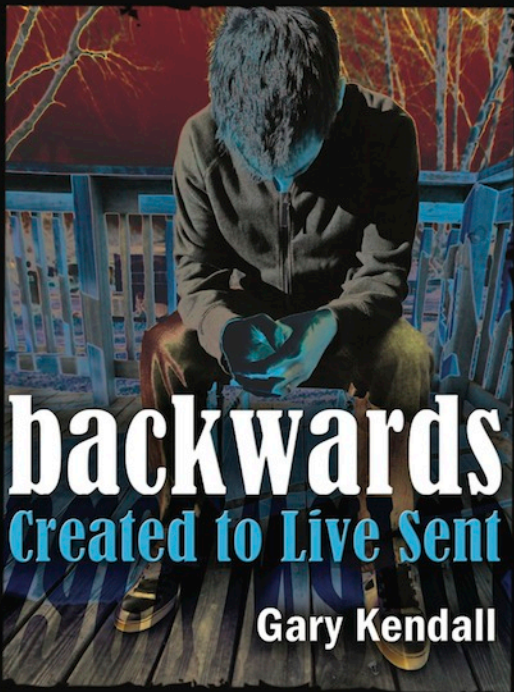


2 A



backwards

Created to Live Sent

Gary Kendall

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Endorsements

There is nothing more important than helping people find their way back to God—and that is the big idea of *Backwards: Created to Live Sent* a terrific book by Gary Kendall. As you read the many stories of people embracing the Jesus mission you will find yourself inspired and wanting to give this book to inspire others.

—Dave Ferguson, Lead Pastor—Community Christian Church
Spiritual Entrepreneur—NewThing

Using the power of stories, Gary creatively helps people to understand what it is to “know” Jesus and in so doing how to become fulfilled in life. This is a book that is a great resource for an individual or group who longs to know their life’s purpose. The stories alone are worth the purchase price.

—John Fozard, Ph.D, President Mid-America Christian University

Gary Kendall continues to prove why he is a gift to the church. His vision, leadership, and wisdom continue to help propel the Church forward. *Backwards* is one more significant way God is using Gary to help us go further faster. This book is a must read for those exploring faith, new to the faith, and anyone who may need challenged to a higher level of surrender to Christ. Get it. Read it. Live it.

—Tom Planck, Pastor, Church planter and coach HGCM

Gary expresses the questions many have and provides the answers we need. Drawing from his wealth of experiences in ministry, Gary has taken the fear and unknown out of giving yourself to the Lord with very practical methods. This book will both challenge you and encourage you to be one of Jesus’ 21st century disciples reaching out to our post-Christian generation. It is guaranteed to make you a better disciple of our Lord.

—Donna Thomas, Founder Project Partner and City Vision Ministries, Author

Gary Kendall has given his life to help people who are far from God, not just find their way back, but become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. He’s more passionate about church planting and disciple-making than anyone I know. What he shares isn’t theory, it’s lessons learned from 30 years of raising up Christ followers.

—Steve Chiles, Pastor & Church Health Coach

I’ve often heard the phrase, “backwards about going forward” as it related to a person who was indecisive. However, this book brings new meaning to the word, “backwards” for me. My friend and author Gary Kendall has given motion and meaning to the joy of Living Sent. Written by a master discipler, this book is a must for every believer.

—Dr. Stan Toler Bestselling Author Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

It’s rare to know someone who, throughout all the variations of life, seems to consistently and naturally live out of a core conviction. Gary Kendall is one of those people who consistently and in such natural ways lives his belief that people matter to God . . . and to him. “Backwards” is a perfect read for those who want to know that God and how they can live a life of difference.

—Tom Bassford, Founder of Significant Matters

I highly recommend this book for anyone with a genuine desire to know the heart of God the Father for your life and to experience His presence daily in your life. Pastor Gary Kendall has provided here a pathway to following God in full devotion that is very practical, down to earth, and engaging. Here in these pages there is hope for healing in our relationships and insightful keys to living a life that is exciting and full of adventure. Read this book and you will find your way back to God and you will be equipped to help others find their way back too!

—Gary Schmitz, Executive Director of Citywide Prayer K.C.

Gary writes about the spiritual journey in a down to earth, practical way that is both humorous and inspirational. His heart for connecting people to a real relationship with God is obvious. He's one who lives it.

—Russ Olmon, Founding President Ministry Advantage

backwards

Created to Live Sent

*Discover the freedom and adventure
of on-purpose living.*

Gary Kendall



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To my friends at Indian Creek Community Church, it is through you that
God gave me the primary context for what it means to live SENT.



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acknowledgements

I want to thank my wife Belinda for her tireless support as a wife. She is up for any wild adventure in serving Christ. I love what God is doing in us and I can't imagine a better life partner. She read and edited this project with great heart and skill.

