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**INTRODUCTION**

It is irrefutable that God has given every believer at least one spiritual gift. I Peter 4:10 (NKJV) states, ***“****As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* So, you have received one or more gifts; but, have you ever feared your God-given gifts weren’t dynamic enough to be effective for the Kingdom? As you watch others seemingly flow effortlessly in their gifts that shine intensely and gloriously like bonfires ablaze, do yours appear to be a flickering spark in comparison? My dear friend, I can relate. For years, I was bound by feelings of insignificance that kept the gifts God bestowed upon me hidden, silent and at the mercy of other people’s approval.

The good news is that those long-engrained fears and feelings of insignificance were all lies introduced by Satan in his attempts to kill, steal and destroy the purpose, impact and effectiveness of my God-given gifts. Satan wants that same demise for you too. But his weapons against you will not prosper because I have a charge; a command from God that I must keep and part of that charge is to reveal the truth about the purpose of your God-given gifts so the world can experience God’s grace through you. The truth is your gifts are unique and were specifically designed by God. The truth is your gifts are significant. The truth is God can do amazing things with your gifts according to the supernatural power that works in you. The truth is your gifts were given to you to glory God. The truth is your gifts are necessary for such a time as this and you have a spiritual responsibility to minister to others as a good steward of the manifold grace of God.

You may be wondering, how I made the transition. How did I go from feeling like my gifts are insignificant to feeling honored for any opportunity to use all that God has given me for His glory? Well, it all started many years ago with a song. It is a song that explains how I have been charged by God to make a difference in this world. It explains that I must obey that charge, I must glorify God, I must serve others and I am empowered by God to fulfill that charge. I didn’t understand it then when I was first introduced to the song. It was not until years later after the Holy Spirit revealed to me what the words to that song meant that I was freed and released to fulfill God’s charge for my life.

Dear friend, as I share the revelation that I came to embrace regarding that song, it is my hope that you will be inspired just as I was. The world is waiting for your gifts to be released when you surrender and respond to the charge God has commanded you to keep.

**Chapter 1: The Song That Changed My Life, “A Charge to Keep I Have”**

There are so many things my Mother used to do or say and so many things she taught me to do or say that I didn’t understand as a child. Sometimes when I was dumbfounded with bewilderment and it all just seemed too complicated to understand, Mother would respond to my confusion with these words, “Just keep living!” She knew that just living life is an amazing teacher and only in time would I come to understand some of the wisdom she tried to impart, some of the experiences she tried to expose me to and some of the words she made me learn and recite even if I had no understanding at the time. She knew in time, those mysteries would be revealed.

The words to the hymn, “A Charge to Keep I Have” written by Charles Wesley was one such mystery for me. I had no idea what the words to that song meant, nor how deeply they would eventually resonate with me. With a royal blue felt tipped ink pen, my mother permanently penned the words to that song in the front cover of the Bible she had given me. She made me recite the words over and over.  Every time I picked up that Bible, which was almost daily, the words of that hymn were staring me in the face.  I had no idea at the time that Mother was multiplying the fruit from the harvest of her own life by transferring seedling to mine.  As a farmer strategically and diligently tills the ground to plant the seeds of an anticipated harvest to come, my mother planted the words of that song in my mind believing that one day my heart would reap a harvest.

More importantly, than staining the words in my Bible or inscribing the words in my mind, she reached deep down and planted the spirit of the song in my heart.  How did she do that? She taught me to sing the song and made me sing it over and over. Then, she made me take possession of the song. She told me, “This is ***your*** song!” Every time she would tell me to sing it, she would say, “Sing your song!” Unbeknownst to me, the words of that song were gripping the soil of my heart and gradually forming deep and wide roots to anchor themselves in place.

Now this wasn’t just any old simple song. It was a call and response song. So, she would make me call it out and she would respond.  The sounds we made were painful to the ear; like the sound of children awkwardly playing instruments in a band for the very first time. We shrieked and croaked but she didn’t seem to care about that because the goal wasn’t the singing. She was planting!

I wasn’t exactly thrilled about this gift of being assigned my very own song. In fact, it became the source of much fear and frustration for me. One particular memory regarding this hymn is etched in my mind so vividly that if I close my eyes and allow my thoughts to transport me back to that particular place in time, I feel as if I’m actually reliving the moment all over again.

Mother proudly and firmly issued her command, “You will be singing your song for devotion at church next Sunday!” It was clear this was not a request and there was no alternative. Like a newly drafted soldier headed to war, I attempted to reason with my fear-cramped stomach. I told myself maybe it won’t be so bad. After all it’s a call and response song.  I reasoned it was sort of like being picked by the teacher to lead the Pledge of Allegiance in front of your classmates. You really only say a few of the words by yourself then everyone joins in.  No one will dare tease you because one day it might be their turn.

Every night for an entire week before I went to bed Mother would come in my bedroom and say, “Sing your song!” We would bellow and croak, “A Charge to Keep I Have” with unmelodious tones until she was satisfied she had sufficiently watered and fertilized her seedling. Then she would stand watch as I got on my knees to say my prayers; her eyes closed and head tilted slightly upward as if basking in the warmth of God’s sunlight.

