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**Chapter #1:**

**My Story: Called to the Ministry of Dance**

**First Main Point: Identifying My Passion**

**Support A: Knowing My Interests and Abilities**

**Example:** I was drawn to the arts and wanted to play the piano, dance, sing, write songs, and draw.

**Example**: Dance was my passion

**Support B: Putting my passion into action.**

**Example:** As a child, I taught a dance to other children

**Example:** I participated in a summer youth talent show where I choreographed a dance for me and other youth to perform.

**Support C: Using my passion, interests, and abilities for kingdom purposes.**

**Example**: My creative skills as a child continued as a young adult when I started choreographing dance pieces for ministry purpose

**Example:** As a child, I started using flags and rifles when I was involved in the O’Quinn Band and Bugle Corp and I started using ministry tools when I started ministering in dance including flags, streamers, tambourines, scarves, mattah sticks, etc.

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**Second Main Point: Pursing My Passion, Pursuing God**

**Support A: Pursuing different avenues of dance.**

**Example**: At the age of 16, I took my first ballet class at Malcolm X College

**Example:** As a teenager, I joined the O’Quinn Royal Gladiators Drum and Bugle Corps where I learned to twirl a rifle and to carry and twirl a flag.

**Support B: Pursuing dance in college.**

**Example**: My main focus at college parties was to dance

**Example**: I joined an African dance company called Omnimov, while in college

**Example:** Every semester of college, I took dance classes including ballet, jazz, and modern

**Support C: Pursuing a relationship with God.**

**Example**: I receive Jesus Christ in my life while in college

**Example**: I join Rock church after graduating from college,

**Third Main Point: Accepting the Call**

**Support A: How Do I dance for you, Lord?**

**Example:** I accepted the call to dance for the Lord

**Example:** I started the ministry of the Lord through God’s leading

**Example:** God enable me to dance for Him, choreograph dances and lead the ministry

**Support B: Surrender and Sacrifice**

**Example:** Surrendering my will to do God’s Will

**Example:** Sacrificing time to seek God and His Will, and sacrificing relationships

**Support C: Leading, Teaching, Ministering**

**Example**: I led Rock Church children and adult dance ministry and taught the biblical foundation, and dance technique and choreographed pieces to Rock Church dance ministries.

**Example:** I taught biblical dance classes at Dorolyn Academy School of Music through Divine Expressions Ministry (DEM).

**Example:** I taught biblical dance classes, dance techniques, and some choreography through Eagles International Training Institute’s (EITI) TEN Network.

**Chapter #2:**

**Created for God’s Purpose**

Eph 2:10 NIV)

**First Main Point**: **Created as part of God’s Plan.**

**Support A: God existed before creation.**

**Support B: God chose man before creation.**

**Support C: Through Jesus, all things were created**.

**Example:**. Colossians 1:16 NIV

**Second Main Point: Created out of God’s love.**

**Support A: God is Love.**

**Example: “**We love because he first loved us.”

**Example:** God loves man and desires a relationship with man

**Support B: We are commanded to love God and others**

**Support B: God created us in His image. (**Gen 1:27 NIV)

**Example:** We have God’s intellect to think, reason, make decisions, invent, create

**Example:** We have a conscience that reflects God’s holiness. We know the difference between evil and good.

**Third Main Point**: **Created to Glorify God**

**Support A: We glorify God through our praise.**

**Support B: We glorify God when we obey His Word**

**Support C: We glorify God by proclaiming His Truth**

**Example**: We proclaim His Truth by sharing the gospel

**Example**: We proclaim His Truth when we testify of who God is and what God has done

**Support D: We glorify God through serving.**

**Example:** We are God’s gift to the earth when we serve by using our gifts, abilities, and talents

**Example:** Reproducing and filling the earth are acts of serving to bring an increase through multiplication and replenishing the earth

**Example:** We lead or take charge as a means of serving not controlling (we “lead with the heart of a king”(Senator Shannon Grove)

**A Prayer:**

**Chapter #3:**

**Gifted for God’s Purpose**

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

**First Main Point: What is the Meaning of Being Called**

**Example: Called to follow Christ**

**Example: Called to serve the body of Christ**

**Second Point: What are Natural Gifts?**

**Example:** the potential to learn and develop a skill through practice or training

**Example:** a natural skill or ability to do something without having any experience or training

**Third Point: What is the Fruit of the Spirit**

**Example: “**love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness**,** and self-control”

**Example:** character traits that are produced by the Holy Spirit

**Fourth Point: What are Spiritual Gifts?**

**Example:** spiritual gifts are to build up the church

**Example:** Spiritual gifts are effective if they are used for God’s glory

**Chapter 4**

**Gifted for God’s Kingdom**

**First Main Point: Who Are You?**

**Support A: How do you see yourself?**

**Example:** How Do You See Yourself?

**Example:** Do you accept yourself (abilities, interests, weaknesses, strengths, ? (What does the Bible say about you)

**Example:**

“Within your heart, you can make plans for your future, but the Lord chooses the steps

**Example:** Accept you and your life (experiences, crises)

**Example:** How do others see you (Are you known to be friendly? Are you known to be generous? Are you known to be a godly person?}

**Second Point: Seeing You from A Different Perspective**

**Support A: How Does God See You?**

**Example:** Who is God (1 Cor 13:4-7)

**Support B: How Does loved Ones See You?**

**Support C: How Does Others See You?**

**Third Point: God Knows Best**

**Support A: Who is God?** (2 Thess 1:11-12 NIV)

**Example:** How is God described in the Bible? Who is God to you? What is God known for in the Bible.)

**Example:** What does God mean to you

**Example:** What has God done or is doing in your life.

**Support B: Listening to God**

**Example:** Listen for God’s voice. Intimacy with God should bring us to a place of hearing God. God speaks to us in unique ways (vision, thoughts, feelings, sensing, ….) (John 10:27-28 NIV)

**Example:** Stay Connected to the leading of the Holy Spirit. (The Holy Spirit will empower you with wisdom and revelation, and to speak and do things you could not do on your own. God will continue to establish you through the Holy Spirit(withdirection, guidance, teaching you His ways, interceding for you, and helping you fulfill the Will of God)

**Support C: Trusting and Submitting to God**

**Example:** Trust God – “Before you do anything, put your trust totally in God and not in yourself. Then every plan you make will succeed.” Proverbs 16:8 (TPT)

**Example:** “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5 NIV)

**Example:** Give your whole heart to what God is establishing in your life. (your heart, mind, and will)

**Example:** Surrender your will to do His Will

**Example**: Submit to leadership’s guidance, instructions, and ideas

**Chapter #5:**

**Running with Your Gifts for Kingdom Purposes**

*” … let us throw off everything hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.” (Hebrews 12:1 NIV)*

**First Main Point: Walking Worthy of Your Calling**

*“So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do.”(1 Thess 1:11 NLT)*

**Support A**: **Let’s Go Deeper**

**Example:** Deeper Relationship with God

**Example:** Deeper understanding of your gift

**Example:** Continual hunger and thirst for more

**Support B: Do the work that is required for your calling**.

**Example:** Get Understanding, Knowledge, and Wisdom.

**Example:** Learn to Be in Him (Be Confident, Be Thankful Be Christlike , Be Obedient, Be Trustworthy, Be Prayerful, Just Be (Wait on the Lord)

**Support C: Let Your light Shine**

**Example:** Leave a legacy and fulfill our destiny

**Example:** Be a witness to others of what God is enabling you to do

**Second Main Point: Stay Committed**

**Support A: Endure Hardships**

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Heb 12:11 NIV)

**Example:** Move away from hindrancesby **s**tanding Firm when under spiritual attack (doubts, fears, rebelliousness, jealousy, pride) 1 Corinthians 15:58 NIV

**Example:** Resist and Avoid temptation by putting on the Armor of God, praying without ceasing, and rejoicing: Rejoice: Praise God when you feel like it and when you do not

**Example:** Be Content in all situations. -“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them” ([Romans 8:28, NLT](https://www.bibleref.com/Romans/8/Romans-8-28.html))

**Support B Commit to the Process of Being Called**

**Example:** You may have to relocate.

**Example:** You may be chosen for a task or ministry position or promoted to a new role or position

**Example:** Be alert to how God is working in your life to grow and develop you

**Example:** Be patient and wait on God

**Example:** Seek guidance, counsel, and accountability

**Support C: Commit to Serving**

**Example**: Be ready (in season and out of season)

**Example:** Dedicate time to serving in the capacity to which you feel called

**Third Main Point: Finish Your Race**

**Support A: Avoid Being Distracted**

**Example:** Unexpected Circumstances (Confront rebellious, resistant and critical People)

**Example:** Personal Problems: (Insecurities about self-image or character, health issues, misconceptions of people or situations)

**Example:** Contradictory feelings (feeling defeated, unmotivated, lethargic)

**Example:** Do not entertain negative thoughts

**Support B: Stay Connected to the Vision** (Habakkuk 2:2-3 NKJV)

**Example:** The kingdom is voice-activated, how is God speaking to you?

**(**God will give you a verse to stand on. God can speak to you to continue to move toward the vision through people, through situations, through prayer, through dreams, etc. Create a vision board)

**Example:** Continue to Enhance your vision as God takes you through seasons.

(Take classes or read books to enhance your gift or skill or understanding. Worship before Him.

