#  **Table of Content**

Introduction

Chapter 1 - - Finding My God-Given Purpose

Chapter 2 - - Created for God’s Purpose

Chapter 3 - - Gifts for God’s Purpose

Chapter 4 - - Gifted for God’s Purpose

Chapter 5 - - Running with Your Gifts for God’s Purpose

Chapter 6 - - Running for the Prize - “…for the joy set before you...”

Conclusion

**Chapter #1:**

**Finding My God-Given Purpose**

**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.

**Second Main Point: Pursuing 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 enabled me to dance for Him, choreograph dances and lead the ministry

**Support B: Surrendering All**

**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**: **We Are 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: We Are 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**: **We Are 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)

**Chapter #3:**

**Gifts 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 Purpose**

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

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

 **Example:** Do you accept yourself (abilities, interests, weaknesses, strengths, ? (

**Example:** our identity is in Jesus

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

**Support A: How does your family see You?**

**Example:** What does your family see in you?

**Example:** Sacrifice to live for Him

**Support B: How do church members, friends, and coworkers 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?

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

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

**Support C: Beyond the Gift is God’s Purpose**

**Chapter #5:**

**Running with Your Gifts**

*” … 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**: **Dive Deeper**

**Example:** A deeper Relationship with God

**Example:** A 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: Listening to God**

**Example:** Listen for God’s voice.

**Example:** Stay Connected to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

**Support C: Trusting God**

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

**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 for the Prize**

**“…for the joy set before you...”**

**First Main Point: Serving With 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: Recognizing 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 time there 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. That recital may have been the encouragement that some may have needed to strengthen their faith. That recital may have been the inspiration that others may have needed 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 body of Christ and ultimately, 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. Each of us has 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 fulfill the purpose for which God has called you to while here on earth. 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 “light of the world”. We are called to be movers, shakers, and life changers.

 This book is here to serve as a source of inspiration, a source of knowledge, and a source for reflection. The intent is to remind you that God has a plan for your life, and it is not based on your age, your background, your level of education, or even your level of spiritual maturity, but it is based on your relationship with Him. God can only use those who make themselves available to Him, not those who sit on their gifts. For those who want to live for our Father, glorify our Father, and say yes to His Will, God is calling you. God sees you, knows you, and most importantly, created you with a purpose. You are not alone in this endeavor because our heavenly Father will be with you every step of the way.

 The following chapters will allow you to embark on a soul-searching journey to help you embrace your purpose in excellence. As a means of testifying to God’s goodness and how He wants to move in our lives, I share my testimony in the first chapter of this book. I expound on how God found me, gifted me, and gave me kingdom purpose. Throughout the book, I share personal experiences of how God has called and used me. 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 wants to go. Let us make sure we are on the path that will enable us to become what God wants us to become so that we are living an abundant life in Him and impacting lives for His glory. One day, we want to hear God say, “Well done, good and faithful servant”.

**Chapter #1**

**My Story: Finding My God-Given Purpose**

***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.

*Surrendering All*

 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.

 Sharing my experience, I have choreographed over one hundred dances through the many years of serving in the dance ministry at my church. 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.

 Just as our creations bring us satisfaction, joy, beauty, and fulfillment, we cannot fathom the depth of God’s delight in His creation. In Genesis it says, “God surveyed all he had made and said, ‘I love it!’ For it pleased him greatly…” (Genesis 1:31 TPT). Let’s take a look at 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.

***We Are 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)

***We Are 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.

***We Are 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 telling 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 Jesus by becoming a disciple and a follower of Jesus. You may sense the calling by hearing someone share the gospel, through reading the Bible, 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 being called into a relationship with Him, 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 freely given us many gifts. Through Jesus Christ, we have received His gift of God’s unconditional love, His gift of salvation, His gift of eternal life, His gift of grace and mercy, and the list goes on. In addition to these gifts, God has also given all mankind gifts to enable us to function in our humanness, to partake in pleasure and to serve others. 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. For example, some people have the aptitude to work hard, or to play a certain sport or learn a language. 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. Just to give you a few 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.

