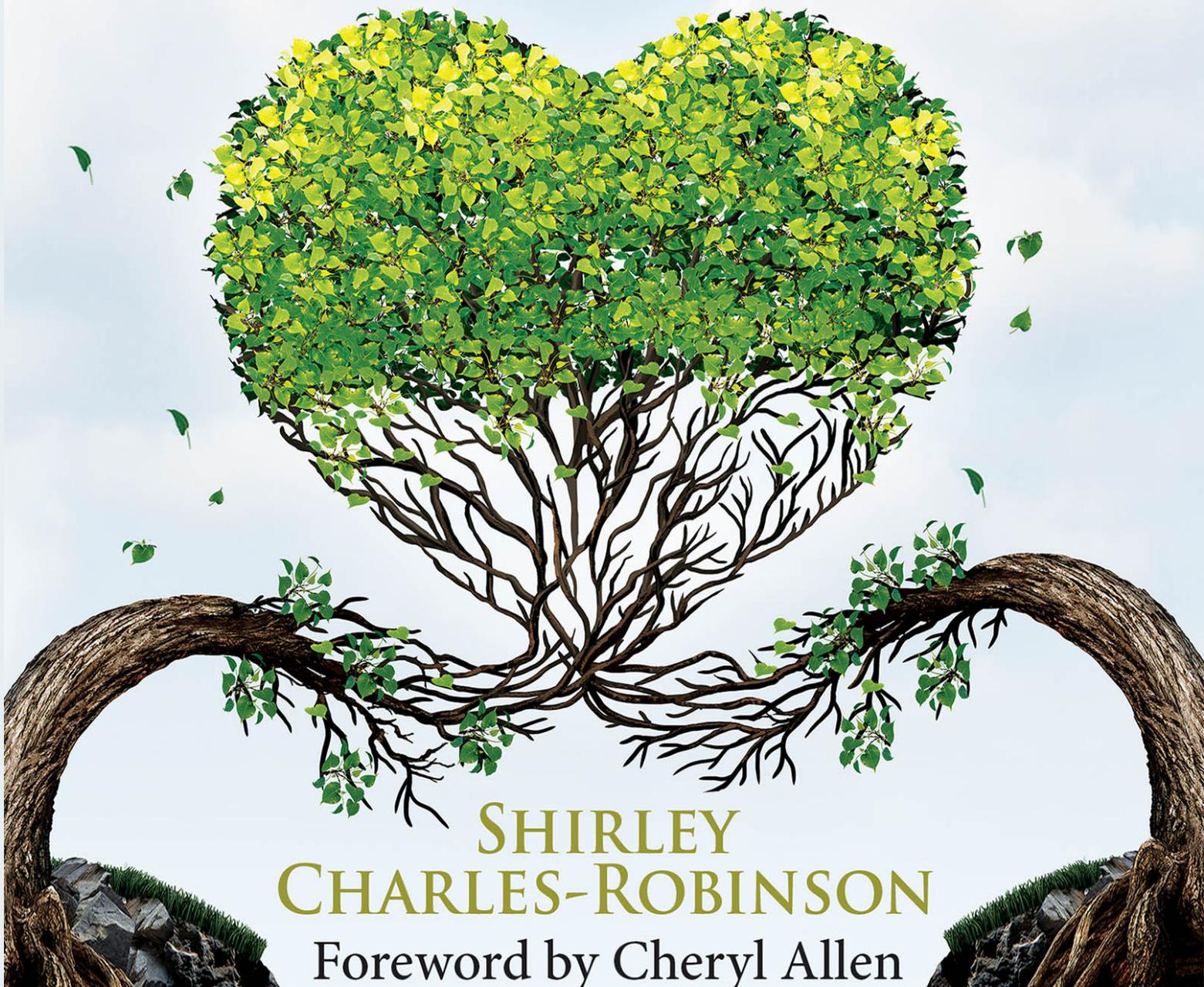


HEARTS CRY

*Made With Purpose
For A Purpose*

How to live in Purpose and on
Mission for God's glory



SHIRLEY
CHARLES-ROBINSON

Foreword by Cheryl Allen

PART 1

AWAKE: ARISE TO THE CALL



It Is No Accident

The fact that you're reading this book is no accident; no matter how this book has come into your hands, I pray that it will be the catalyst for God's plans uniquely purposed for your life. Countless prayers have gone out for the person who would one day hold this book, and that person is you! My prayer is that this book will motivate you to be courageous and, above all, obedient to what you were made for and created to do for the good of the Kingdom of God. Being obedient is easier said than done when you're being challenged with the daily responsibilities of life calling for your attention. So, I pray that despite the demands of life or the unexpected obstacles waiting for you, you'll persevere, even though they may seem like a mountain you cannot seem to overcome or climb. We'll dispel the thought that it's impossible to overcome any obstacle before us because we know we serve a God who will strengthen, sustain, and equip us for every situation. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13 NKJV). Do we believe this great truth, people of God?! This powerful verse in the Bible can be a lovely scripture to quote, but do we really believe that we serve a God who will equip us for every battle, whether in lack or in plenty, so that we can thrive and gain contentment despite any circumstance?

Let me be transparent with my own fears, doubts, and insecurities that have their roots from my ancestry, upbringing, culture, and environment. I understand and know these emotions well. These unhelpful emotions have delayed promises that God whispered to me many years ago, and that's why I'm well-suited to encourage you and challenge you to do it anyway. I hope that as you take this journey with me, you'll identify and operate more in the work you were called to and preserved for even before taking your first breath. The Bible is filled with numerous accounts of God depositing a calling in the hearts of people, and because of their obedience, He is able to do great things through them.

Moses comes immediately to mind. I feel a special kinship to Moses because I see myself in him. His humanness threatens to circumvent his very reason for being; the purpose he was reserved and preserved to accomplish. The work he was predestined to accomplish was staring him in the face as God called him forth from the burning bush. The call that was on Moses' life didn't begin at the burning bush; it started long before