**Example:** Glean and connect with others of kindred spirit and purpose.

**Example:** Pray and fellowship with others of kindred spirit to build a unified community (Establish accountability partners or mentorship. Learn from others.)

**Support C: Victory in Jesus.** (Hebrews 12:2)

**Example:** He is the Author and Perfector of Your Faith

**Example**: Fix your eyes, mind and heart on Jesus by staying in the word

**Example:** Increase faith, spiritual growth, renewed strength, more confidence in your purpose

**Chapter 6**

**Running to Get the Prize**

**“…for the joy set before you...”**

**First Main Point: Serving With Your Gifts is a Joy** (James 1:2-4 NIV)

“Eyes that focus on what is beautiful bring joy to the heart and hearing a good report refresh.

and strengthens the inner being.” Proverbs 15:30 (TPT)

**Second Main Point: Recognize the Blessings**

**Support A: The Blessing of Using Our Gifts**

**Example:** Glorifies God

**Example:** God blesses the work of your hands

**Support B: The Blessings of Serving Others**

**Example:** Sharing God’s love

**Example:** Helping others in their relationship with god

**Example:** Sharing the message of who God is

**Example:** Strengthens the body

**Third Main Point: Wanting to hear, “Well Done Good and Faithful Servant”**

2 Tim 4:7 –**“**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (NIV)

Matthew 25:21 – “His lord said to him, ‘Well *done,* good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” (NKJV)

**Introduction**

There they were. Female praise dancers were moving all over the stage with sheer white scarves making Chaine turns and figure eight movements as the song by Donald Lawrence and the Tri-City Singers was saying, "I feel seasons everywhere and I feel blessings in the air”. As the dancers turn, you can see the fluidness of their light blue angelic-like garment flaring out like the opening of an umbrella. Attached to the chests of the garments is a sparkling silver beaded cross symbolizing Christ’s redemption.

     As the dancers display beauty and splendor in motion, the song progresses to a certain point where it says, “The wait is over, walk into your season.” The song continues to repeatedly say, “Walk into your season" as the dancers, one by one, begin to walk through the veil that is positioned at the front of the center aisle of the stage. The veil is represented by two long white sheer flags which are held like curtains by two dancers. The other dancers individually walk through the veil, and then spontaneously dance down the aisle. As each dancer passes through the veil, you can hear people from the audience shouting, "Amen!” Praise the Lord!", "Hallelujah!". As the last dancer walks through the veil and dances down the aisle, the song comes to an end. At the end of the song, you hear an uproar of praise. Some dancers are walking about and praising God with lifted hands and shouts of “Thank you Jesus!” and “Hallelujah!” Other dancers are just standing and praising God with tears of joy.

  Taking place at Dorolyn Academy School of Music was not just a dance recital, but a movement of God. As the glory of God was being displayed through music, lyrics, dance, and praise, an atmosphere was created for the Spirit of God to move. It wasn’t just that one dance that made the experience so powerful. Some singers and dancers ministered during the praise and worship time. There were also children, teenage, and adult dance presentations that included hip hop, mime, solo dancing, tambourine, congregational, and a pageantry processional dance. To end the evening was an encouraging message from a guest speaker.

At Dorolyn’s dance recitals, students were discovering, developing, or enhancing gifts in the dance. While these students were finding kingdom purpose, the audience was being blessed as well. For some people in the audience, that recital may have been their only exposure to seeing, hearing, and experiencing God. For others, that recital may have been the encouragement they needed to strengthen their faith or to seek a personal relationship with God. We don’t know for sure how lives may have been touched because of individuals pursuing and using their gifts, but we do know that people were ministered to. As **Christians, we are called to serve in God’s kingdom to help meet the n**eeds of the world. We have the potential to make a difference by using our skills, talents, and spiritual gifts.

Do you know the purpose for which God has created you? Do you know what gifts, talents, and abilities that God has given you? Are you sitting in the pews or being a blessing to the congregation? Why are your gifts, talents, and abilities so important? Here is why.

We are God’s gift to the earth. We have been given the hands, feet, mouth, heart, and mind of Jesus to continue the work that Jesus began. We are the vessel through which God will proclaim his message of love, hope, and redemption to those who will listen. Our gifts, talents, and abilities are needed to not only help proclaim God’s truth but also to help strengthen and unify the body of Christ and to encourage the body of Christ to continue in faith and service. God has uniquely designed us and given us gifts, talents, and abilities to fulfill His unique purpose for our lives.

God has a greater purpose for your life than what you could ever think or imagine. Our purpose is rooted in using our gifts. We cannot allow circumstances, disappointments, personal issues, and other reasons to prevent us from thriving in our giftedness. It is time to tap into or continue with the purpose for which God has created you. God is not looking for you to be a spectator but a participator in His kingdom. As born-again believers, God is looking for you to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world”. We are called to be a mover, a shaker, and a life changer.

This book is here to serve as a source of inspiration and a reminder that God has a plan for your life no matter your age, your background, your level of education, or your level of experience. Do not give up on yourself, or God, or the calling God has on your life. Stay in the race and fight the good fight. God uses those who make themselves available, not those who sit on their gifts. For those who have the drive and the zeal to serve, and to say yes to His Will, God is calling on you. God is smiling you on, and you must keep running until you hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. God sees you, knows you, and most importantly, created you with a purpose. You are not alone in your endeavor because our heavenly Father is with you every step of the way.

In the following chapters, you will embark on a soul-searching journey to help you embrace your purpose in excellence. In Chapter 1, I share my testimony of how God called me to the ministry of dance. For 34 years I have served in this ministry, and I am still thriving. I did not find my kingdom purpose but rather God found me, gifted me, and gave me purpose.

As you read this book, I hope that you receive a word from the Lord that empowers you with renewed hope in this season of your life. God needs you to be the person He has called you to be, to reach the people no one else can reach, and to go to places no one else has gone. Let us make sure we are on the path that will enable us to become what God wants us to become so we can impact our lives as well as the lives of others.

**Chapter #1**

**My Story:**

**Called to the Ministry the Dance**

***Identifying My Passion***

During my childhood, I was very active, playful, and inquisitive. I grew up in a single-parent household, with two brothers and two sisters. Each of my siblings had their own interests and endeavors. For myself, I loved playing outside, and I also enjoyed the arts. I loved music so I wanted to learn how to play the piano and the violin. I didn’t have an opportunity to learn how to play the piano as a child, but I found pleasure in singing, playing the violin at my school, writing songs, drawing, and dancing. More than anything else, I was drawn to the dance. Dancing was my joy and passion. It was one of the activities that I felt confident in doing. I kept abreast of all the latest dance trends. I danced at home, I danced at house parties, I danced in a high school club, and I danced in a youth talent show. I not only enjoyed secular dancing, but I was interested in pursuing all genres of dancing. My dream was to be like Debbie Allen and pursue dance in the performing arts.

***Pursuing My Passion, Pursuing God***

At the age of sixteen, I worked a summer job and paid for my first ballet class at Malcolm X College in Chicago. I had no experience with ballet other than what I saw on television. After the first day of attending the ballet class, I began to question my ability as a dancer. I thought I could be like Debbie Allen, but I realized that I did not have enough experience, skill, knowledge, or exposure to dance in the performing arts. At that time, I did not know ballet terminologies like jetes or ton ‘dues nor able to achieve the movements. I did not know how intense a dance class could be until I took my first ballet class at Malcolm X. In my discouragement, I dropped the class and returned to the familiar, secular dancing. Surprisingly, I was able to find another pathway to the performing arts. I joined a marching band called O’ Quinn Royal Gladiators Drum and Bugle Corps where I learned how to twirl a rifle and carry and twirl a flag. Marching in a band was exciting but was a brief experience for me because the parades only happened during the summer, and I participated for one summer.

Upon entering college at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, I decided to make another attempt at taking dance classes. I was not a dance major, but I took dance classes every semester including ballet, jazz, and modern dance. I was determined to continue to pursue my interest in dancing. I also joined a dance company called the Omnimov Dance Company which was an African dance company. My dean could not tell from my college transcript if I was a mechanical engineering major or a dance major. He knew that I enjoyed dancing and encouraged me to continue to take dance classes as an outlet for my studies.