***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 in our lives, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit as our Helper, helping us to become more like Jesus Christ and helping us in every other aspect of our life. 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 us. We are given strength or power in our innermost being through the Holy Spirit working in us. 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 should become evident in the lives of believers, as we live out our 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 believer or follower of Christ has received a special gift from God to serve the body of Christ. Every spiritual gift serves a purpose. God has called us and equipped us with spiritual gifts so that we take an active role in the kingdom. A “Spiritual gift is a unique gift given by God through his Holy Spirit to believers in Jesus for the purpose of bringing glory to Him and strengthening His church.” **8** In the New Testament, the phrase spiritual gift is rooted in two words, “Gods grace and His Holy Spirit”. Paul and Peter referred to spiritual gifts as “charismata” which means the grace of God or “Pneumatikos”, meaning of or relating to the Spirit. ***9*** With a spiritual gift, you have a God-given ability to serve God by serving the church. Your spiritual gift is recognized and affirmed by the church. In essence, people in your local church know your spiritual gift(s) and can attest to how they are edified by your spiritual gift(s). 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. Apostle - one sent as a messenger with a specific commission.
2. Prophet – one with a God-given ability to speak forth a message from God’s Word that edifies, exhorts, and/or comforts the body.
3. Evangelist – a messenger of the good news; one who shares the gospel clearly so that others may come to faith in Jesus.
4. Pastor - a shepherd; one cares for the local congregation by feeding, tending to, and protecting the flock.
5. Teacher - an instructor who cares for the local congregation and teaches the truth of the Word clearly and understandably.
6. Word of Wisdom – a clear insight into God’s truth and the true nature of things so that application can be made from that clear insight.
7. Word of Knowledge – a seeking to know, investigation, an inquiry of god’s revelation and truth, communication of knowledge.
8. Faith – an unusual measure of trust in God. This is more than the faith all must have for salvation.
9. Gifts of Healing – the ability to restore physical, emotional, and/or spiritual health through divine intervention which includes praying for and witnessing.
10. Effecting of Miracles – workings of supernatural acts that can only be explained as demonstrations of God’s power.
11. Prophecy- the ability to speak forth a message from God’s Word that edifies, exhorts, and/or comforts the body.
12. Distinguishing of Spirits – the supernatural ability to distinguish between different spirits, discerning whether they are of God, human, or evil origin.
13. Speaking in Tongues – the supernatural ability to speak an unlearned language as a form of prayer or communication with God.
14. Interpretation of Tongues – a supernatural ability to translate an unlearned language, making it understandable to others.
15. Serving – the capacity to attend to, serve, aid, and minister to others selflessly and meet practical needs within the church.
16. Teaching – the ability to instruct and teach the truth of the Word clearly and understandably.
17. Encouragement (or Exhortation) – the ability to encourage, appeal, comfort, and urge others toward spiritual growth and maturity.
18. Giving – the ability to give, share, or impart generously and cheerfully.
19. Leadership – the ability “to stand before”; the God-given ability to lead others so that they may follow the Lord.
20. Mercy – to demonstrate compassion, and empathy, and to feel sympathy with the misery of another, especially sympathy manifested in action; to extend help.
21. Helps – one who serves others selflessly, often behind the scenes.
22. Administration (Leadership) – those who provide guidance and organization.**10**

 We may possess different spiritual gifts, but it is God’s plan for us to function together and be unified in purpose having one heart and one mind that is centered in Jesus. When we are alone and not using our gift in the body of Christ, the church is incomplete. When we are using our gifts in the body, and working together, then we are whole as a church.

 To determine which gifts God has given you will involve several considerations. First, seek God in prayer and ask Him to give you wisdom, understanding, and clarity to help you in identifying your spiritual gifts. You can also take a spiritual gift assessment inventory. There are two resources provided in the back of this book. One of the resources, *Finding Your spiritual Gifts*, is the bestselling spiritual gift inventory pamphlet which can be purchased on amazon.com. The other resource is a spiritual gift online assessment that can be taken at your leisure. You also may have Christians in your life who know you well and can share with you the spiritual gifts that they see in you. You will have to determine the best assessment resource for you. Some of your gifts will be revealed to you as you voluntarily serve in God’s in the body of Christ.

**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.” **11** When we find our purpose, we find our identity. Our purpose is rooted in our identity in Christ. We operate in the understanding of our purpose based on the depth of your relationship with the Father. W operate in using your gifts at the level of being comfortable with who you are, how God sees us, and how we see ourselves.