that pivotal moment. Unbeknownst to Moses, God had been preserving, providing, and equipping him long before he even took his first breath. It wasn't by accident that the Hebrews midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, made the conscious decision to preserve Moses' life and defy the king of Egypt's decree to kill all newborn Hebrew baby boys, which preserved Moses' life. It wasn't by accident that Moses' mom, Jochebed, saw that the son she bore was a "fine child," so she risked hiding him for three months and then made the most challenging decision that a mother can make, which is to release her child into the unknown world so that he can live.



I wonder what Jochebed was thinking as she made the decision to let him go. As a mother, I know it required a lot of trust on her part. Did she possess an unwavering faith that her God would protect her baby? Or did she just hope for the best? According to scripture, she was a Levi. Levites were musicians, gate keepers, guardians, Temple officials, judges, and craftsmen, so I think we can deduce that her faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob enabled her to trust God. Imagine the trust it required for her to place Moses, her baby boy, in a basket made of papyrus reeds held together with bitumen and pitch, not sturdy materials, to be placed in the Nile River among crocodiles, snakes, and hippos. It wasn't by accident or luck that Moses, the baby, arrived at his intended destination unharmed; it was with great intentionality that he was able to find his final resting place near where Pharaoh's daughter would be bathing. It wasn't by accident that Pharaoh's daughter's decided to bathe in the Nile River banks and her heart was softened for this Hebrew baby boy who was condemned to die by her own father's decree. It wasn't by accident she decided to spare his life. It wasn't by accident that Miriam, Moses' sister, followed him and was prompted to ask Pharaoh's daughter if she could get a Hebrew woman (Jochebed) to be a nursemaid for Moses. I think we can safely say that it was no coincidence, luck, or happenstance; it was God from beginning to end using people's choices whether good or bad to fulfill His masterplan.

STEPS OF FAITH

- I want you to reflect on and write down a moment in your life that, in retrospect, you can attribute to God guiding your steps or preserving you from calamity.
- Are you able to see the impact that His Sovereign hand has on your life as well as the lives touched by yours, if so, how?
- Take a moment to thank God for His providence and for preserving you when you didn't know He was. Let this be a reminder that He is a God worthy of your trust.

