



**FULFILLING  
YOUR PURPOSE**  
The Key to a Victorious Life  
**DAWN J EPTING**

# Fulfilling Your Purpose

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The Key to a Victorious Life

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Fulfilling Your Purpose  
ISBN 978-1479398539  
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Website: [www.dawnepting.com](http://www.dawnepting.com)

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Printed in the United States of America

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## **Introduction**

*Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.  
Hebrews 12:1 (KJV)*

I saw a great and infinite brown course set before me. There appeared to be no beginning or end in sight. In fact, although I could see a little of the course behind me, I could see none of the course before me. The path was treacherous, filled with brown rocks of all sizes, and contained many pitfalls. There appeared to be hazy light colored ripples in the air. They were the byproduct of sweltering heat. The humidity in the air was intense. Nonetheless, I ran this path with a dogged determination and at a steady pace. I did not run in my own strength though. People stood to the left and to the right of the course in plush green grass. They were engaged in various conversations and all types of interactions. These people stood stationary but I was in motion, running. I heard a still inaudible voice say, "Many things will occur, but no matter what happens, continue to run your course." My eyes remained fixed straight ahead and I consistently ran by these groups of

*From Eternities Past, God Had a Purpose*

people at the same steady pace as if they were nonexistent. My eyes were fixed on something I could not even see! When I woke up, I knew that this dream held great meaning and significance. At the time though, I did not fully grasp what it was. Throughout the years, God slowly began to unravel what various components of the dream meant.

***The Dream's Meaning***

First, before we were born, the eternal God had a path for each of us to take in order to fulfill our unique purpose. Second, our past experiences have served as exercise and preparation to strengthen us for the portion of the run (our life's journey) in which we are now engaged. We do not run in our strength but in God's strength and with His grace. Third, we are to learn the lessons from the past (in terms of setbacks and mistakes) but look ahead and not back in order to run our respective course. Satan will always remind us of our past and not our victorious future. Fourth, we are to run our own course and stay focused on it and not anyone else's. Fifth, we must allow God to guide us into our future and purpose that will affect countless

generations. And finally, seizing God's purpose for our lives is not without adversity and challenges. Nonetheless, God's ultimate purpose will always prevail and be fulfilled! God always finishes what He starts. The Bible refers to Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

## **Chapter 1**

# **From Eternities Past, God Had a Purpose**

Before time was created and we were even born, before the earth was fashioned or the stars were hung in their sockets, before the infinite expanse of the universe was set, from eternities past, God had constructed a plan and purpose for each one of our lives out of His grace (unearned and unmerited favor). You may have heard this before, but it is important to let this point sink deep into your spirit. The Holy Bible in 2 Timothy 1:9 declares that God “has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began” (NKJV). Notice that this verse of Scripture states that God’s purpose was given to us as a result of His grace. God extends grace towards us simply because He is good. Also, like the path in my dream with no beginning, our purpose existed before time began. Our individual purpose is so important that it was fashioned before the physical

attributes of the earth and universe were ever formed! If God thought enough of us to fashion our purpose before time even began or the earth was formed, surely He is concerned with every intimate detail of our lives. Consequently He desires to be with us to help us fulfill our purpose and desires for us to possess everything He longs to give us. Ecclesiastes 3:11 states that “God has set eternity in the hearts of men” (NIV). A sense of our purpose birthed from God in eternities past and a desire to attain its future fulfillment resides within each of us.

Pastor Paula White has stated that “in our spirits there is a memory of a future that we have not even experienced yet.” Think about that. This occurs because God dwells in eternity and we dwell in time. God is the author of time. Eternity is from the everlasting past to future infinity. Our spirits are connected with the eternal God as Born Again Believers. When God declares a thing in eternity, from the everlasting past, it is so and already done. It is done because God sees it as complete although it has not manifested in time and the natural realm. It is finished because once God speaks, whatever He says must come to pass. That is the power of God’s Word. God does not have to wait for the passage of time for a thing to

occur since He dwells in eternity, outside of time, and indeed holds time itself in His hands. He sees the end (or conclusion of the matter) from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). In fact, God speaks to our spirit concerning the thing (or future) that we have yet to experience. This is especially true for Believers that have confessed with their mouth the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in their hearts that God has raised Him from the dead. At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit of God comes and dwells in us. The Holy Spirit imparts to us all truth (John 16:13). Often, our spirit knows our purpose before our mind uncovers it.

Since an innate sense of God's eternal purpose for our lives has been placed in each one of us, there is a desire to achieve it. You may have heard statements such as, "I was born to do this." A sense of fulfillment is a gauge as to whether we are operating in our calling or purpose. When we are not, we often experience feelings of stress, frustration, and emptiness. This is because we are not operating in that memory of our future that God has deposited in our spirits mentioned earlier. Often, we still must uncover this purpose though since we do live in time and our spirit knows our purpose but our minds have not grasped it yet. God

always speaks to our spirits and not our minds. Ideally, the mind embraces the truths God speaks to our spirits. I will touch on the subject of knowing the voice of God later. Since God has placed a sense of a finished purpose in our hearts (or spirits), we are all compelled to find and fulfill our purpose in life. The reason it is “finished” even upon our birth, is because again Isaiah 46:10 states, “God has made known the end from the beginning” (NIV). God knows the outcome of the story before it even begins. Our life’s purpose was established before the foundation of the world. Like the path in my dream that had no beginning, from eternities past, God has seen fulfillment of our purpose long before it even becomes realized in our lives. In God’s eyes, it has already been accomplished and done! It will become realized in time as we submit our lives to Him, receive His grace, and get in agreement with what He has declared concerning us.

Again, it becomes realized in time because God considers our purpose a done deal since He dwells in eternity and sits outside of time. Time was created for man. In fact, “It was given to man as a module to dwell in,” according to Pastor T.D. Jakes. Time was given to man as an instrument to measure purpose. All of our

days, hours, minutes, and seconds are used as a tool to measure whether we are accomplishing or have fulfilled God's purpose for our lives. Once we do discover our purpose, sometimes we tend to get frustrated and doubt God when something He has promised us has not yet come to pass. This frustration is often rooted in not having God's perspective or trying to do things in our own strength. Getting the proper perspective of our life's purpose and relying on God allows God to bring it to pass expeditiously.

### ***The Story of Abraham***

Consider the story of Abram in Genesis 13:15. In the Bible, God made a promise to Abram to give the land of Canaan to his descendants forever even though Abram did not even have a son. Later in Genesis 15:4, God made an even more specific promise to Abram to give him an heir from his own bowels. Although this purpose had been established and God considered it done before the physical manifestation took place, Abram and his wife Sarai struggled with doubt that God's Word could and would come to pass. Immediately after God made the specific promise in

Genesis 15:4 concerning Abram having a son, Abram and Sarai tried to bring the promise of God to pass in their own strength. By Genesis 16, Sarai suggested that Abram have relations with her servant Hagar in order to have a son. This attempt to manipulate circumstances did not work for Abram and Sarai though because as Pastor Creflo Dollar has stated, “God wants us to finally get to the point where self-effort dies and grace effort reigns.” Although Abram would conceive a child with Hagar named Ishmael, this self-effort would result in a 25 year delay of the child promised by God.

In His grace, God still appeared to Abram after the birth of Ishmael to honor the promise He made to him. In Genesis 17:17 Abraham laughed when God told him that he would have a son at 100 years old and the elderly Sarai laughed when the Lord said that she and Abram would conceive a child. The couple thought the promise was dead but God always honors His Word even if it was given 25 years earlier. So why did Abram and Sarai initially doubt God when He clearly stated in Genesis 17 that they would have a son together? They did not realize that it would be God’s power and not their own that would bring the promise

to pass and they did not agree with God and His Word. They had to rest in God knowing that He was well able to do what He said, they had to see themselves with the promise of God, and they had to speak in line with what God had said. God changed their names to Abraham (Father of Many Nations) and Sarah (Princess) so that they could speak in line with the promise God gave them and see themselves as possessors of that promise. Once the couple's names were changed, they saw themselves with the promise, and they relied on God's strength, within one year their son Isaac was born (Genesis 21:2). Faith is simply a decision to trust God and speak in line with what He has promised. We trust God by resting in Him. Relax and totally rest in God and the promise will manifest in no time.

Faith is always now because God is in the eternal now. Notice in the Gospels when Jesus manifested God's promises of healing, prosperity, and wholeness that terms such as "immediately" and "straightway" were often used because all God's promises are yes and amen (2 Corinthians 1:20). God is the most loving Father ever and wants to swiftly bring His promises to pass in our lives because "hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a

tree of life” (Proverbs 13:12, NLT). For example, God wanted to immediately bring The Children of Israel into the Promised Land after their exodus from Egypt in the Bible. The trip was only 11 days but ended up taking 40 years because of their doubt, unbelief, and refusal to get in agreement with God. Like Abraham and Sarah, the promises of God will manifest swiftly in our lives once we learn to trust the grace of God and get into agreement with His Word.

### ***Revelations of God***

I believe that we inherently possess a revelation of eternity in our hearts. That not only includes God’s plan for each of our lives that was formed before eternity, but also of God Himself. For without Him, we would have no individual purpose set from eternities past. He is the source of everything and the One who fashioned our purpose. A revelation of God precedes ascertaining God given individual purpose. Often, this revelation of God comes through the physical universal creation. All of creation testifies of God. That is, the earth, plants, animals, and everything we see around us in nature. For Romans 1:20 discloses that “ever since

the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities-His eternal power and divine nature” (NLT). The first and most important revelation we see of God through His creation are indications of His love and goodness. We see the dew that nourishes the lush green patches of grass throughout creation. Sometimes we observe the soft misty rainfalls that gently descend from the heavens and water the whole of creation with their life sustaining properties. We gaze upon the sun with its bright yellow florescent rays, feel its warmth, and see how it provides energy. We are even privy to radiant sunrises and sunsets with their orange, pinkish, purple, and bluish hues which serve to inspire a sense of awe and peace within their onlookers. Revelations of God and His love are all around us. While it is true that destructive events also transpire in nature, it can be argued that good events occur more often! The sun rises and the earth remains in orbit every day, while earthquakes, tornadoes, etc., occur at random and not daily. Additionally, nature testifies of God’s love and goodness merely by virtue of the continued existence of humankind and the universe! A revelation of eternity begins with a revelation of God.

Revelations of God (who is love) are all around us. Our purpose is birthed out of Him, is an extension of His love, and is meant to bring honor and glory to Him.

### ***Childhood Revelations of God***

Sometimes God goes a little deeper and allows us to have specific revelations of Him and eternity through dreams and visions. Although it was over 20 years ago, I will never forget being about 4 years old and having what at the time I deemed a troubling dream. In this particular dream, I dreamed God died. In the dream, I saw a casket outside with God in it (somehow I knew it was Him). This is yet another example of our spirits knowing hidden truths. Anyway, at the end of the dream, I distinctly remember God rising from the casket and ascending into the sky! I woke up shaking and utterly terrified! I cried because I did not understand who would take care of the world if God died? I had only gone to church with my family a couple of times in my life (on Easter mostly) and really did not understand much about God. I now understand that at the tender age of 4, God was giving me a revelation of His plan of salvation. He was revealing to

me that He came in human flesh to die for my sins in the person of His Son Jesus, and was resurrected from the dead. I will explain this in more detail later. This purpose was established from eternities past and is vital! Without it, God could not have fashioned our individual purposes. It is because of Christ that we now live. Concerning Christ, the Bible teaches us that “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28, NIV). Our purpose is borne out of what Christ did for us.