**Who Are You?**

 How do you see yourself? Do you know your talents, abilities, interests, passions, weaknesses, or strengths? How often have you said or thought, “I have a destiny”? Our identity answers the question “Who are you?”. Our identity stems from what is inside of us. According to *Psychology Today*, “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.” **12** *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 because we 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. We need to know who we are and not allow others to define for us who we are. 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 in our unique purpose. Believing in and accepting how God has made us, how God sees us and the gifts He has given us will allow us to continue to soar in everything we do.

**Seeing You From A Different Perspective**

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5%3A16&version=ESV#fen-ESV-23251a)] they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16 NIV)

What Do Others See in You?

Sometimes our family can be our greatest critics and other times our family can be our greatest supporters. These are people who have lived with us for a large part of our lives. These are people who have seen us when we are not dressed in our Sunday best. Theses are people who have seen how we handle life when it comes to conflicts, gossip, bad and good news, losses, taking care of our home, managing money, work ethics, caring for others, church attendance and involvement, and so forth. Some believers may act one way when they are with their family, another way when they are with their church family, and another way when they are with friends or coworkers. As Christians, we must consider how we are living our lives before men. Our families knew how we were before we knew Christ. Now that we have dedicated our lives to living for Christ, there should be a difference in how we talk, how we act, and the choices we make. What exactly are others seeing in us? Who exactly are we portraying? Are they seeing qualities and characteristics that depict being a new creature in Christ Jesus or are they seeing the quick temper, gossiping and boastful person we use to be?

By no means is it meant for us to please men or live our lives for men. By no means is it meant for us to try to become someone that we are not. God wants us to be our authentic selves. God wants us to become more like Christ through His strength and not our own. We must depend on Him to bring about the changes in our lives that would glorify and honor Him. We simply can’t do it on our own because if we attempted, we would not be our true selves.

What is needed on our part is sacrifice. We must sacrifice our lives so we can live His life. As stated in Romans 12: 1-2, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.” (NIV) As we give our entire being, our heart, our love, our talents, our energy, and all our strength for God’s service, then our identity in Christ will become more evident to others. People will be able to see God’s love in action. People will then be able to affirm God’s work in us and through us.

***God Knows Best***

*Who is God?*

 So, who is God? There are so many ways to describe who God is, His nature and character as can be found in the Bible. On a personal level, God can also be described based on what He means to us. When we experience God for ourselves, we will come to know Him as our Father, our physician, our friend, our peace, our protector, and our comforter, just to name a few of the things God becomes to us. In addition to these qualities, God is also characterized in scripture as being good, gracious, merciful, faithful, holy, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, just, perfect, and unchanging. Depending on the context in the Bible, God is also labeled by different names such as the “Sovereign Lord”, “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. Without knowing God for us, we would not be able to view Him in the way He is being described. When we can relate to God by knowing His character and His nature, we then can embrace Him as the lover of our soul, the father to the fatherless, and the friend to the friendless. 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.

 Undoubtedly, we are very valuable to God and He loves and cares for us. When we discredit ourselves, we are discrediting the one who created us. We are speaking against everything God proclaims us to be. When we doubt our abilities, we are saying we have not faith in what God can do through us. When we fail to use our gifts, we are saying what God has given us is not important. While we are looking and seeing all of our human limitations, God is looking and seeing all the potential and greatness that He has put in us. He is waiting on you to “Be” who He has bless you to “Be”.

How Does God See Us?

 Not only should we know who God is but we should know how God sees us. Psalms 139 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 God’s dearly loved children, and He loves us as a perfect Father. “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1 NIV) God has crowned us with glory and honor. We are His special possession.

 God sees us differently from how we see ourselves. Psalms 17:8 says that we are the apple of God’s eye which denotes how precious and irreplaceable we are. In 1 Peter 2:9, we are described as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. We are God’s temple and His Holy Spirit dwells within us. (1 Corinthians 3:16). John 15:15 says, “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” (ESV)

How God sees us is not based on anything we can say or do but God sees us through the lens of His Son, Jesus, who died on the cross for us, who became our sin offering and our burnt offering. Jesus was our sin offering, taking on our sins so that His righteousness was transferred to us. As our burnt offering, Jesus’ righteousness, excellence, beauty, and perfection have been transferred to us. All that Jesus is before God, we became when we receive Him as our Lord and Savior. **13**

