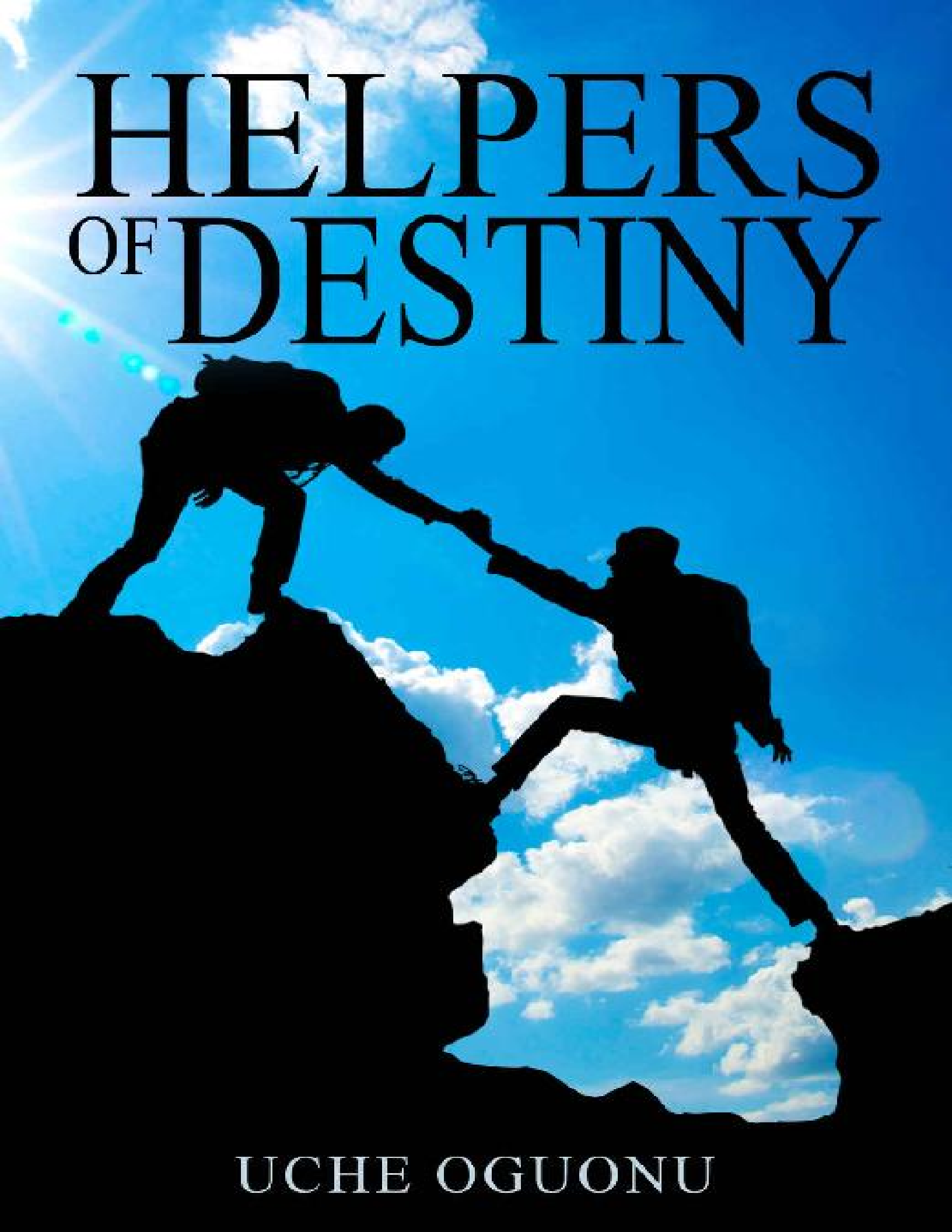
HELPERS OF DESTINY



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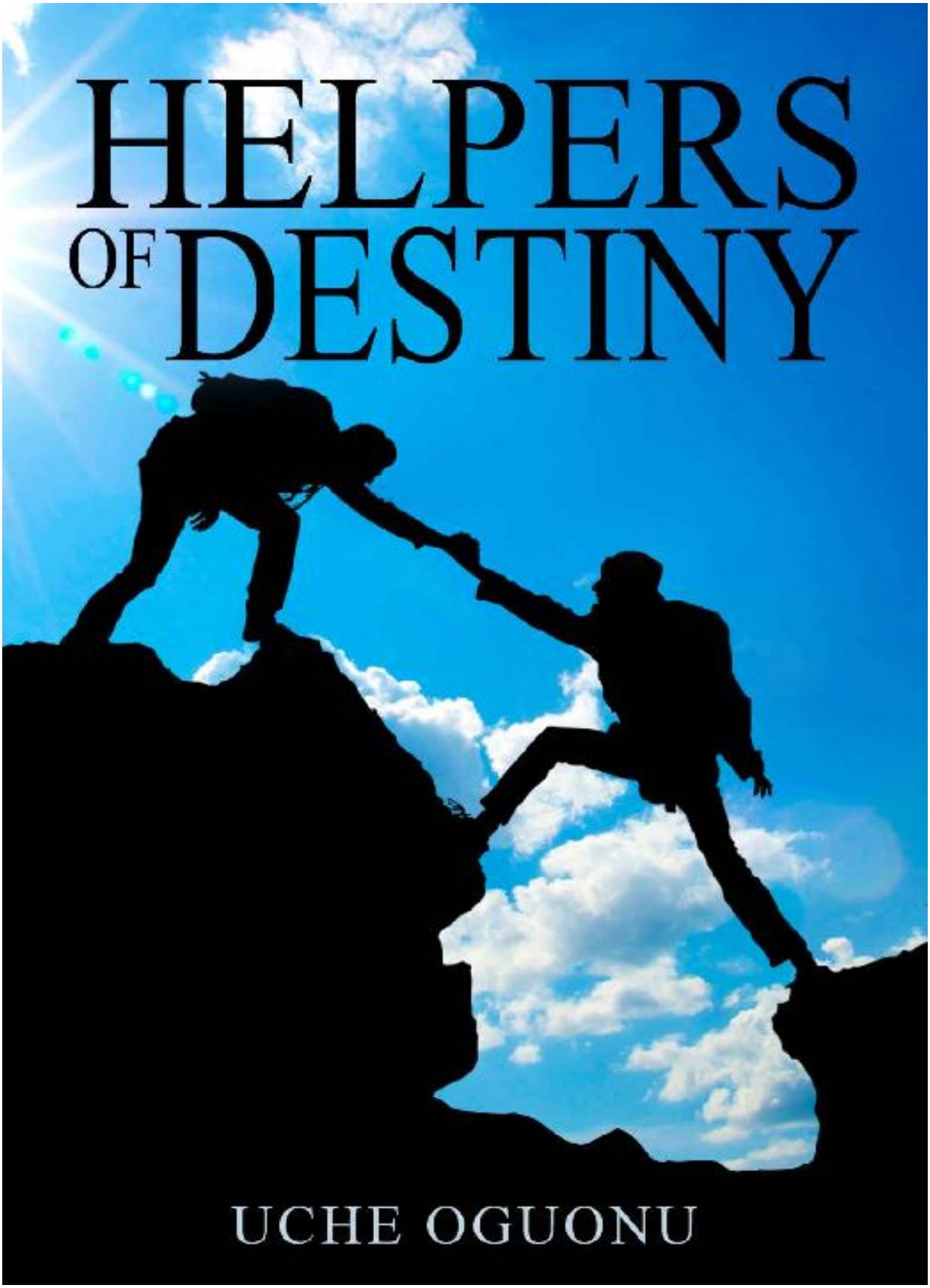
HELPERS
OF DESTINY
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Helpers of Destiny By Uchechukwu Grace Oguonu

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Dedication This book is affectionately dedicated to all Helpers of Destiny whose lives touch others daily in wonderfully special ways. May you all discover who your true Helpers of Destiny are.

Acknowledgements My acknowledgement and gratitude goes first and foremost to my God and Father, who gave me life and sent me to this world with a great destiny. I acknowledge my husband and friend, Dr. Tagbo Oguonu, for his immense support that enabled me to coordinate all the numerous things I had to do to ensure that I stayed on track with my writing. I wish to thank my wonderful children, Chukwunweike, Chiamaka and Ogochukwu. I could not ask for a more wonderful set of children. You taught me so much, and actually inspired the writing of this book. I also appreciate my ward, Chinemerem Agbasielo, who typed the initial manuscript. I wish to thank my twin sister, Mrs Esther Eze, who has been there for me since infancy, and also helped to edit this book in an informal capacity. Last, but not the least, I appreciate Ms Ifeanyi Omeni, for the professional editorial touch that helped to make this book a good reading material. God bless you all.

An Igbo adage states that living close to a wealthy man is either an advantage or a disadvantage. This means it is either a blessing or a curse.