Finally, it was Sunday. I always looked forward to Youth Sunday!  The Second Sunday of every month was transformed from a regular church worship service to a boot camp training ground for every person in attendance under the age of 18. Envisioning their prized church of the *future*, the church leaders deemed it imperative to train the youth of *today*.  Every Youth Sunday, the youth were tasked with leading the various aspects of the Worship Service.  The youth would serve in every aspect of the order of service except the Message. They welcomed visitors, made the announcements about upcoming events, collected the tithes and offerings, served as ushers, choir members and led the devotional period which included a Scripture, Hymn and prayer.

The Order of Service which we referred to as the “program” was always printed out on paper and distributed by the ushers to the congregation along with an envelope for tithes and offerings.  As I waited for the devotional period, I held my program in my hand and watched it as if I was watching the second hand of a clock; each aspect of the program indicating time was quickly passing and I would soon be called upon to execute the orders of my commanding officer, “Sing Your Song!”

I wrung my sweaty hands together rhythmically as I rehearsed my song in my head. As I waited my turn and looked around the room into the faces of the people, sheer terror struck me as I feared the worst. Oh no! What if I’m so bad that when I call out my song no one responds?

I went from rehearsing my song in my head to repeating a prayer like a stuck song syndrome, “God please let them respond, please let them respond, please let them respond, please let them respond, please let them respond!” The Mistress of Ceremony interrupted my pleas with an introduction, “Next, we will have our devotion. That was my cue. Very slowly I shuffled to the front of that little old Baptist church and stood in front of the communion table looking at the people who were all looking back at me. I tugged downward at my little Sunday dress hoping it would hide my shaking knees. I could no longer hear the tune of my song in my head as it had been drowned out by the magnified sound of my racing heartbeat. I blinked frantically in an attempt to sooth my stinging eyes from the salty sweat that had begun to drip down my forehead and onto my lips which now tasted like the dense salt from saltine crackers.  I tried to swallow but fear drained the moisture from my mouth as if I had bitten into an unripe persimmon and I longed for a cool glass of iced water. My body had frozen stiffly in place. Only my eyes moved. As I slowly glanced left to right across the room, my eyes honed in on Mother. Without saying one word out of her mouth, her facial expression yelled, loudly, “Get a hold of yourself! You’d better get to singing your song!” My body suddenly broke out of its frozen pose, I closed my eyes tightly and just like we practiced, I bellowed out, “Aaaaaaaaa char-ar-arge,” “to-oo-oo kee-eep,” “I-I-I have.” Then, after what seemed like a long delay, the congregation responded in kind.

***“A charge to keep I have*, a *God to glory***

***A never dying soul to save* *and fit it for the sky***

***To serve this present age*, m*y calling to fulfill***

***Oh, may it all my powers engage* t*o do my master’s will.”***

**Chapter 2: A Charge to Keep**

* **Charged to Co-laborer with God (1 Corinthians 3:9)**
* **Charged to Give Ourselves to the Work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58)**
* **Charged to Steward (to use our gifts; talents parable; Matthew 25:14–30)**

**Chapter 3: Charged to Glorify God**

* **Charged to Glorify God in Everything (1 Corinthians 10:31)**
* **Charged to Glorify God with Worship**
* **Charged to Glorify God with Light**
* **Charged to Glorify God with Much Fruit**

**Chapter 4: Charged to Serve Others**

* **Charged to Love**
* **Charged to Give**
* **Charged to Help**
* **Charged to Disciple/Teach (Luke 22:32)**

**Chapter 5: Charged for this Generation**

* **Charged for Such a Time as This**
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**Chapter 6: Charged with Power**

**Chapter 7: Charged to do the Master’s Will**

**Chapter 8: Your Charge to Keep**

The words of the song my mother taught me when I was just a little girl, demonstrate a commitment felt by a previous generation to know God themselves then tell the story to "the present age." We all have a charge to serve "this present age;” this present generation.

(Note to self: need to find the author of this story and cite it).

There’s a story of a little girl who was very close to her grandmother. Grandmother always took time to go to her room at bedtime, pull up the rocking chair and read her stories from an old storybook given to her by *her* mother, every night … without fail. After a while Grandmother got sick. Shortly after the little girl learned that grandma had gone to be with the Lord. The little girl became very concerned. Not about her grandmother because she understood that grandmother was with the Lord. The question that bothered her was, "Whose going tell the story?"

That night her mother came into her room and tucked her daughter in bed. And because she was tired from the day’s work, she sat in the old rocking chair. Instantly the little girl sat up in her bed and displayed the biggest smile. The mother asked her, “Why are you smiling so?”

The little girl pulled out the old storybook that had passed through three generations and put it in her mother's lap. She said, “You’re sitting in grandmother’s chair. So, ***you*** have to tell the story!"

The world is in need of a Savior, and the people of this present age want to know, “Who will tell the story?” We are all sitting in the seats of grandmothers and grandfathers past who have told the story of Jesus.

Each of us is charged to tell the story of the great things God has done in the past, what he is doing today and the greater things to come. And Greater can begin right now:

You have a charge to keep. Keep it.

You’ve been charged to glorify God.

You’ve been charged to serve others.

You’ve been charged for this generation.

You’ve been charged with power.

You’ve been charged to do the Master’s will.

**Chapter 9: In Honor and Loving Memory**