*Beyond the Gift is God’s Purpose*

*My Story*

 Do you remember the encounter that Jesus, who was a Jew, had with the Samaritan woman? Traveling from Jerusalem to Galilee, Jesus and His disciples took a shorter route through Samaria. While the disciples went into the village of Sychar to purchase food, Jesus sat at Jacob’s Well because He was tired and thirsty. The Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water and Jesus asked her for a drink. The woman questioned why Jesus would ask her for a drink because she was a social outcast. Jesus broke three Jewish customs by speaking to the woman, associating with a Samaritan, and asking the woman for a drink of water. Jesus offered the Samaritan woman the gift of salvation because He accepted her and was more concerned about her soul than the Jewish laws. (John 4:1-26)

 Some people will never set one foot inside the door of a church. Some people will never take their church involvement seriously because they only attend out of obligation or tradition. Whether we are in the church or outside the church, our mission is to all people. God wants to reach all people working through the gifts, talents, and abilities that He has given us. I was called by God to minister in dance to help encourage the body of Christ but to also reach people in ways that only the ministry of dance can do.

 God also called me to the marketplace to make a difference in young people's lives by teaching high school math and sharing the love of Christ with many hurting and lost teenagers. Here is how I accepted the call to become a high school math teacher:

 Math has always been my favorite subject in elementary and high school. Solving math problems was easy, sometimes challenging, but always fun 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 bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Illinois in Champaign, Urbana. According to statistics, this accomplishment was and is not common for an African American female growing up on the west side of Chicago in a single-parent home, but God made it possible. Against all odds, God blessed me with a career in Mechanical engineering and exposed me to certain people, places, and things that I had never experienced before. Overall, I was very grateful for every door God had opened for me. At the same time, I had to deal with not being accepted in a field that was dominated by white males.

 Knowing that God had blessed me with a church home, a ministry in dance, singing in the choir, and my role as one of the church youth leaders, I had no idea why He called me to such a challenging career. I had to deal with a historical struggle that have impacted black people and women for many decades. The struggle for equality. What I did not realize at that time was that God was working out the plans He had for my life and these plans were far greater than what I was experiencing on my job. After stepping into the corporate world where I felt like a “square peg in a round hole”, God was using that experience to build my character and prepare me for what was to come. God was also using me to be a light in some very narcissistic environment. If I was able to reach one person, through sharing my faith, the experience was worth it.

 Some of my coworkers saw that I was different because I was helpful rather than competitive. Some of my coworkers started asking me if I ever considered teaching. My coworkers were seeing an ability in me that I did not see in myself. I not only received comments about teaching from my coworkers, but friends and church members were also complimenting me on being a good teacher or trainer. As I kept receiving similar remarks, I began to question if God was trying to speak to me through other people. I did feel that it was strange that different people had similar perceptions of me and that people were sharing with me around the same time frame.

 A little time after that, I unexpectedly received an email from Chicago Public Schools (short for CPS also called Chicago Board of Education) offering me an opportunity to change careers through a program called Teachers for Chicago. To this day, I cannot tell you how CPS received my email address or knew of me. In the email that CPS sent to me, I was told that my tuition would be paid in full to obtain a master's degree in education while simultaneously teaching at a CPS school. I decided to pursue the offer and when I was able to successfully pass the interviewing process, complete the certification process to become a teacher, and choose the high school where I wanted to teach, I knew then that God was making this all possible. So, for two years, I took evening classes at St. Xavier University in the evening, and I taught math during the day at John F. Kennedy High School without having any prior teaching experience.

 Why would God introduce me to a new career? I liked math, but I never had any intentions of becoming a math teacher. That was not my goal, my dream, or my desire. However, God had a plan for me but a bigger plan for the many students who would one day sit in my math class. Just like Jesus and the disciples could have continued their travel from Jerusalem to Galilee in the direction they were going, He changed course for the sake of the Samaritan. He knew that He would be the only one to reach her and let her know that she was loved, accepted, forgiven and had the chance to receive an eternal life with the Father. Even though I did not know what I was walking into, God knew of the many students who were hurting, living in abusive homes, dealing with low esteem, mental illnesses, and feeling unloved. God already had it mean that He had chosen me to make an impact in the lives of young people.