The general notion is that this statement is directed only to a poor person. However, I have come to realise that it applies to a poor man living close to a rich man as much as to a rich man living close to a poor man. Human beings usually live in close proximity to each other. A man of means usually has a cook, a housekeeper, drivers, gardeners and messengers in the office etc. He can turn the presence of these people (who belong to a lower social status) to an advantage by helping them become better. On the other hand, having them around him can

become a disadvantage if he does not add value to them. He has a choice to make. In the same way, the lowly person who is a driver, a cook, a caretaker or a tenant to a man of means also has the opportunity of turning his proximity to this man into an advantage by being the best helper he can be. On the other hand, he can choose to allow his proximity to a man of means become a disadvantage by offering poor services to him. We are always faced with choices. This book explores relationships between people and their neighbours and explains who a helper of destiny is. It also shows how we can consciously cultivate and maximise our relationships with these 'helpers of destiny' whom God has graciously and freely placed on our paths through life, for our benefits and blessings. Personal experiences form a large part of this book. I am sure you will be greatly blessed as you read. In my autobiography which I am still working on, one of the chapters discusses helpers of destiny. The book dealt mainly on chance meetings with people and discussed chance events that can make an impact on our lives. In this book, I have expanded the theme of helpers of destiny, having come to realise that they abound all around us. A lot of times we do not even recognise them as such, neither do we know how to position these relationships to become mutually beneficial to us. I pray that you will have a new perspective about relationships after you read this book. Read and be blessed.

Uchechukwu Grace Oguonu (Mrs)

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CHAPTER ONE Who Is A Helper Of Destiny? How did the title, Helpers of Destiny come about? The term was first mooted by late Dr. Myles Munroe, an expert on leadership and potential, when he came to

Enugu, Eastern Nigeria in 2008. I live in that city, and I made sure I attended the event which took place at the church auditorium of The Redeemed Christian Church of God. The meeting hall was packed full and there were more people outside than inside the church auditorium. People wanted to hear Myles Munroe live. He basically came to speak to the potential of the people in that city. In his concluding remarks, as he encouraged the audience to maximise the contact they had made with him on that visit, he explained that the people we come in contact with in life have been put there by a loving God. 'Yes,' he said, 'They may appear as chance events to us, but to God they are not, and we would do well to take such apparent 'chance meetings' seriously. His words connected with me, for attending that meeting had been quite by chance. I had stepped into my regular meat shop to buy meat. The flier on the door caught my eye. I went back, took a closer look and observed with joy that the venue was close to my house. I had some peculiar domestic challenges then, and had been barred from attending fellowships, but the desire to attend was strong. I made a mental note of the meeting times and re-organised my schedule to accommodate them. I am glad to say that my life has never quite been the same since I attended that meeting. For one thing, that encounter set me on the path of being mentored by one of the greatest experts on leadership and potential that our world has ever known. Indeed, Dr. Myles Munroe was a God-sent, and has been a powerful helper of my destiny since then. His message on that day, titled 'The Leader in You,' opened my eyes to great possibilities for people of African descent specifically, and for humankind at large. I will share some of the lessons I learnt from that memorable meeting. But first, let us look at what the word of God says 'Yes,' he said, 'They may appear as chance events to us, but to God they are not, and we would do well to take such apparent 'chance meetings' seriously. His words connected with me, for attending that meeting had been quite by chance. I had stepped into my regular meat shop to buy meat. The flier on the door caught my eye. I went back, took a closer look and observed with joy that the venue was close to my house. I had some peculiar domestic challenges then, and had been barred from attending fellowships, but the desire to attend was strong. I made a mental note of the meeting times and re-organised my

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him. This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. Genesis 2:23 In verse 24 of Genesis chapter 2, God went on to establish the family relationship, and in Genesis 4:1, Adam and Eve had their first child. Let us go back to when Adam was alone. He had work to do that kept him busy and somehow satisfied, but he had not reached his fullest potential. Potential is hidden strength and ability – what will be that has not yet been. God, the Omnipotent One, made us with lots of potential, just like Him. Adam's true potential did not come out till he had a suitable helper. It then follows that to reach our fullest potentials, we need people and relationships. God, in His infinite goodness and wisdom, has placed those people and relationships around us for our benefits. Some of them certainly do not appear so at first, but we must learn to recognise them as well as consciously position ourselves to benefit maximally from them. Examples of relationships that do not appear to be of benefit are those that give us horrible experiences early in life. For instance, the separation of parents, cases of mental and physical abuse, etc. It may look as if they will not be beneficial to us at the beginning, but God did not mean it to be so. We can make the choice later in life either to give ourselves to God so He can bring something good out of these negative situations, or we can remain with hatred towards those who inflicted the pain, and live in self-pity. We

always have choices. It is true that such experiences sap our self-esteem, but we need to snap out of self-pity and seek God's help to build relationships that will mould us to become who and what He meant for us to be. A wise person once said that you are the same person you were five years ago except for two things – the people you know (i.e. the relationships you have or build) and the books you read (i.e. the information you have at your disposal). We need to commit the circumstances we find ourselves in to God, who alone can make all things work together for our good. Eleanor Roosevelt who was once the United States of America first lady said: It is not so much the things that happen to us that hurt us but how we react to them. Another man by the name of Orison Swett Marsden spoke about success in this way: Success is not measured by what you accomplish, but by the opposition you have encountered, and the courage with which you have maintained the struggle against overwhelming odds. I have been emphasising on our having choices when it comes to the directions that our lives take. This is brought out in the statement by Eleanor Roosevelt. We have a choice to decide whether our past or current experiences will 'sour' us or 'sweeten us' in future. The choices we make in life are determined beforehand by the values and attitudes we adopt in life. Our attitudes in turn are governed by our past experiences to some extent, and to a large extent by the information and knowledge we have. The information we have at any given time, influences our beliefs. Our attitudes are a mirror of our beliefs. Our attitudes to life are built up over time by what we see or hear over a prolonged period which gets into our heart. What gets into our heart gets into our lives and becomes our physical reality. What this means is that some utterances, visual or auditory experiences we have had in the past get stuck in our subconscious mind and ultimately inform our belief systems. Our beliefs usually cause us to take actions that are in line with what we believe. Our actions are largely influenced by what we believe. At this point, those things in our heart or mind usually become our physical reality, except we make a conscious effort to change them for the better. What if during your childhood days you noticed that your parents did not trust each other? You often heard your father say, 'Never trust a woman; see what happened to Adam.'

And your mother usually said, 'Men are always breaking women's heart; you never know with them. You think you are all they have and one day, some lady comes, saying your husband is the father of her child…….' Invariably these words will shape your beliefs and you may develop hatred for the opposite sex. Boys who grow up in homes where such utterances are made learn to distrust their mothers and sisters, and girls from such homes do not trust their fathers and brothers. As these children grow up into adulthood, they see members of the opposite sex as enemies. This distrust or abhorrence of the opposite sex could, in extreme cases, lead to the development of gay relationships. Even if it does not get to this extreme, the mistrust is carried into marriage where the cycle of mistrust is played out again for the next generation. On the other hand, this set of people may see members of the opposite sex as 'forbidden fruit,' which they should not have but become curious enough to eat. Either way, except a conscious effort is made towards a paradigm shift, an unbalanced relationship awaits such a person who has been exposed to this experience. To make such a paradigm shift, the right information is required. This information can be acquired by consciously seeking to know the truth of God's word that is able to set everyone free. Alternatively, those people could read books written by experienced marriage counsellors, or seek help from marriage counsellors. How does this example relate to the helper of our destiny? I have discussed how God established the relationships He expects us to have, first with Himself, then with others. Let us look at our relationship with God. Ideally, as God's offspring, we are supposed to be in a father-child relationship with Him. However, because sin entered the world, it is no longer an automatic relationship. We are now born sinners because we take our physical nature from our parents. When we come to an understanding of this situation and become aware of that need to establish the right relationship with God, we are faced with a choice - to go ahead and establish that relationship with God or to remain with the sin nature. Some people who have had experiences that caused them to question the love and care of a father figure find it difficult to trust God enough to commit their lives to Him. This past prolonged exposure to a negative father image jeopardises re-establishing the most important relationship of our lives - a relationship

that will ultimately lead to our reaching our full potential in life. Without establishing a relationship with God, we can never reach our full potential. Jesus brought this out very vividly in the gospel of John, chapter 15 where He uses the analogy of The Vinedresser (God the Father), the True Vine (God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ), and the branches (human beings) to depict the right rela tionship we need to have with God. I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit. However, apart from me (cut off from vital union with me) you can do nothing. John 15:5 – Amplified Version It cannot be depicted any better than this. We must remain connected to God if we want to have healthy lives - spiritually, physically, emotionally etc. God is the number one helper of our destiny. He created us, and had in mind a purpose or assignment for us to fulfil before sending us into the world. Without Him (If we are cut off from this vital union with Him) we can never know that purpose in the first place, let alone accomplish it. We need God every step of the way to be able to achieve our destinies. He is the source and sustainer of our lives, because we take our spiritual nature from Him. Let us get to the human relationships we have to be in. I will introduce this in three parts. (i) Our marital relationships (Will be discussed in chapter 3) (ii) Our earthly family relationships (Will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4) (iii) Our relationships with neighbours, the community we live in, the workplace family, and the body of Christ (Will be discussed in chapter 6).