### ***Salvation, the Prerequisite to Finding Purpose***

Salvation is a prerequisite to receiving God’s purpose for our lives. John 3:16 clearly states that “for God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (KJV). Jesus Christ took the place for our sins. You see, the book of Genesis teaches us about the fall of mankind through the disobedience of the first man Adam. When Adam sinned by eating of the tree God instructed him not to eat of (see Genesis 3), we all fell and inherited a sin nature because we were all in him (his seed). Since

Romans 6:23 says that “the wages of sin is death,” each of us deserved to die and not inherit eternal life and spend eternity in heaven for the sin we committed. Jesus, who never sinned, took our place so that we might live. Since He was sinless and did not deserve to die, He was able to take our sins upon Himself. Essentially, under the law, Jesus should have never died because He never sinned. Think of it as an exchange. We sinned so should have died and be eternally separated from God; He did not sin so should not have died and been separated from God. Since He took our sins and death, we are able to take His righteousness and stand sinless and live eternally with God. All we have to do is accept His sacrifice.

In order to obtain salvation, Romans 10:9 states that we must first confess God’s Son Jesus with our mouths and believe in our hearts that He shed his precious blood for us and was raised from the dead. The benefits of salvation include eternal life with God in heaven after death and abundance of life (spiritually, physically, financially, and relationally) while on earth. This type of life is called Zoe life in the Greek. It refers not to the duration of life but quality of life. It is the life and nature of God, God’s DNA, and what makes

God, God. After salvation, we are able to come before God the Father and spend time with Him in His Word (The Holy Bible) and in prayer to uncover the purpose He has for our lives. We must uncover our purpose because God has already established it in eternity. The Bible in Revelations 13:8 says that Jesus is “the lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world” (KJV). Our purpose is borne out of what Christ did for us and accepting His sacrifice.

### ***What Purpose Is & Finding It***

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines purpose as “something set up as an object or end to be attained.” In a race for example, the purpose (or end to be attained) is to reach the finish line. Regardless of the injuries and potential bumps/bruises incurred along the way, reaching the finish line is viewed as successful completion of the course. Similarly, our goal should be to run our respective course (in life) and fulfill our purpose even if we incur difficulties along the way. We must seek God for our purpose.

Jeremiah 29:13 says, “And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your

heart” (KJV). Jesus searched to uncover His purpose. He spent a lot of time with God in prayer and fellowship and was therefore very clear on what His purpose was. He also disclosed to His followers in John 8:29 that “the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him” (KJV). In fact, 1 John 3:8 states that “for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (KJV). Jesus knew His purpose and fulfilled it. In the Holy Bible there are demonstrations of Jesus going about healing people, or destroying sickness. It recounts Him abundantly feeding crowds, or destroying lack. And finally, it shows Him ultimately defeating death for us by being resurrected after His crucifixion on the cross. All of these things destroyed the devil’s prior grip over humanity with sickness, lack, and death/eternal damnation. It was a sense of purpose that gave Jesus the strength to continue His ministry despite prevalent criticism by religious groups and to even face His ultimate death for us on the cross.

Similarly, purpose gives us strength and motivation to face each day and moment of our lives. It is almost like fuel for the inevitable challenges we all will face. It can be the most effective catalyst, for

example, to bring about social change due to injustice, preserve the family unit from potential threats, and display faith in God during turbulent circumstances. We endure the present circumstances because there is a sense that fulfilling purpose is greater than the current discomfort we might face. It kind of brings to mind a woman who is with child. Often, she endures so much during the course of her pregnancy. There may be morning sickness accompanied with nausea, irritability, pains, and other discomfort. Additionally, when it is time to give birth, there is a great deal of pain, anxiety, and distress associated with this act. What motivates the woman through all of this though is the purpose at hand: giving birth to that beautiful baby. Purpose enables her to endure. When speaking of Jesus, Hebrews 12:2 teaches us that “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross” (KJV). Jesus considered the joyful purpose of destroying the works of the devil, in particular eternal damnation of humankind, so fulfilling that He endured all the pain and agony associated with the crucifixion. Like the woman with the baby in mind, He had us in mind. Once our purpose is found, we should become relentless to fulfill it because we will not feel satisfied if

we do not. Having a sense of fulfillment is often an indication of operating in purpose. Those with no purpose experience feelings of hopelessness and watch their lives slowly ebb away in the sea of confusion, chaos, superficiality, and the mundane that many term “life”.

Knowing our purpose then becomes imperative. Once we know and begin to operate in it, we then become straightly aligned with the bull’s eye (purpose) along a trajectory (course) like the arrow in a bow that propels towards its target. When discussing fulfilling God’s will or purpose for our life though, we have to remember that we should desire His above our own. This is nothing to become discouraged about. Often, the will of God will line up with the desires we have especially if we are spending time with God (in His Word and prayer). Most often, God has placed those desires in us. Consequently, God’s will often lines up with our desires. Godly desires will line up with the Word of God. God’s will/purpose for our lives includes Godly desires but many times we experience a level of adversity along the way in fulfilling that purpose.

### ***Purposeful Trials***

If you are experiencing trouble in your life today do not think you are outside God's will or that it is not part of your purpose. Also, do not think that God is the source of the hardships you may be experiencing. I remember once being accused of something I had not done. It grieved me because it was not even in my nature to do what I was accused of. I spoke with God about this hurt and I heard His voice clearly say to me, "How do you think I feel." We will touch on knowing the voice of God a bit later. Precious Brothers and Sisters we have accused God of all kinds of things and evils that it is not in His nature to do. Let us always remember that God is good and His desire is to always do us good! While God is never the source of evil, trials and tribulations do come. Jesus even stated in John 16:33 that "in the world ye shall have tribulation" (KJV). As Believers, we have an adversary. John 10:10 reminds us that Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy and 1 Peter 5:8 says that "the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (KJV). Satan's mission is to try to make the life of the Believer miserable and ultimately destroy him/her. Most importantly, his ultimate goal is to prevent you from fulfilling your purpose! 1 Peter 4:12 even states,

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (KJV). Think of the life of Jesus. Years before He was born, in Isaiah 53, it was foretold that His purpose to destroy the works of the devil would include being beaten, mocked, and dying a terrible death on the cross. God knew these trials would occur before they took place and He already had a path to victory. Ultimately, Jesus obtained the victory over Satan by being resurrected and defeating death though. We know that 1 John 4:4 states that “greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (KJV). Just like Jesus overcame, we too will overcome and fulfill our purpose as we trust God, hallelujah!

### ***What Purpose Is Not (Wrong Purposes)***

Since we have established that there is an inherent need to find purpose, then it is perpetually the quest of the human heart. Unfortunately, many people seek to find purpose in the wrong things. Some seek it in the form of substance abuse, chemical dependency, affirmation from the opposite or even same sex (in

today's society), the approval of others, or the accumulation of material things. One common thread weaves through all of these things; namely, they are all for self satisfaction (self-centered) or to glorify one's self. God's purpose for our lives is NEVER centered on self but meant to somehow reach out, improve the lives of others, and glorify Him. He is the source and creator of all things and the only one who deserves all the glory, honor, and praise! Jesus improved the lives of others and glorified God by setting people free from bondage, healing the sick, and dying for all mankind on the cross. Always remember, we can determine what our purpose is not, if it is focused on ourselves, or does not help others so that God will be glorified. The danger of trying to find purpose outside of God is that there will always be a sense of restlessness and longing for something deeper and more fulfilling.

### ***My Wrong Purpose and Motives***

I learned this lesson shortly after serving a six-year stint in the U.S. Air Force. I had just completed a Bachelor's in History and was set to take the LSAT or law school entrance exam. I took the test and did fairly

well on it. I also completed all the other necessary requirements needed to apply to various law schools. I got into a couple of schools, and was very excited because law school would be free to me as a veteran from Illinois. The state paid for all the necessary costs associated with this schooling. I thanked God for this seemingly great blessing! “Wow God,” I thought, “Not only did you open the door for me to get accepted, but you also arranged it so that I don’t have to worry about paying for law school.” How could that not be the hand of God, I reasoned?

Well, 2 Corinthians 10:5 teaches us to “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (NIV). The way we know which arguments (or thoughts) are to be cast down is to filter them through the Word of God. We are to cast down any thoughts that cause us to feel a loss of peace, depressed, or worried. If a thought is contrary to the written Word of God or what has been imparted to our spirit through the Holy Spirit, we are to cast it down. Years earlier, God had imparted to my spirit that my purpose was to teach the Word of God. Consequently, I should have never

even entertained the thought of being a lawyer or going to law school. Furthermore, I also began to realize that I had no vision for being a lawyer. I believe that God gives us some sense of vision with our purpose. I did not know what type of law I would practice or how I would touch people's lives through practicing law. All I thought was that it would sound good to say I was a lawyer. Growing up, saying that you wanted to become a lawyer or doctor someday was always impressive and garnered the approval of people. Let me pause here and offer a side note. Our purpose is not to garner the approval of people. People did not die on the cross and go to Hell that we might have eternal life! Only God did and we are to honor Him with our lives. We are operating in our purpose when we are doing what God has called us to do.

Anyway, I began to sense this decision I had made to attend or even apply to law school was not God's perfect will for my life. So then, I began to seek the Lord as to whether or not I was to attend law school. First I would like to say that it's amazing that we seek God about things we already know the answer to. When we do this, we just want God to forfeit His purpose for our life and come in line with the purpose

we've created. That is out of line though and there is an order to everything in nature and even in the spiritual realm. Just as the sun does not orbit around the earth but is centered in the solar system and the earth must adjust its celestial path to go around the sun, similarly we must adjust our lives around God. Secondly, we often seek the Lord as an afterthought when that should always be our initial inclination before making any life altering decision. I earnestly sought Him for a few months. God confirmed to me through dreams over about a two week span that it was not His will for me to attend law school.

In the first dream, I was walking through the halls of Northern Illinois University (one of the schools I had been accepted into) in a zombie like state. In the second dream, I was sad while attending law school. And finally, I had a dream one Saturday night in which there were no images but the voice of God speaking to my spirit. God spoke that I was to make sure I attended the church my mom was a member of the next morning. I was in Chicago visiting my family and usually attended that church but would occasionally go elsewhere on Sundays. I attended as God had said and the co-pastor preached a sermon. Although I took no

notes, I'll never forget that the name of the sermon was "The Unfair Exchange". He said that "often when God calls you to give up something you have decided you want, that it looks like an unfair exchange." He went on to disclose how it looked like an unfair exchange when God asked him to leave his job and go into full-time ministry. He stated how happy he now was that he had been obedient to the voice of God. I knew deep within my spirit that going to law school was not the road I was to take.

Even after those three very firm confirmations not to attend law school though, my flesh still struggled with not becoming a lawyer. Notice I said my flesh still struggled with not becoming a lawyer. When I became honest with myself, I wanted the applause from people and the accolades that the title "lawyer" would afford. I had no plan or even passion for law though! Remember that when God calls us to do something He gives us a vision and passion for it. Often, it is something that we would do without monetary compensation and could even do in our sleep. That is how I feel about teaching the Word of God. Additionally, although He may not reveal the entire vision or all the steps at once, we have an inkling of direction. I had no inkling about

practicing law and more importantly I had no peace.  
Always follow the peace and passion of God!

