



Suanne Camfield is a writer and speaker who serves as the director of women's ministry at Christ Church of Oak Brook (IL). Previously, she was an assistant editor and publicist at InterVarsity Press and the blog manager for FullFill™, a nonprofit focused on mobilizing women to invest their influence in the world for God's purposes. She is also a founding member of the Redbud Writers Guild. Suanne has written for *Strangely Dim*, *Her.meneutics*, *Kyria*, *MomSense*, *Gifted for Leadership*, and was a contributor to the *Every Day Matters Bible* and the MOPS devotional *Always There*. Suanne and her husband Eric, a pastor at Christ Church of Oak Brook, live in the Chicago suburbs with their two children.

Who do you want to become?

And what does a dream sound like? In her debut memoir, Suanne Camfield writes of the varied dreams that she has pursued over the course of her life. With captivating and eloquent stories and concepts, she guides us through what it feels like to have a stirring deep inside of us – and how God guides and shapes us through that sense of calling. In the following, she shares how she came to write this years-in-the-making book.

Your book is a memoir. What made you want to share your unique story with readers?

Suanne Camfield: The book came out of my own journey (over a roughly ten-year period) of wrestling with feeling a strong calling on my life but not being able to identify what exactly to do with it. Much of the book stems from years of me sitting in coffee shops and other various locations trying to work out the more specific dream or calling in my own life to write and to speak – having lots of conversations with God and others along the way. Writing gave me a way to work out what I was feeling.

Who do you hope connects with *The Sound of a Million Dreams*?

Camfield: Believers looking for a way to connect more deeply with God through a well-told story. Believers who wrestle with questions about “what they want to be when they grow up” and who are looking for someone to put words to how they’ve often felt.

What do you hope readers who are trying to figure out the possibility of their dreams will take away from your book?

Camfield: The need I address for others is to speak into the place where they are wrestling with their own dreams and push them toward God as they step toward them. I believe most people wrestle with what they want to be when they grow up. But I also continue to remind them that it's never about the destination, always about the journey. In this case, becoming more of the person God created us to be.

Do you think this concept of God-given dreams is something that impacts everyone? Can you unpack the difference between doing and becoming?

Camfield: God has placed and cares about the dreams and callings he's given each one of us—I call this the Stirring throughout the book. He sees and knows us as we pay attention to the way he speaks and guides us in these dreams—but we have to pay attention to the Stirring. More important than the actual dreams he's given us, however, is the way we offer ourselves to those dreams and the sanctifying process that happens along the way. While God does care about our dreams, he cares more about the person he wants us to become as we offer ourselves to both him and our dreams. Instead of asking “what we want to do with our lives,” we need to ask “who do we want to become?”

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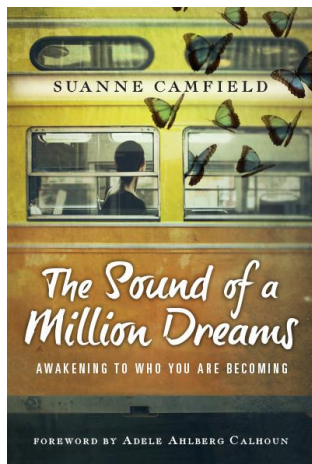


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The Sound of a Million Dreams:
Awakening to Who You Are
Becoming

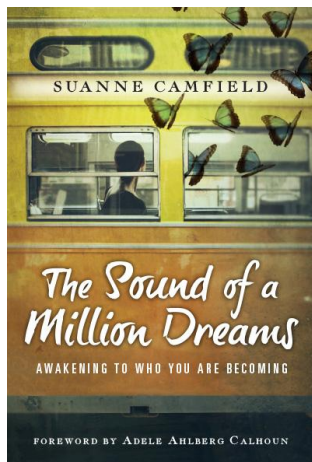
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What are some guiding principles you'd like readers to have after they read your own story?

- God speaks into our lives about the deep things or dreams that stir inside of us – we need to be intentional about listening and paying attention to those stirrings. Most people live with a desire to do something meaningful with their lives.
- God cares about our dreams, but he uses our dreams as a conduit to draw us closer to him, to continually shape and sanctify us and make us more of the person he created us to be. Our dreams are always primarily about the Becoming, a pathway to the person we're meant to be – and to God.
- We need to stop primarily asking "what we want to do" and ask "who we want to be."
- It takes courage to step into our dreams – and an enormous amount of faithfulness and persistence and intentionality to continue to follow them in spite of or in the midst of the pace and challenges of our everyday lives.
- Our primary calling is first and foremost to a person, God, not an earthly accomplishment.



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"The Sound of a Million Dreams simultaneously embraces me right where I am while beautifully beckoning me one step further. Through her intensely honest pilgrimage, Suanne Camfield woos me to become fully who I already am in Jesus."