CHAPTER TWO Know Your Helpers

What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning till evening? Exodus 18:14b

The above question was posed by Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, to him in the wilderness shortly after the Israelites came out from Egypt. This remarkable story in Exodus 18:1-27 portrays the situation Moses found himself in as a leader of Israel. He had received the tablets of stone and settled down to the task of 'educating' the Israelites concerning God's commandments, statutes and ordinances. It appeared that he was going

about it in the wrong way, hence Jethro in alarm, asked him what he was doing. I believe Jethro was a very sensitive and sensible man. He sensed Moses's dilemma. Incidentally, Moses was not the only person suffering as a result of this lack of delegation of some of the work to others. People were everywhere, standing in the hot sun from morning till night waiting for Moses to attend to them. I am sure that some people could not see him on the first day and they had to come back the next day, hoping they would have better luck. Fortunately, Jethro discerned what the problem was, and promptly offered the solution (vs 18-23). He taught Moses a powerful lesson in leadership that day. The summary of the solution is this: When you raise 'helpers' for yourself, they will share the load with you and thus make your own load lighter. It takes great discernment to discover your helpers of destiny. Moses listened to his father-in-law and everyone was happy with the outcome. This story mirrors the dilemma we all face at different times in our lives – at home, at work, and in our different organisations. Moses had received a powerful assignment from God (just like all of us), but did not know how to handle it so as not to 'burn out' in the process. It is possible he thought, "Oh! This is 'my cross,' my special assignment. I will bear it alone. It's me that God has given the assignment. I'm sure He has given me the strength for it". We all tend to make such assumptions. John Maxwell, a leadership expert said, "The fact that you are a foreman does not mean you are to do the work of four men." One man is not expected to do all the work alone. That is why God created families and communities. I suppose it has to do with 'common sense not being common.' Sometimes it may actually not occur to us to ask others for help. Or we may forget that we have benefitted from raising helpers in the past, and could do the same when faced with identical circumstances. This calls to my mind another incident that occurred between Moses and the Israelites when they were close to the River Jordan. The burden had become heavy for Moses once again, but instead of recalling how he had solved the problem in the past, he began to complain to God. He said to God, Why have You brought this trouble on Your servant? What have I done to displease You that You put the burden of all these people on me?

Numbers 11:10-17 – New International Version This time, God gave

him the solution Himself, telling him to come with seventy of Israel's leaders and officials to the tent of meeting and He would anoint them with the 'spirit' that was on Moses so that they could perform as well as Moses (vs. 16-17). Another lesson we learn here is that the people God has placed around you as helpers have been well equipped to help you. You need to pray for discernment in order to harness their help appropriately and adequately, so that it becomes a mutually beneficial relationship. Wisdom is also essential. If we do not know that we can ask for help and receive it, we may not even ask. Thus, both the knowledge of what to do and the discernment to do it right is needed. Much as it takes great discernment to know who your specific helper of destiny is, you must consciously cultivate people around you as helpers. Over time, God will reveal your true helpers. I have come to realise that ordinarily, people do not, as a rule, offer assistance to others. Very few people actually go to someone and say, 'How can I help you?' or ''Is there anything I can do for you?' There are many reasons for this. Some fear rejection of their offers; some are simply shy (they want to, but cannot bring themselves to ask). Some others are used to 'sitting on the fence,' i.e. they have set their lives on a 'wait and see' mode and some have got used to being told what to do. Whatever is the reason, the responsibility for seeking help (especially the sort of help one truly needs) falls on the person who needs the help. As I write this, I am at such a period in my life that I need strong, useful 'helpers of destiny' to whom I can delegate a lot of things and get a lot of load off my back, in order to create large chunks of time for my self-development. I work at a full-time job where I have a God-given assignment to accomplish. I also oversee a non-governmental outfit (NGO) which is actually a God-given vision that I am fully committed to making a success of. Moreover, I have my family life to keep in order. Right now, on the home front, the nest is empty of help because our children (both biological and non-biological) have all left home. On all these fronts, my attention is needed. How do I do a balancing act? How do I create time to give to each area of my life the sort of attention it needs? At some point, I actually thought of quitting my regular job, but God told me that the time was not yet ripe for it, as He still had an assignment for me in my workplace. There were also protests, both from my family

and friends, mainly because of the tough times that my nation Nigeria is going through. They felt I needed the salary I was being paid to survive. For me, the money was not such an issue because, by God's grace, I have other sources of income. Besides I knew that if I am able to carve out large 'chunks' of time for my personal development, I will be able to create more sources of income. I had to seriously re-appraise my investments in the light of the knowledge I had, and I asked myself, 'Have I really built my investments to the point of becoming financially free?' In all honesty, I had not done so at that time. I was at a serious crossroad, but God in His infinite wisdom, began to show me how I could apply the things I knew in faith. The solution lay in 'raising leaders.' Raising 'successors' at my workplace for instance, will reduce my work load and enable me maintain a consultancy role. Raising leaders at my NGO will enable the programs go ahead with minimal supervision from me. This will enable me give time to other things. At the home front, I had some help for a while in the form of a cleaner who came twice a week, but I needed more helpers. God has now graciously provided a wonderful cook to handle the cooking, and also provided my husband and I with a house to enable us accommodate the live-in cook. I have now embarked on imparting to my junior colleagues at my workplace and at the NGO, the things I know, so that they too will be equipped to train others (II Timothy 2:2). I hope that these 'leaders' I am raising will 'duplicate me' and together, we will be fruitful and multiply. Amen. Because our God-given assignments cannot be accomplished by us alone, we must of necessity seek the cooperation of others. To maintain harmony with others occupying the same space with us, we have to be friendly, non-antagonistic and show concern for them. However, trying to secure peoples' cooperation in the pursuit of God's plan and purpose requires a higher touch and some level of persuasion. There is a leader in all of us. We need to take leadership as the ability to influence others, rather than a position of authority. God has equipped us with this leadership ability, knowing that we need it in order to secure the cooperation of others for the assignment He has given to us. Much as it is a God-given ability, do we become leaders automatically? The answer is an emphatic 'no.' With a little juxtaposition, this quote by Shakespeare brings out a crucial

point: 'Some are born great, some achieve greatness, some have greatness thrust upon them.' Let us now replace 'greatness' with 'leadership:' 'Some are born leaders, some achieve leadership, and some have leadership thrust upon them.' What I am trying to say is that though God has put the potential for leadership abilities in us, it rarely manifests automatically. Rather, oftentimes, He may need to give us a 'push' in the form of circumstances. The late Dr. Myles Munroe, in his book, Maximizing Your Potential said that 'circumstances and crises are powerful tools in God's hands that lead us to our purpose, and the maximising of our potentials.' A lot of us by nature will remain in one place but for the circumstances and crises that God brings our way to 'push' us into greatness. When we are faced with those challenges and crises of life, the 'helpers of our destiny' play different roles. Sometimes they come at our invitation; at other times, they barge in to shake us up. Imagine that you have just lost a loved one. It could be a spouse, a parent, or a good friend. You grieve for a long time and then begin to lapse into self-pity. That means you start to overdo it; to over-grieve. A 'Comforter' will come and sit with you and encourage you to get on with your life. That person will urge you to look up to God and that the sun will shine again. There is truly nothing wrong with this. A 'Confronter' on the other hand, will take your hand, force you to stand on your feet, look you eyeball to eyeball and tell you that you are over-doing it. He or she may go as far as putting you in a rehabilitation program to help you get over the depression. Life is all about balance. These two types of people are needed to make us have fulfilled lives. God has put them around us for our good, and we should recognise and utilise them. When you are out to consciously cultivate your helpers of destiny, the special characteristics of the people around you must also be consciously explored so that you will know who will be the best 'fit' for the role you want at a given time. Dr. Mike Murdoch, in his book The Assignment, gives us some clues on how to do this. One of such clues is this: Choose someone who has what you do not have. For instance, if you are shy, you need to have someone who is bold and confident around you. God showcased this principle in the choice of a 'helper' for Moses. Moses was a stammerer, and possibly a self-conscious person. God gave him his brother Aaron who was an