### ***God's Voice, the Source of True Purpose***

Once we become Believers, it is imperative for us to know and ascertain the voice of God. We hear so many voices within a given day. We are exposed to the voices of the media, popular culture at large, and established social norms. The voices of our moms, dads, other family members, loved ones, and friends are also etched into our memory. This is because we are exposed to their ideologies and ways of doing things very early in life and their influence often remains throughout the course of our lives. Sometimes we hear the voice or opinions of other individuals, the enemy (Satan), or the voice of God. Since there are so many voices vying for our attention and that contradict God's Word, the Bible admonishes us, "Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove

[for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]” (Romans 12:2, AMP). The more we spend time reading the Word of God, the more we will be able to “prove” His will for our lives. God speaks to us through His Word and His Spirit. It is essential that we listen to and obey the voice of God. Jesus said His “sheep listen to His voice...and will never follow a stranger” (John 10:3-5, NIV). God can speak to us through a number of avenues and means. Most often, He speaks to us daily through the time we spend reading His written Word and in prayer. God and His Word are one in the same. You cannot separate God from His Word.

As we mature in our spiritual walk and prayer life, we begin to ascertain God’s still small voice. 1 Kings 19:12 teaches that God speaks in a still small voice. That is the reason it is important for us to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and spend quiet time alone with God each day. Only then are we able to clearly hear God speak. In my experience, when God speaks in His still small voice your whole being spirit, soul (which includes the mind),

and body are flooded with peace. There is always peace when God speaks.

Since God speaks in a still small voice, Satan seeks to keep us busy and distracted. We live in an extremely fast paced society. Everyday, each and every one of us are presented with the opportunity to be busy, get distracted, and not hear the voice of God. Consequently, if we are not hearing from God we are involved in activity and just spinning our wheels. What comes to mind is a hamster running fast on a wheel but never reaching a destination or accomplishing anything. We may be busy, but if we are not hearing from God and operating in His purpose, we are essentially unproductive. If Satan can keep these distractions up long enough, our lives are eventually over and our purpose is never fulfilled. Remember John 10:10 says that “the thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (NKJV). If Satan cannot outright kill or destroy you, he will steal your life through distractions and busyness. You can become so distracted with work, school, trials/tribulations, the attainment of success, or even family that you never ascertain your purpose or fulfill it, even if it is known. In addition to His Word and prayer, God also speaks through dreams,

visions, or even other people. The common thread that weaves through all the methods of the way God speaks is the peace that ensues once God has spoken.

### ***Random Dreams Versus God Given Dreams***

The way that I have heard God's voice aside from His Word throughout my life has always been through dreams. Of course I've always heard God's voice through reading/hearing His Word (the Bible) but I've always received specific direction and warnings through dreams. I believe one of the reasons God chooses to speak to us through dreams is because we are so busy sometimes that we are not still long enough to hear His still small voice while we are awake. I believe the other reason God chooses to sometimes speak in this manner is because there are times, when it seems at least, that no Scripture can be found that gives detailed instructions about our particular individual situation(s). For instance, there is no Scripture explicitly stating who you are to marry, where you are to live, where you are to work, and many other pertinent life decisions. While there are Scriptures about what type of person you should marry, you may

need direction in terms of clearly identifying the specific individual. God speaks in dreams to give us specifics beyond Scripture. If time permitted, I would share stories of numerous dreams that I have had that have come to pass.

Prophetic or Godly dreams always come to pass. Some of you are probably thinking that perhaps the dreams that I have had that came to pass were a coincidence. In my experience though, a God given dream is very different from a random meaningless dream. A random dream is filled with visual images, may be convoluted, may or may not make any sense, and is usually not remembered upon waking up or is forgotten within a short period of time. A God given dream commands attention, is very simplistic and direct, often has no images, and is NEVER forgotten. In fact, most of the God given dreams I have had contained no images but just the inaudible voice of God speaking to my spirit. God given dreams are direct and structured because God is a God of order. I have never forgotten any one of them and just recently recorded them all in a journal although I had some of them years ago. Case and point, I have never forgotten the dream about Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection that I

mentioned at the beginning of this book, although I was only around 4 years old at the time. I honestly don't remember any of the random dreams I have had though. I don't dream as much as I once did anymore. Most often, God speaks to me directly in His still small voice while I am awake. I believe this is because I consciously make time to sit still and not be so preoccupied with other things in order to hear God's voice. Now, I can hear His voice very clearly all day long giving specific direction and instructions. What loving father would go a day without speaking to his children? God longs to speak to us throughout the day about many things including His purpose for our lives.

### ***My Visitation from God***

I'll never forget a personal visitation that I had from God. It was in 2003 when I was in the U.S. Air Force stationed in Germany! It may sound a bit strange to some but I pray that you would allow God to open your heart to see that He speaks to each of us in a variety of different ways. I was lying in my bed on the second floor of my two-story duplex. I looked over to the right of my bed and saw a figure that stood between

5 feet 9 inches and 5 feet 11 inches or so, the average height of a man. The figure was very dazzling and bright and had the appearance of what I could best recognize as crystal or a diamond. The various facets of the figure sparkled with different colors as a diamond does when it reflects light. I was so overwhelmed with fear when I saw Him that I felt as if my heart was literally about to collapse in my chest. I thought that I would not live through what was occurring. Just then, He spoke to my spirit in an inaudible voice that permeated from deep within Him and said, "It is me, the Lord, do not be afraid!" At that moment, I felt a deep indescribable peace come over me that I cannot explain. Somehow instantly I knew that I knew that this was in fact God. There was no question of this fact. This is yet another example of my spirit capturing a truth before my mind did. It was like someone I had always known.

I am limited by the human experience and language to explain what happened next. I don't think I will ever be able to adequately convey this experience because the spiritual or infinite transcends the finite world in which we reside. I was then caught up (in my spirit it seemed) and passed through the infinite expanse

of eternity, into another dimension. We zipped about without effort. In an instant, we were no longer on the second floor, but on the first floor of my duplex at the bottom of the stairs. He told me, "Everything in you has got to die." Somehow, I could see myself (or spirit) and it was pure dazzling white and glowing. It seemed that I could then feel myself dying. It is important to note that while in eternity, I was totally aware of the presence of God and it never left me. It was everywhere! Nothing could contain Him. His presence was just as real as the physical human beings we see every day even though he had no physical form once we passed into eternity. Next, I was back in my bed sitting upright and the crystal figure was gone. I wanted to ask questions but He had left. I was left to ponder the meaning of what this all meant.

Years later, still even today, I would realize that the visitation was to show me that there are many things in me that needed and still need to die. God was conveying that every trace of selfishness, stinginess, self-centeredness, jealousy, insecurity, inferiority, and everything unlike Him have to die in order to minister to others. This message that I needed to die to myself was essential! It is noted in John 12:24 that "except a

corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (KJV). This is a very powerful picture! The grain of corn must sacrifice its individual life for the good of the whole. That is, for the good of yielding an abundant crop. The individual corn dies but an abundant crop is produced. Jesus died but many live and are saved because of His sacrifice. Perhaps that is the reason God instructed me that I must die. You cannot effectively serve others unless their needs are placed before your own. Serving others before one’s self is difficult because the human tendency is to think, “What about me?” If we take care of others, God Himself will take care of us. God always rewards our sacrifice.

There are many examples of self sacrifice throughout history. In the current spirit of the 2009 Presidential Inauguration, Civil Rights Leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others sacrificed their lives. This was done so that minorities could gain equal social rights and to pave the way for there to become an African American President like Barack Obama someday. Someone had to die so that others might abundantly live.

The message of dying to live was one that was imparted to me during that visitation from God. What I love about God is that He never condemns us! In that visitation, He could have easily said you are selfish, stingy, self-centered, and so on. In His love and grace though, He conveyed the message that He needed to get across in a way that could be understood but that was still gentle and not condemning. Additionally, this dream also applied to some experiences I later had in regards to dealing with people in my personal life that can be a bit challenging. God has stretched me, my pride, and my tendency to seek to preserve and provide for myself. That has all had to die. I find that I more consistently put the needs of others above my own. As a side note, it was not until 4 years later in 2007 after this 2003 visitation that I realized that God's appearance to me coincided with how God revealed himself to the Apostle John. In Revelations 4:3, John wrote about seeing a throne in heaven and said, "He Who sat there appeared like [the crystalline brightness of] jasper and [the fiery] sardius" (AMP). The 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the Merriam Webster's collegiate dictionary describes jasper as an opaque cryptocrystalline (or crystal) quartz of any of several colors. This

description coincides with the way that God appeared to me!

### ***Not Seeking God Can Lead to Wrong Purpose***

God wants to have an intimate relationship with us and that includes speaking to us. That is His heart's desire. Man was created to be in continuous and constant fellowship with God. Jesus denotes this point when He said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, NKJV). God will take every opportunity He can to speak to us if we are willing to listen. In Matthew 5:6, Jesus said "blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (KJV). Seeking God for our God given purpose is a righteous act. In doing so we are saying, "Lord I want to uncover your purpose for my life, be obedient to your will, and ultimately glorify you with my life." God will certainly honor that. This is confirmed in Hebrews 11:6 when the writer says that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. I think that

it is always important to seek God as a first and not last resort, especially in regards to our individual purpose. God will always speak to those who seek Him with their whole heart. Remember, as I previously quoted, in Jeremiah 29:13 He said if we seek Him with our whole heart then we will find Him. In this same book, He also said to “call to Me and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3, NKJV). I believe that this course of action, seeking God first, saves us from the battle that ensues in the flesh against the spirit. The battle in the flesh involves the desire to pursue things that are not God’s best for our lives.

There is always a constant battle in us between the Spirit of God and our sinful flesh because both seek to gain control of our minds. Either our minds are influenced by the Spirit and revelation of God or the flesh (world’s way of doing things, demonic influences, unrenewed minds, incorrect past thought patterns not based in the Word of God, etc.). Once we make any decision based on the flesh without seeking God, and our mind grabs hold of it and determines a course of action, the war between the flesh and spirit begins to rage within us. Our flesh and spirit are in a constant

struggle to gain control of our minds. Once our mind grabs hold to a concept through our flesh, we often begin to visualize (or see) the thing we want and feel like we can almost (touch) that desire. The appeal to our flesh and senses has taken root in our mind.

Often we lusts for things based on appeal to one or more of the five senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, or smell. This is deceptive because our enemy Satan works through the sense realm. This is the same trick he used on Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. He convinced them to focus on the appearance and feel of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil instead of on the Word of God. They allowed Satan to gain control over their minds through the flesh instead of allowing God to do so through the Spirit and His Word (the instructions He had given them). The allure of the sense realm contributed to their fall. Satan is the enemy of God and every Believer and seeks to use deception through the senses to lead the people of God astray. Looks can be deceptive. Whoever controls the mind (whether Spirit or flesh) controls your life. Our words, actions, and station in life are a byproduct of what we think. That is the reason Satan constantly seeks to gain control of our

minds through the flesh so that ungodly words and actions will follow. Subsequently, the result is a life derailed from fulfillment of Godly purpose.