Obedience in Purpose

I was told that, as a baby, my mother traveled with me from the United States to Haiti to visit family, and, while we were there, I almost died. While I don't know the specifics of what caused this near-death experience, I like to think I was preserved to make an impact on society. I believe we're all preserved for a purpose. While we all may not have a grand calling like Moses, we all have a call, purpose, or mission, whether great or small. The midwives had a call to preserve as many Hebrew boys from annihilation as possible. Moses' mother had a call to preserve and raise Moses to be the man he would soon be called to be. Even Pharaoh's daughter had a call to preserve Moses' life. With each call, there's a moment of decision to answer it. These moments often are unique to our talent, abilities, or influence. They're opportunities, whether we realize it or not, to accomplish a purpose to give God glory. The Hebrew midwives could have obeyed Pharaoh's decree to kill all male newborns, but they feared God more. Moses' mother could have succumbed to the inevitable demise of her son, yet she decided to trust God for her son's preservation



Your purpose may require you to take the least likely position. Are you willing to take that step of faith? I believe you are!

We discover Moses being presented with a Kairos moment. A moment that unveils his purpose aside from him being husband and dad. An assignment uniquely designed to his unique background, talents, personality, and abilities. In the following passage of scripture, we gain insight into Moses' reluctance to answer God's call on his life. His reluctance was shrouded in insecurities, fears, contentment with his safe life, mixed with the need to gain the validation of humankind, resulting in downright disobedience.

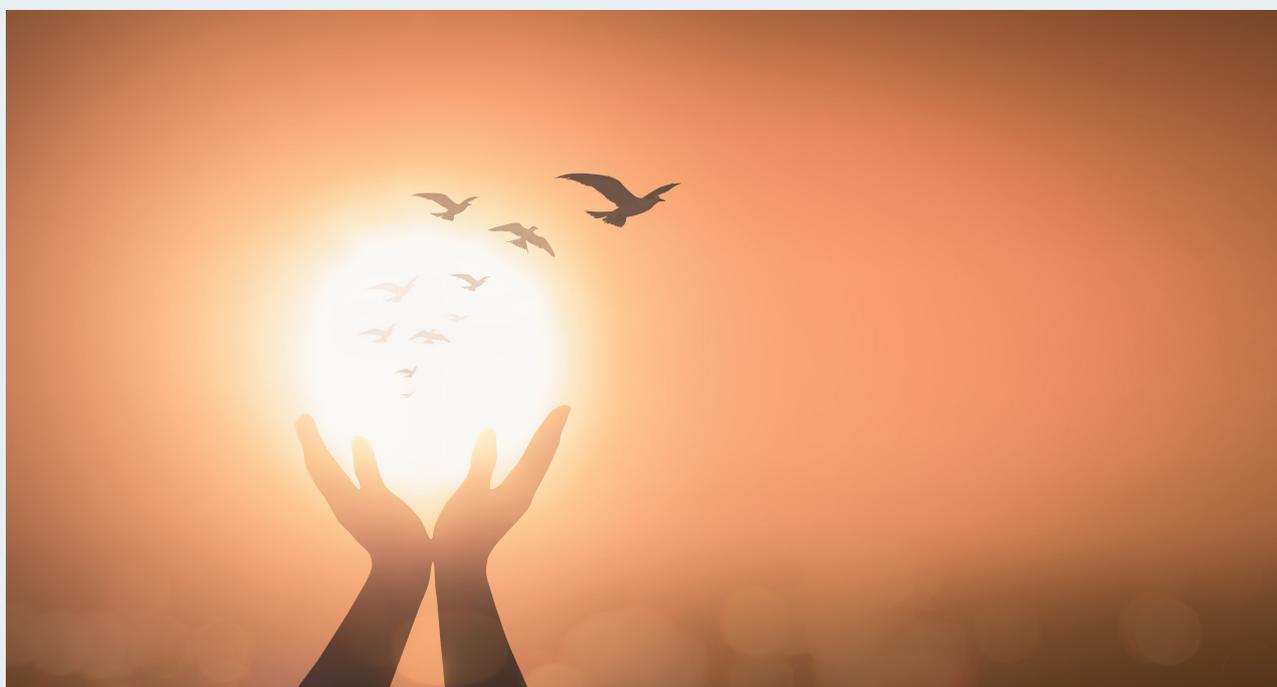
In Exodus Chapter 3, God reveals Moses' assignment. God gives Moses unprecedented insight into the opposition he will encounter with Pharaoh as he leads the Israelites out of Egypt, as well as his inevitable victory in Egypt and over Pharaoh. You would have thought the fact that God tells him he will be victorious would have been enough for him to say with confidence, "Well, let's go!" God essentially gives Moses the playbook; the cheat sheet. Yet, Moses proceeds to respond to God with a lot of what ifs and buts, which translates to self-centeredness, distrust and plain ignorance to the Sovereignty and Power of the I AM God he's communicating with.