eloquent speaker to be his 'mouthpiece.' God also allows this attraction of opposites to play out often in the choice of life partners and in other relationships, where we are meant to complement each other rather than compete with each other. In order to apply the advice from Dr. Mike Murdoch, that is, 'to choose someone who has what we do not have,' it is imperative that we know the different personalities and temperament types we will come across in life, learn how to be 'people persons' or leaders, so that we can work in harmony with the people we come across, and if need be, consciously seek their cooperation. Tim Lahaye, in his books, The Spirit-filled Temperaments, Transformed Temperaments, and Why You Act the Way You Do, highlights the different basic temperament types and the possible combinations that exist. He helps us to understand our own temperaments first, especially our strengths and weaknesses. Armed with this information, we will be in a better position to understand the other temperament types and how we can interact with people of those other temperaments in a mutually beneficial way. The 'four temperaments' is a proto-psychological theory that suggests that there are four fundamental personality types, namely sanguine (enthusiastic, active and social), choleric (short-tempered, fast, or irritable), melancholic (analytical, wise, and quiet), and phlegmatic (relaxed and peaceful). Most formulations include the possibility of mixtures of the types where an individual shares two or more temperaments. (Wikipedia) In his classic Belbin Team Role Model/Theory, Dr. Meredith Belbin has identified nine different behaviours (or contributions) that individuals display in the work place. These are called the nine Belbin Team Roles. He specifically defines a Team Role as 'a tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way.' Proponents of this model advocate that successful teams need to have the right mix of people within them, so that all nine of the Team Role behaviours are represented. Hence, as we pursue our various assignments, we need to take these facts into consideration. The nine different team roles are: Resource Investigator, Team Worker, Co-ordinator, Plant, Monitor Evaluator, Specialist, Shaper, Implementer, and Completer Finisher. The bottom line is this: It is what we know and are willing to apply in

faith that makes a way for us. By implication, it is one thing to know what to do; it is another thing to step out in faith to do it in order to achieve the desired results.

Chapter Three The Role Of Family As Helpers Of Destiny. Now the Lord God said, "It is not good (sufficient, satisfactory) that man should be alone, I will make him a helper meet (suitable, adapted, complementary) for him". Genesis 2:18- Amplified Version In this simple statement, God gives voice to a yearning He sensed in Adam as he went about the assignment He had given him, to tend and name the animals, and also keep the garden God had planted. It mirrored God's care and concern for man, the crown of His creation. All other higher animals were created two of a kind for the completion of their species. I believe it was important that God made a special statement (of a powerful principle) before providing a helper for Adam. God, in making that statement, establishes that it is not good for man (or mankind) to be alone, without assistance. He went ahead to create a suitable helper for Adam, thus establishing the principle of 'a helper of destiny,' as well as establishing the family unit where this 'mutual helping' is to be fully actualized (Genesis 2:18-25). This is the order that God established from the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden. Sadly, this order was disrupted when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. The harmonious 'mutually helpful' relationship existing between the first human couple disappeared, giving way to the blame game, where each person in a marriage begins to point an accusing finger at each other (Genesis 3:11-13) and others, including God Himself. Fortunately, God's calling is without repentance. The order He has established stands, irrespective of the devil's lies and schemes. A man and his wife are made to live in harmony with each other, not in suspicion of each other. How did GOD intend for this harmonious, mutually beneficial relationship between man and woman to operate? First and foremost, we must realise that it was God's intention that this harmony should operate in the context of a holy union i.e. in the context of the marriage relationship (Genesis 2:24 & Hebrews 3:5). Genesis 2:21-25 continues the story of how God

provided a 'help meet' for Adam. He first caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, then He 'surgically' removed one rib from Adam's side and fashioned another human being. All other created beings before this time were 'not comparable' to Adam. But this time, Adam had a fellow human being as a companion. No wonder he exclaimed when he saw the woman, 'This now is the bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.' He proceeded to name her woman, saying, 'She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.' God further makes other pronouncements in other verses of Genesis chapter two. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Genesis 2:24 The two of them, man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame"

Genesis 2:25 - The Message Version The implications of these verses of Scripture are: (i) That a woman is the best help meet for the man. (And they have come together to meet each other's needs). (ii) That a woman is the only helper 'comparable to man.' Both are two of a kind because both are human beings. (iii) Both were originally in Adam, because the root word from which the name Adam comes means 'mankind.' However, bringing forth Adam first showed that God was in the process of doing something dramatic so that it will be recorded for all time. (iv) God separated the woman from her original position in the man's side and made her a separate being. He went on to make the profound statement recorded in Genesis 2:24: Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the (two) shall become one flesh. God separated them in the first place, for He wanted them to be two separate individuals who will grow up separately into wholeness and maturity. They will then leave their parental homes, their familiar environment and geographical location (sometimes) and be joined to The implications of these verses of Scripture are: (i) That a woman is the best help meet for the man. (And they have come together to meet each other's needs). (ii) That a woman is the only helper 'comparable to man.' Both are two of a kind because both are human beings. (iii) Both were originally in Adam, because the root word from which the name Adam comes means 'mankind.' However, bringing forth Adam first showed that God was in the

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(a) That they engage in bringing God's kingdom plans and purposes to light (Genesis 1:28).

(b) To raise up another generation of holy offspring (Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Psalm 127:3; Malachi 15:14-16). Marriage is a spiritual partnership between the man and his wife. On a higher level, they are in partnership with God, forming a three-fold cord that

cannot be broken (Ecclesiastics 4:12). The man and the woman each had unique, distinct assignments given to them by God before He 'sent' them to the earth. They are meant to help each other with accomplishing these God-given assignments. When they become parents, they are the first helpers of destiny for their children as they seek to nurture them to full physical, emotional, educational and spiritual maturity and completeness. This way, they prepare them for the next phase of their lives: being a 'help meet' for someone else. The Role Of Parents As Helpers Of Their Children's Destinies The family unit can also be helpers of destiny for their children through establishing the right parent-child relationships. Parenting is a serious business which should be taken seriously by all parents. Children are a heritage from God (Psalm 127:3). It is a great responsibility that God has reposed on the shoulders of parents to ensure that the next generation of humans grow up to become 'spiritual giants.' A clear-cut role for parents as helpers of their children's destinies is brought out in the commandments and ordinances given to the children of Israel in the wilderness. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Deuteronomy 6:4-7 This passage of scripture shows clearly that parents are to be their children's first teachers and mentors. They are to teach them under different settings because repetition will drive home whatever message they are conveying to their children at any given time. Parents are also to bring up their children in the fear and admonition of God, so that when the children grow up, they will not depart from the path that has been chosen for them (Ephesians 6:4 and Proverbs 22:6). Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6 And, you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4 As parents perform their God-given roles of raising Godly offspring, they are not to 'exasperate' their children (Colossians 3:21-New American

Standard Version), so that the children do not lose heart. Several verses of Scripture tell parents how to guide their children. Fathers, do not provoke or irritate or fret your children (do not be hard on them or harass them), lest they become discouraged and sullen and morose and feel inferior and frustrated (Do not break their spirit.) Colossians 3:21 - Amplified Version Why would scripture record this warning to parents (especially fathers)? The primary reason why the exhortation goes to fathers is because they are the heads of the home, and ideally, set the tone for their families. Another reason, I believe, is that too often, fathers feel that a high-handed approach to raising children keeps them in check. An allusion I believe, to the 'rod of correction.' (Proverbs 22:15 and 29:15). Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him. Proverbs 22:15 The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. Proverbs 29:15 Over time, it has actually been proven to have the opposite effect of exasperating children. Much as some level of discipline is essential for children in order to 'drive away foolishness far from them,' a balanced approach involving discipline, reward for well-doing and teaching responsibility is called for, if we are not to break their spirits. As I write this, I recall the challenge my husband and I had as our son grew up. He was our first child so we did not have any experience of real parenting. My husband and I had come from homes where a high-handed approach was used, and that was what we were used to. As we applied that approach in an attempt to keep in check this adventurous, high-spirited young boy, it got to a point where he became immune, so to speak, to the rod of correction. He would simply turn his back and brace up for the expected strokes from the cane. At this point, I realised a change of approach had to be used. I sought God for wisdom and got it. Instead of lashing out at him with words or strokes of the cane, I forced myself to control my frustration, and to sit him down for a talk. During the talk, I would try to explain things to him. I would use scripture as much as possible to drive home some issues. At that time, he was not joining us for family prayer times, and I made up my mind not to force him any more. Instead, I chose to commit him to God,

praying with some psalms. I used two texts from the book of psalms to pray for him. I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Psalm 32:8 Order my steps in Thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Psalm 119:133 - King James Version Then I would pray this way: Lord, teach him and instruct him in the way that he should go, and guide him with Your eye. Lord, please order my son's footsteps in line with Your word. Do not let any iniquity overtake him and have dominion over him. Before he left for the university, I taught him how to 'discern the spirits' (an important lesson my pastor had taught me earlier in my Christian walk), based on the following two scriptures. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. I John 4:1-4 Therefore, I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 12:3 From verse three of the scripture in 1st John, my pastor taught me when I was a newly converted believer, that when listening to a message or teaching preached by anybody, I should watch out whether the message acknowledges that, 'God came in the Flesh.' In other words, 'that God became flesh and dwelt among us.' He said that the message of the incarnation, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are at the core of the Christian message, and warned that I should be wary of any teaching that makes a mockery of them. In discussing I Corinthians 12:3, he explained that no man, speaking by the Holy spirit of the living God will disrespect Jesus. Rather, he will seek to exalt Him. Therefore, any doctrine that does not exalt Jesus as Lord should be disregarded. These warnings have helped me immensely to remain on track in my Christian walk. I have also passed them on to my daughters, domestic