### ***Distractions to Purpose***

The Bible warns about the lusts of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. 1 John 2:16 states that “all that is in the world-the lust of the flesh [craving for sensual gratification] and lust of the eyes [greedy longings of the mind] and pride of life [assurance in one’s own resources or in the stability of earthly things]-these do not come from the Father but are from the world [itself]” (AMP). Although these sensual lusts are from the world, Satan has influenced the world system. The world system includes the norms, status quo, beliefs and ideas not based in God’s Word that society has come to deem as acceptable. Satan operates in the world and in individuals through the sense realm. If we can see it, hear it, touch it, taste it, or smell it we deem that it is real or acceptable. While it is true that sense knowledge is a necessary aspect of the human existence, we are not to rely on it when it comes to spiritual truths revealed in God’s

Word. What God says always transcends sense knowledge. For example, if someone is feeling (the sense of touch) pain in their body from sickness, the truth of God's Word says that "with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5, KJV). We are healed because of the pain Jesus bore for us on the cross. That is the truth regardless of what the senses state. If the person trusts God and stands and confesses this truth long enough, eventually the manifestation of healing will be seen in the physical realm.

Believe it when I say there is a spiritual unseen world that exists that is just as real as the physical world around us. That includes God, heaven (where God dwells), God's promises to us, angels, demons, Satan and even Hell. We cannot see the air for example but we know that it exists. 2 Corinthians 4:18 stresses the importance of not relying on sensory perception when it states that "we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (NIV). We are called to make our decisions by focusing on the eternal unseen God and what He prompts us to do through His Word and prayer and not based on what looks/seems good to us or what we want, think, or feel.

The senses stand in direct opposition to the truth of God's Word and His revelation. We know this because Galatians 5:16 instructs us "to walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (KJV). The flesh refers to a system of doing things based on the senses that opposes the will (even Word) of God (or the way He does things). Satan influences the flesh because He opposes the will of God. The Spirit and the flesh are mutually exclusive. A person cannot walk in both. Again, that is because the flesh is a way of thinking or doing things that opposes the Word (and will) of God. Walking in the Spirit involves doing what God has instructed in His Word. Either you are operating in the flesh or Spirit with every decision you make or action you take.

Consequently, the flesh needs to be put to death in order for the Spirit to live, have preeminence over our minds, and lead us. Walking in the senses can be dangerous because Amos 3:3 poses the question "can two walk together, except they be agreed" (KJV)? Following the senses will often result in us walking in the flesh. Sense knowledge has its place in order for us to experience the world around us as physical human beings. Sensory things become dangerous though when

they stand in direct opposition to the truth of God's Word and His revelation. If we are going to follow God we must follow the promptings of our spirit. His promptings are usually evidenced by peace within us. There is no peace when we walk exclusively by the senses because we are not in alignment with the Spirit of God. John 4:24 is clear that "God is a Spirit" (KJV). God operates in the spiritual realm. Consequently, God's instructions or will (purpose) for our lives most often comes via the Spirit through prayer, fellowship with Him, and is confirmed by His written or spoken Word.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Our Past Has Prepared Us for Our Present Course**

The second point in the dream at the beginning of this book reveals that everything that has occurred in our lives up until now has served as preparation for the present. I don't care how young or old you are as long as you are still breathing, you have a course to run. We all are currently running a course and need to eventually complete it. We can take heart because we do not need to run it in our own strength. We know we are headed towards a unique destination that God has for us. We do not necessarily know where it is or how to get there though. That's why I believe I could see prior portions of the path and not what was up ahead in the dream. Our past is what served as preparation for our present course. Regardless of where you presently are in life, past experiences will strengthen you for today and even tomorrow. Even past mistakes of our own doing can help us to effectively run our present course. I believe all of us can look back on situations in

our past, and encourage ourselves for the present. God gives us the ability to run our present portion of the course more effectively because we remember how God took care of, helped, and delivered us in the past. We are meant to run on top of things that we would have tripped or stumbled over some time ago. Whether you feel like it or not, you are now stronger because of what you went through then. At the very moment I saw myself in the dream, I was running very strong. In the dream, I could see remnants of the path behind me, despite the fact that I had ran past those portions of the course. The prior portions of the course had strengthened me.

### ***The Athlete's Training Ground***

In training to jog or run, each prior run serves as exercise or preparation for the next one. The quadriceps, hamstring, calve, and glute muscles are strengthened as a result of prior runs. Even muscle groups that are not as actively engaged as the lower body ones in running, such as the biceps and shoulder muscles are strengthened from previous runs. The past has strengthened us for whatever our present task at

hand is or our future one will be. In remembering the past we can count on God to bring us through whatever trials we may be facing by recounting past accomplishments/victories. Second, we are not as easily flustered by uneasy circumstances and situations as we once were because exercise also serves to mature our muscles, or in this case, us. We have acquired strength from past experiences to overcome present circumstances or whatever may come our way in the future. Everything you went through in your past was exercise for the present. Just as an athlete must train in the natural for physical competition, so you must also train in the spiritual.

### ***The Spiritual Battles***

Training is necessary because we are part of a spiritual war as Believers. The good news is that the war has already been won and we are on the winning side! When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead he defeated sin and death for us and the Bible states that “having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:15, KJV). Although the war is

ultimately between God and Satan, we as Believers have willingly enlisted to be soldiers of God. Satan has also seduced or drafted followers for his side too. As soldiers though, we simply must enforce the victory that has already been wrought by Christ. Consequently, we do not have to accept sickness, disease, financial lack, or emotional turmoil. When these negative things attack us, we must see them as a deception from the enemy and maintain our stance of victory in Christ over these things. As Godly soldiers enforcing the victory already secured, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12, NKJV). Although we wrestle with these principalities and powers, we are also contending with the deception of the devil. Ephesians 6:16 instructs us to take the shield of faith “wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (KJV). Those fiery darts are the lies and deception that Satan shoots into our mind that we are sick, in lack, or failures.

We must be strengthened to fight. We do not fight in the natural though, but we fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). Our job is to have faith in

what God has already provided by giving us victory over all adverse circumstances through Jesus' death on the cross. We've been given authority to enforce the victory won through prayer, God's Word, the name of Jesus, and acknowledging the blood of Jesus. Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3 to "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (NKJV). Hardships always come from the enemy but God has already given us all the necessary tools to overcome them.

I once saw a comic strip of three men carrying their own individual crosses. One whined about how his cross was too heavy and cried out to God to cut it down shorter. God obliged and answered his prayer. Shortly thereafter, all three arrived at the edge of a cliff and needed to cross over to the other side to another cliff. Well, the other two used their longer crosses to bridge this gap and walked over them to the other side victoriously. The man who had whined could not cross over though because his cross was now too short to do so. Consequently, that man had to remain where he was and not be promoted to the next level. Although this difficulty was not sent by God, God could give them power to overcome the difficulty and they would be stronger and better equipped for what was ahead (in

this case a cliff). I laughed at the comic strip but was reminded of the ring of truth it contained. Sometimes, we need to ask God to strengthen us for what we are going through by His Word and prayer instead of asking Him to take the trial away. Promotion may lie on the other side of the trial. If you think of school, you must take a test in order to advance to the next grade level. So it is with the spiritual. Although Satan is the author of the test, you are still equipped by God to pass it. No one is ever promoted to the next level without passing or enduring the present test.

Just because a situation is difficult does not mean that it is bad for us. In keeping with the theme of running throughout this book, many marathon runners wear t-shirts that say “pain is weakness leaving your body.” According to Romans 8:29, God’s desire is to conform us into the image of Christ who has no weaknesses. Christ overcame every difficult situation from the enemy that He was ever confronted with. Similarly, God has given us all the necessary tools we need to overcome every adverse situation we may encounter through His Word, prayer, the name of Jesus, the blood of Jesus, faith, and grace.

Many evil things happen around us because we allow them to happen, not God. Jesus has given us authority over the evil of the enemy but often we fail to exercise it in the battles we face. In Luke 10:19, The Bible notes that God has given us “power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over ALL the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (KJV). He has given us His very own power and the right to use it. Why would a person whose name has been added to a joint checking account for instance, go to the person who opened the account to withdraw the funds they need when they now have authority to do so too? The person added has just as much authority to make a withdrawal as the one who initially opened the account. Similarly, why do we go to God and ask Him to deliver us from negative situations when He has added our names to His account which contains healing, prosperity, peace, and wholeness? God expects us to take authority over the evils of the enemy by accessing that account and believing and speaking the promises in His Word out loud because He has given us authority to do so.

If you are experiencing a difficult time today, don't fret, know that God will carry you through. Be

encouraged that God said in Isaiah 43:2 that “when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze” (NIV). God has promised to be with us even in the midst of trials. Remember that ultimately the war is between God and Satan and God will protect and provide for His soldiers. Obviously if the trials do not kill us, then we should be strengthened by them to run stronger in the future.

Unfortunately, often we allow the past to weaken and not strengthen us for current and future battles. We recount past failures, disappointments, and setbacks and reason and rationalize why we are ill equipped to run our present or future course. God intended for those past disappointments to serve as a lesson and not liability in running your present and future course.

### ***The Life of Joseph***

Joseph’s life is a good example of past preparation for future purpose. Chapters 37 through 47 of Genesis in the Bible recount Joseph’s challenges and

the purpose they served. Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers and then taken to Egypt. While enslaved, he served his master honorably but was accused of raping his master's wife (a crime he did not commit) and was thrown into prison. Even though Joseph helped another prisoner understand the meaning of a dream, that same man forgot about helping Joseph get out of jail upon his own release. Nevertheless, Joseph ultimately became ruler over all of Egypt, second in command only to pharaoh (the king), which allowed him to preserve the lives of his kindred during a time of famine.

Upon first glance, in the natural, all of the events that occurred in the life of Joseph appear to be tragic and even confusing. I am sure there were numerous times that Joseph was tempted to be despondent and question God. Joseph could have easily felt justified in questioning God and giving up; he did nothing to deserve the injustices that he suffered. A bigger future purpose and greater victories were borne out of everything that Joseph experienced. Had he not gone through what he did, the Israelites would have been killed by the famine that took place in their land while he was in Egypt. We would have never

heard of the names of Moses, Paul, or even Jesus Christ who was to come out of the tribe of Judah (one of Joseph's brothers) because Judah would have died during the famine. There would not have even been a Bible since it was written by the Jewish people. God allowed Joseph to overcome the adversity he experienced, preserved a nation, and ultimately extend his offer of salvation to the entire world!

### ***Tried for the Battle***

As a child, I had always felt a strong call to go into ministry and teach and preach God's Word but had never really been tested or tried. Short of growing up without enough money, I had never been through anything really challenging in my youth; namely, I did not experience the tragedies many people experience such as a serious illness or death of an immediate family member. Let me again clarify what I am about to say by stressing that God DOES NOT bring tragedy and sickness in our lives. Satan is the destroyer and is the one who comes "to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10, KJV). Jesus made that clear. I will make reference to this Scripture repeatedly throughout this

book. Nonetheless, God can still use the difficulties we experience and work them together for our good to fulfill His good plan and purpose for our life (Romans 8:28). That is the omniscience nature of God. He turned around the evil intended to destroy Jesus on the cross by using it as a means to extend salvation to the entire world. Concerning God's plan of salvation, 1 Corinthians 2:8 records, "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (KJV). Never think that any situation the devil sends your way is too hard for God to turn around in a positive manner.