My kids and their spouses share their time with me so I can live the life that is SENT. I truly appreciate their support and love. Kristen and Josh Levitt, Jeremy and Jesi Kendall, Luke and Rachel Kendall your grace toward me sets a wonderful context for life and ministry. My Dad, Paul Kendall, was without a doubt the greatest impact on my love for people who don't yet know real life in Christ. His grace giving attitude is second to none. I can't thank him enough for all he instilled in me.

My Mom, Ruthie Kendall, is a spiritual cheerleader. She believes in me and she is not shy about telling anyone who will listen. She read and re-read the script, made suggestions and spoke many affirming words of inspiration.

Tim Stout supplied the artwork for the front and back cover in addition to the diagrams inside. Not only did he come up with great ideas and artistic design but he continually challenged my thinking to higher levels. He also keeps me grounded in reality.

This project took on a new urgency after a talk with Mark Batterson in the café at Indian Creek. He challenged me to start writing. He talked about the discipline of getting out what God put in. He gave me the push I needed to begin. I'll always thank him for it.

Jean Janner is a super Executive Assistant who keeps my schedule and tries to keep me on schedule. She understands my priorities and cleared space for this project.

The Leadership Team at Indian Creek encourages me to use the gifts God's given me and to lead beyond Indian Creek. John Bennie, Ben Stears and Steve Southards inspire me and keep me grounded at the same time. I love the teamwork and ministry we share.

My friends and co-workers at Healthy Growing Churches continually encouraged me to reach out to those who needed to hear this message. Patsy Wootton, Tom Planck, Greg Wiens and all—thanks for the wind in my sail.

Robin Wood keeps calling out the gift in me to write. Many times he pushed me to tell the story of what God is doing in me and through Indian Creek Community Church. I thank God for his friendship and his ministry.

Adam Toler and Dust Jacket have been great partners in this project. Stan Toler first told me about your ministry and he was right on target. Keep up the good work.



Introduction

I write to those who don't yet know real life in Jesus. I want you to understand that even though from birth forward it feels right to look out for self that there is a better way. It might seem backwards initially to follow Jesus but you were created in the image of God for relationship with Him. Once you experience the richness of this life with him you will decide that doing life on your own is what is truly backwards. I believe you will find yourself saying, I was made for this!

Some may be reading who've just made this choice to follow Christ and I say with confidence, the best is yet to come! Once you find your way back to God then keep growing to become like Jesus. Yes, it is possible. This is why I write.

It helps me to break this journey into steps and I've used a circle to illustrate it. When you begin following you make a choice to enter relationship with Jesus. I call that finding your way back to God. As you continue in the relationship you grow to be like him. Three steps along the way are to learn to love God, love people and to live out the love of Jesus. Each leads to the other and in the process you discover you are meant to live life on purpose, on mission all the time. I call that living SENT. When these converge is when you live most like Jesus.

Jesus said this to his followers, As the Father has sent me so I send you. He invites us to live SENT just like he did. You'll love it when you live it. This is why I write. Join me in the journey of Backwards: Created to Live SENT.

--Gary Kendall

**Find you way back to God and
become like Christ**



Live SENT

chapter 1

Backwards

*“The trouble with a mule is that he’s
backward about going forward.”*
-Vance Hayner

Does it ever feel like something’s backwards? Life’s not working for you, and you don’t know why.

Imagine this. The beautiful blue Caribbean ocean. No clouds in sight. Gentle tropical breezes. The surf’s up. It’s another day in paradise.

However, my life wasn’t picture perfect. The idea seemed innocent enough, but the result was more telling than I could know. My wife, Belinda, and I were on vacation. We set out that day with eight other couples to kayak along the coast of an island and to enjoy a leisurely day surrounded by absolute beauty. What could be better than that?

We listened to the details of how to get the kayak off the beach and avoid capsizing when the first set of waves crested near the shore, but we couldn’t agree on what we had just heard. The surf was loud and adrenaline was pumping. Belinda was nervous because she doesn’t swim well. I was overconfident because I grew up in Alaska, had spent a lot of time in a canoe, and knew we would be just fine.

As we pushed off from the shore, I said, you paddle on the right (her strong side), and I will paddle on the left. The first big wave came at us and she paddled frantically on the right and then switched to the left. I tried to correct her verbally and offset her choices by paddling opposite her. That didn’t work because she kept changing sides. I didn’t know which way she was going next. I tried desperately to guess and keep us headed straight into the first big wave. To turn sideways into the wave would be certain disaster.

The bow went straight up in the air. The surf splashed in our faces. We went down the other side with incredible speed. Somehow we made it past the first wave upright. We were off on a great adventure! Life is good! We can do this, or so we thought.