helps and other believers. God watched over His word and performed them in my son's life. I am very happy to say that as the years passed, my son would jokingly recall the times when I had, in frustration with his antics, got to the point of attempting to pour hot water on him. However, he testified that what made the greatest impact on his life were the times I called him, sat him down and taught him things in a calm atmosphere. God, in His goodness worked His wonders on our son, and ordered his footsteps right. He was in his last year at the university when he called my husband and I, just out of the blues, to announce that he had given his life to the Lord Jesus Christ. It was wonderful news from someone who appeared to have turned his back on the salvation message. He was the one who introduced my family to the ministry of Daystar Christian Center and Reverend Sam Adeyemi, who has been a great helper of destiny to my family since then. He had joined the Daystar Christian Center Campus fellowship at the Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO), where he had his university education. As parents, we have done our part to bring him up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. We also hope and pray that now that he is mature and a parent, he will also pass what he learnt from us (and much more) on to his children, so that godly offspring will continue to be raised in our family.

Another cause of exasperation to children is when parents do not realise that their children are basically different from each other, with different personalities, temperaments, gifts and talents, and have different love languages. I personally found this out the hard way as my youngest daughter grew up. The natural tendency of parents is to expect younger children to behave like their older siblings and conform to certain 'norms' expected of them. My youngest daughter turned out to be totally different from her older sister. While she is more of an independent type, who liked to take her time to do things, and also do them her own way, my older daughter is an easy-going phlegmatic, who even from the crib, did not want to disturb anyone. Her love language is quality time to which the dialect of 'quality talk' is added. We used to have (and still have) lengthy fulfilling mother-daughter talk times. My

youngest daughter just was not created that way, and the mother-daughter talk times were frustrating to her. She used to feel that I favoured her older sister over her, and my vehement denials of that fell on deaf ears. Her love language was not so obvious and I just could not connect with her then. She loved throwing temper tantrums and had several mood swings. I was confused because I did not know what triggered them. This was something I had not experienced with my two older children and oftentimes I used to just turn my back on her out of frustration. I felt helpless to deal with the situation, even as I yearned to have a close relationship with my young daughter. As she approached puberty, I knew that something needed to be done before the situation got out of hand. To have her strange behaviour compounded by the normal emotional changes of adolescence was scary. As I prayed for wisdom, God led me to read some books. I gained a lot of insight from books like, What Your Daughter Isn't Telling You by Susie Shellenberger and Kathy Gowler, Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman, Parenting Teens and a few others. The five love languages according to Gary Chapman describe ways to express and experience love . These love languages include: giving gifts, quality time, words of affirmation, acts of service (devotion), and physical touch. Gary Chapman claims that the list of five love languages is exhaustive. According to this theory, each person has one primary and one secondary love lan guage. The most important lesson I learnt from these books was that people, including children, are different from each other, and they need to be treated or handled differently in order to have the best relationship with them. The wisdom and insight from the books paid off. Gradually, my youngest daughter and I began to reach towards each other and even have quality talk times. I learnt how to casually introduce topics in a way that did not cause her to 'freeze' and turn away. I learnt to discern her mood swings and avoid the triggers. She also made strong attempts to overcome the mood swings and temper tantrums, apologise for them and to accept an olive branch, when offered. Now she is a young adult, and we have bonded so well that we have a wonderful mother-daughter relationship. A relationship that started out as a frustrating and exasperating experience on both sides has now been turned into a

rewarding relationship. It took hard work on both sides, and wisdom to get there. I want to repeat here that parenting is a serious business which should be taken seriously, if parents want to raise Godly children; children who will be good leaders and parents of tomorrow. Sometimes parents want children to live their dreams for them. That means that the dreams they failed to actualise, they force their children to pick up. This often comes up in the choice of life careers or even life partners. Some parents insist that their children (maybe a favourite child) take up a career which they had wanted to pursue earlier in life but were hindered in one way or the other. Such children may want to pursue a different career but their parents will insist, sometimes even to the extent of applying some 'economic arm-twisting.' For instance, a parent may want a child to pursue a career in Engineering but the child wants a career in the Arts, History, Economics or Music. The parent will insist that if the career in Engineering is not pursued, then school fees would be withheld. This is very frustrating to children. An identical situation is when parents insist that their children pursue a career path they desired but could not achieve even if those children would have preferred a different career path. This is often seen when parents have a private practice, like in Law or Medicine. Their reason is that they want their children to take over the practice when they are old or when they die. These scenarios are often very frustrating for children, who feel helpless at that stage of their lives, and are tempted to disobey their parents, but may initially lack the boldness to do so. Over time, they may become bold enough to insist on a career path of their own. Instances abound where some kids succumbed to parental pressure and studied courses that were not their own choices. They were not bold enough to insist on a change and they graduated. A child who experienced this will hand over the certificate to such parents and say, 'Mum' (or 'Dad'), here is your certificate. I have read the course you wanted me to study. Now I can pursue mine.' Such a waste of a life. Time that would have been spent meaningfully was spent in misery and frustration. Parents please beware and stop exasperating your children. We, parents can learn how to support our children's dreams and give them appropriate information to succeed in life, rather than suppressing their dreams, and imposing ours on them. It is never a

good thing to ask someone to let go of his or her dreams. As parents who have more experience, we could help with analysis of the pros and cons, but not force them to give up their dreams. It leads to frustration and estrange ment from family. Dr. Robert Anthony Schuller wrote a book titled Walking In Your Own Shoes. In the book, he explained that God sent each of us to the world with shoes that have a perfect fit, having been custom-made. It was actually a reference to our individual unique purpose and assignments. He concluded by insisting that it was important that each of us 'walk in our own shoes' i.e. follow our purpose, and no one else's. In summary I would say that a lot is involved in parenting, and as parents we would do well to learn how to maintain the right environment for 'nurturing our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord so that they do not depart from these teachings when they are old.' We must always remember that our children are a heritage from God, and that God has given them to us to bring up for Him, so that the world will continue to be populated by Godly offspring. We are custodians of God's heritage. Let us be faithful in that assignment. We are critical 'helpers of destiny' for our children. Not only to our biological children but to all the children we come across: domestic helps, children of extended family relations (especially in our African setting). Teachers are also helpers of destiny to the various students they teach. These helpers of destiny owe it to God and the future of our world to raise Godly leaders who will be great spiritual champions for God. Our world needs people who know God; who will be strong and do exploits (Daniel 11:32). Parents or those who are 'in loco parentis' (those who are in the place of a parent) must learn to 'read' children. The term 'in loco parentis,' is Latin for 'in the place of a parent,' and it refers to the legal responsibility of a person or organisation to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent. Originally derived from English Common Law, it is applied in two separate areas of the law. First, it allows institutions such as colleges and schools to act in the best interests of the students as they see fit, although not allowing what would be considered violations of the students' civil liberties. Second, this doctrine can give non-biological parents the legal rights and responsibilities of biological parents, if they have held themselves out as the

parents. (Wikipedia) A lot is learnt by close observation, and this is very useful when children are being counselled generally, or when we need to partner with their teachers in choosing the right careers for them. As I wrote this book, the thought struck me that circumstances may not always be ideal. Life in truth, rarely is ideal, but we must not be so preoccupied with our personal issues that we neglect these wonderful gifts from God. Whether the situation is friction between spouses or a busy work schedule, we must try to find time to nurture our children. We are accountable to God for how we bring them up.