I remember hearing the testimonies of pastors and other teachers and thinking that I needed to go through something (trials, etc.) to credibly preach of God's strength and faithfulness one day. I could sense God's faithfulness, strength, and power based on what He had done in the lives of various ministers as they recounted their testimonies and preached with vigor. God can use anyone to proclaim His Word even those who have not experienced adversity. I was a very strange child though and always liked to be challenged; i.e., mentally, academically (school competitions), or physically (joining the military). I would think how I

would welcome the day I was tried. That is what I thought at the time at least. This concept of rejoicing in trials is not foreign to Scripture though. Romans 5:3 boldly declares, “Moreover [let us also be full of joy now!] Let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing pressure and affliction and hardship produce patience and unswerving endurance” (AMP). I believe the reason we are to glory (or rejoice) during difficult times is because of our confidence in God and the character challenges produce in our lives. Rejoicing in trials is merely a sign that we are confident that God is big enough to take care of the enemy and whatever we are facing. We also rejoice because again, trials give us greater endurance for what lies ahead. Endurance is not cultivated for the past but for the present and future. Having these thoughts as a child, I knew the day of trying in my life would come but was not sure what form it would take. As previously mentioned, Jesus said that “here on earth you will have MANY trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world” in John 16:33 (NLT). Following Jesus and leading/living the Christian life does not exempt you from trials. Nonetheless, as Isaiah 43:2 above states,

we are guaranteed that God will be with us and carry us through the hard times.

### ***Initial Testing***

I can remember when I initially had this dream of running the path mentioned at the beginning of this book and referenced throughout it. It was a couple of weeks before I was to leave home from Chicago to go to the Air Force's six-week Basic Military Training (boot camp) in Texas. I had attended a college about three hours from home one semester, but had never really been far away from home. Embarking upon this military journey was a set up that allowed me to meet a number of people and experience a number of things that would become intricately woven into my path and propel me into my life's purpose. What stuck out in my mind about the dream and the message I garnered from it at that time was that I was to do what God was calling me to do despite what other people around me were doing. The present course I was running in the dream would serve as preparation for my future purpose. The Air Force's six-week boot camp was somewhat challenging. The technical school that I attended

immediately after basic training to learn the job of a financial manager was more challenging to me though. It was here that my sense of self would be challenged. Sometimes I followed what the crowd was doing against my better judgment and even desire. There was a lot of partying and clubbing that took place. I now know that when we consider a course of action we should always ask ourselves the question, "What would Jesus do and how will this behavior honor and glorify God?" Being called to walk alone and risking being lonely was a fear I secretly harbored which is the reason I sometimes followed the crowd.

After I joined the military, and completed basic and technical school training, I set out for my first duty assignment as an Accounting Technician in California. I was allowed to go home to Chicago to visit for a couple of weeks after technical school ended and before my assignment in California began. The challenges began from the moment I set out on the actual road trip from Chicago to California. I was traveling alone and would have to traverse a number of states including Denver and Utah and cross over the Rocky Mountains. While traveling, I experienced problems concerning a health issue. I had a lot of pain in my abdomen. It was

extremely difficult to drive the 24 hour trip alone with this discomfort. I can remember the fear I felt from this physical ailment and the treacherous road trip alone! I can remember numerous times literally stretching out my right hand towards the passenger seat and imagining that God was sitting there with me holding my hand which comforted me! Later, upon arriving in California, I was diagnosed with fibroid tumors which caused the tremendous pain and even bleeding throughout my trip. I would experience numerous health issues with those tumors for the next year and a half or so until they were surgically removed.

I experienced a number of challenges while serving in the military in California including a boss with a totalitarian management style, a heavy work load, severe financial difficulties, mandatory long work days (usually 12 hours at least), and a neighbor that constantly called the cops on me at night for allegedly making noise when I was actually asleep. I am sure these experiences are not uncommon. It was disheartening for me though because I was so far away from my home in Chicago for the first time and felt like I did not have any peace at my home in California or at work. The worst challenge in California though was

that I was also involved in a relationship that was very emotionally abusive. Although many of the difficulties I experienced were probably a result of bad judgment or even not exercising my authority over the enemy, later they served to strengthen me and my faith in God.

### ***Precious & Never Alone In the Battle***

I was so lonely and so far away from home with no family/friends or support system that I was willing to do anything for any form of companionship. I felt as if the relationship I was involved in was better than having nothing at all. I also felt that perhaps that was the best that I could do. I could not have known the love of God. Had I known it, I would have believed that God had much better for me than that! God's heart is always to give good gifts to His children simply because He is a good God! I now know that even when I feel alone, God is always with me and loves me unconditionally and with an everlasting love. That is all that really matters. I also know that I am precious in His sight as are all His children. We can always draw close to God during lonely times through prayer and His Word. When you get down and defeated and

dejected enough though, you are susceptible to believing the lies of the devil. When we harbor negative opinions of our self and self-worth, this is not God but a vicious attack from the enemy. God NEVER attempts to make us feel bad about who we are or who he created us to be.

Genesis 1:27 teaches us that “God created man in His own image” (AMP). Just think about that. We are created in the image of Almighty God! We are also part of the Body of Christ (the Church or body of other Believers). He is the head and we are His Body intended to dispatch the Gospel of Salvation to the entire earth. If God demeaned us, then He would be demeaning himself (part of His body); and that makes no sense. Pastor Creflo Dollar once posed the following question. He asked, “How foolish would it be to haul off and slap yourself?” God would never demean us as Believers, His Body, by belittling us because consequently he would be inflicting pain upon Himself because He is our head. It’s a shame that we place so little value on ourselves when God has already articulated how valuable we are in His sight. Jeremiah 31:3 says that “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (KJV). He loves us so much and we are SO

valuable to Him that it took the blood of Jesus (God in the flesh) to bring us into right relationship with Him. God does not plan the rejection and pain we experience, but God will use all the pain, all the rejection, and all the setbacks from our past to shape us into the refined gold that we are to become.

Enduring the illness, major surgery, work/neighbor challenges, and bad relationship was hard for me. I endured it all without the physical presence of family or any friends. In my family's defense, they were always there for me over the phone and came to visit for a few days when my surgery was performed. But the fact remains, that I experienced most of these hardships alone. That is what I thought then at least.

I now know that I was never alone. God was always with me even when I felt alone. I look back now and know that it all worked out for my good. Something amazing happened, as I began to focus on God and pay less attention to my circumstances, God began moving one obstacle after another out of my life. For a long time, I wondered how things would work out, or how I could be moved out of the harsh woman's section at work, or how I would ever get along with my

neighbor that detested me so much, if the abusive “relationship” would ever get better, or when/if my health would ever improve. The woman was relieved as chief of the section I worked in, my neighbor was eventually thrown out after it was revealed that she was schizophrenic, I had surgery to remove the fibroids and became stronger and healthier than I was before it, and God granted me the strength to terminate the “relationship” I was in and move forward without any regret or concern. Even then, I knew it was all the hand of God because I certainly saw no way out of those circumstances at the time. These things built character in me though. God is far more interested in first changing us before removing our circumstances.

You see, the more I worried about and paid attention to my circumstances, the worst they became. When I ceased looking at them, and looked to God just a little bit more, obstacles were removed and circumstances began to change.

### ***The Importance of Connection with God for the Course***

It reminds me of the story of the Apostle Peter walking on the water in Matthew 14:25-32. You see,

Jesus' 12 disciples were in a boat and saw a figure walking on the sea towards them. They became frightened because they thought it was a ghost. In actuality, it was Jesus walking on the water. Peter shouted to Jesus that he wanted to walk on the water as well, to which Jesus replied "come." Peter got out of the boat and then began walking on the water. As long as Peter stayed connected with Christ and kept his eyes on Him, he continued to walk on the water. But then he began to look around at the waves of the sea and the wind (circumstances) and it was at this point that he began to sink. This is a popular and well-quoted verse of Scripture but one that we need to meditate upon often. Focusing on God invokes His presence in our situations and circumstances.

Whatever you give your attention to grows and whatever you ignore dies. If you give your attention to a houseplant by giving it sunlight and watering it, there is a great possibility it will grow. If you ignore that same plant, it will definitely die. That is the reason that Psalms 34:3 says to "magnify the Lord" (KJV). We are to magnify God and not our circumstances so that His power can be manifested in them.

You see that is why they are called circumstances because they are ALWAYS subject to change. Satan is the king of messing with our circumstances. If he knows that messing with your circumstances will interfere with your emotional stability, derail you, and get you off course, he will always manipulate them. God is not constrained by our circumstances though. As long as we focus on Him, He is big enough to change any circumstance that we may encounter in our lives like He did by raising Jesus from the dead. For “with God all things are possible,” according to Matthew 19:26 (KJV). He can turn any situation or circumstance that you are facing around in a moment’s time.

I now thank God for all that I endured during my two and a half years in California. I gained a revelation of God’s power that I never possessed up until that time. Up until that point, I knew of God because as a young child I studied the Bible. Nonetheless, I did not “know” God. I gained the revelation that nothing is too hard for God and He can turn any circumstance I encounter around in an instant. After the trials in California, I always carried that revelation with me. Today, when I am facing

significantly smaller battles I am reminded of what God has done for me in the past. We must recount past victories. That is what David did before he faced and defeated the giant Goliath. In 1 Samuel 17:36, David told Saul “thy servant slew both the lion and bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them.” God’s past faithfulness is a solid foundation to rest upon when facing present or future difficulties.

Since my experiences in California, I have endured situations that were a bit more challenging. I am convinced that I would be ill-equipped to deal with them now had I not went through the things I did back then. Although I felt like I would not survive those difficulties in California at the time, I look back and am thankful for them and better understand why they occurred. Now when things happen, I have more faith and can sit back with a deeper trust in God. I’ve seen how He is able to turn things around. If He delivered me back then, then He can deliver me today. My job is simply to continue to run my course with confidence in His abilities and not my own. I just need to stay connected to Him. We also need to stay connected with other Christians (Believers).

## ***The Importance of the Body For the Battle***

One of the most effective tools of the enemy is isolation. Had I been actively connected to a Body of Believers (local church) I am sure I would not have compromised to be in the relationship in California or succumb to the peer pressure in technical school. I believe this is the reason God makes so many references to the Body of Christ in the Bible. Like the human body, the spiritual Body of Christ is a machine that is jointly fit together. This Body is important because first, other parts compensate for an injury/strain or weakness experienced in another. Second, united it serves as a strong force against the enemy.

When there is strain or weakness in one part of the human body, other parts will compensate for it. For instance, as individuals age they may begin to walk with a cane. The upper body then begins to compensate for the lack of strength in the legs or lower body. If one kidney is removed the remaining one performs all the functions that two would have carried out simultaneously. Or, if vision is impaired, the ears, hands, and nose for example take on a greater role as sensory mechanisms employed to experience the world

around us. In relationship, to our spiritual walk, Romans 15:1 teaches that “the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak” (KJV). When one organ or part of the body is weak, the stronger ones compensate for it. The same is true in the spiritual Body of Christ. Other Christians can compensate for your weakness when the enemy attacks or during times of difficulty (through prayer, intercession, speaking God’s Word, and encouragement) and provide strength for the difficulties you may be facing. Therefore, remaining in fellowship with the Body serves as a means to counter any attack from the enemy, including loneliness. This Body fellowship may and should take the form of church attendance, Bible studies, or fellowship with other Believers.