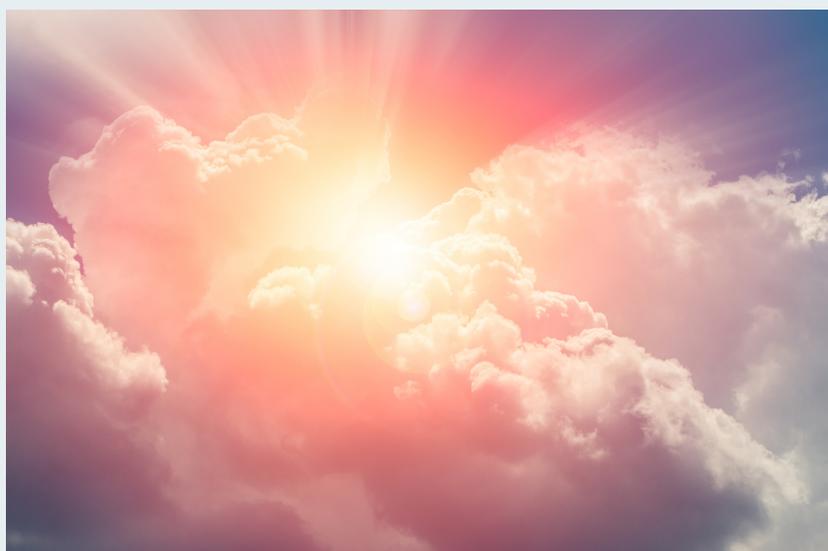
Exodus Chapter 4 gives us deeper insight into Moses' heart, brand-new relationship with God, as well as God's patience and understanding for Moses' deficiencies and great potential.

*Then Moses said to the Lord, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." And the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes Ehim³ dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now then go, and I even I will be your mouth, and teach you what you are to say."
(Exodus 4:10-12) —NASB*

As I reflect on Moses' heart posture and response to God, his focus was on "me, me, me." Moses begins to list all the reasons why he's a horrible choice for this assignment, how God is making a mistake, and he needs to convince God of that, forgetting that God doesn't make mistakes. It may not always make sense to us, but all God is looking for is an obedient heart, and He will do the rest. As I mentioned before, this is why I feel such a kinship to Moses, because I had had similar conversations with God, even when I knew quite well that He was directing me to an assignment. Still, all my insecurities, masked by fear, were really about me not wanting to look foolish; I didn't want to allow my flaws to be exposed. I preferred to let my carefully crafted safe façade be left alone. Also, to be honest, it requires less work and less of me. This mindset robs us of the opportunity to see God's glory working in us and through us.



I'm reminded of another individual who disregarded the Sovereignty of the Almighty God. In the first chapter of Jonah, Jonah is called by God to arise and warn Nineveh about their evil deeds. Jonah arose, not to go to Nineveh, 725 miles away, but to flee to Tarshish, over 3,000 miles away. Jonah's disobedience was intentional. His heart posture was also self-centered. While Moses' disobedience was self-centeredness masked by fear, insecurities, and the approval of humankind, Jonah's disobedience was a self-centeredness rooted in his desire to withhold God's love and forgiveness from those who needed it the most. Jonah chose to dismiss God's assignment because He knew God would rescue the Ninevites whom he preferred to keep lost and suffer the judgment of God. Whether the disobedience is blatant like Jonah's or masked by our insecurities like Moses, it's all disobedience. Their self-centeredness could have sabotaged God's plan to rescue His creation, yet nothing and no one can thwart God's masterplan. Instead, God disrupts Jonah's trip and redirects him. God mercifully places Jonah in the belly of a whale for a while for incubation. During that incubation period, God developed within Jonah humility and a softened and obedient heart. I too have experienced incubation periods that were so hard that it caused me to cry out to the Lord. I've learned lessons in these times of incubation; you may call it a "valley" that God is using to develop us. God loves His children and servants too much to allow them to go astray. I've come to recognize these incubation periods and have learned to embrace them because I know there's a realignment that needs to happen within me that cannot occur otherwise, and in return, God sharpens me, humbles me, corrects me, and equips me in ways that I didn't know I needed. If you should find yourself in an incubation period, ask God what He desires from you. It won't be easy, but you'll be all the better for it; great things can be developed in you if you allow it.