During my sophomore year at the University of Illinois in Champaign, Urbana, I signed up for a work-study program where I was assigned a job working in the cafeteria of my dorm as a server during the breakfast shift. As I served food every morning, I was captivated by one student as he went through the food line. He was not your typical college student that passed through the food line in the morning looking grumpy, half asleep, or speechless. Unlike the other students, this student was always pleasant, always smiling, and always said, “Good Morning” every single day. I could not understand at that time why this student was always so happy and so pleasant. I was not interested in a relationship with him but I was attracted to the uniqueness of his character. He just did not fit into the norm of the character of a typical college student at U of I at that time. I wanted to know why this student was so different.

One day I decided to approach and ask this student named Micheal, why he was always so happy. Michael told me that he had received Jesus Christ into his life. (Special note: Whe we receive Christ in our life, God’s glory flows through us. The glory will manifest in each believer differently.) Michael asked me if I was interested in learning about Jesus and when I complied, he connected me with a female student who shared more details about who Jesus was. Through that female student, I came to accept Jesus Christ into my life.Because of God’s glory reflected through Michael, I came to know the Lord. (Special note: The Word says, “So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.” (2 Corinthians 3:18 (NLT))

From that point on, my life was transformed. (Special note: The Holy Spirit is doing the work of transforming us into the image of Christ who is the image of God.) As time progressed, I was no longer investing so much time in attending parties, nor feeling the pressure from family to pledge to a sorority. I just wanted to graduate. I did connect with the Christian organization that Michael was part of called the Navigators and I participated in their Bible study. I continue to take dance classes, as well, but most of my time was dedicated to my studies. By the grace of God, and it was undoubtedly God’s grace, I graduated with a degree in Mechanical Engineering from U of I.

Meeting Michael made a difference in my life because he introduced me to the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ. Michael allowed God’s light to shine through him on a college campus. (Special note: We are to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others. We are to be living examples of God’s love. We are to make disciples. We are to reflect God’s glory everywhere we go.)

***Accepting the Call***

After graduating from U of I, I returned to Chicago. Desiring to continue my walk with the Lord, I joined a church called Rock of Our Salvation Evangelical Free Church (aka Rock Church) located on the west side of Chicago. During my first few years at Rock Church, I was “a jack of all trades, master of none”. I sang in the choir. I was part of the traveling ensemble singing group that traveled with my Pastor, Pastor Raleigh B. Washington when he spoke at different churches. I was a youth leader, part of the singles ministry, part of a fellowship group, and part of a discipleship bible class. Almost every day of the week was consumed with church activities after work. This was great for a while because it was all contributing to my spiritual growth.

Even with my busy schedule, I was still able to take a dance class at a dance studio, now and then. As my faith grew, I began to question whether I should be doing secular or any type of dancing. Although I had invested so much of my life in dancing, I was ready to give it all up to live for God. When I told my worship leader about my interest in giving up dancing, he said to me, “My sister, you don’t have to stop dancing, you just need to change partners.”

That day, I received a word from the Lord through my worship leader. Although I was willing to make the sacrifice, it was a relief to know that I did not have to follow through with it. Through my worship leader, I heard God say that He did not want me to stop dancing, but to start dancing for Him. I had no clue what that entailed but God had become my partner in my endeavors to dance. I was ready to accept the call to dance for the Lord.

I know you have heard the saying, “God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things”. Well, that is my story. When I started dancing for the Lord, it was a very humble experience. I did not know what I was supposed to do next after accepting the call to dance for the Lord. I didn’t know how to dance in a way that would be pleasing to God. I did not know what type of worship songs to dance to. I could not consult with anyone because I didn’t know of anyone else who danced for the Lord. I didn’t know what type of dance garments to wear. My only question was, “What now God”?

*How Do I Dance for You, Lord?*

When I started dancing for the Lord all I could hear God say was come as you are. I started as a soloist ministering in a black leotard and African wrap material. It was a relief to learn that I didn’t have to fake it until I made it, but I was able to work with what I had, and what I knew about dance. It was good to learn that the church would accept me as a solo dancer dancing in a black leotard and African attire. While I was seeking out other dance attire to wear, I also had to address the concern that I did not know how to dance for God. Even with my dance background, I was still bewildered by how to move in a way that would be honoring to the Lord.

The only person who could help me was God. The verse in Revelation chapter 3 became very real for me during that time. It says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” (Rev 3:20 NKJV) Many Christians use this verse to introduce someone to someone and how they may enter a relationship with Jesus Christ. It was Jesus speaking through the Apostle John in this verse challenging the church of Sardis to get their hearts right. They were neither hot nor cold but lukewarm in their faith and Jesus was standing at the door of their heart to enter if they let Him in. That verse let me know that I was not alone in this new venture in my faith. I had a relationship with God, but I now needed Jesus to come in and transform my way of thinking and transform my heart so that I could have a heart of worship. No, I didn’t know how to dance for the Lord, but I was able to come to God in my lack, my awkwardness, and my uncertainty.

I begin to seek God on how to dance for Him. The first song God directed me to minister to was “What a Mighty God We Serve”. As I practiced movements to the song, I learned that my time of practice was about coming before Him with my offering of praise and worship. My time of practice was then looked upon as a time of dancing in His presence and a time of dancing before His throne. As I began to look at dance differently, movements became easier and more fluid. God was crucifying my flesh. I no longer want to dance just for mere entertainment. Now, it was about worship. I was lifting my hands and moving my feet to express forms of praise as the song and Holy Spirit would lead me.

*Surrender and Sacrifice*

When I started dancing for God, I was no longer a “jack of all ministries”, so to speak. I had a calling on my life to dance and that became my focus of ministry. I realized that I was still at the mercy of God. I only knew two scriptures about dance, Psalms 149:3 and Psalms 150:4. I still had a lot of secular music resonating within me, and I didn’t have a vision for what I was to do in ministry. This was a good place for me to be in. I was in a place where I needed God and I needed to surrender to God. Surrender is about completely giving up my own will so that I can subject my thoughts, ideas, and deeds to the will and teachings of the Father. **1** I needed to surrender my will so that God could do His Will in and through me. I needed to surrender the music that I was listening to and spend more time listening to praise and worship music that I would use to minister in dance. I needed to surrender the way I was choreographing dances. Everything I needed had to come from God because I had very little to offer apart from Him.

I was also under the submission of my Pastor. Submission is about yielding to the authority of others out of reverence for God. I needed to submit to my Pastor and walk in obedience. As I shared my ideas with him, there were times when he told me to wait. An example was when I wanted the dance ministry to do congregational dancing during the time of praise and worship. My Pastor told me that the church wasn’t ready and that it would have to be brought in methodically. Even though I strongly believe that dance was the missing third cord in our time of praise and worship, the singers and musicians being the first and second cords, I had to trust my Pastor’s judgment. He knew the heart of the church. It took about 2 to 3 years before dance was incorporated with praise and worship.

I also had to make sacrifices. Sacrificing time to study God’s word concerning the interpretation of the song and the vision for the dance. I had to sacrifice time to just be still before the Lord and allow Him to begin to give me movements for the dance. I had to sacrifice relationships so that I could be surrounded by people who wanted to live for God.

From the time I started dancing for the Lord to the place I am now, God has been faithful. God’s faithfulness has helped me to walk in faith and to trust that He would walk with me in my journey through the dance ministry. Even when I did not expect, God used someone to provide me with my first dance garment. After I saw how dance ministers dress, I started designing some of my garments. I did not have to worry about anything in the dance because God was making the provisions.

*Leading, Teaching, and Ministering*

As God was working in me through the ministry of dance, I began to develop a heart to pour into children. I had to trust that God could use me in their lives. As God was building my confidence, other people were interested in joining the dance ministry. Eventually, I found myself starting an adult dance ministry. As the children got older, I started the teenage dance ministry and continued to work with the adults.

It was God that was drawing people to the ministry. As I trusted God, He started depositing spiritual gifts within me. The spiritual gifts of teaching, mercy, giving, service, administration, and leadership became more evident. God guided me in how to lead a ministry. I had to stay before the Lord because my endeavors involved co-laboring with the Lord. I thought about the fact that others may have been more mature than me, older than me, or even more experienced than me but it did not matter because God’s power was enabling me to choreograph, lead, teach, pray, have compassion, and love. As the ministry was growing in number, I was growing in my understanding of ministry, in my ability to lead the ministry, in my faith, in my confidence, and my knowledge of God’s Word. Scripture memory kept me grounded in my walk with God. Numbers 23:19 says, *“God is not a man, so he does not lie.  He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?”* I believe every verse that God gave me and planted in my heart because I took God at His Word. It is in trusting God that I was able to dance as a soloist before an entire congregation. It is in trusting God that I was able to lead different age groups in the dance including children, teenagers, and adults. It was in trusted God that I found favor with my Pastor, who provided me with a budget for the dance ministry.