Second, being part of the Body of Christ shields us from any weapon of the enemy including loneliness. If you have seen the movie March of the Penguins, then you may remember the scene in which hundreds of penguins huddled together in order to combat the sheer force of the frigid Artic wind and cold. Alone, no one penguin would have been able to shield itself against the storm. The penguins were weak individually. They would have been picked off and most assuredly would

have died from the storm if they stood alone. But collectively, they provided one another with warmth and comfort to shield against the storm. This is also true of us as individual Christians or believers. While we all have our weaknesses and even imperfections, collectively we are a force to be reckoned with.

### ***Run On!***

The fact that you are still running your course is alright. So often we become frustrated by the run because we have not reached our destination. In reality, death is the only evidence that our God given assignment on earth is either unfulfilled or has been completed. Unraveling all that God has for you and wants to accomplish through you is a continual process/journey and not an immediate destination. Plan for the future but learn to live in the present, not the future or even the past. Like the path in my dream that showed prior portions of the course, focus on your present course knowing your past has served to strengthen you for it. Also know that by running it, you are obtaining strength for the future. You may not have completed your race, but the fact that you are still

running it is an accomplishment! So often, we want to complete the marathon, not realizing that each prior stride (like the challenges I experienced in California) is an accomplishment because it serves to strengthen us for what lies ahead. Most importantly, realize that it is not up to you to “work” to achieve anything because all things promised to you by God are already yours (1 Corinthians 3:21). Continue to trust and follow Him and they will manifest in due time.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Look Ahead and Not Back**

Third, learn the lessons from the past, but look ahead and not back in order to run your course. In my dream recounted at the beginning of this book, I ran with my eyes fixed straight ahead. Satan will always remind you of your past and not your victorious future in order to prevent you from going forward. Often we focus on past mistakes so much because we believe that we cannot overcome them. We believe that past failures or mistakes disqualify us from being used by God for an awesome future purpose. You must always remember that you may have made bad choices, but that those choices don't define you. The Bible is emphatic that we are the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Regardless of what you have done wrong or do wrong, you are righteous because God does not impute (or count) your mistakes against you (2 Corinthians 5:19). Getting this truth in your heart will enable you to live righteously in your thoughts, words, attitudes, and actions. The Lord sees you righteous as a

result of what Jesus did by dying on the cross for you and your acceptance of that sacrifice. God defines you and He says that as a Believer you are righteous.

Everyone has a past. But that's exactly what it is, past! When I speak of "the past" it is in reference to mistakes we've made, hurts we've incurred, and failures we've already experienced. Think of all the great men and women of God in the Bible. In the past, Moses had committed murder in Exodus 2:12, but God used him to deliver the Israelites from the bondage of slavery in Egypt in Exodus 14. In the past, Esther had lied about her ethnicity in Esther 2:10, but God still used her to go before the king and save the Israelites from complete annihilation in chapters 7 and 8 of the book of Esther. In the past, Paul had killed a number of Christians in Acts 9:1, but God still used him to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles and write most of the New Testament of the Bible. I could go on and on and on. It is easy to recount these examples and not see the parallels between these people and ourselves. Often, I believe, that we think they were superhuman in some way and were destined to overcome their pasts and have a happy ending. Not so! They were subject to the same reminders of their pasts and frailties that we

are. They could have easily harped on them, concluded they were unworthy to be used by God, and quit. Remember that God gives us all free will and free choice. These people could have exercised their free will to quit. What a tragedy it is for a person to get off course and not fulfill or reach their God given purpose. Consequently, we probably would have never heard of the name Moses, Esther, or Paul or their great victories in finishing their courses and fulfilling their respective purposes. It was not a given that these people would become Biblical Heroes. Although God knew from eternities past what the outcome of their story would be if they obeyed and trusted Him, the fact remains they were still given a choice to make and chose to look ahead and not back. These people had to choose to trust God and stay focused on what was ahead in order to run their courses effectively.

### ***Looking Back Running!***

In the natural, can you imagine a runner running on a path and looking back at the same time? First, how could they know or focus on what was right ahead? Perhaps there is something great right before

them but they would not know it because they are too preoccupied with what is behind them; they may be close to the finish line but would not know it. Secondly, can you imagine this same runner thinking that they did not run a portion of the path correctly or messed up part of the run and going back and trying to fix the manner in which they ran? That would be a waste of time and energy. They only have a limited amount of time to complete their run. Their best bet is to learn from that mistake and run the rest of the path correctly. Thirdly, they run the risk of stumbling and falling when running forward but still looking behind them. There is a greater risk of injuring oneself and even others on the track in running and looking behind than there is in running and concentrating on what is ahead of you.

### ***Look Up & Ahead***

God wants us to look ahead and not at the mistakes from our past. Because the sinless Christ took the penalty for our sins by dying on the cross, God will now forgive us for our sins. Whatever our mistakes are, He forgives them. Not only does He forgive us, but He

says that our “sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17, KJV). So when we think about our sins or try bringing them up to God again, He literally has made a conscious decision to forget them. This is for His own sake because He loves us so much and wants to have a personal relationship with each one of us! He communes with us through our spirit. Even if we literally sinned a second ago, 1 John 1:9 declares that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (KJV). Just think of that for a moment. Not only does He forgive us for that particular sin and cleanse us from the unrighteousness associated with it, but He goes a step further and cleanses us from any other areas of sin in our lives. That does not mean we have a license to sin. It simply means that if we do accidentally fall short and sincerely repent and look to Him, He is always ready and willing to forgive us. The more we see God and His love for us, we will not even want to sin.

God is more concerned with our future and ultimate destiny than He is about sin because He has great things planned for each and every one of us. Sin has been taken care of on the cross. He can take the

worst of our mistakes or shortcomings and turn them around for our good. God is always forward looking. Every promise given to individuals in the Bible concerned the future. The Bible teaches that “the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord” (Psalms 37:23, KJV). In order not to repeat past mistakes, begin to look to the Lord and His Word to make decisions and guide you.

### ***Don't Go Back to Redo***

Next, God wants us to learn from the mistakes of the past but not focus on them. There is nothing we can do to change past events, mistakes, etc. Dwelling on the past is literally a waste of time and energy. This time and energy could be better spent on running our present course and preparing for our future destiny. Worrying about the past is a trick of the enemy. This brings me to a point concerning condemnation. When we dwell on past mistakes to the point that we begin to feel paralyzed to go forward and don't move to do the things God is currently calling us to do now and for our future, then we are in condemnation. The reason I say that this is a waste of time is because the Bible teaches

us that “the thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy,” in John 10:10 (AMP). If Satan cannot outright take your life, then he will try to steal it through condemnation and other distractions. Think about that for a moment because this is a significant truth that many people lose sight of. Every moment that passes is one that we can never recapture once it departs and the enemy knows that. **Each moment you waste in condemnation focusing on what you could or should have done is one that the enemy has stolen. These moments, seconds, minutes, hours, and days begin to add up.** If we are not careful, the sum of these moments begins to constitute a significant portion of our lives. Before we know it, we may be at the end of our life without finishing our course or destiny because we felt unworthy to run due to some past event. Condemnation kills and destroys everything around it. Depression and unforgiveness towards oneself are often the byproduct of condemnation. Don’t allow all the things from your past to condemn and paralyze you to the point that your purpose goes unfulfilled. Remember, God says clearly in Romans 8:1 that “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (KJV). Sure you may

mess up from time to time but don't condemn yourself. God never condemns you. Just give a wholehearted and sincere effort to focus on the Lord and be the best you can be from this point forward.

Again, we are in a race. We are only given a certain amount of time to run this race and finish our course or fulfill our purpose. Time is not given in unlimited supply. Given this fact, once mistakes are made, you cannot go back and undo that portion of your life or race. **The past should serve as a rudder for your present course and not an anchor.** Lessons from the past are meant to guide you presently and into your future not keep you so stuck in your past that you are inactive now and for the future. The danger of being anchored in your past is that there exists the potential that you will never move forward. With the limited time you have, you cannot afford to be anchored to your past! The Bible in Psalms 103:15-16 clearly states, "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it and it is gone, and its place shall know it no more" (AMP). Given this analogy of the brevity of life, the best you can do is learn from any mistake(s) you've made and move on. Know that you made those

mistakes but that is not who you really are. The real you is righteous. Run the rest of your race better having gained more knowledge and experience from the portion of the course that you did not run so well. Like the runner that cannot go back and rerun portions of the course that they did not run so well due to limited time to finish the race, you cannot go back and undo past mistakes. Just run on asking God to guide you in running the remainder of the course and remember that God is not limited by your past!

### ***Stumbling While Looking Back***

Finally, we run a greater risk of falling and injuring ourselves when running and looking back and not ahead. How many times have people felt so trapped by their past that they impair their present or future? For instance, they may be so focused on remembering someone that hurt them in the past that they sabotage a good relationship that God has prepared for them presently. Consequently, they stumble experiencing the very same rejection now that they once experienced. The very thing that they feared from their past becomes a reality.

## ***The Life of Paul***

Paul knew the importance of looking forward in order to move into God's purpose for his life. Paul describes his past life when he said, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:6, KJV). As a Pharisee, he had been one of the number one enemies of the church. If anyone could have felt unworthy to be called by God to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles, it should have been Paul. I know that in my own life anytime I try to move forward to do a significant work for God, Satan always tries to bring up mistakes, shortcomings, and failures from my past. Just think about the mighty work of God Paul was called to do! He wrote two thirds of the New Testament and spearheaded extending the Gospel to all Gentiles of the earth (or non-Jews). That was a huge undertaking. Just think of the millions upon millions of people that were to later come to salvation because of these endeavors. Given this great purpose, I am certain Satan tried to make Paul recount his past. If Paul had fallen for this trick of the enemy, he would never have accomplished

God's purpose for his life. Think of that for a moment. Where would the church be today if that had occurred?

### ***Forgetting What Is Behind***

I once knew a young man: we will call him Spencer that appeared to have so much going right in his life in the natural. This young man was smart, physically strong, attractive, and professed to love God. Nonetheless, he had been abandoned by his parents as a baby and was eventually adopted. Well, as he grew up, he began to have a number of problems in terms of establishing long-term and meaningful relationships with members of the opposite sex. As soon as a woman would begin to get too close, he would pull away. He had this irrational fear that eventually at some point they would reject him because that is all he had ever known from his past. I mean these women would express sincere and tangible signs of their interest and love towards him, but he refused to believe that anyone could love him. Most men would have been elated at these gestures. However, he was not flattered due to holding on to negative experiences from his past. Additionally, he would become provoked to anger and

terminate relationships over simple misunderstandings. Disputes or disagreements that people who do not have rejection issues would have taken with a grain of salt were viewed as rejection in his mind. The sad thing is that Spencer had so many wonderful qualities. I am sure the last thing many of these women intended to do was reject him. He could not see how valuable he was in their eyes but more importantly in the eyes of God because he was holding on to past hurt! He failed to realize that he was so important and valuable in the eyes of the Lord that He desired to give him good gifts (including Godly companionship). This is exactly what focusing on your past will do. It will cause you to stumble today, jeopardizing your future.