Chapter 4 The Role Of Children As Helpers Of Destiny

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth. Ephesians 6: 1-3 Much as I urge parents to take their roles as helpers of their children's destinies seriously, the converse is also true. Children are helpers of their parents' destinies, and they need to be serious about it too. In the African setting, a lot of people actually marry for the sole purpose of having children in the accepted en vironment of marriage. The idea of companionship in marriage for the couple is not usually paramount. During the olden days in the African setting, couples were encouraged to have many children because it was believed that the more children they had, the more hands they had for their farms, and the more people to contend with their enemies. Our biological children are also expected to take care of us in old age. The world has now changed so much, and a lot of these paradigms have altered, but the fact still remains that children are useful. They help to sustain a family's vision. Take the lineage of Abraham the patriarch, for instance. His biological children continued in the vision that God had given their father, passing it from one generation to the other, as God had commanded. Even when Abraham had not had biological children, he had this testimony, For I know him (Abraham), that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do

justice and judgement; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him. Genesis 18:19 – King James Version This testimony that God Himself gave about Abraham was mirrored in the fact that Abraham's servant, Eleazar, who was sent to Abraham's kindred to find a wife for his son, was taught the way of the Lord well, and he was able to actualise God's plans. A lot of times, God gives people assignments which He expects to span generations, hence parents are expected to mentor their children well so that these children will work alongside them and continue on the chosen path for generations to come. In Scripture, Aaron's priestly role, and David's kingly role are instances of it. God seeks that the union of a Godly man and his wife will produce Godly offspring to promote His kingdom plans and purposes. After we have done our part as parents, the onus then lies on our offspring to continue the 'family' vision, provided we have communicated it well. It is a two-way thing. But it is good mentoring that gives birth to continuity. To buttress this point, I will revisit God's instructions to the Israelites in the early part of their national life here. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Deuteronomy 6:4-7 The nation of ancient Israel provides us with instances of how the offspring of godly men continued in the vision that God gave their forefathers from one generation to the other. In modern day society, we have in the USA (godly) families who have continued with family traditions. Take for instance, the family of Jonathan Edwards, a Calvinist minister. It is reported that many of Jonathan Edwards's descendants became prominent citizens in the United States of America, due to their godly upbringing. In politics, the Kennedy and Bush families have a long line of descendants active in the United States political arena. In the United Kingdom, there is the royal family that has continued in the family tradition up to the present day. In parts of Western Europe, we have businesses that were set up as far back as 1700s still thriving. For these long lasting business dynasties, it has not

necessarily been the direct offspring of the founders that have kept them going. Rather, the business entities have incorporated good systems and structures that make for continuity. In Africa, we will do well to imbibe this culture of continuity so as to build organisations that stand the test of time, and help in promoting God's plans and purposes. I want to advise the younger generation here: Your parents may not have had what it takes, but you can, by your godly character, re-write your family's history for the better. You can undertake to be mentored by a godly person and help build that person's business enterprise. You will certainly find a niche there. For the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. Matthew 13:31-32 & Mark 4:30-32 Let us help to build kingdom businesses which start as small as the mustard seed, but with the cooperation of all, grow to become big blessings to humanity. If, on the other hand, your parents have set up a business (no matter how small), even if it is not in line with your own profession, learn what it will take to build it into a big business. You can become the Chairman of the Board of Directors. In that capacity, you can bring in experts who will run the affairs of the business on a daily basis. The most important thing is that the organisation grows and humanity is blessed by its existence. Do not neglect what your parents sweated to start up, all in the name of, 'They have lived their lives; I should be allowed to live mine the way I want.' It is a shame for any child to allow his or her parents' business to die. Technology has made it so easy for people to multi-task, especially in the sense of being able to set up and run, profitably for that matter, more than one business enterprise simultaneously. I challenge my fellow people of African descent with these scriptures as we reach out and become the helpers of each other's destiny: (Africans) Arise and shine for your light has come. The glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Isaiah 60:1 Do not despise the days of small beginnings. Zechariah. 4:10 For though your beginning be small, yet your latter end will greatly increase. Job 8:7

CHAPTER FIVE The Mentor -Protégée Relationship You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Deuteronomy 11:19 You should ask yourself the following questions when choosing a mentor. - Who is a mentor? - How do you know your mentor? - Who is a protégée? I would like us to allow our minds to engage these questions as we continue to explore the subject of the conscious deliberate effort to help another person reach full God-given potential. Mentorship is a relationship in which a more experi enced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. The mentor may be older or younger than the person being mentored, but she or he must have a certain area of expertise in which the mentoring goes on. -Wikipedia. A mentor means a person who gives a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period of time, especially at work or school. - Cambridge English Dictionary. A protégée is a person who is guided and supported by an older and more experienced or influential person. - Wikipedia. Mentorship refers to a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. The person in receipt of the mentorship is referred to as a protégé (male), a protégée (female), an apprentice, or in more recent years, as a mentee. -Wikipedia. enced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. The mentor may be older or younger than the person being mentored, but she or he must have a certain area of expertise in which the mentoring goes on. -Wikipedia. A mentor means a person who gives a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period of time, especially at work or school. - Cambridge English Dictionary. A protégée is a person who is guided and supported by an older and more experienced or influential person. - Wikipedia. Mentorship refers to a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or

more knowledgeable person helps a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. The person in receipt of the mentorship is referred to as a protégé (male), a protégée (female), an apprentice, or in more recent years, as a mentee. -Wikipedia. Mentoring is therefore a process that always involves communication and is relationship-based. Another definition: It is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career or professional development. Mentoring involves informal communication, usually face to face, and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégée). - Wikipedia. The summary is that the mentor plants something in the protégée or mentee, then nurtures and waters it to ensure that the desired growth occurs. This vividly captures the essence of who a 'helper of destiny' is. It is a consciously developed relationship that is beneficial to both parties involved, and it is geared towards ensuring that both parties reach full (God-given) potential in that area of life where the mentoring is going on. The implication of this last statement is that a person Mentoring is therefore a process that always involves communication and is relationship-based. Another definition: It is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career or professional development. Mentoring involves informal communication, usually face to face, and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégée). - Wikipedia. The summary is that the mentor plants something in the protégée or mentee, then nurtures and waters it to ensure that the desired growth occurs. This vividly captures the essence of who a 'helper of destiny' is. It is a consciously developed relationship that is beneficial to both parties involved, and it is geared towards ensuring that both parties reach full (God-given) potential in that area of life where the mentoring is going on. The implication of this last statement is that a person could have more than one mentor, or different mentors for different areas of life. For

instance, one could have a mentor for work life and career, and a separate mentor for marriage and family life etc. How does one choose a mentor? (1) In an ideal situation, the choice of a mentor should be deliberate and planned for. In other words, a less experienced person deliberately seeks out a more experienced person who has attained a level of expertise in an area where he or she desires to gain expertise in. The converse is also true: A more experienced person takes a liking to a younger, or less experienced person who is showing promise, and decides to take him or her under his or her wing, to nurture him or her to "full maturity." (2) Some organisations have also institutionalised mentoring as an organisational culture. Soon after a new employee comes into the organisation, a mentor is assigned. This is a good practice which ensures that a young employee is not left to his or her own devices to stumble along, but is carefully nurtured and guided. This way, the employee blends into the organisation and has a higher chance of understanding the vision of the organisation, and rising to great heights. Of course, such organisations gain a loyal and committed employee, in the long run. (3) My spiritual mentor, Reverend Sam Adeyemi, advocates that people should pray before choosing mentors. When we consider that the relationship is one that could either derail us or keep us on track, we will appreciate the importance of seeking God before making the choice. A prospective mentor must be someone who shares your basic values, has the character to go with it, and has achieved what you are aspiring to achieve. A good character is critical because we are easily influenced by associations (that is, people we are in close association with). As you seek the Lord to help you make the right choice, He will open hidden things to you, as well as give you conviction on the mentor who will guide you well. When you have shared values with your mentor, and you are comfortable with that person's character, you will be able to confidently follow his or her advice most of the time (up to 99.9% of the time). This makes for more successful outcomes. Biblical Examples of Mentoring Relationships These are being included here for our instruction, and also to highlight the importance of the mentor-protégée relationship. The Bible provides us with good instances of relationships where there was a deliberate nurturing of younger, less experienced people. It was even built into the

law and ordinances that God gave to Moses for the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 4:9). Mentoring ensures that godly values are passed on from generation to generation. We will look at a few case studies. Abraham and Eleazar Jethro and Moses Moses and Joshua Naomi and Ruth Jesus and His disciples Paul and Timothy (1) Abraham and Eleazar Abraham was a man called out by God to leave his native land and go to a land which God would show him. Abraham had no biological child then, yet he brought up the children of his maidservants and menservants on his lap (a figure of speech depicting good nurturing). God Himself, testified of his ability to nurture others. For I know him, that he will teach his children to know the Lord..... Genesis 18:19 - King James Version This was further buttressed when Abraham's chief servant Eleazar, whom he had 'properly nurtured in the way of the Lord,' was able to undertake a journey to Abraham's kindred (without supervision) and get a wife for his master's son. The success of the trip truly showed that Eleazar was well mentored by his master, Abraham. (Read the whole of Genesis chapter 24 for the full story). (2) Jethro and Moses Jethro was the priest of Midian and Moses's father-in-law. Not much is written about him other than the wise advice he gave Moses (Exodus 18:18) (Read the whole of Exodus chapter 18). That Moses took the advice of this older man shows that they already had a mentor-protégé relationship going. Trust is built on both sides over time in this sort of relationship. The forty years Moses spent in the desert was with Jethro's household. That advice made things easier for Moses and all the Israelites. (3) Moses and Joshua Joshua was described as Moses' aide or attendant (Exo dus 24:13). He was not the only young man in Israel at that time, but something made Joshua to stand out; he desired to gain the same level of expertise that Moses had developed in his relationship with God. When Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive the Law on tablets of stone, Joshua stayed on at the base of the mountain after Moses was enveloped by a cloud. He could have been tired of waiting, just like the rest of Israel did and decided to make a molten calf, but he held on. He reaped the rewards of diligence, and became Israel's next leader. (4) Naomi and Ruth Naomi was the wife of Elimelech, a Bethlehemite who went to the land of Moab with their two sons during a famine in Israel. Their sons

