***Don’t Stop Dancing***

by Sandra J. Jackson

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**Chapter #1: “For I know the plans I have for you…”**

**God Created Us for One Purpose**

 **First main point** : **What is purpose?**

 **Support A:** Definition of Purpose.Purpose is defined asthe reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists.

**Example:** Psalms 139:13-14 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

**Example:** Ephesians 2:0 - For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

**Example**: God created us to serve (help) others and to glorify Him.

Matthew 28:19 - Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit(NIV)

**Support B:** God gives us gifts for His purpose

**Example:** Definition of a gift – “A gift is a power of ability bestowed naturally or supernaturally for the purpose of serving God”

 **Example:** James 1:17 - Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

 **Example**: Proverbs 18:16 A man’s gift makes room for him, And brings him before great men

 **Example**: 1 Cor 12:11 “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”

 **Example**: Ephesians 3:20 “**20**Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

**Support C** : “God has made each of us with unique gifts, passions, talents, abilities, personalities and experiences that shape us and make us uniquely suited for our calling in life.”

 **Example:** Pastor Rick Warren classify our uniqueness using the acronym, **SHAPE** (**S**piritual gifts, **H**eart (passions), **A**bilities (talents), **P**ersonality, and **E**xperiences.

**Example :** As a child, my attention was drawn to the arts. I wanted to play the piano, dance, sing and write songs and draw. I dance because I found great pleasure in it.

**Example**: With my interest in the arts (dance, singing, art and writing songs) as a child, God was preparing for a life of praise and worship through dancing and singing

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**Third main point** : What is a Calling?

**Support A**: Definition of Calling?- Greek word is “Klesis” – “a call to something like a vocation or an invitation”. Also defined as “God’s initiative to bring people to christ and to participate in his redemptive work in the world”

**Example**: Romans 1:1 - Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God. (NIV)

**Example**: **1 Peter 4:10-11** Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. **11**If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (NIV)

**Example:** Eph 4:10-12 10 He who descended is the very One who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things. 11 And it was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for works of ministry and to build up the body of Christ

**Support B: How does God call us?**

**Example**: God called me to the ministry of dance by using someone to tell me that I could dance for the Lord.

**Example:** God speaks to us through various means including people, dreams, visions and situations or circumstances

**Example: John 10:27 says** “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me”

**Support C:** Purpose is associated with our calling but not our calling

**Example:** Ephesians 1:11 - In him we were also chosen [or called] having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will (NIV)

**Example:** “Our calling is the things God gives us to do in life in order to carry out our purpose” or how we will glorify Him. “It includes our occupation or the work God calls us to do. It includes our service and ministry in the local church. It includes using our talents and abilitities in whatever ways, and whenever God chooses.

Example: “Calling is not an end, it is a means to an end. That end is glorifying God which is our purpose” (Purpose vs. Calling, Servants University

 **Chapter 1 : Conclusion** : God created us with the purpose of glorifying Him through using our gifts, talents, and abilitlites to serve others.. Jeremiah 29:11 says 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.”

 **A. Restate topic** : “For I know the plans I have for you..”

 **B. Summarize three main points**: God created us the purpose of glorifying Him through fulfilling our calling by using the gifts, talents, abilities and everything that He has entrusted to us to serve others.

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**C. Revisit introduction or tie all ideas together**: God has created us and wants to fulfill His purpose in us. That purpose is rooted in who we are, and the gifts, talents and abilities that he has given us and that brings us joy and fulfillment. When we find calling we find our purpose.

**Chapter #2: “…Nevertheless Not My Will, But Thine Be Done”**

God will fulfill His purpose in us

Phil 2:13 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

 **First Main Point:** God Fulfills His Purpose Through our Relationship With Him

 **Support A:** Spending Time with Him in Prayer

 **Example**: god speaks to us through prayer. Prayer is a two way communication. Not only do we need to pour our hearts out to god but we also need to be still and listen while God speaks.

**Example**: Prayer helps us to turn focus our heart, mind and soul on the things of God without worldly distraction

 **Support B:** Spending time in His Word

 **Example**: God speaks to us through his word by example, or direct instruction

 **Example:** 2 Tim 3: 16 - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

 **Support C:** Spending time Praising and Worshiping Him

 **Example**: When we spend time praising and worshipping God, we open our hearts for hearing and receiving what God is trying to say to us.

 **Example**: Psalms 99:5 - Exalt the Lord our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!

 **Support D:** Spending time fellowshipping with other beleievers

 **Example:** Being part of a community offers support and encouragement

 **Example**: Being part of a community offers accountability

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 **Chapter 2 : Conclusion** : God will fulfill His purpose in us by us taking time to develop a relationship with Him.

 **A. Restate topic** : “…Nevertheless Not My Will, But Thine Be Done”

God will fulfill His purpose in us

 **B. Summarize three main points** : God will fulfill His purpose in us by us taking time to develop a relationship with Him. That relationship entails spending time in prayer, in His word, praising and worshipping Him and being part of a community of believers.