Other examples of the past jeopardizing one's future involves criticism from a parent, spouse, or someone else in our past that affects how we presently look at ourselves. Sometimes a person may even feel unworthy of all the things God wants to do and accomplish in their lives because they are looking back at what someone said in their past. Good things we now encounter seem too good to be true. Looking back at all these past hurts and/or criticisms cause injury to our present course. I believe this is the reason in

Philippians 3:13-14 that Paul said, “One thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward” (AMP). God loves us so much that He has great gifts in store for every one of us. Nonetheless, we have a role to play also. We must forget negative events from our past because we must strain (combat pressure) to move forward.

Sometimes the pressure we feel that constrains us from going forward is from today. Often though, the pressure is a result of mistakes, influences, fears, and hurts from our past. I believe it is more of the latter. I also believe that the Apostle Paul used the word strain because it will take everything in us to move forward into our purpose due to the inevitable trials and tribulations of life. We do not move forward in our strength though but in God’s. We experience enough present pressure (or difficulties) that seek to hinder us from running and finishing our course. The last thing we need to do is compound this problem with looking back and adding unneeded pressure. If it takes virtually everything in us to move ahead looking forward, it is

almost impossible to move ahead to reach the goal if we add looking back to the equation. I believe that is the reason Paul said this was his “one aspiration,” to forget what was behind. He could have said his one aspiration was to preach more, give more, or some other notable Christian deed. No! While those things are commendable, I believe that Paul grasped that forgetting the past is one of the most important aspirations a Christian should have. Past hurts and defeats can always potentially jeopardize our present and future if we allow them to. Without knowing it, a person can potentially hurt themselves today or not fulfill their purpose by focusing on their past. If forgetting the past was not crucial, I do not believe the Apostle Paul would have ever said we need to forget those things that are behind in order to press forward. Many people do not live today with the strength and faith they need for today because of the past.





## **Chapter 4**

### **Look At Your Course Alone**

Fourth, we are to run our own course and stay focused on it and not anyone else's. Remember, in my dream many people were standing around the path doing their own thing but the voice told me not to focus on them. I believe we are not to focus on others, their lives, or what they are doing.

We have discussed the dangers of looking back and trying to run our course, but I also believe there is a danger in looking at what is going on around us and trying to run. It is just as easy to stumble and fall by looking at what is going on around you, as it is in looking back! The reason for this is because again you are not focused on your course with the obstacles, rocks, and pitfalls that it contains. Recall that in my dream my gaze remained fixed straight ahead. Gazing at another person's course will either cause us to stumble while running on our path, cause us to try to run their course, or make us stop running because we are focused on them. In all cases, it may result in unfulfilled purpose. Our purpose goes unfulfilled because we tried to instruct them how to run, didn't run our own course, and

ran out of the limited resource of time. All of us have a path to run. Our life is the path that was entrusted to us by God to complete a very distinct purpose that He wants us alone to fulfill.

### ***Gazing At Another Course***

Ah, so often we gaze at the course that God has called others to run. If we look long enough, sometimes we want the things they have in terms of spouse, career, talents, gifts, beauty, etc. We desire to run that course! What we fail to realize though is that even if we had that course, we would still have to run it! There would still be work involved. Even, if we could exchange our path for someone else's, the fact still remains that running any course will take work. For some reason we naively believe that if we are able to acquire another's course, then we would be so happy and able to sit down in the middle of that path and bask in our contentment. The people that we look at who are successful are that way because they have run their course and continue to run it. Often, they ran it when it was rainy, treacherous, over pitfalls, through valleys, over hills, and when it was icy and they ran the risk

of falling. Most importantly, even when they don't feel like it, they still run it!

Additionally, you can't fulfill your purpose by getting another person's course even if you could! You and your course are a perfect match from God. You are meant to stay on your course because God has given you unique resources, gifts, and talents for your course in order for you to fulfill YOUR God given purpose. You cannot run another person's course because the equipment on it was given to them to assist them in their run. Similarly, the equipment on your course was given to you to assist you in running and fulfilling your purpose. That is the reason we are never to be envious of the gifts, talents, or resources of others. In 1 Samuel, David could not slay Goliath while wearing King Saul's armor. It was not until he used the equipment God gave him that he was able to fulfill his purpose and defeat the giant. God equips us each with what we need and much more!

If we are living beneath our God given rights in experiencing "life more abundantly" as John 10:10 states (KJV) that we should on our course, then we either need to ask for what we need from God or discipline ourselves to do what God is calling us to do in His Word in order to experience prosperity. Romans 2:11 clearly indicates that

“God shows no partiality [undue favor or unfairness; with Him one man is not different from another]” (AMP). Prosperity, abundance, healing, and good relationships are available through God to all. Therefore go before God and ask for the abundance of life that He has promised. James 4:2 says, “You do not have, because you do not ask” (AMP). After asking and realizing God does not show favoritism to one person over another, you have to be willing to do what is necessary to receive all the abundant promises God has assured us we can have. You must work because remember, we have an enemy (Satan) whose desire is to steal, kill, and destroy all that God has promised to you! It will take work on your part! Get into the Word and find out all God has promised you and acquire it by faith and action. James 2:26 indicates that “faith without deeds is dead” (NIV). The good news is the crux of the work is to trust and believe in what God has promised and speak accordingly.

### ***Trying to Run Someone's Course***

Have you ever known someone who lives their life vicariously through someone else? Perhaps the parent of a child or a friend/associate without vision for their own life

comes to mind. This can either involve giving someone else excessive unsolicited advice, planning on their behalf, or outright imitation of another person. Often these people feel like they have no course or purpose of their own, so they attempt to live life through the life of others. We all have a course and purpose though and don't have to live through anyone else.

### ***The Story of Ruth & Naomi***

There are times when trying to run someone else's course may be linked to running your course and fulfilling your purpose as well. A good example of this is the story of Naomi in the book of Ruth in the Bible. Naomi initially felt like she had no purpose after her husband and sons had been killed in battle. Her widowed daughter and law Ruth went to live with Naomi in Naomi's native land. Naomi began to find purpose in instructing Ruth on attracting a possible suitor by the name of Boaz and by nursing the child eventually born from this union. In this case, Naomi's planning and advice giving on Ruth's behalf not only gave Naomi a sense of purpose, but was linked to Ruth's purpose of bearing the child Obed through whose lineage the Messiah would come. Naomi's decision to

intervene in Ruth's life was in fact her purpose also that was meant to usher in the birth of Jesus Christ.

This story is the exception and not the rule though. Most often, trying to run someone else's course is not linked to running your own course. In most cases, the truth of the matter is that if we are running our own course, we really have no time to try to advise others on how to run theirs. The one attempting to run someone else's course may never finish their own and achieve their purpose. Additionally, the person who is allowing someone to run on their course may not achieve their purpose either. Taking counsel from someone trying to run your course can have disastrous results for one's own life and derail their purpose.

### ***Stopping & Looking***

Stopping and looking is very similar to trying to run someone else's course. Although both involve focusing our eyes on someone else's course for an extended period of time or longer than one should, this action eliminates advice giving. This stance may prevent us from running our own course and begin to envy someone else's. This one may involve whining, complaining, and not

appreciating what God has given us or done for us. Remember the Bible tells us those that are “comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12, KJV). God’s approval of our lives should be the measuring stick that we go by in gauging whether we are fulfilling our purpose and not someone else’s life. Focusing on someone else’s path often causes us to desire things, careers, mates, and other things which were never God’s will for our lives. Often we are content with what God has given us until we see what another person has. As a result, we begin to lust after what they have. As mentioned previously, beware of the lusts of the eyes and lusts of the flesh. Consequently, we undermine the great things God has done in our own life. There is nothing wrong with allowing the accomplishments of others to inspire us to reach higher or desire greater things. The problem arises when we cannot be content, lose our peace, and stress ourselves out to attain the things they possess.

### ***The Life of King David (Stumbling)***

The Life of King David is a good illustration of gazing at another course. In his case, he tried to run a course that was not his. 1 Samuel 16 recounts that David

had been a shepherd boy with a modest upbringing. Eventually, he was given everything by God including a kingdom. By the second book of Samuel, David was a rich man that had numerous flocks, gold, and even wives. God had given David all the desires of his heart. This makes sense when we understand that Psalms 37:4 says to “delight yourself also in the Lord, and He will give you the desires...of your heart” (AMP). David was definitely a man that delighted himself in God. This is evident by the numerous Psalms he wrote about God and His goodness. God was first priority in his life. Therefore, God had no problem with giving David the things he desired. Consequently, David should have been content.

David’s purpose was to reign as king, serve the Lord in righteousness, and to establish a holy royal undivided lineage that would perpetually rule and reign over all the tribes of Israel. God had given David the tools, riches, and wives he needed to achieve this end. Nonetheless, in 2 Samuel 11:2-3, David took his eyes off his course and started gazing at a man named Uriah’s course. God had given Uriah a wife by the name of Bathsheba to complete his course or purpose. Although David had more than most people will ever have, he still began to look at another man’s course. David saw

Bathsheba bathing and began to lust after her. Eventually he committed adultery with her, impregnated her, and had her husband killed to cover up the sin (see 2 Samuel 11-12). David's first mistake was to begin to gaze too long at someone else's course. He should have fixed his eyes straight ahead and continued to run his own course. Bathsheba was part of the course Uriah was running for his life and purpose.

As a consequence of David's action, violence came to David's house and not righteousness. One of his son's raped his own sister and his other son sought to kill David (2 Samuel 13:14 & 2 Samuel 15:14). In his grace, God allowed Bathsheba to conceive a son with David named Solomon who succeeded him to the throne (2 Samuel 12:24). Although David did fulfill his kingly duties and served the Lord with a righteous heart, the purpose of unity in his family and an undivided kingdom went unfulfilled. That can be the consequence of gazing at someone else's course and not keeping our eyes fixed on our own: we stumble and fall not fulfilling the entire purpose of God for our own lives.

As demonstrated, there is danger in trying to run someone else's course, stopping too long to look at another course, or looking at another course and stumbling. In each

case purpose may go unfulfilled. For this reason, I believe that we are to run our path while our eyes are fixed straight ahead like I did in my dream. We must also spend time seeking God through prayer and His Word to uncover our own unique purpose. This entails some work on our part. Often, we prefer to go the easier route and try to imitate someone else or live the lives of others without putting in the necessary time and energy to seek God for His purpose for our own life. Our goal as Believers should be to come in agreement with God and fulfill His purpose for our lives and not our own. And remember, we run the risk of not finishing our own course if we are too involved at looking at someone else's or trying to coach them on how they should be running theirs.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Allow God to Guide You**

Fifth, we must allow God to guide us into our future and purpose that will affect countless generations. Like the path in my dream that had no beginning or end, our purpose was set from eternities past and is meant to affect and improve the lives of others for countless generations to come. Although we may not now know all the intricacies of that path, God knows them and how to guide us along it.

I think that so often we are so shortsighted that we don't take the time to think about the fact that God has a greater purpose in mind with everything He does and with everything that occurs. Although our purpose is unique to us individually, it is meant to affect and improve the entire Body of Christ in some manner for generations to come. Although your purpose for example may be to get a particular person saved in your lifetime, attainment of this in some way weaves into the greater purpose of improving the church and Body of Christ as a whole in the future. In short, it is not all about us individually.