I continued to have more reasons to trust God as He opened more doors. Because I also loved to sing, I decided to take voice lessons at Dorolyn Academy School of Music. Through my voice teacher, I was introduced to Rosalyn Acevedo who not only headed a ministry called Divine Expressions Dance Ministry but also oversaw Dorolyn Academy’s first dance program. As I got to know Rosalyn, she invited me to join her dance ministry as an outreach ministry.

As my relationship with Rosalyn developed, she invited me to join the first dance class that Divine Expression Ministries (DEM) would be teaching at Dorolyn Academy. After I graduated from the first dance graduation, Rosalyn asked me to become one of the dance teachers for DEM at Dorolyn Academy. This was a big step for me, but I rose to the occasion. During my service at Dorolyn Academy, I was able to teach various dance classes like the Biblical foundation of dance, tambourine dancing, and prophetic dancing as well as minister to the many students who participated in the program.

When I started teaching classes at Dorolyn, I encouraged members of the dance ministry at my church to take classes at Dorolyn Academy and they did. As some of Rock’s dance ministers grew in their understanding of dance ministry, I was able to pass on some of my leadership of the dance ministries at Rock Church. One of the Rock dance members was able to take over and lead the children’s dance ministry at Rock Church. For about 10 years I taught dance classes at Dorolyn while leading the teenage and adult dance ministries Rock.

The dance ministry teams at Rock were being used by God to encourage the church through movement with expressions of God’s love, power, hope, and salvation. The classes at Dorolyn Academy were being taught to activate and help develop students who felt called to the ministry of dance. As God was bringing the increase in these ministries, in number, abilities, and spiritual understanding, my role was to continue to do my part as God did the rest. I had to continue to walk with Him and trust the work that He was doing in the people and the work He was doing in and through my life. I had to walk in humility, in faith, in love, in God’s strength, with confidence, and not be afraid of the new. There were so many times in the Bible that God reminded Joshua to be strong and courageous. Joshua struggled with courage. Caleb and Joshua spied out the land of Canaan and returned to the Israelites with a report that showed that they trusted God. The other spies doubted God and were afraid. Through God’s strength, Joshua was able to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land, defeat the enemies, conquer battles, and stay true to God. Just like Joshua, I was often challenged in my faith, but I stayed strong and courageous as God enabled me to lead the dance ministries to new levels of knowledge and experience in the dance.

In 2007, God showed me that my time with Divine Expressions was coming to an end. At the same time, Divine Expressions Ministry's time with Dorolyn had also come to an end. This was a time of shifting for not only me but also for Dorolyn Academy School of Music and DEM. Without knowing the basis for the transition, I was asked by the founder and director of Dorolyn Academy to oversee the dance program. God was elevating me, once again.

It seems like in my times of elevation, I have been in a position of being alone and having no one else to trust but Him. No longer was I a part of DEM which was a large part of my life and my spiritual growth at that time. We ministered together, we dined together, we traveled together, we had fun together, and we held each other accountable. I also gleaned from Rosalyn and the other Divine Expression dancers who had more dance experience and biblical knowledge than myself. However, no longer would I have my tribe to turn to.

I was not sure if I was ready to lead the dance program at Dorolyn Academy but the director, Dorothy, believed in me. It was an honor and a privilege to be asked to serve in that capacity. However, after a year of leading the dance program at Dorolyn Academy, I did not feel that I was moving in the direction that God wanted me to go. So out of obedience to how the Holy Spirit was leading me, I stepped down from heading the dance program at Dorolyn Academy of Music.

When I left Dorolyn, I felt a void. I had already separated from DEM and now I was leaving my students and my music family. I was still thankful for my Rock family, but, I was allowing myself to become stagnate. After acquiring a deeper biblical understanding of the dance through DEM and Dorolyn, I needed more than what I was receiving at that time and I didn’t know where to find it. I was starting to focus on the wrong things and feeling sorry for myself. God had already done so much for me through the ministry of dance, for which I was grateful but I struggled with trusting Him with the present status of my faith journey. I should have also focused on the great things God was doing with the dance ministries at Rock Church. I knew that God was still with me, but I didn’t know what direction to take Rock dance ministry because I no longer had my village of support.

I wasn’t sure what God was saying to me, but I felt like I was in a waiting period. In that waiting period, I decided to branch out and attend dance conferences. I attended a couple of conferences in Chicago and a dance conference in New York during the summer of 2008. That conference in New York was life changing. At that conference, I saw and experienced a whole new perspective on the ministry of dance. The dancers were dressed in what they called priestly garments. Biblical teachings on dance were even more in-depth and thought-provoking than I had ever experienced. I felt that God had not left me but was doing a new thing in my life through the dance once again. In God’s faithfulness, He was answering my prayers and fulfilling my desires to receive more of Him.

At that conference, I met one of the guest speakers and dance instructor, Dr. Pamela Scott. She was amazing. She connected me to her ministry, the Eagles International Training Institute (EITI), and from that point on my life and mindset about dancing for the Lord has never been the same. In 2009, I graduated from an EITI course, dance year one. I obtained an even deeper biblical foundation of dance than what I already knew. I continued to take classes with EITI and just as this ministry is depicted, I was starting to “soar like an eagle”. God had taken me from starting a dance ministry in my church to joining the divine Expression ministry outside of my church to teaching dance classes at a music school and now to become part of an international ministry where I could continue to grow, develop, and serve in His kingdom, locally, nationally and internationally and travel as a missionary ministering in dance in places like the British Virgin Islands. I am still a part of EITI, and I am still involved in the ministry of dance because of God’s faithfulness. God’s hand is on my life, and He is using His gift of dance to me for His glory.

God called me to the ministry of dance. No matter what area you are gifted in, whether it is ushering, preaching, teaching, missionary, or hospitality, for examples, remember that it is God who will lead, protect, provide, open and close doors, and bring the increase.

**Chapter 2:**

**Created for God’s Purpose**

*“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10 NIV)*

In Rick Warren’s book, *Purpose Driven Life*, he says, “The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It’s far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose.” **2**

God created everything, including you and me, with a plan and a purpose in mind. He created us with certain interests, passions, skills, and desires. Even though I did not realize it as a child, my passion for dance was the beginning of the plan God had for my life. Can you imagine how God felt when He created you and me? Take a moment to consider how you felt when you created something. What motivated you to create? What motivated you to paint a picture, write a poem, make a cake, design a dress, or choreograph a dance? You were motivated by a purpose.

Because I have served in the ministry of dance for so many years, I have choreographed over one hundred dances. Each dance was to encourage the body of Christ by preaching different messages through movement. It was God who would fill me with creative ideas of how to convey His message in movement. As God gave choreography to me, whether it was in a day or a few weeks while driving, or while lying in bed, I was always able to bring it to fruition. Seeing the results and seeing how God brought it all together with the dancers, the dance attire, the use of ministry tools, and the staging was always a great delight for me and a blessing to the congregation. I can truly say that I am always amazed and blessed at the work of art God produced through me and others. I have been even more blessed by how the choreographed pieces would minister to the people.

If I am overjoyed and blessed every time I can create a dance, can you imagine how God felt when He created the world? In Genesis it says, “God surveyed all he had made and said, ‘I love it!’ For it pleased him greatly…” (Genesis 1:31 TPT). Just like personal creations bring us satisfaction, joy, beauty, and fulfillment, we cannot fathom the depth of God’s delight in His creation. Let’s take a deeper dive into God’s purpose for creating us by considering these three facets: God created you and me because it was part of His plan. God created you and me out of love. God created you and me to glorify Him.

***Created as Part of God’s Plan.***

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)*

Before God created the world, God already existed. God is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. He is not defined by time, space, or matter. God is omniscient and knows the beginning and end of all things. God already had a plan for the layout of the design of the world. God already had a plan for you and me even before the foundation of the world. God already knew what day, what time, what place, and what person would bring us into the world. God already had in mind how He wanted you and me to serve on this earth and in the body of Christ before we were ever born. Jeremiah the prophet was called to ministry before he was born. Jeremiah 1:5 says, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” (NIV) God already had a plan for Jeremiah to be a prophet even before He was born. God knew the purpose that He wanted Jeremiah to fulfill.

Through Christ, we were chosen before creation as holy and blameless and predestined to be adopted as God’s children, His sons and daughters. Jesus Christ is the one that makes man holy and blameless. God created us knowing that we would sin and would need a Savior to redeem us from our sins. God already had in mind that Jesus would be the sacrificial lamb to redeem the world from sin. Jesus was chosen before the creation of the world to redeem us from our sins and to give us eternal life by sacrificing his precious blood on the cross. We are justified through Christ Jesus. Without Jesus, the creation of man, the love of man, God’s relationship with man, the forgiveness of man, and life eternal would not be possible. Colossians 1:16 says, “For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, powers, rulers, or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.” (NIV)

***Created Out of God’s Love.***

Before the beginning of creation, there was love between God and Jesus. God’s love existed before time because God is love. God had us in His heart before the creation of the world. He created you and me with love and care and with the intent to have a relationship with Him. When the Bible refers to love as being patient, love is kind, love is not envy, love does not boast as it says in 1 Corinthians 13, that love refers to God. God is patient and kind and does not envy and does not boast. God’s love extends to all man. Just as God loves us, He wants us to love Him and love others. Love is so important to God that He has given us two great commandments. The first is “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” The second is “Love your neighbor as yourself”. We are to love others just as much as we love ourselves. How we show love to others is in our willingness to serve others.