married Ruth and Orpah, two Moabite women. Naomi must have developed a wonderful mentor-protégée relationship with her daughters-in-law such that when Naomi wanted to go back to her native land, Ruth chose to go with her, rather than return to her pagan ancestry. The nurturing in the way of the Lord that Ruth had received from Naomi was seen in her statement. Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Ruth1:16 -New International Version The mentoring continued even after they came back to Israel. This time, Naomi mentored Ruth in the area of human relationships, and she was able to enter a Godly relationship with Boaz, their near kinsman. The rest is history. We now know that a Moabite woman named Ruth came into the genealogy of Jesus. (5). Jesus and his Disciples Jesus had a great number of disciples, but He closely mentored twelve of them (called Apostles). They were a bunch of radicals, with diverse viewpoints, character traits and perspectives. He took His time to be close to them, and they learnt both the theory and practice of the way of God's kingdom. This obviously paid off, because after He was taken up to heaven, His disciples 'began to do and to teach' what He had taught them. The people of that time were amazed at their performance and boldness. They came to one simple conclusion: 'These men have been with Jesus,' implying that His mentoring truly rubbed off on them. Now when they saw the boldness and unfettered eloquence of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and untrained in the schools (common men with no educational advantages), they marveled; and they recognized that they had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13- Amplified Version (6). Paul and Timothy Saint Paul was a man called by God in a unique way with a unique calling. Though he was not one of the twelve apostles chosen and personally nurtured by Jesus in His lifetime, he acknowledged the special call of God upon his life as an apostle. He planted many churches in the Asian region and raised many leaders in these places. His close mentoring relationship with Timothy stands out, and he co-authored some of the epistles with him. He commends the nurturing that the young Timothy had received from his mother and grandmother, which had laid a foundation for his sincere zeal for God.

Furthermore, he urged Timothy to stand firm and also mentor others. ……when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore, I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. II Timothy 1:5-6 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. II Timothy 2:1-2 Thus Paul was able to raise many leaders because he was a nurturer and a mentor to many. Mentors are powerful helpers of destiny. The Gospel of Jesus Christ endures today because of mentoring; leaders continue to be raised because of mentoring. In my environment (Eastern Nigeria) among the Ibo tribe there were a number of traditional mentoring practices that stood out. a) Traditionally, young girls were given out in marriage at very tender ages; some as early as ten to twelve years old. It was a common practice for their usually much older husbands to send them for 'apprenticeship'to older, more mature, married women. The women selected were usually those whose character and general conduct were worth emulating, the aim being that they would 'groom' the young girls to become 'good wives' to their own husbands. Such mentoring usually lasted a minimum of two years. By the time they went back to their husbands, they were more mature, both physically and mentally, for the roles they had to play. (b) Another traditional mentoring practice is seen among entrepreneurs. An established entrepreneur/business man approaches a family that he knows has young male children (they may be a family either personally known to him or to which he has been referred). He works out an agreement with the parents for one of their children who falls within the required age range to 'serve' him for a specified number of years, during which he understudies his business. On the other hand, a young boy may desire to learn a certain line of business, and his parents will go into an agreement with a successful entrepreneur in that line of business. The young boy becomes an apprentice of the older businessman for the agreed number of years, after which the older man gives him money and support to set up his own business, along the

same line as him. Sometimes the young boy may work alongside his mentor for some time before being 'set free,' having been certified to have understood the trade well. The same cycle is repeated when this young business man has grown his business to the point where he considers that he requires a helping hand. The one-man business which is seen to be the bane of many Igbo business enterprises has actually thrived because of this mentoring tradition. Because of my level of education, I have a few mentors. Spiritually, I am being mentored by Reverend Sam Adeyemi and Late Dr. Myles Munroe. I also closely identified with late Myles Munroe in the area of relationships. He brings in the perspectives and experience of the people of Negro origin in his writings. Financially, I am being mentored by Robert Kiyosaki. I must say that I am still searching for mentors in other areas of life. By God's grace, I will find. I have also undertaken to mentor a number of young people, from my village as well as in my workplace, and profession, so help me God. Chapter Six

Who Is Your Neighbour? Who are the people in your neighbourhood? In your neighborhood, in your neighbourho-o-o-o-d, Who are the people in your neighborhood? They're the people that you meet each day. This is a favourite song of mine from the children's educational program, Sesame Street. After this first stanza, the song goes on to list different people we are likely to come across in the course of the day, and highlights that they are our neighbours.

The song continues: The fisherman (or teacher/doctor/gardener/tailor) is a person in your neighbourhood, in your neighborhood, in your neighbourho-o-o-o-d. The fisherman (or teacher/doctor/gardener/tailor) is a person in your neighbourhood, a person that you meet each day." The song emphasises the fact that your neighbour (or people in your neighbourhood) are people you meet each day. They range from family members, people living in your compound or premises, on the same street, in the same locality, people you meet walking along the street, in the public bus, in the parking lots and at your place of work. These people are our regular neighbours that we are likely to meet every day. Nevertheless, this does not exhaust the list

of people we could meet in the course of a day. Hence, a chance acquaintance is also a neighbour, as portrayed in the classical story of 'The Good Samaritan,' which our Lord Jesus Christ used to challenge the paradigm of the people of His day, when someone asked Him who His neighbour was. On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life? What is written in the law?" He replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind'; 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" In reply, Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was, and when he saw him, took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day, he took out two silver coins and gave them to the inn-keeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' Then Jesus asked, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to him who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10: 25-37 Key points of the story: - A question was asked: 'And who is my neighbour?' The question was actually meant to trap Jesus, who wisely turned the tables on the law expert and shared the parable of The Good Samaritan instead. We see from the story that a priest and a Levite saw the man who had been robbed and severely beaten but they turned and went another way. A priest and a Levite, who should be the epitome of Godly behaviour, abandoned a man in need. An ordinary citizen, a Samaritan for that matter, saw the same man, had compassion on him, took him for proper care and spent his money in

the process. He went the extra mile. - Concluding question: Jesus asked the expert, 'Which of these three people showed himself as a true neighbour?' Insight had come to the expert and he answered correctly, 'The neighbour is the one who showed pity and mercy on the victim.' (paraphrased) Jesus's concluding command is for all of us, men and women of all ages, 'Go and do likewise.' The implication is that neighbourliness is manifested in our treatment of the people we come across each day. We should show kindness, love, compassion, mercy, pity. As we do good, good will unfailingly come to us. This is the golden rule of the universe, 'Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.' This thought also takes us back to the event that prompted the story of The Good Samaritan in the first place. A man from a sect of the Pharisees had asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus replied by asking him to recount the commandments. The man highlighted the two most important ones, namely: (1). Love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. (2). Love your neighbour as yourself. Showing kindness to others is not new in God's scheme of things. It is a major command from God because we are made for relationships and communal living. At another time, Jesus was ministering in the synagogue and people came to tell Him that His mother, brothers and sisters were looking for Him. He began to ask them who His mother, brothers and sisters were. In the end, He stated with firmness, Who is My mother and who are My brothers? And He stretched out His hands towards His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother".