Then the struggle for control set in. We argued about how to steer the kayak and who should take which role. I complained that everyone else seemed to have it figured out. And notice they were cooperating. They were even smiling and enjoying the experience. That didn’t help us.

The guide instructed us as a group to follow him in a line parallel to the shoreline. We were not only falling to the back of the line, which was a problem for me, but he was so far ahead we could barely see him. After some animated discussion, Belinda told me if I was so smart I could just paddle by myself and see how that worked. I said, that would be an improvement. Belinda decided she had had enough and quit paddling completely. Out of frustration I quit paddling too.

dead in the water

Dead in the water. That’s what happens if you don’t paddle. Then the sea takes you wherever it wants you to go. That was not good!

We made apologies and started again. We tried harder. We tried a LOT harder. By now the

sun was blazing hot. The sky was a beautiful blue, but there were no clouds. The fun factor was fading fast. We were far from shore. Belinda kept reminding me the water was deep and there were sharks. We couldn't go back to where we had started. If we didn't find a way to paddle together soon we would lose sight of everyone else. Besides, finishing last wasn't an option in my book! What do you do when what you thought would be great fun takes a disastrous turn?

our only choice

Considering our alternatives were limited, we did what we had to do. We quit complaining. We stopped fighting each other. Belinda started paddling again, and I paddled opposite her changing when she changed. We improved enough to steer in the general direction. Over time we began to catch up with the others. We wouldn't win a prize for our tactics, but with two strong wills, we found a way to make it work. I started counting how many kayaks were ahead of us. Maybe if we made it a race it would be more fun. Belinda didn't care about a race and wasn't buying.

Since there was plenty of time, we did eventually catch and pass every kayak except one. I must admit that I was pretty proud when we caught that last wave and coasted onto the beach. The guide grabbed the front of our kayak to steady it so we could get out. Then the guide peered at us with an astonished look on his face and exclaimed, in all my years I've never seen that before! You traveled the whole trip going backwards! How did you do that?

Good question! No wonder it was so hard! Just so you know, both ends of the boat came to a point. Evidently, we were supposed to get in the kayak facing the shore. We didn't know that. When you push off backwards the first thing you do is turn toward the waves. We got into the kayak facing the waves and took off. I guess we should have listened to our guide more closely! Suddenly, the struggle for the last hour and one half made a lot more sense.

harder than it should be

Maybe you know the feeling that life seems harder than it should be. Maybe you missed the details or someone else in your world isn't cooperating. It isn't unusual that what appears to be a rather simple and fun exercise of living instead turns into an unexpected ordeal.

What if you got it fundamentally backwards? What if you think you are supposed to be leading in life and in reality you were designed to follow?

it is all about me

It's normal to live your life believing you were born to be in control. Isn't life all about you? It is about having what you want and the freedom to do as you please—that's what brings happiness. Isn't that what we think from the cradle forward? The problem is that it doesn't work so well in everyday life. Before long you find yourself arguing, competing, and complaining with others who believe the same thing—that it is all about them. And after you've both tried harder AND threatened to quit, you eventually come to the place where you are dead in the water.

I'm not the fastest or brightest student of life, or kayaking, but I've come to an astonishing discovery: I am made for more than that! And you are too. There is a better way!

Life is better when you turn around and go the direction the Guide advises. You slice through the water. Steering is easier. Your efforts are more productive. You get along with others better. You can enjoy the journey.

In this book we discover the benefit of living life, not backwards but as God designed. It is a life that is filled with on purpose living. This brings great adventure and amazing satisfaction.

backwards, chapter 1
questions for thought and discussion

1. Give an example of a time when it seemed like things were backwards for you.
2. How are you dealing with things that aren't working for you?
3. What might be backwards for you?
4. What do you think the guide would say to you about how to find a better way to travel through life?

about the author



Gary Kendall has a deep passion for helping people find their way back to God and for planting and developing churches that do the same. Gary and his wife, Belinda, founded Indian Creek Community Church in 1985, which has grown from a home Bible study to a multi-site church. Gary serves Indian Creek as the Lead Pastor.

It's that passion that led him to co-found the Church Multiplication Association in 2004 (now Healthy Growing Churches Multiplication). Gary is also the President of Project Partner, a 501c3 charity, which supports mission ministry to China to touch hearts and transform communities there.

He invests time in the community through service on several local and national boards and frequently travels as a speaker/ conference leader nationally and internationally. Gary has co-authored two books, *Path to Power* with Pastor Jim Davey and *The Call to Love* with Belinda Kendall.

Gary and Belinda live in Olathe, Kansas and have three married children: Kristen (Josh), Jeremy (Jesi), and Luke (Rachel) and two grandchildren, Landon and Morgan.