God loved us so much that He created us in His image. God did not create us as robots but to be functional. We were created to be like Him in our personalities, our emotions, and our intellect. We have God’s intellect to do such things as to think, to reason, to make decisions, to invent and to create. As believers, we can operate with the mind of Christ. We have a conscience that reflects God’s holiness. We know the difference between evil and good. We were created in righteousness with the potential to be patient, kind, humble, respectful, compassionate, honest, forgiving, and empathetic. When we perform these deeds through our strength, they can be conditional or prideful but when they are done through God’s love, then God can get the glory., God also created us with the intent to fellowship with others, just like He desires to fellowship with us, reflecting God’s triune nature as well as His love.

***Created to Glorify God.***

*“Your Kingdom purpose is the service God has gifted you to perform, that has eternal value. More specifically, your Kingdom purpose is that thing you do, that you do not do – but that God does through you.”* **3**

*We Glorify God Through Praise*

The next time that you can enjoy the outdoors, look around. Take note of the radiant sun, the blue skies, the swaying of the tree branches, and the blooming flowers. Listen to the chirping birds and feel the caress of the gentle fresh wind as it touches your face. What you are experiencing is God through nature. You are experiencing the sights and sounds of God through His creations. God’s magnificence and splendor are being displayed as nature functions in the way that God purposed it to function. God created all things to glorify Him or in other words, to honor Him with praise, admiration, or worship. When we see God’s glory in nature, we see how amazing and wonderful God is. We are seeing His power and majestic beauty.

If God is glorified in nature, how much more is He glorified through mankind? Our responsibility as God’s children is to glorify God through praise and worship. Psalms 15:6 says, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.” (NIV) There is also a verse in the bible that expresses that God inhabits the praises of His people. Whether we praise God in words, in song, in dance, by playing an instrument, by lifting our hands, or by some other means, God's presence will be manifested when we praise Him. This is when the glory of God will fall. This is when the miracles, signs, and wonders can be manifested.

God values our praise. Jesus told the Pharisees that if the people had kept quiet, he would have gotten the stones to praise him. (Luke 19:36 -40) As we praise and worship God, we are also being blessed. That time of praise and worship can end up being a time of deliverance. It can also be a time of revival or restoration bringing us to a place where we can hear God and God can work through us to renew our minds. God desires to commune with us and is seeking those who will praise and worship Him in spirit and truth as stated in John 4:23 -24.

*We Glorify God by Obeying His Word*

We also glorify God when we obey His word. Obedience to God’s word is the way we grow personally and the way we draw closer to God. In 1 John 2:5, it says, “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this, we know that we are in Him.” “God wants us to hear His Word, to know His Word, to trust His Word, and to keep His Word…. We can only keep His Word if we trust His Word. We can only trust His Word if we hear His Word, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." And we can only keep His Word if we hear, know, and believe in our hearts ALL that God has said in and through His Holy Word.”**4**

*We Glorify God by Proclaiming His Truth*

God has not only given us the eyes to see His magnificence but also the words to proclaim His Truth. “In the Bible, “proclaim” signifies making a public announcement or sharing the good news.” **15** We are all called to proclaim to others God’s Truth about sin, love, judgment, repentance, and salvation. When we talk about our faith to others, we are proclaiming God’s Truth. It is not only in spoken word but the songs that are sung or danced to, proclaim the attributes and power of God. We use our gifts in such a way that God’s Truth is being proclaimed through us. Luke 4: 18, it says “The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,” (NIV).

We are to be an example of Christ through how we live our lives and in how we serve others. We are the temple of God and God’s Holy Spirit dwells inside of us. No matter where we go, we are carrying His glory.

*We Glorify God Through Serving*

When God blessed Adam and Eve, and said to them in Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it”, He was giving them a command and a responsibility to rule over the earth. He was telling them to oversee and manage the earth’s resources. God was giving them the authority to take control of, to exercise power over, and to dominate the earth. God has called us to lead or take charge. Man is to serve as the king of the earth. What do kings do? They lead. They rule. They govern. They make life-changing decisions. They are problem solvers, providers, overseers, and inventors, as examples. They hold responsibility for the lives of others. I once heard a politician say,“Rule with a servant's heart” and “Lead with the heart of a king”.I also heard someone say that “leaders are servants”.

The body of Christ is who will carry out God’s work in the world. God has given us gifts so that we can serve in the body and demonstrate the love of Christ. In the body of Christ, we serve with compassion and out of love. Every purpose that we fulfill in the body of Christ should be an act of love. Serving should not be a chore but a privilege. Serving should not be done out of guilt or obligation but cheerfully. Serving is about utilizing our gifts, talents, and abilities to glorify God. Using our gifts is God’s love in action. Serving is about utilizing our gifts, talents, and abilities to help unify and strengthen the body of Christ. We are giving from what God has given us. Nothing is ours; everything about us belongs to God. What we accomplish on earth is what we put into action and what God allows us to accomplish.

**Chapter #3:**

**Gifts for God’s Purpose**

I am thankful that God uses people, experiences, and places to speak into our lives. It wasn’t until I said yes to accepting Christ into my life that I was able to understand His Will for me. It wasn’t until I said yes to the calling to dance for Him, that the dance ministry began to take form and prosper. When I said yes to the call, I was saying to God that I was willing to be used by Him according to the purpose and plan He has for me. It is your choice to say yes to God’s Will for your life, but when you do, your life will never be the same.

***What is the Meaning of Being Called***

In Matthews 22:14, Jesus says, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” (ESV) This verse summarized the parable about a king who invited many people to attend his son’s wedding banquet, but no one showed up. People either ignored the invitation, refused the invitation, or were preoccupied with doing their own thing. The king decided that those people that he invited did not deserve to attend the wedding banquet, so invitations were given out again, and this time to anyone that the king’s servants met on the streets. These people accepted and were guests at the wedding. One man did not come dressed appropriately for the wedding and the king had him thrown out of the wedding.

Being “called” is about being invited. We are first called or invited to a relationship with Him by becoming a disciple and a follower of Jesus. You may sense the calling by hearing someone share the gospel, through reading the Bible for yourself, through watching someone’s life, or through some type of ministry, for example. The call to follow Jesus goes out to all people, no matter their background, talents, or circumstances. How you respond to the invitation or call determines whether you are chosen. The ones who wholeheartedly decide to accept the calling or invitation and who then bear fruit are considered the chosen meaning they have said “yes” to the calling and yes to living their lives for Jesus.

In addition to that call, God calls us into relationships with others inviting us into families, communities, and churches. God also calls us to roles, vocations, or professions. Throughout our lives, we may have many callings and one of our callings is to join God in His work in the kingdom. “Calling is really about God saying, ‘I have a plan and it involves you and it involves us. God guides us, walks with us, and enables us to do what He calls us to do.” **5**

God has given us gifts so that we can do whatever He is calling us to do. When I think of a gift, I think of something willingly given without expecting anything in return. God has given us many gifts. Through Jesus Christ, we have the gift of God’s unconditional love, the gift of salvation, the gift of eternal life, the gift of grace and mercy, and the list goes on. God has given us some gifts that enable us to function in our humanness, other gifts for our pleasure, and even more gifts so that we may serve his people. God has given us natural gifts and talents, the fruit of the Spirit, and spiritual gifts. Let me expound on what these gifts comprise.

***What are Natural Gifts?***

God has given us natural gifts and talents that we have from birth. Natural gifts include the ability to see, hear, speak, walk, and talk but also include having the aptitude to do something such as teach or work with your hands, or manage people. Aptitude means that you have the potential to learn and develop a skill through practice or training. A talent is a natural skill or ability to do something without having any experience or training. Some people have natural talents for singing, dancing, public speaking, and writing poetry as examples. God does use our talents and our skills and abilities to serve Him whether it is in our homes, schools, churches, or the marketplace. However, there may be one or two skills, abilities, or talents that are tied to your purpose.

