esther, age 18
Medway, Ohio

“If you’re going to be a true Gideon, you’ll need about three hundred buddies to help you.” What a great way to describe how we rely on each other in doing hard things!

If and when a group of friends takes shape around your

project, remember that the person who provides the catalyst for bringing people together and setting a vision is not necessarily the best person to lead the project on a daily basis. Have the humility to assess whether you are the one to lead the project long-term. You will probably want to get feedback from others about this. It also takes humility to distinguish between friends who aren't excited about working on a particular project and friends who aren't excited about working with you because of certain attitudes and tendencies you need to change.

If your friends don't respond as enthusiastically as the secret rebelutionaries around Esther did, use technology to find people who share your passion, and through working together, make new friends. For every issue that excites you, you can probably find numerous blogs, discussion boards, and online groups of fellow enthusiasts.⁴

Finally: let go. While you might think everyone should care about your specific cause or project, God doesn't place the same calling on every person's heart. Don't judge others because they aren't as excited as you are. Give them the freedom to work out their own story with God in His time.