Matthew 12:48-50 The people He called His mother and brothers were not necessarily members of His biological family, but people who were committed to hearing and obeying God's word. Neighbourliness is about 'community,' about interacting with others in a friendly way, reaching out to them with the love of God. As you read this chapter, think deeply on the implications of being a neighbour to others. Make a firm decision to be more of a neighbour to others than ever before. Begin to reach out with a smile, a kind word and act. You will certainly receive the same in kind. Always remember, 'living close to a wealthy man is either a blessing or a curse.' The choice is yours what it will be

for you. At this point someone may ask, 'What happens if people do not treat me well, as good neighbours should?' To those who ask, I reply with the words of a former American first lady, 'It is not so much what happens to us that hurts us but how we react to it.' You can choose not to do good because of unappreciative people, and miss out on your blessings. Or you can choose to 'not grow weary in doing good,' trusting that God's promise will come true: 'For in due season you shall reap, if you do not lose heart.' (Galatians 6:9) In our workplaces, God has also placed some people around us to bless us. They may be on the same educational or social level with you, or even higher or lower. They may be your regular 'neighbours' or people you meet once in a lifetime. Whatever the case may be, it is important for you to know that God brings you in contact with people who will bless you. Thus, you must be sensitive to the people around you. Pray for wisdom on how you can interact with them in a way that will be mutually beneficial. A line of thought put forward by Wallace Wattles, author of Science of Getting Rich is this: 'In order that man may have what he wants when it comes to him, he must act now on the people and things in his present environment.' 'Acting now on the people and things in his present environment,' he further explained, is about maintaining a state of harmony with your environment. If you do not maintain this harmony, then there will be impediments to the flow of the things you desire moving towards you. However, if you are able to maintain this state of harmony, the things you desire will reach you readily, without impediments. An identical thought is expressed by Napoleon Hill in his book, Think And Grow Rich. I believe it is aptly summed up in his classical statement on how power can be generated. 'Power can only be generated when two or more people move towards a specific goal in a coordinated manner, and in the spirit of harmony.' The implication is that the power to move mountains, the power to pull down strongholds, and achieve great breakthroughs, are inherent in the principles that God has put in place in the universe. Moreover, in the pursuit of God's plans and purposes, God has a unique role for each and every one of us. No one can accomplish a God-given vision alone. It is so huge that we cannot go it alone. He does this so that we, His people, can depend on

Him every step of the way. We must depend on Him to reveal the people He has positioned around us, (our 'empty vessels') and the human resources He has provided within us that will assist us in the fulfilment of our unique assignment. If we neglect them, it is to our peril. But if we seek God for wisdom, He will show us how to interact with our helpers in a fruitful way that will be beneficial to both parties. (Jeremiah 33:3) The workplace family is an arena that is full of helpers of destiny. Research has confirmed the truth that the choice of a suitable workplace is the second most important decision of one's life (second only to the choice of a life partner). This reflects how important the workplace is in shaping people's lives. Indeed, it can either be an 'aquarium' or an 'ocean'. An 'aquarium' does not allow much growth of any organism placed in it, while the 'ocean' allows organisms the freedom to reach full potential. To buttress this point, it is said that if a shark is placed in an aquarium, the longest it grows is six inches, but whenever it is taken out from there and thrown into the ocean (which is its natural habitat), it grows to its full gigantic size. In different organisations, we have people at different levels occupying the same space and interacting with each other. We have supervisors or immediate bosses, the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), subordinates, peers on the same level, up-lines, down-lines, different professionals with different academic and technical expertise, etc. All these people in an organisation have influence on each other, which could be positive or negative. In a healthy organisation, the influence will be positive, and individual members get to be consciously and methodically nurtured, by virtue of the organisational policies, to reach their full potential. This type of workplace is an ocean. In an unhealthy organisation, individual members are not allowed self-expression, and are not consciously or methodically nurtured by any positive policies of the organisation. People are rarely happy to work in such organisations and hence do not get to reach their full potential. Such organisations also suffer this inhibitory effect and do not grow. This is a classical aquarium. We actually have choices whether to remain in the 'aquarium' organisation or move to the 'ocean' organisation. God has given us the power of choice and we must exercise it whenever the need arises. Just like we should seek to consciously nurture the relationships

with the helpers of our destiny, we can choose to make the best of any workplace where we find ourselves, or change the environment, if it limits our reaching full potential. The body of Christ, ideally, should be the healthiest community of all. God calls us to a way of life exemplified by Him and His Son, Jesus. The Bible describes it as 'being our brother's keeper,' which actually means to consider your neighbour's needs at all times, whether that person is present or not. A brother's keeper is one who understands godly love as expressed in Christ's sacrifice (John 3:16-17). This kind of love for others is not a part-time job but a way of life. It follows the example of the Good Samaritan at all times. A true helper of destiny is his brother's keeper. It is in the body of Christ that people who have lost biological families as a result of natural or man-made disasters (like wars, dysfunctional families, persecutions, famines, earthquakes, etc.) find new spiritual families. These families become 'helpers of destiny' to them by giving them a new lease of life, and helping them reach full God-given potential. Jesus amply equipped the Church for the role it had to play, for He said, ……..and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:18 Beyond this empowering pronouncement, as He went back to heaven, He equipped the church with gifts which were meant for building up the individual members to full maturity. The great apostle Saint Paul refers to these gifts in this Scripture: He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting. But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head (even Christ) From whom the whole body, joined and knit

together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4: 10-16 Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ must challenge themselves to become Helpers of Destiny to people both within the body of Christ and outside, because they have been well equipped for the work. As they reach out to be their brother's keeper, and follow the example of the Good Samaritan in a dying and decaying world, they show that they are the 'Light of the world' and the 'Salt of the Earth,' which ultimately shows that they truly love God, and belong to God. For as Saint John, in his gospel said, And this command we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also. 1 John 4:21.

CHAPTER SEVEN Conclusion You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. II Timothy 2:1-2 In conclusion, I would like to re-emphasise that being a helper of destiny to someone else is about a consciously deliberate effort to serve another person, and help him or her become better and reach a full God-given potential.

I have summarised my discourse on Helpers of Destiny by sharing a story that was sent from a friend to me by email recently: Do You Need Help? Interesting Story on Helping Lives… I was parked in front of the mall, wiping off my car. I had just come from the car wash and was waiting for a friend. Coming my way from across the parking lot was what society would consider a bum. From the looks of him, he had no car, no home, no clean clothes, and no money. There are times when you feel generous but there are other times that you just don't want to be bothered. This was one of those "don't want to be bothered times." "I hope he doesn't ask me for any money," I thought. He didn't. He came and sat on the curb in front of the bus stop but he didn't look like he could have enough money to even ride the bus. After a few minutes he spoke. "That's a very pretty car," he said. He was ragged

but he had an air of dignity around him. His scraggly blond beard kept more than his face warm. I said, "Thanks," and continued wiping off my car. He sat there quietly as I worked. The expected plea for money never came. As the silence between us widened, something inside said, "Ask him if he needs any help." I was sure that he would say "yes" but I held true to the inner voice. "Do you need any help?" I asked. He answered in three simple but profound words that I shall never forget. We often look for wisdom in great men and women. We expect it from those of higher learning and accomplishments. I expected nothing but an outstretched grimy hand. He spoke the three words that shook me. "Don't we all?" he said. I was feeling high and mighty, successful and important, above a bum in the street, until those three words hit me like a twelve-gauge shotgun. Don't we all? I needed help. Maybe not for bus fare or a place to sleep, but I needed help. I reached in my wallet and gave him not only enough for bus fare, but enough to get a warm meal and shelter for the day. Those three little words still ring true. No matter how much you have, no matter how much you have accomplished, you need help too. No matter how little you have, no matter how loaded you are with problems, even without money or a place to sleep, you can give help. Even if it's just a compliment, you can give that. You never know when you may see someone that appears to have it all. They are waiting on you to give them what they don't have. A different perspective on life, a glimpse at something beautiful, a respite from daily chaos, that only you through a torn world can see. Maybe the man was just a homeless stranger wandering the streets. Maybe he was more than that. Maybe he was sent by a power that is great and wise, to minister to souls too comfortable in themselves. Maybe God looked down, called an Angel, dressed him like a bum, and then said, "Go minister to that man cleaning the car; that man needs help." Don't we all? Moral: Everybody Needs Help. Why not be more open to helping lives? Author's Comments: Do you need Help? I can help you, but I also need your help. The moral of the story is simple: We all need help in one way or the other. We do not have it all. It is pride to think that we do. God told the children of Israel this, For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide

to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land ' Deuteronomy. 15:11 So He encouraged them to be generous, so that He would bless them. Once the word 'poor' is mentioned, our minds (as humans) go to those with financial lack. However, all of us fall short in one area of life or the other. Hence, we need each other to make up for the shortfall. If God, our creator and our 'manufacturer', the God of the universe, who sent us to the earth said, 'It is not good that man should be alone,' who are we to think we can go through life alone and succeed? Where do you fall short? Pray for God to show you where. Then reach out to people who can minister to you in that area. In what areas do you have riches? Reach out and be a blessing to those who lack in that area. God sent you to the world, to your country, to your continent, to be a blessing. Give to the world what God has given you to bless it with. Do not add to the wealth of the cemetery through your stinginess. God will certainly ask you, when you stand face to face before Him, 'What did you do with the gifts and talents that I gave you? (Read Matthew 25: 14-30). 'Mbidebe ogaranya oburo uru, oburu oghom,' is an Ibo expression which means, 'living close to a wealthy man is either a blessing or a curse.' The side that you are on today is relative; it changes, depending on the circumstances you find yourself at any given time. Be the best you can be, anytime and anywhere. God bless you. Like I pointed out in the chapter on mentoring, being a 'helper of destiny' to someone is a consciously developed relationship. Because we all need 'helpers' in one way or the other, we must all strive to make the conscious efforts required to build and sustain such re lationships. It is a two-way thing. And we need to learn how to go about it for maximum results. My closing challenge to all reding this book, lower your shoulders and give someone else a 'lift'. One is too small a number to achieve greatness. John C. Maxwell On this quotation, I rest my case.

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