I was called by God to dance to help encourage the body of Christ, but I was also being called to the marketplace to make a difference in young people's lives by teaching high school math. This is how the story flows:

Math has always been my favorite subject in school. I guess you could say that I had a natural ability for doing math because solving math problems was easy for me. Even though I enjoyed math, I did not enjoy my math classes. All my math teachers made math seem hard and boring. At the age of fourteen, I remember saying that I would never become a teacher. For various reasons, that type of career did not appeal to me. When I graduated from college, I graduated with a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Illinois in Champaign, Urbana. According to statistics, it was unlikely for an African American female growing up on the west side of Chicago in a single-parent home to graduate with such a degree, as Mechanical Engineering, but God made it possible. Against all odds, God blessed me with a career in Mechanical engineering and exposed me to people, places, and things that I had never experienced. Overall, I was very grateful for every door God opened for me, but I also had to deal with not being accepted in a field that was dominated by white males.

God had been doing some mighty work in my life with the blessing of a church home, a ministry of dance, singing in the choir, and working with youth ministry. I did not know how He would be able to help me with my career. It didn’t take long for me to realize that God was working in ways I never could have imagined. After stepping into the corporate world where I felt like a “square peg in a round hole”, people started speaking into my life and asking me if I ever considered teaching. I would get random comments from friends and coworkers saying I was good at teaching or training others and people would ask me if I had ever considered teaching.

I didn’t know at that time that God was preparing me for a career change but I felt it strange that so many different people were emphasizing the same thing to me. When I did not expect it, I received an email from the Chicago Board of Education offering me an opportunity to change careers and to go back to school for a master’s degree in education with my tuition paid in full. I trusted that God had opened another door for me to walk through and t confirmation came when I was told that I would not have to pay anything, and it would only take two years to get a master's degree while I worked as a high school math teacher without any experience.

I took the necessary steps to change careers and become a high school math teacher and I never looked back or had regrets about my decision. Once again, God made the impossible become possible. Not only has God blessed me with many years of teaching, but he has also allowed me to become a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) Specialist for an elementary school for 5 years and a STEAM ((Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math) Specialist for a high school for 4 years incorporating my background and experience in Mechanical Engineering to foster the ideas and activities that I would implement for the school.

It has been a blessing to see the ways God has moved in my life to keep me grounded in my faith, to show me that I have a purpose, and to let me that the natural gifts He has given me are important.

***What is the Fruit of the Spirit?***

Jesus said in John 14:26, ‘But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (NIV). It is a blessing to know that when we receive Christ into our lives, we receive a gift and that is the gift of the Holy Spirit. God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we may be our Helper, helping us to become more like Jesus Christ. When we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, we always have the presence of God with us because He dwells inside of us. The Word of God tells us that the Holy Spirit is our comforter, our counselor, and our peace. The Holy Spirit empowers. It is through the Holy Spirit we can understand who God is and understand how God’s word applies to our life. The Holy Spirit empowers us to glorify God and proclaim His Truth. The Holy Spirit not only empowers us but also purifies us, reveals to us, and unities us. **6**

When we use our gifts to serve others, we operate through the Holy Spirit. **“The work of the Holy Spirit is to manifest the active presence of God in the world, and especially in the**

**church.” 7  In whatever capacity that we serve in God’s kingdom, we want people to see Jesus in us. We want people to see Jesus’s power working in our weakness. We want people to see His grace covering our sins. We want people to see the fruit of the Spirit flowing and evident in our lives. Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is “**love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness**,** and self-control” (NIV). The Fruit of the Spirit are character traits that are produced by the Holy Spirit and become evident in the lives of believers, and they live out their faith in God.

***What are Spiritual Gifts?***

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12: 4-7 (NIV))

Every gift that God has given to the body of Christ is important. God has given spiritual gifts to build up the church. Every spiritual gift serves a purpose and can bring the life-changing power of God into manifestation to meet and answer human needs. “A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified, and believers are edified.”. **8** In 1 Peter 4, we find that spiritual gifts were placed into two categories, speaking, and serving.Spiritual gifts are effective if they are used for God’s glory and not our own.

The spiritual gifts include the following:

**Speaking and Serving Gifts**

1. Apostles – those who are sent as messengers with a specific commission.
2. Prophets – Individuals who receive and convey God’s messages and revelations.
3. Evangelists – Those who proclaim the gospel and lead others to faith in Christ.
4. Pastors (shepherds) – Leaders who provide spiritual care and guidance to the church.
5. Teachers – Those who are skilled in explaining and sharing God’s Word.
6. Word of Wisdom – A deep understanding of God’s truth and the ability to apply it practically to life situations.
7. Word of Knowledge – Special insight and knowledge of God’s Word and His Will.
8. Faith – A Supernatural ability to trust God and His promises in extraordinary circumstances.
9. Gifts of Healing – Praying for and witnessing physical, emotional, or spiritual healing in others through divine intervention.
10. Effecting of Miracles – the ability to perform extraordinary signs and wonders, demonstrating God’s power.
11. Prophecy- Speaking forth God’s messages, including words of edification, exhortation, and comfort.
12. Distinguishing of Spirits – Distinguishing between different spirits, discerning whether they are of God, human, or evil origin.
13. Speaking in Tongues – The ability to speak in unknown languages as a form of prayer or communication with God.
14. Interpretation of Tongues – The gift of interpreting messages spoken in tongues, making them understandable to others.
15. Prophecy – the gift of speaking forth God’s messages, emphasizing edification, exhortation, and comfort.
16. Serving – The capacity to serve others selflessly and meet practical needs within the church.
17. Teaching – The ability to communicate and explain God’s truth effectively to others.
18. Encouragement – the gift of encouraging and motivating others toward spiritual growth and maturity.
19. Giving – the ability to give generously and cheerfully, contributing resources for the benefit of the church.
20. Leadership – The gift of providing leadership, organization, and guidance within the church.
21. Mercy – The gift of showing compassion, empathy, and kindness to those who are suffering or in distress.
22. Helps – Individuals who serve others selflessly, often behind the scenes.
23. Administration (Leadership) – those who provide guidance and organization.**9**

To determine which gifts God has given you will involve several considerations. Seek God in prayer and ask Him to give you wisdom, understanding, and clarity as to identify your spiritual gifts. You can also ask Christians who know you of the spiritual gifts that they see in you. Another option in determining your spiritual gifts is to take one of the online spiritual gifts assessments. Seek advice as to the best assessment to use. Some of your gifts will be revealed to you as you serve in God’s kingdom.

**Chapter 4:**

***Gifted for God’s Purpose***

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)*

It was stated that “Your Kingdom purpose is the service God has gifted you to perform, that has eternal value. More specifically, your Kingdom purpose is that thing you do, that you do not do – but that God does through you.” **10** When you find the purpose God has for you in His kingdom, you find you. Your purpose is rooted in your identity in Christ and your relationship with God. You operate in using your gifts at the level of being comfortable with who you are, how God sees you, and how you see others. You operate in the understanding of your purpose based on the depth of your relationship with the Father

**Who Are You?**

How do you see yourself? Do you know your talents, abilities, interests, passions, weaknesses, or strengths? How does God see you? What does the Bible say about you? How often have you said or thought, “I have a destiny”? How do others perceive you? Do they see you as generous, helpful, or witty? Whether you were able to answer these questions or not, you are in the right place now because you are reading this book.

Your identity answers the question of who you are. Psychology Today says, “Identity encompasses the values people hold, which dictate the choices they make. An identity contains multiple roles—such as a mother, teacher, and U.S. citizen—and each role holds meaning and expectations that are internalized into one’s identity. Identity continues to evolve over the course of an individual’s life.” **11** Psychology Today went on to discuss that your identity is formed by “Discovering and developing one’s potential, choosing one’s purpose in life, and finding opportunities to exercise that potential and purpose. Identity is also influenced by parents and peers during childhood and experimentation in adolescence”.

When we receive Jesus Christ in our lives, our identity is redefined by who we are in Jesus Christ. We come to learn that God knows us better than we know ourselves. Psalms 139 speaks about God creating our inmost being and that we were fearfully and wonderfully made. Psalms 139 also says that God knows our thoughts and our ways. There is nothing about us that is hidden from Him. Luke 12:6 says that there is no sparrow that God has forgotten. If God has not forgotten about the sparrow, He has not forgotten about you. Although we may not be able to tell one sparrow from the next, God knows each one intimately and provides for them all. How much more consideration does God give to each of us? We are so valuable to God that He even knows the number of strands of hair on our heads. We are children of God and heirs of God. God loves us as a perfect Father. God has crowned you with glory and honor as the pinnacle and final act of the six days of creation. You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. You are God’s special possession. **12**

We need to know ourselves who we are and not allow others to define us. Our interests, abilities, likes and dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, and values are important because we are being shaped into the person that God designed us to be. Knowing who we are enables us to function with our unique purpose. Believing in and accepting yourself and how God has made you, how God sees you and the gifts He has given you will allow you to continue to soar in everything you do.

**Seeing You From A Different Perspective**

How Does God See You?

How Do Loved Ones See You?

How Do Others See You?