Our disobedience may even surface as fear and doubt. Did I hear what I thought I heard? In Judges 6: 36-40 (NKJV),

Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said— look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there's dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said." And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew." And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.

Gideon starts by saying, "If." He reveals his potential disobedience is surfacing as doubt. He's not sure he heard God correctly. Again, the shift is away from God's Sovereignty and inward. Gideon wants proof that God is going to do what He said He will do. At first glance, you might wonder what's wrong with Gideon making sure he's hearing God right. Maybe Gideon's ear isn't developed enough to discern God's voice like young Samuel. In 1 Samuel Chapter 3, Samuel, a young boy assisting Eli in the temple, heard God's voice and thought it was Eli calling for him. He didn't know it was God calling him until Eli told him the voice he heard was God's. However, with further investigation that's not what was happening with Gideon. We see that earlier in Chapter 6 of Judges, God directs Gideon to pull down the altar of Baal. Gideon hears God clearly and executes God's instruction with no hesitation or doubt, but proceeds to do it in fear of men in verse 27,

So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the Lord had said to him. But because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night." And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar which had been built. So they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And when they had inquired and asked, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing." Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it."

This experience prompted Gideon's doubt because he had interaction with God prior to testing God with the fleece. This experience scared him. He wanted assuredness before he obeyed.

Allow me to be transparent and reveal my deficiencies without judgment. I've been like Moses, Jonah, and Gideon at one point or another. I have had moments when my fears and insecurities surfaced like Moses. I doubted I heard God correctly and tested God like Gideon. I also stood on the sidelines like Jonah, waiting for those to suffer the consequences and judgment of their actions. How does your disobedience tend to reveal itself when you're called? Are you most like Moses, Jonah, or Gideon?

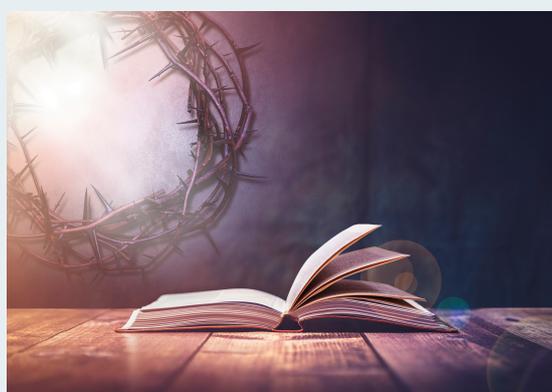
This book is birthed out of my journey as a wife of twenty-three years and mother of four beautiful children in the midst of all of life's responsibilities, trials, setbacks of all kinds, and, of course, joys. I found myself in an incubation period. My marriage, personal relationships with family, finances, and home life were in total disarray. Amid the chaos in my life, God was depositing this book on my heart and a pastoral apprenticeship, which I knew was God-ordained. I prayed, "God, come back when my life is calmer; come when there's more order. God, my life is a mess now!" We won't be able to control when God calls, and His timing could be less than desirable to us, but perfect because it challenges us to hold unto Him and rely on Him. I want you to remember that God doesn't make mistakes, and His timing is perfect. It hasn't been easy. At times, I had so much opposition in the natural and spiritual realm. It seemed like this book would remain an idea prompted to me by the Holy Spirit but never to be fully realized.

I share this all to say that what God is calling you to will be filled with much opposition from outside elements as well as internal turmoil. This book was birthed out of insecurities, doubt, fear, unbelief, belief, faith, power, and obedience. I'm thankful that belief, faith, and obedience won over the insecurities, doubt, and fear. I hope that encourages you. Oftentimes, we see the success and victories of others, a finished product that's all nice and polished, but we don't get to see the pain, tears, and the uncertainty that preceded the victory. My hope is that you'll find comfort and realize that, in spite of your fears, doubts, and whatever you carry, God wants to work something more profound in you than the calling He has put on your life. He wants to prune you, sharpen you, and invite you to a relationship dependent on Him and Him alone.