— Elisa Morgan, president emerita, MOPS International, cohost, Discover the Word Radio, author of *The Beauty of Broken*

"There's beauty in this world."

Two small scraps of paper weigh heavy in each pocket. One barely legible, scribbled in a hasty scrawl: *I am but dust*. The other bold, clear, strong—a canny invitation: *The world was made for me*.

My imagination turns over the old Hassidic proverb, the implications of each scrap twisting provocatively at the edges of my mind. The first, our own finiteness, is true; indisputable. The beauty of it hit me square in the chest one year in the sacredness of a sanctuary where my friend Tracey taught me to dampen my thumb in a bowl laden with ashes and make the sign of the cross on a person's forehead. Each and every forehead.

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you will return.

For thirty minutes I said it, over and over again, as I stared into the dark and innocent eyes of a child; as I brushed my thumb across the oily pimples of a teenager; as I gently pressed the soft, dented wrinkles of an elderly woman; as I crossed the dark skin of a man in a narrow suit and tie and admired the flowing, unkempt curls of a young woman stooped forward in slouchy Australian boots. I crossed and I kneeled and I hugged and I blessed, recognizing each moment—diverse, unique, personal, communal—for the gift of redemption it was, as the tears streamed openly and unashamedly down my face.

There's beauty in dust.

The world was made for me.

The second is false. In fact, perhaps no more untrue and misleading statement has ever been made. The world was not made for me, neither for me individually nor for us collectively. The world was created by a flawless artist, a soulful creator, a stainless king, a triune spirit living in the perfect perichoresis of both genesis and eternity, who one day breathed life into this world, said it was not good until it was very good and then allowed it to flourish—and implode—time and time again, all as part of a long and twisted and redeeming love story. The world was not made for me, but I for it. Which is to say I for him.

There's beauty in this world.

How to embrace the tension, the endless possibilities of who we long to become ensconced between dust and eternity while still experiencing the beauty of both—before the nimble swing of the pendulum relentlessly threatens to knock us to the edges of the earth?

Now that really is the question we've all been asking since the first whispered breath.



"Few books so brilliantly and beautifully describe the process by which one awakens to a personal dream and then dares to discipline oneself to pursue it as this amazing breakout work by Suanne Camfield. In the course of describing the fears, tears, and laughter that marked her own journey toward fulfillment, Camfield inspires all of us to begin listening for the yearning voice in ourselves that might be calling us to the life we are meant to live."

— Daniel Meyer, author of *Discovering God, Witness Essentials*

It's a cold December afternoon. I am sitting in one of my favorite coffee shops, next to the train station, next to the bay window encased in honey-stained oak that leaves a quaint view of the winter's first snowfall. It's been more than a year since the Stirring. I now have a laptop that, for the first time, I can call my own, a refurbished hunk passed on by my friend Andy, a business owner who was updating his company's stock. ("We have tons of them we don't use" he'd said.) So I'd started sitting in lots of coffee shops, an at-home mom trying to find her way, my kids now safely tucked away in school for most of my day.

Although I can see the bricked shops that line the other side of the street, the sill, resting slightly higher than my right shoulder, cuts the buildings in a horizontal midline. The snow is falling lazily as it makes its way to the ground, but every now and then its path is redirected by a microburst of wind. The branches of an evergreen wreath gently tap the glass in rhythm with the breeze. The back of a parking meter is slicked wet and black, causing the snow to stick and then hang, resembling a strip of Santa's beard, nature's way of not being outdone by the velvet of any crimson bow.

For a while, I can't take my eyes off a red string that's gotten itself hopelessly tangled in the prickly branches of the tree across the street, perhaps a string to a child's lost balloon. I glance at an advertisement for a new meatball pesto flatbread and wrinkle my nose at the thought of eating it with my coffee.

There are three parking spots within my view: the one in the front and back, both occupied by oversized, black SUVs, are stagnant, but the one in the middle has had a revolving array of occupants, and I find myself curious about who these people are. Where they might be going on such a cold winter day, what life they may have waiting for them after they pull out of the spot. A business executive with a demanding job and a boss he hates, a mom trying to squeeze in a few more errands before she picks up the kids from school, an exasperated caretaker with an elderly parent waiting for a prescription, a carpenter fixing the store's leaky plumbing, a woman who's so bored with her own life that she's hoping another swipe of the credit card might fill the emptiness lingering in her soul.

For a long time the spot remains empty. A white pickup truck passes slowly, the words Gourmet's Choice centered on the passenger side door. A gold suburban breaks momentarily but then moves on, having decided that eking out a parallel park might be more than he can handle. Maybe all those passing by decide the space is too tight, too hard to squeeze into. Maybe cars filled with people who feel like that string caught in the tree, too tangled to get loose.

I wonder if they like their life. I wonder if they are living the life they thought they'd be.

— Taken from chapter one, "Ashes," and chapter five, "Be When I Grow Up"