***God Knows Best***

*Who is God?*

Your purpose is connected to knowing God. For example, you cannot be a server in a restaurant without first knowing about the restaurant and how customers are to be treated. Similarly, you cannot effectively use your gifts without first knowing about the one who has given you the gifts to use. When we come to know God, we become more connected in seeing the way He sees, hearing the way He hears, and speaking the way He would want us to speak. We become familiar with the heart of God.

So, who is God? I have already expounded on the fact that God is love. There are so many other ways to describe who God is and His nature and character can be found in the Bible but on a personal level, God can also be described based on what He means to you. When we experience God for ourselves, He works in and through us in unique ways to show us who He is and what He can do. In essence, this is how we derive our testimonies. Our testimonies stem from the marvelous works God does in us, through us, and around us. Because of our personal experiences of God working in our lives, we don’t just acknowledge but sincerely embrace Him as our Father, our Physician, our Friend, Our Peace, our Protector, and our Sovereign Lord, just to name a few of the things God becomes to us.

At the same time, God is described in the Bible as being a person. We cannot physically describe what He looks like, but we can describe His characteristics based not only on His holy Word but from our own experiences of His faithfulness. We begin to see God not just as a Spirit but as characterized as good, gracious, merciful, faithful, holy, omniscient, omnipresent, just, perfect, unchanging, “The Living God”, the “Everlasting God”, Adonai which means Lord Master, Elohim, which means The Creator, El Shaddai which means God Almighty and Jehovah-Jireh which means The Lord, our Provider. God has many more names and is used at different times for different purposes. Without knowing God for yourself, you would not be able to view Him in the way He is being described. When you get to know someone more intimately, you begin to call them by other names that are more affectionate or more meaningful to you. Just in the description alone, you can sense how powerful and life-changing a personal relationship can be with Him when you can identify His character, describe His nature, and see Him as not just God.

Listening to God

Trusting and Submitting to God

*“God is not a man, so he does not lie.  He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?” (Numbers 19:23 NLT)*

Know that you are not running alone because God is here for you. He is your Father, your friend, your ultimate partner in ministry, and your trainer. God knows of our potential to be drawn in by the schemes of the enemy. God knows of our potential to fall. God is not expecting us to be perfect. God does not expect you to serve in His kingdom alone. He expects us to depend on Him. It is out of an intimate relationship with him that you will be able to weather any storms. It is in Him that you will be able to prosper. God says this in John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (NIV)

God will guide you in everything you need to know and in everything you need to do. Proverbs 16:8 says, “Before you do anything, put your trust totally in God and not in yourself. Then every plan you make will succeed.” (TPT) Listen for God’s voice. Intimacy with God should bring us to a place of hearing God’s voice. God can speak to us in unique ways. He can speak to us through dreams, through people, situations, and through how the Holy Spirit moves in our thoughts, feelings, and senses. You must stay connected to the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit will empower you with wisdom and revelation and will enable you to speak and do things that you could not have done on your own. God will continue to establish you through the Holy Spirit giving you direction, and guidance, teaching you, interceding for you, and helping you fulfill the Will of God.

When I initially started in the ministry of dance, God was my ultimate teacher, my ultimate choreographer, my ultimate encourager, my ultimate leader, and my ultimate partner. I had no one to model after and no one to help me plan the ministry other than God. He was carrying me through the process. God gave me time and room to mess up and to grow. As I grew in my relationship with Him, my eyes were open to how to dress more appropriately as a minister of dance. God gave me visions for choreographing dances. It wasn’t me leading the ministry but God leading the ministry through me. He gave me the words and ideas of how to lead. He enabled me to dance in a way to glorify Him. He brought other experienced dancer leaders into my life to encourage me, to help me, and to speak His Words to me through them. Some of the things that were said to me were not always easy to hear but I needed to be challenged. God was using them to push me to a higher level in my understanding of my calling and in my understanding of what God requires of me. When I was asked to lead the ministry, I was asked to be more transparent, to pray more, to love people more, and to go deeper in studying and understanding God’s Word and to teach God’s Word. It wasn’t about a title but about taking the steps to become the leader who would be able to carry God’s glory to others. Choreographing dances was not just about modeling and teaching movements, but it was about receiving and delivering a message from God that would be conveyed through movement. As dancers learned the choreography, they were not only being disciplined through movement but becoming copartners in the preaching of God’s word through movement.

**Chapter #5**

**Running With Your Gifts for Kingdom Purposes**

*”* Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, *let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith…” (Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV))*

Being a fan of the game of tennis, I enjoyed watching the movie, titled, “Never Give Up”. This movie was based on true events, about Brad Minns who became gifted as a professional deaf tennis player. Brad had many reasons to give up on himself, his education, and on pursuing his dreams, but he did not. At the age of three, was when Brad was diagnosed with 80 to 90 percent loss of hearing after experiencing an extremely high fever. Despite the challenges and the rejection that he experienced throughout his life; He kept moving forward. At the age of twenty, Brad became the number one deaf tennis player in the nation after winning the 1985 Men’s Single Tennis Finals for the deaf. The odds of Brad winning were against him. Yet, Brad held the title of number one deaf tennis player in the nation for five consecutive years.

In this movie, it was God who made it possible for Brad Minns to win and become the number one deaf tennis player in the nation. Brad was a man of faith. He trusted God. God showed the world that He could work through Brad to do what seemed impossible because Brad believed in Him. God enabled Brad to become a very skilled tennis player. If Brad had given up on what God had gifted and proposed to him to do, he would not have reached his destiny. Today, Brad serves as a tennis professional and personal trainer helping others to achieve their dreams. Brad also shares his testimony of living his life for Christ with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes group. **13**

I share this endearing movie reference with you because it is a great example of what using your gifts and perseverance in your purpose can do for God’s kingdom. You are called to be an overcomer. Believe in yourself. Stay focused and believe that God can do the impossible for you and through you. Surround yourself with a supportive community to help you through tough situations. No matter what you experience, you cannot give up on the purpose that God has for your life. It may seem easier to quit than to weather the storms. It may seem easier to become complacent than to step out on faith. It is easier to lean into your insecurities than to lean into God’s Word. It may seem easier to believe in the lies that you hear and see around you than to trust God. No matter how easy it may seem, you must not give up but keep operating in the gifts.

***Walking Worthy of Your Calling***

*“So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do.”*

*(1 Thess 1:11 NLT)*

*Let’s Go Deeper*

Apart from God, we are nothing. God has given us purpose. He has done and continues to do everything to make it possible for us to have a relationship with Him. He also continues to work to help us fulfill our purpose in His kingdom. God has chosen us, predestined us, (“marked beforehand”), created us, accepted us, redeemed us (put us in the right standing) through Jesus’ blood, given us grace (abundance of love, grace, favor), and saved us. He has given us an inheritance (the kingdom of God and all of God’s wonderful promises and blessings). God has sealed us with His Holy Spirit (His stamp for security and preservation) and He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing

*Do the work that is required*

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Heb 12:11 NIV)

When it comes to living out your purpose, God has called you to run a marathon race and not a sprint. A marathon runner cannot run a marathon if that runner does not train. A marathon race is an endurance sport and requires training, good health, and mental resilience. In a marathon, you need to pace yourself. If you run too fast, you will tire yourself out and if you run too slow you may give up. You must keep energy, patience, and passion in reserve for the many miles of running to come. You must be prepared with your bottle of water and have more than one pair of shoes, handy, if you are running a long distance. You also must make sure that you get enough sleep or rest and consume good nutrition. Moreover, a marathon runner must be self-disciplined enough to wake up early in the morning as well as disciplined enough to run during uncomfortable or inconvenient situations, including running while in some pain. Marathon running is a sport of willpower. There is no room for doubt.

You cannot fulfill your purpose if you are not willing to run the marathon. God is such a gentleman that He does not force us to do anything. Living for him and serving in His kingdom, is a choice you make. When you choose to say yes to doing His Will, and yes to His ways, then can He take hold of your steering “will”. You must first be willing to seek God. When you are serving in God’s kingdom you desire to seek Him. You desire more of Him because He is your source of activation for serving in His kingdom. He instructs and guides you on how to serve. When you choose to say yes to His will, you acquire a hunger and thirst for all the things that pertain to Him. You want to spend time in prayer. You want to spend time in His presence. You want to study His Word. You receive understanding, knowledge, and wisdom that inspires you to live for Him. You want to make a difference in the kingdom for the cause of Christ. Your time of praise and worship becomes more meaningful to you. You become more connected with the Holy Spirit. You have more depth to your walk and your service. You are standing on biblical principles. You are seeing and experiencing more because you are surrendering more of your life to Him.

We also must be willing to do the work of our calling. Work that can entail investing time in developing relationships, demonstrating acts of love, studying the word with others, using some of our funds to help others, opening our homes to others, and teaching or mentoring others.