I want you to know you're not alone in running this race that has been set before you (Hebrews 12:1-3). God will equip you with the courage, tools, resources, finances, and divine appointments necessary to accomplish His perfect plan in you and through you. All you have to do is trust Him, believe that He placed the passion and desire in you, and He will equip you with all that's necessary. Do you believe it? I pray that you do. Even if you don't fully believe it, take a step forward anyway toward obedience; after all, that's what faith is all about. It's belief, trust, and hope in the One who can do miraculous things that we can't comprehend. "But hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we don't see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (Romans 8:24-25 NASB). The hope referred to in this passage is the hope we Christians hope for in our bodies' redemption. I believe we can apply this kind of hope in the calling that God has whispered to us individually what we haven't yet seen come into fruition. Faith isn't in our own abilities but in what God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, can do through us and for us. For that, I'm thankful! I keep reminding myself it's not up to me and not about me. He will remove the obstacles needed to be removed, but for the purposes of sharpening me in the fire, some of these obstacles will remain. This reminded me of Paul's petition to God to remove this unknown obstacle and God kept responding to him, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me (2 Corinthians 12:

I love Paul's response. I'll boast about my weakness all the more. We live in a society where you're convinced to hide your weaknesses and don't admit to your weaknesses. Instead, you portray this false façade and air that you're free of any weaknesses and have it all together, when you know deep inside that you're trying, in your humanness, to hold everything together, and, at any moment, it will all fall apart. God's power magnified in our weakness is a humbling concept to embody; our surrendered weakness is the very thing that allows God to shine; not that He needs us to shine, but so we can stand in utter awe at what He is able to do in us and through us. It reminds us that whatever we're pursuing is ultimately for our good, but more importantly, for the good of all humankind and the Glory of God. I don't know about you, but a weight is lifted off me as I acknowledge this truth. I don't need to feel like I have it all figured out or have all the skills and resources needed because our God will provide and equip us with what's needed when we need it. I love that the staff that Moses already had in his possession was used on his journey in Egypt. God allowed that staff to be transformed to what Moses needed when he needed it. He equipped him for the journey, and He will do the same for you. He gives us what we need before we even know we need it. "I'll answer them before they even call to me. While they're still talking about their needs, I'll go ahead and answer their prayers!" (Isaiah 65:24 NLT).

That's our God! You should feel great comfort and hope that God steps in before we even call to Him. It does for me! Before I ask or complete my sentence, He has set a plan in motion for my good and the good of His creation. That's what happened at the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were cast out. God sets a plan in motion before we even know a plan is needed. That's our God! He is a rescuer! He sounds the trumpet and immobilizes the cavalry of heaven's angels to bring about victory.



As someone who struggles with control in various areas of my life, God is constantly challenging me to release the reins to Him. This was truly a challenge for me. At an early age, I learned to rely on no one else but myself to get things done. In fact, my mom taught me to be self-sufficient. I internalized this to mean, don't ask for help; don't bother people; figure it out on your own! This thinking is partly cultural. However, I also suspect she experienced disappointments from loved ones who simply came up short. I learned quickly in my adult life that no one makes it on their own. You need to trust and rely on other people, of course, with wisdom, but the alternative leaves you all alone trying to push a boulder up the mountain. Having some trusted people in your life to help you move the boulder up the mountain is so much more doable and can even be fun when you're doing it in community. In the same way, God wants us to partner with Him; lean on Him; trust Him, and, most importantly, surrender EVERYTHING to Him. Please, by "surrender," I don't mean you should throw your hands up in the air, doing nothing; I'm referring to the surrendering of your doubts, insecurities, and your own abilities, knowing that God will equip and provide the increase. As I learned what the relationship with the I AM God requires, which isn't an overnight journey, my ability to surrender in trust has strengthened. My ability to believe and remain faithful in obedience has become more of a norm than not. More and more, I'm coming to a place of surrender of will and self-sufficiency to trust the One who is All Sufficient. I don't want to give this false impression that it's an easy journey; in fact, I came to this place, not always willingly. I guess I hit enough walls trying to do it my way that I realized His ways are simply better than my ways.