 Even though some people thought that I was insane to make a drastic career change, I never looked back or had regrets about my decision because it was all for His glory. Once again, God made the impossible become possible. Not only has God blessed me with many years of teaching, but He allowed me to continue to be elevated in my new career with blessings on top of blessings. Through another CPS program, I was given another opportunity to receive a second master’s degree in school leadership at Concordia University. This degree took one year and allowed me to be considered for an assistant principal or principal position. Not only was I blessed with some of the professors coming to my high school in the evening to teach their courses, I was also able to take classes with a cohort group of teachers from my high school which made the endeavor more exciting.

 I decided not to pursue the assistant principalship or the principalship. Instead, God allowed me to use my second master’s to serve for one year as an Instructional Support Leader in Math for 25 elementary schools. I mentored principals and assistant principals and coached math teachers. After that experience, I went on 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 and teaching math classes as needed.

 It has been a blessing to see the ways God has moved in my life using my gifts to be a blessing to others. God has shown me that I have a purpose. God has reminded me all the gifts He gives us are important. What God has done for me, He wants to do the same, if not more, for you. Don’t take for granted your gifts, or the transitions that may be happening in your life. God may be repositioning you for a greater purpose. Be sensitive to how God is speaking into your life because you do not want to miss out on how God is trying to bless you and bless others through you. There are times you will need to simply say yes and trust God for what will come next.

**Chapter #5**

**Running With Your Gifts**

*”* 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, 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.

 It was Brad’s faith and trust in God that enabled him to win and become the number one deaf tennis player in the nation. Through Brad, God was showing the world that what seems impossible is possible when you believe in Him. God enabled Brad to become a very skilled tennis player because he persevered through all of life's challenges. If Brad had given up on what God had gifted and proposed for him to do, he would not have reached his destiny. Today, Brad serves as a tennis professional sharing his testimony of living his life for Christ with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes group and as a personal trainer helping others to achieve their dreams. **14**

 This endearing movie is a great example of what using your gifts and perseverance in your purpose can do for God’s kingdom. We are called to be overcomers. We must believe that God can do the impossible for us and through us. No matter what challenges we may face in our service to the Lord, we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith. It is so easy to quit or become complacent or hide behind our insecurities or allow the lies that the enemy whispers in our ears to impact us, but we must continue to walk worthy of our calling, stay committed to using our gifts and most importantly, finish the race that God has assigned to us.

 ***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)*

*Intimacy With God?*

“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)

 Apart from God, we are nothing. 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) It is God who has done and is still doing everything for us. He has made it possible for us to have a relationship with Him. He has given us purpose in His kingdom. God has chosen us, predestined us, created us, accepted us, saved us, and redeemed us through Jesus Christ. He has given us grace, mercy, unconditional love, and favor. He has given us an inheritance which is His kingdom and all His promises and blessings. He has sealed us with His Holy Spirit and has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. So, what does God desire of us? There are many possibilities of how this question could be answered. but for now, let’s look at Micah 6:8 which says, “He has told you,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Micah+6%3A8&version=NET#fen-NET-22657a)] O man, what is good, and what the Lord really wants from you:[ He wants you to[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Micah+6%3A8&version=NET#fen-NET-22657c)] carry out justice,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Micah+6%3A8&version=NET#fen-NET-22657d)] to love faithfulness,and to live obediently before[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Micah+6%3A8&version=NET#fen-NET-22657f)] your God.” (NET) In some translations, it says “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God”. In other words, Micah 6:8 shows us how to put our faith into action even when it comes to living out the calling God has given to us.

 God is such a gentleman that He does not force us to do anything. Living for him is a choice that we make out of our love for Him. What it will take to stay the course is a continual hunger and thirst after all the things that pertain to God. We must take time to pray, study His Word, practice our craft, be still before Him, and have time to praise and worship Him. We must also be willing to invest time in developing relationships with others, demonstrating acts of love toward others like helping someone with a financial need, studying the word with others, opening our homes to others, and or mentoring others. As we go deeper in our relationship with Him, we will mature into the godly men and women God desires us to be.

*Listening to God*

“But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says.

Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. (James 1:22 NIV)

 Sometimes we may feel like God has abandoned us or He is not speaking to us, but God has not abandoned us. God tells us in Hebrews 13:5 that He will never leave us nor forsake us. We must 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 the Holy Spirit moving in our thoughts, feelings, and senses. We must stay connected to the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit will empower us with wisdom and revelation and will enable us to speak and do things that we could not have done on our own. God will continue to establish us through the Holy Spirit giving us direction, and guidance, teaching us, interceding for us, and helping us fulfill the Will of God.

 Listening to God should proceed with an act of obedience. James 1:22-25 says the following about listening to God’s Word, “But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.” God often speaks to us in the quietness of our hearts. There are times when we need to be still or even silent so that we can have a listening ear and tune out every other voice but God.

Trusting 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 23:19 NLT)*

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 Our relationship with God is a covenant relationship. A relationship that is based on an agreement that God has established through the blood of Jesus Christ. That agreement is everything that God has promised to do for us. God is a God of His Word. 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?” (NLT) In David Huskin’s book, *The Purpose of a Covenant Heart*, he says, “The Lord our God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God…. Covenant is the vehicle, as well as the roadway by which God partners with men and women in order to fulfill His eternal purposes. **15**

 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)

 Any relationship is rooted in trust. In our covenant relationship with the Father God wants us to take Him at His Word. By trusting God, we are simply coming into agreement with the plans God has already laid out for us. We may not know or understand what God is doing but as we seek Him, walk in obedience, and submit to His Will and His Ways, God will reveal what He wants to do through us and what He wants us to do for Him. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.” (NIV)

 ***Stay Committed***

**To Be Continued - Need to work on this section, Not clear**

 When it comes to living out the calling, it is like running a marathon race and not a sprint. A marathon race is an endurance sport that requires commitment. A marathon runner cannot run a marathon if that runner does not train. A marathon runner is trained to pace himself or herself. If he runs too fast, he will tire himself out and if runs too slow, he may give up. A marathon runner must keep energy, patience, and passion in reserve for the many miles of running ahead of him. He must be prepared with a water bottle and an extra pair of shoes, handy when running a long distance. He must also make sure that he gets enough sleep or rest and consumes good nutrition. More than anything else, a marathon runner must be self-disciplined, He must wake up early in the morning to run during uncomfortable or inconvenient situations, including running while experiencing bodily pain. Marathon running is a sport of willpower. There is no room for doubt.

 Just like in a marathon runner, we cannot carry out our calling if we are not willing to stay committed. We are running a race of faith. There are times we may feel like serving and there are times we may not feel like serving. We have to know when God is telling us to be still. He is not saying it is time to stop but He may be saying it is time to refuel or rest for a moment in Him

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 for Satan seeks to scheme and destroy everything God desires to build. We also 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 during different seasons. 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 because God can allow shifts to happen. There was a shifting our dance attire as the focus was the dancers to consider themselves as the Levitical Priest of this day and age. There was a shift in the terminology spoken as we obtained a better understanding of our biblical purpose. There was a shift in how we ministered as we became more in tune with allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.

 Know that there will always be people coming into our ministries and people leaving our ministries. People leave for different reasons, and we cannot take it personally. Sometimes they leave because it is not what God called them to do. Sometimes people leave because they joined with the wrong motives. I have had people join the dance ministry to lose weight or as a substitute for their real ministry interest simply because they like to dance. Just because other people leave our ministry does not denote that our season of ministering is over. There are times when God may have us in a waiting period because He is birthing something new in us or in the ministry. 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)

*Endure Hardships*

**To Be Continued**

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.

*Commit to the Process*

**To Be Continued**

 Being Committed means that you will continue to move forward in your spiritual growth and development with an attitude of servant.. The purpose that God has called us to is not just about serving but also being planted in a position where you can grow spiritually. God wants us 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. 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.

 *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)*

**To Be Continued**

 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.

***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

 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.

**(to be continued)**

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 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: Recognizing 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

 We cannot walk in our purpose if we are not connected to the right source. God is the only one who can fulfill His purpose in us. Our purpose is connected to knowing God, knowing ourselves, and being committed to serving. God will give us the eyes to see, ears to hear, and the heart to receive from Him as we move in the purpose that He has called us 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.

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**Bible Versions**

* King James Version – KJV
* English Standard Version – ESV
* The Message (MSG)
* New English Translation (NET)
* 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**

**Resources**

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