 **C. Revisit introduction or tie all ideas together**: God will complete the work he began in us when we do our part to develop a relationship with Him that includes, prayer, spending time studying His word, praising and worshipping Him and being part of a community of believers.

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**Chapter #3: Thriving in Your Calling**

 **Support A:** Recognizing Who You Are

 **Example:** Jeremiah, The weeping Prophet

 **Example: Moses a reluctant leader**

 **Example:** Paul the Missionary

 **Example:** Strengths/Weaknesses

 **Support B:** Recognizing the Vision

 **Example**: God wants to give us

 **Example**:

 **Example**:

 **Support C:** Recognizing how God wants you to fulfill the vision

**Example:**

 **Example**

 **Chapter 3 : Conclusion** :

 **A. Restate topic** :

 **B. Summarize three main points**

 **C. Revisit introduction or tie all ideas together**:

**Chapter #4: Be Steadfast in Your Calling**

#  1 Corinthians 15:58 - Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (NIV)

 **Support A:** Why Persevere?

 **Example**: Spiritual Growth

 **Example:** Character Building

 **Example:** Experience God’s faithfulness

 **Example:** Fulfill God’s Purpose

 **Support B:** Overcoming Obstacles

 **Example**: Considering examples of Biblical Characters who overcame obstacles

 **Example:** Considering the some of the obstacles I overcame in my ministry

 **Support C:** Living andLearning

 **Example**:

 **Example**:

 **Support D:**

 **Example**:

 **Example:**

 **Chapter 4 : Conclusion** : No matter what obstacles arise in your ministry, you must stay in the race and not quit.

 **A. Restate topic** : Persevere in your partnership with god

 **B. Summarize three main points**: We must persevere through the challenges, feelings and attacks that would entice us to quit the ministry.

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**C. Revisit introduction or tie all ideas together**: God wants to fulfill his purpose in and through us and we cannot allow circumstances to be the reason that we stop ministering.

**Chapter #5: “…for the joy set before Him”**

 **Support A:**

 **Example:**

 **Example:**

 **Support B**

 **Example:**

 **Support C:**

 **Example:**

 **Example:**

 **Chapter 5 : Conclusion**:

 **A. Restate topic**:

 **B. Summarize three main points**:

 **C. Revisit introduction or tie all ideas together:**

**Introduction**

***“I wanted to be like Debbie Allen because dance was my passion.”***

Who would have ever thought that God would or could use me as a dance minister. As a child, I had no clue that I would one day be dancing for the Lord. All I knew was that I wanted to dance. Dancing for me was a joy. In addition to secular dancing, I wanted to pursue all genres of dancing. I wanted to be like Debbie Allen because dance was my passion.

 Growing up in a single-family home with my mom and my two brothers and two sisters, I knew that my mom could not afford to spend money to fulfill my dreams or interests. If I was going to pursue any of my dreams or interests, I would need to make it happen. I wanted to play the piano. I wanted to attend modeling school. I wanted to sing and write songs. Most of all, I wanted to dance. I loved secular dancing, and I was very good at it. However, I wanted more than that. I also wanted to pursue dance in the performing arts.

 At the age of 16, I was able to pay for my first dance class after working a summer job. I took a ballet class at Malcom X College with an African American male instructor. That male instructor was so challenging and intimidating that I quit the class. I then began to question my abilities. Do I really know how to dance? Why couldn’t I keep up in doing the movements in class? Raised on the west side of Chicago, and with limited exposure, I had no experience with the performing arts, other than what I saw on tv. I thought I could be like Debbie Allen, but I came to realize that dance in the performing arts was not easy. There was a lot more that was demanded of me than I knew about or could grasp. I did not know or understand the ballet terminology including how to do jetes or ton dues. I didn’t know that a dance rehearsal or class could be so intense I was not prepared to get down like that. In my discouragement, I walked away from the performing arts dancing.

 However, I did continue to dance the way I knew how and that is secular dancing with secular music. Sometimes I found myself dancing all night long when I attended house parties. I also participated in summer youth programs where I was able to participate in a talent show and choreograph a dance for me and other youth to display in the talent show. Along with that, I also joined O’ Quinn Royal Gladiators Drum and Bugle Corps. Through this organization, I was able to participate in parades where I either twirled a rifle or carried a flag.

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***“I did not know why I was drawn to dance, music, singing, or***

***writing songs but I did know that I had to do it.”***

 During my childhood, I did not know why I was drawn to dance, music, singing or writing songs but I did know that I had to do it. This is what I gravitated to when I wanted to be happy, or to escape life’s situations. This felt like my destiny.

 After graduating from high school, I attended the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. I decided to pursue the performing arts again taking dance classes which included ballet, jazz, and modern dance every semester. Even though I was not a dance major, I felt a need to continue to pursue my interest in dancing. I also joined a dance company called the Omnimov Dance company, an African dance company as well as continue with secular dancing at college parties. My dean couldn’t tell from my college transcript if I was an engineering major or a dance major. All he knew was that I really enjoyed dancing, and he encouraged me to continue to do it as an outlet because majoring in Mechanical engineering at UIC was very challenging.