When Moses finally succumbed to God's call to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, his success was dependent on his complete submission to God. Even though I know this is necessary in my own life, it doesn't mean I won't try to take up the reins of control, and my own wisdom kicks back in, and I pick up the weight of perfection, the pursuit of success at all cost and approval of man: a weight I wasn't designed to carry. I attribute it in part to my Haitian culture and upbringing, being raised by a strong mother, who had to be strong due to society and environmental realities. I can only imagine what she endured as a young woman who immigrated from Haiti to a country that was foreign to her. My mom had to learn very quickly how to adapt and assimilate in order to experience the financial freedom that she heard the United States offered.

Our Western culture and philosophy of picking "ourselves up by our bootstraps," or putting "our big girl panties on," "self-made," "self-taught," etc. permeates our way of thinking. In fact, it's applauded. I'm sure you heard all those catchphrases at least once in your life. I embodied this kind of thinking. The thinking that it all depends on me to make it happen. All I managed to do was spin my wheels, doing everything with my own strength, wondering why I kept hitting a wall in exhaustion.



I most likely will have to remind myself to give it back to God, because I'm constantly reminding myself to let go of the reins and stop carrying the weight I wasn't designed or created to carry. I hope you didn't miss a keyword in that last sentence, "reminding." It's interesting to me, but intentional, God repeatedly tells the Israelites in the desert, in the book of Exodus, to either do something in remembrance of an event that occurred or to remember what He has already done. He knows His people. We, unfortunately, have short-term memory. We forget His promises, His character, and His love for us. I don't think we'll fully comprehend this love until we find ourselves basking in His presence.

Take note; you'll need to remind yourself of what's true and what's possible with God many times. For a time, I found it necessary to be part of a recovery group, and in that recovery that was non-faith based, they knew that it was necessary to have a divine power greater than themselves to overcome their particular struggle. I encourage you to form a group of trusted individuals that you'll need to help you remind yourself of what, I hope, you already know about our God. Why? Because we often rely on what we see, and what we see can seem discouraging and impossible. In those moments, you'll need to remind yourself of what you know to be true and even go to those trusted advocates to remind you of such truth, so you won't be tempted to throw in the towel. It will have to be a faith muscle that you exercise until it becomes stronger. Otherwise, you get frustrated when you believe the very thing that's possible is impossible.



My journey toward weight loss often led me to believe that I had too many things working against me: metabolism, age, time, finances, etc. I longed for the days when I didn't have to worry about what I put in my mouth and how much of it I put in my mouth; I could simply consume and enjoy it. Those days are no more. I would gain strides and lose them just as quickly, which left me frustrated. I had to remind myself of what was possible when my inclination was to revert to old habits that didn't serve me well. It wasn't long before I realized that it would be a battle that I'll have to engage daily to maintain the healthy weight that would serve my height and age well. I had to be intentional and mindful that this was the way I would need to conduct myself in order to gain the desired goal and retain it! I must be honest that I have experienced seasons when the pull of a dessert—who am I kidding—the pull of multiple visits to tempting desserts won over and derailed my progress. I had to decide to get back up again and stay the course. Even though I had a setback, I had to make the decision not to throw in the towel but reengage and do the things that I knew that would maintain my commitment.

I want you to be sober minded about the journey you'll embark on. Those habits and thought processes that haven't served you well or you thought were conquered will try to rear their ugly heads. You'll have to be intentional and create a process that carries you through those moments of fear and insecurities that will seek to derail you. Together, in the coming chapters, we'll set on a journey to create a system that, hopefully, won't allow you to be your worst enemy. One of the most important systems we're going to develop is the ability to recognize God's voice in obedience. My hope is that you'll save precious time spinning your wheels, doing everything but what God has uniquely created you to do and self-sabotaging yourself in the process.

The goal of this book is to awaken those God whispers that lie dormant in the recesses of your mind and heart; identify why they were left dormant; gain clarity, encouragement, and power from the One who empowers; and apply actionable steps to bring this purpose forth so that All may benefit. Your gifts and purpose aren't for you alone, but to edify those in your sphere of influence and ultimately give God glory.

To God be the glory!

You're made with purpose for a purpose!