When God called me to lead the dance ministries at my church, to teach dance at Dorolyn, and eventually teach for EITI, there was work involved. I spent much time praying for myself and praying for others. I was not always confident about leading, and I had to pray for strength and confidence to lead, teach, choreograph, and make the right ministry decisions. I had to be the shepherd to the sheep in the ministry or the dance class. I prayed for them and with them and watched over them as they developed as dance ministers. I had to study the word to be able to teach them with the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding that I was receiving from the Lord. For me to pour into others, my cup had to be filled. As I sought God, he continued to fill my cup with everything I needed to oversee the ministries and teach the classes. God continued to give me choreography and birth new ideas in me. He still uses me to choreograph songs and help with the church’s dance ministry team.

(To be continued)

*Be the salt and light of the world.*

(To be continued)

***Stay Committed***

When it comes to our calling, we can never assume or feel like we have reached the peak of ministry. God always has more to show us, more to pour into us, and more to experience and do in God’s kingdom. He wants to take us from glory to glory. Our responsibility is to stay put and keep alert. We must be in tune with the move of God. We must have the eyes to see, ears to hear, and the heart to receive what God is doing and how God is moving in our lives. Staying committed to your call means that you will stay in alignment with your God-given purpose by moving in the direction that God takes you. Transitions will occur. People will come and go. This does not denote that your season of ministry is over. God can have us in a waiting period because He is birthing something new. Isaiah 40:31 says, “but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” (ESV) Being Committed means that you will continue to move forward in your spiritual growth and development with an attitude of servant.

*Endure Hardships*

*Commit to the Process*

The race that you and I are running is a race of faith. God wants you and I to grow in our faith. He wants us to live for him, to trust him, and to help in bringing those who don’t know Him to His saving grace. The purpose that God has called you to is not only about serving in God’s kingdom but also about being planted in a position where you can grow spiritually. Through your calling, God may be able to reach the unreachable. People who have a different perspective, vision, or angle on life may not be attracted to church, per se, but attracted to what you do in the church. As you step out in faith to serve in your calling, God is molding your character, maturing you in your faith, transforming your heart so you are becoming more like Him. For this to happen, you must stay the course in this race of faith.

**(to be continued)**

*Commit to Serving*

*“What good is it, my brothers, and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:14-17 NIV)*

It was once said by a guest speaker on Moody Bible Institute radio station that “Christianity works best when it is an action.” God has not just called us to be known as Christians but to serve in the kingdom.When I first started going to Rock of Our Salvation Evangelical Free Church after graduating from college, I only knew one person there and that was the person that invited me. I visited at least 6 churches before deciding to make Rock my church home. When I was about to give up on finding a church home, I got a call from a male friend inviting me to the Rock. Once again, God was showing me his faithfulness even when I was not aware that He was with me.

Initially, the congregation of Rock church was small, so it was very easy to get to know people. The founder and Pastor of Rock Church, Pastor Raleigh B. Washington, and his wife Paulette Washington, were a very energetic, ambitious, and outgoing couple who loved people. Pastor Washington put a lot of emphasis on racial reconciliation, fellowship, and discipleship. Pastor Washington made sure that everyone in the congregation was involved in the church. The church grew very rapidly as many people supported and embraced the vision. As the church evolved, I was able to sing in the choir, take a bible class, and work with the children's choir and the youth ministry while still taking dancing classes outside the church. As my faith increased, my desire to live and please God increased.

I heard a TV evangelist say that “purpose will find you, serve the purpose”. I didn’t find the ministry of dance, the ministry of dance found me through the miraculous leading of God who spoke through my worship leader who then spoke to me. I was in a place where I was ready to give up dancing altogether because it no longer rights in my spirit. The movements on the outside were not align with how God was transforming the heart.

I wonder sometimes that if I had not found Rock Church how different my life would be today. If I had not joined the choir and met my worship leader, would I still be dancing? I did not attend Rock Church for no other reason than to find a church home. However, God positioned me with the right church and the right people so that my heart could be opened to His call. Getting involved in the church allowed me to find a community of support so that my faith could grow, but it also allowed me to use my gifts of singing and working with youth and find my calling which was to dance for the Lord.

**(to be continued)**

***Third Main Point: Finish Your Race***

*“but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31 ESV)*

Support A – Avoid Being Distracted

Support B: Stay Connected to the Vision (Habakkuk 2:2-3 NKJV)

Support C – Victory in Jesus.

Hebrews 12:2 – “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer, and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (NIV)

**(to be continued)**

**Chapter 6**

**Running for the Prize**

**“…for the joy set before you...”**

***First Main Point: Serving with Your gifts is a Joy*** (James 1:2-4 NIV)

“Eyes that focus on what is beautiful bring joy to the heart and hearing a good report refresh.

and strengthens the inner being.” Proverbs 15:30 (TPT)

***Second Main Point: Recognize the Blessings***

Support A: The Blessing of God When We Use Our Gifts

Support B: The Blessings of Serving Others

Support C: The Blessings that Come From Others

**Third Main Point: Wanting to hear, “Well Done Good and Faithful Servant”**

2 Tim 4:7 –**“**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (NIV)

Matthew 25:21 – “His lord said to him, ‘Well *done,* good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” (NKJV)

**Do Not Read Below – Need to be Rewritten**

**Conclusion**

**From Chapter 1: Conclusion**:

**Restate topic**: Created for Kingdom Purpose

God created everything with a kingdom purpose. As His children, we are all called to glorify Him, proclaim His Truths, and rule over the earth. We rule as servants and lead as kings using our unique gifts, abilities, and talents.

**From Chapter 2: Conclusion**:

**Restate topic**: Gifted for Kingdom Purpose

God is the only one who can fulfill His purpose in you. We cannot walk in that purpose if we are not connected to the right sources. Our purpose is connected to knowing God, knowing ourselves, and being committed to serving. God will give you the eyes to see, ears to hear and the heart to receive from Him as you move in the purpose that He has called you to. You also must continue to stay connected to your purpose by keeping the vision in mind, developing your gifts and skills, and building positive relationships. You also must maintain a kingdom mindset by being optimistic, obedient, and emotionally stable. My testimony of thriving in dance ministry for 34 years was about a journey of faith. Through my faith, I was able to follow the leading of God for when it was time to start the ministry and expand the ministry. Through my faith, God blessed the ministry and opened many doors for building relationships with other dance ministers within my church across Chicago and even internationally. I was able to teach beyond the church walls and grow in my biblical knowledge and in my skill of dancing for the Lord. After 34 years, I was able to pass the ministry on to another dance minister whom I can assist and watch the ministry continue to go from glory to glory.

Every part of our life is valuable. We all have been on a journey to discover and embrace the purpose to which God has called us. Our interests, talents, gifts, abilities, likes and dislikes, and strengths and weaknesses are part of our character. It is the way that God has created us to fulfill our unique purpose in His kingdom. God brings our purpose to fruition in His timing and when He thinks we are ready to receive. Sometimes it may require us to be in the right place around the right people, or in the right position before God can make the assignment clear to us. God wants to work in and through you in ways you cannot imagine but you can only experience when you learn more about your identity, who God is, and being committed to serving in the His kingdom.

**From Chapter 4: Conclusion**:

**Restate topic**: Running with Your Gift for Kingdom Purposes

No matter what obstacles arise, you must stay in the race and not give up on yourself, God, or His purpose for your life. You will not fulfill your kingdom purpose or glorify God or grow in spiritual maturity if you allow people and personal issues and other circumstances to cause you to give up on your god given purpose. You must persevere through the challenges, feelings, and spiritual attacks. My testimony testifies to the challenges and temptations that I experience in the ministry of dance. What has helped me to stay the course is keeping my eyes, my mind, and my heart fixed on Jesus. Jesus is where I and you will find the strength and the victory to overcome every obstacle.

Just like you have experienced challenges and temptations that have tried to hinder you in fulfilling God’s purpose in your life, I have experienced challenges and temptations in the ministry of dance. What has helped me to stay the course is keeping my eyes, my mind, and my heart fixed on Jesus. Jesus is where I and you will find the strength and the victory to overcome every obstacle.

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**Bible Versions**

* King James Version – KJV
* English Standard Version – ESV
* The Message (MSG)
* New International Version - NIV
* New King James Version – NKJV
* The Passion Translation (TPT)

**Definitions**

1. ‘***kingdom’*, or ‘*God’s kingdom*’, or ‘*kingdom of God’***

The biblical meaning of “kingdom” is God’s kingly rule — his reign, his action, his lordship, his sovereign governance.” **1** “The “kingdom of God*”* is a spiritual kingdom, an eternal kingdom” not a physical place. It is the realm of God's sovereignty, presence, and influence in our lives, where God reigns and rules over us with love, justice, mercy, and grace. In the kingdom, we find hope, peace, joy, and purpose that can only be found through living under God's rule.” **3**

**Footnotes**

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