***“I receive Jesus Christ into my life and my life began to change.”***

 At some point in college, I receive Jesus Christ into my life and my life began to change. I found that I was no longer investing time in attending parties or trying to pledge a sorority, instead, my focus was on graduating from college and learning about God. However, I did continue to take dance classes and to keep up with the secular dances.

 When I graduated from college I return to Chicago and through a friend I learned about a church called Rock of Our Salvation Evangelical Free church. I became highly involved in that church and in seeking God. As my faith grew, I began to question the dance. I was no longer sure if dancing was pleasing to God. I became convinced that dancing was wrong. I decided that I needed to give up dancing if I was going to live for God. I approached my worship leader with my concern about the dance. My worship leader said to me, “My sister, you don’t have to stop dancing, you just need to change partners”.

***“God did not want me to give up the dance but to begin to dance for Him”***

 I was in awe of what my worship leader had expressed to me. It really resonated in my spirit. I continue to reflect on the idea that I needed to change partners and continue to dance. At some point, I was convinced that God did not want me to give up the dance but to begin to dance for Him. I had no idea of how it would look or what it meant for me, but I felt a calling to dance for God.

 That experience catapulted my journey in dancing for the Lord and using what God had given me for my pleasure to do for His purpose. This journey has not just given me purpose in God’s kingdom, but it has helped me to learn who God is and how God sees me. It has been a time of developing a relationship with God where I learn to seek him,

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to trust him, to walk in faith and to surrender to Him as I ministered through the platform of dance. God used the ministry of dance to draw me to Himself and this has been a spiritual experience with Him that goes beyond what I could ever imagine. As God has worked through me through the ministry of dance, I was able to pour into others and to be used by him to impact the kingdom with messages and expressions of His love, His power, His hope and His salvation. As I was finding my place in ministry, I also found my identity as a person.

***“God has taken me from glory to glory using the platform of dance ministry.”***

 Even through God’s provisions and how He has continued to guide and bless me through the many years of ministering through the dance, there has been times where I have taken a sabbatical and even felt like quitting. During those times, I was reminded that God was with me. I also remember the covenant that I establish with God after I was once told by my worship leader, ‘Don’t stop dancing, just change partners. So, through the years, through the hurts, through the insecurities, through the aging, through the spiritual attacks, through the loneliness, and through health issues and other challenges, I stayed in the race. As a result, God has taken me from glory to glory through the platform of dance ministry.

 Do you know that what God has done in my life through serving in the ministry of dance, He also wants to do the same for you? You may not be a dance minister, but God has a ministry for you. God wants to work in and through you in ways you cannot imagine but only experience when you serve Him in ministry. 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 just be known as a Christian but to serve in the kingdom. **James 2:14-26** says, **“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.**

***“Are you sure that you are on the path that God wants you to be on?”***

 In my book, I take you through the process of serving in ministry using my experience of serving in dance ministry for many years. In my book, I share aspects of my journey of serving in ministry as I highlight areas of ministry that are most relevant. May God allow this book to be a blessing to you and to inspire you to find your purpose and get started in ministry or inspire you to continue to thrive in the ministry God has called you to. Please know that every ministry experience is not the same, but it is important to get an understanding of the process of ministry as you learn what you should be doing and how you should be doing it. There is always more to do, more to learn and more to experience in God’s kingdom. Are you sure that you are on the path that God wants you to be on? May my book help you to find God’s will in ministry for you.

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**Chapter 1**

**Finding Your Purpose**

**For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,**

**which God prepared in advance for us to do. Eph 2:10 NIV**

 What desires and interest has God placed in you? What brings you pleasure? What do you enjoy doing? What did you do for fun as a child, and it kept you so engaged that you found yourself doing it frequently? What is it that you have found great enjoyment in doing and you have become skillful at it, or you are interested in becoming skillful at it? What is it that you do because you feel the need to do it? Whatever that thing is, it is connected to your purpose. God has created us all with purpose.

 When I started dancing for the Lord, I had no idea that God was going to use me to lead a dance ministry. I never knew that I would one day lead the dance ministry at my church with children, then lead the dance ministry with adults and eventually lead the ministry with teenagers. I never knew that I would be teaching dance and spiritually pouring into the lives of others. I never knew but God knew**.** In fact, all my interest that I had as a child, was now being used for God’s purpose. I was not only leading the dance ministry, but I was also singing praise and worship with an ensemble and writing praise and worship songs during my spare time. **Jeremiah 29: 11** says**, 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. (NIV)**

 God is not partial, when it comes to people. He wants to use everyone, but we must find our purpose. If we don’t see our purpose, then we must be alert as to how God is moving in our lives. We must be in tuned for when God brings our purpose into full fruition. Nothing that happens in our lives is coincidental. Everything happens for a reason. **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Rom 8:28 NIV**

I was called to the ministry of dance. Some of you may be called to ushering or operating the sound system in your church or doing the church announcements or preaching or even writing a book. Some of you may even be called to ministries outside the church like the prison ministry, or providing home care for the sick or ministry through your job or serving as a missionary in another country. What is it that God has prepared or is preparing you to do? **Matt 7:7-8 says, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (NIV)**