This principle is illustrated throughout the Bible. Although Abraham's purpose was to conceive Isaac, Boaz's was to marry Ruth, and Esther's was to save the Israelites from annihilation, they all served a greater purpose. Isaac's birth and the birth of his son Jacob ultimately ushered in the 12 tribes of Israel through whom the Messiah would come. Boaz and Ruth's marriage resulted in the birth of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David whose lineage the Messiah would also come through. Finally, had Esther not married King Xerxes and saved the Israelites from complete destruction, Jesus would never have been born. In each of these cases, these people's individual purpose affected corporate purpose and countless generations because of the birth of Jesus. The gift of salvation and the gospel has been offered to the entire world because of Christ.

### ***The Life of Moses***

Consider the life of Moses. Moses was called by God to deliver the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Upon being called, Moses wanted nothing to do with the mission from God. Nonetheless, he humbled himself and submitted to the purpose of God for his life. God kept His

Word and delivered the Israelites from slavery. Immediately afterwards, they set out through the wilderness to a good land promised to them by God. Moses at least, allowed God to guide them in the wilderness through the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Moses did not know all the details of how this decision to allow God to guide him would affect countless future generations. Nonetheless, because of this act of obedience, millions upon millions of people came to know of Moses' name and are inspired by his story.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Purpose with Adversity**

Finally, seizing God's purpose for our life is not without adversity and challenges. God's ultimate purpose will always be fulfilled. Even once we have uncovered God's purpose for our lives, we will experience challenges. It is also important to remember though, that we have already obtained the victory.

Every runner knows that there are challenges involved with running a course. There may be structural obstacles along the way. There may be rocks on the path, dips in the course, or a series of other structural deficiencies along the course. There are also physical challenges involved with running a course. The heart must work hard to supply blood and oxygen to each muscle group, the muscles must work beyond their normal capacity, and breathing must be controlled in order to sustain the run itself. The Apostle Paul declared, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course" in 2 Timothy 4:7 (KJV). Anyone who runs knows the challenges involved with running. At times, taking the next

stride involves great physical pain and one must fight in order to take it. Nevertheless, in order to get to the end of the course and finish it, a person must fight through this pain.

So it is with the Christian life, there are many painful challenges that one must fight through in order to complete the course (purpose) for which they were created. The fight may involve the need to die to self or to overcome a perpetual sinful habit. The fight may involve overcoming the grief associated with the death of a loved one, a divorce, or the failure of plans we have made for our own lives. These things can present obstacles which attempt to prevent us from finishing the purpose for which God created us. Don't focus so much on the adversity or tests at hand. Focus on what was learned from past prep courses (even mistakes made) and how this knowledge can be applied to the present exam. The test itself is never to become the focus because it can serve to hinder purpose. Even though challenges are present, what motivates the runner to keep running is the sense of satisfaction they know they will acquire upon completing their course.

God already knew when He created our purpose from eternities past that we would have challenges with fulfilling it. Jesus Himself said that in this life or "in the

world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NKJV). Jesus could make this statement because He also knew that God has given us every tool that we need to overcome every challenge we will ever face in reaching our destiny.

Consider the story of our runner again. My former pastor’s wife, Pastor Marjie Hufton of Faith Family Church in Shiloh, Illinois once asked, “Can you imagine a runner in a marathon not taking the items offered to them that would assist them in their run?” She went on to ask, “Can you imagine them passing by the bananas, water, and Gatorade being offered along the way?” Imagine them passing by the towels as well. It sounds foolish because we know that the bananas will supply vital potassium for the muscles, the Gatorade will replenish depleted electrolytes, the water will supply much needed hydration, and the towels will get rid of excess perspiration. Each one of these items will help the runner run more efficiently, effectively, and ultimately reach the goal. Nonetheless, we pass by items needed to fulfill our purpose all the time. How often do we feel like we don’t need to study Scriptures on a particular day, gather at church with other Believers, or pray and seek God about a particular issue? All of these items are given by God to ensure we live a successful life and ultimately fulfill

our destiny. We must know who we are in Christ and what He has given us in order to effectively utilize these tools.

### ***The Story of the Tigers***

You can never overcome adversity if you don't know who you are and what you've been given. I'll never forget this documentary that I once saw about this man who had raised a couple of tigers from the time they were very young in the dense jungles of an African village. These beautiful white tiger cubs with brown stripes had been separated from their mom and followed his instructions readily. The man easily wrestled with them and subdued them when they were little babies and even young adults. Nonetheless, the tigers began to grow and become stronger and stronger. The gentleman said the animals weighed 300 lbs a piece consisting of pure muscle. The man found it increasingly difficult to handle the animals as they grew. The feedings he once initiated easily became a wrestling match of sorts. Although they once waited for the food to be given to them, they now wanted to take the food from the man by force. The animals were dissuaded from doing this though because the man displayed an air of dominance

over them through loud verbal threats and aggressive gestures.

For some reason, this strategy worked and the animals never took what they could have easily taken. The tigers would growl at the man a little bit, but never exercised their full power and authority. The man in the documentary said the day he did not maintain the illusion of power over the animals would be the day the cats would kill him. Additionally he commented that he had to trust the tigers would let him know what they were thinking and when it was time to get out of their way based on their body language and what they did.

That man in the story reminds me a lot of Satan and the tigers remind me of us as Believers. He was more scared of the tigers than they were of him but they never realized it. Those animals had a lot of potential power they could have unleashed and were much bigger than that 170 pound man. Nonetheless, he had exercised an air of dominance over them for so long that they really did believe the lie that he was stronger. This reminds me of how we are as Believers before being born again. Satan easily overpowers us before the new birth and even when we are initially saved. Once we become born again though and begin to grow in the things of God (Word, prayer, etc.),

we are bigger and stronger than him and can conquer him. The Bible teaches us in 1 John 4:4 that “greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (KJV). Satan knows this too: the greater one lives in us. He knows the potential within each one of us to live a victorious life in our relationships, physical body, finances, and spirituality. His best chance to defeat us and hinder us from reaching our destiny is to exercise dominance over us by loud threats, accusations about our past failures, and aggressive postures; i.e., manipulation of our circumstances is what he uses to threaten us. It is all a façade. Like those animals, we can take anything that God has promised us (in His written Word or through His Holy Spirit) by force.

We are taught in the Bible that “the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it” (Matthew 11:12, NIV). We have to take what is ours’ by force. The Bible clearly tells us that we’ve been given authority over the enemy but we must exercise it. We take authority by placing faith in God’s Word. Like those tigers though, many of us growl a little bit at Satan but allow him to run all over us. Much like the man, Satan watches to see what he can get away with or if he should prepare to flee. Remember that the Bible teaches that the devil “prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some

victim to devour” (1 Peter 5:8, NLT). He is not a roaring lion but is “like a roaring lion.” When we “submit to God,” in every area of our lives, we can “resist the devil and he will flee” though (James 4:7, NKJV). We are victors and can overcome any trial or tribulation sent our way by the grace of God. We need not forfeit our destiny.

### ***When Individual Purpose Is Forfeited***

I do believe that we can choose to forfeit God’s purpose for our lives. Sometimes the path seems so hard to us that we are unwilling to engage in the necessary sustained run or fight. We don’t exercise our authority. At other times we are just plain disobedient to do what God is calling us to do in terms of our purpose. Perhaps we have determined that wealth, fame, or the approval of others is more important than fulfilling God’s plan and purpose for our lives if it is contrary to these things. **In either case, although the individual may forfeit God’s purpose for their life, God’s ultimate purpose will always be fulfilled.**

### ***The Life of King Saul***

Consider the story of King Saul in the Bible. Saul was anointed to be the first king over Israel. Saul was destined to reign as king and ultimately establish a lineage of kings upon the Israeli throne. In 1 Samuel 15:3, God told Saul to utterly destroy all the inhabitants of Amalek and its livestock but Saul disobeyed. In fact, he even told God that he disobeyed because of the promptings of the people (1 Samuel 15:21). In essence, he chose the approval of men over discharging his God given duties as king. This displeased God and in 1 Samuel 15:28, God replied that He had chosen another better than Saul and that this other man's throne would now be established in Israel forever. This other man was David. Although Saul forfeited God's individual purpose for his life, God's ultimate purpose of establishing an everlasting throne in Israel still came to pass. In fact, Jesus descended from King David and the Bible teaches us that "of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33, KJV). God always finishes what He starts (Hebrews 12:2).

## ***Adam & Eve***

Another good example of the concept of forfeiting individual purpose is Adam and Eve. Their original purpose was to walk in holy fellowship with God without ever sinning. Nonetheless, in Genesis 3:6, they chose to disobey God by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the purpose of living in constant fellowship with God and not sinning went unfulfilled in their lives. God's ultimate purpose of a man walking the earth in pure holiness without sinning would be fulfilled in who the Bible in 1 Corinthians 15:45 calls the last Adam, Jesus Christ. The Bible clearly explains that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin" (Hebrews 4:15, KJV). Since Jesus was able to walk in fellowship with God without sin, we too can now commune with God without sin.

In both of the above cases, individual purpose went unfulfilled but ultimate purpose did not. Also in both cases, God took the bad and worked it out for good. Saul's disobedience and subsequent murder attempts on David's life in the book of first Samuel taught David to totally depend on God, submit to authority even when it was challenging, and ultimately receive the throne. Similarly, Adam and Eve's disobedience necessitated a Messiah who would demonstrate the vast love of God through his

sacrificial death on the cross! Remember that the Bible teaches us in Romans 8:28 that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [His] purpose” (KJV).

### ***Finding Purpose May Take Time***

It is important to note that the mysteries concerning Jesus or the Messiah were given years before he was actually birthed into this world in the city of Bethlehem. More than four thousand years would pass before the sayings of the prophets concerning the birth of a Messiah and subsequent crucifixion to save humankind from their sins would be manifested and fully understood. Similarly, the dream of running I shared at the beginning of this book was given to me almost 10 years ago before many of the messages from it have been manifested in my own personal life and before I began to comprehend it more fully. In the future, I still may continue to discover the full meaning and ramifications of this dream. Take heart if you do not presently fully understand how everything will manifest on your course. God takes us step by step because like I have previously noted, the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. Notice this Scripture says that the “steps” are

ordered. This suggests that God directs us as we are doing something. You have to be moving (active) in order to have your steps ordered. He then takes us along our path one step at a time. Just remain active on your course (life) and God will guide you as you seek Him with all of your heart. Your purpose, victory, and everything else will all manifest in time.

## **About the Author**

Dawn Epting is a Teacher, Speaker, Author, Business Adviser, and Founder/Chair of a crisis line. She has taught courses for women at churches concerning maximizing their potential, as well as courses for both men and women. She has personally witnessed lives transformed and healed through the power of God's Word. She has also taught history courses at the university level. She is a firm believer that God created individuals to excel in every area of their lives: spiritually, relationally, financially, and emotionally.

Dawn obtained a Masters degree in Business Administration from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Maryland, University College. She was a Licensed Investment Adviser who served in the U.S. Air Force as a Financial Analyst for 6 years. Her military tour took her to such places as California, Korea, and Germany. Dawn's speeches and teachings draw off of a wealth of experience obtained from the numerous years she served in the U.S. Air Force, her various teaching ministries, and from illnesses/emotional challenges she has

experienced and overcome in her own life. In this book, she inspires individuals to run their course in life and fulfill their purpose regardless of past or present adverse circumstances.