# DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my sovereign God, who has found me a worthy tool for His Kingdom Assignment. I will continually magnify His name.

To my three precious daughters, Ngodoo, Mimidoo, Member and my treasured son, Oryiman; you have remained a blessing and a constant reminder of God's faithfulness in my life.

Finally to all the broken vessels out there; the ostracised, hurting and rejected whose hope and victory remain in Christ Jesus alone. This is for you!

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## PREFACE

### A Testimonial

The purpose of this book is to bear out God's absolute faithfulness, goodness, mercy and grace in a person's life and how He can turn around the vilest and most complicated mess into a beautiful and wonderful message that aligns with His plan and purpose.

It also addresses foundational issues. How right, wrong or faulty foundations have a far reaching effect on the growth, maturity and manifestation in one's life. Psalm 11:3 states that if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The righteous can do nothing except to return to their Creator who has the master plan of their destiny.

In my walk with God and journey of life, I have come to understand by revelation and experience that God has an absolute eternal purpose for a person as it is stated in the scriptures.

> "*For I know the plans I have for you,*" *says the LORD.* "
> *They are plans for good and not for disaster,*
> *to give you a future and a hope*". *(Jer.29:11 NLT)*

The plans of God for His created order or the universe are eternal and immutable. The predetermined counsel of the Godhead cannot be broken. They are TRUTH. The Bible states emphatically that "God's Word is Truth as can be seen in both the Old and the New Testament.

*“For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.*"

***Psalms 30:4 (NIV)***

*“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*"

***John 17:17 (NIV)***

In the plan of God, nothing or no one is a mistake, an accident or a chance. The truth about mankind is that we were carefully thought of, gracefully designed and beautifully created before we became a clot of blood in our mother's wombs and an eventual manifestation on this earth. As confirmed by the prophet Jeremiah;

"*I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb.*
*Before you were born I set you apart; and*
*appointed you as my prophet to the nations.*" ***Jeremiah 1:5*** *(NLT)*

There is a purpose, time and season to everything on the earth. *(Ecclesiastes 3:1)*.When purpose was needed, the Godhead carefully created, made and empowered us. He then sent us to fulfil an agenda. No child is a bastard or an orphan. We all have a Heavenly Father and that for me is not just comforting but empowering.

This revelation of my heavenly lineage settles it all. I am made in heaven and sent to earth for an assignment. This is the truth. Hence, there is nothing any human being with a plan contrary to this truth can do about it.

*Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own?*
*No one--for God himself*
*has given us right standing with himself.* ***Romans 8:33*** *(NLT)*

I am set on the path preordained for me. My seemingly controversial and messy intrusion into planet earth does not alter the truth that God had a magnificent future planned for me and my generation.

More so, I have come to know by experience that every purpose of God is tested, tried and challenged.

"*But He knows the way that I take;*
*when He has tested me,*
*I will come forth as gold*" ***Job 23:10 (NKJV)***

This also is exciting and encouraging for me. It tells me that when we are tempted, we are merely being toughened for our divine assignment.
*Someone shout hallelujah with me… HALLELUJAH*!

Simply put, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, with all power according to His glorious might, so that we may have great endurance and patience with joy at the end of it all.

*"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*" ***Philippians 4:13 (NLT)***

*"Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience,*" ***Colossians 1:11(NIV)***

Before God, nothing is hidden. He makes all things beautiful in His time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to the end. ***Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV)***
It is very reassuring to know that we may not understand or have answers to all life's questions by human wisdom but by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are gradually brought into the fulfilment of our purpose in destiny. ***John 14:26; 16:13***

The life of every person is a seed from God and every life goes through a process of seed time and harvest. As important as the seed is, the soil in which the seed is planted is equally vital. Jesus reflected this in the parable of the sower in **Matthew 13:1-8**. There are different kinds of soil and each soil has its own nature as stated in this parable. Each seed takes nutrients, strength and life from its own soil nature. Therefore, every seed planted by God takes on the nature of God and overcomes all **(1 John 5:4).** Here lies the meeting point of our choices and God's predestination. A person's life is

determined by God, their foundation is determined by their choices and the altars raised by them in life.

Like every other person, my life has not being different. I will not shy away from the personal choices I made in life that reinforced the faulty foundation, which gave the enemy a foothold to almost ruin my life until the mercy of God located me.
It is my prayer that after reading this book, your spiritual eyes of understanding will be opened to the knowledge of God and His purpose for your life. No matter who you are, wherever you are, and how messed-up your situation is, I am bold to state that with God all things are possible and your life will be beautiful again.
Come along with me as I take you through the journey of my life.
Enjoy!

CHAPTER ONE

# In the Beginning

As a reminder us, the word of God says: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and all He created was good and beautiful. He created Adam and Eve and called them beautiful. By extension He created our forefathers and called

them beautiful. In the same light He also created us and called us beautiful. Therefore, I am beautifully created and wonderfully made and I know too well that it is for this reason that I choose to worship and praise my God the way I do; not for show, not for silver or gold, and certainly not to please any man.

"*I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are your works, and that my soul knows very well.*"Psalm 139:14 (KJV)

I sometimes wonder how anyone can conclude that something that is not beautiful can come out of something so beautiful. It could be that they are oblivious of the truth that we are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of the Most High. They may not be aware of the magnificence, splendour and goodness of our gracious Father or have not experienced the marvellous works of our mighty God. If not, how can they assume that something other than good will come from the only good and marvellous God. Can a good tree bring forth bad fruits? Categorically, NOT!

"*A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.* "Matthew 7:18 (NKJV)

It is therefore abundantly clear that only good can come out of good, and evil out of evil. The word of God explains the intrusion of evil into God's created order. The origin of sin is Lucifer, the devil. However, when Adam and Eve. With that one disobedience, sin reigned from them until the grace of God located us through Christ Jesus.

Sin is to fall short of God’s commands and thus, His standard and glory. Sin, (Hamartia) in the Greek lexicon means '*missing the mark or target*'. This presupposes that a standard has been set and this standard is not shifty, not in different shades of grey and not varied. The standard is for all people, in all cultures and for all generations. This standard is eternal, absolute and existed before the law was given to Moses. This standard is good. Absolutely good.

In this light, I began to ask a seemingly obvious question as to how the birth of a child, which ought to be good and beautiful,

a gift from God, intended to spark joy and celebration in any family; and above all, an inheritance to any family, rather be considered a thing of shame, disgrace, dishonour and unwanted by anyone. How is this possible? Well, the story of my birth is such; where a thing of joy turned out to be considered a disgrace and therefore rejected.

My mother is one hundred percent black African and so is the rest of her family. However, when I was born I was not black in complexion but light-skinned. Yes, I know that Africans can also be light-skinned but my kind of complexion was not the normal kind of African light-skin. It was completely 'white'! As in Black and White or what others refer to as Mulatto. In the part of the world I was born, I came to be referred to as “Half-caste.”
How could this be explained when my mother was never betrothed or married to a Whiteman, neither was she betrothed to any man, yet with a baby. I was not an ordinary baby but a half-caste baby. This in itself is an error, not the perfect will of God, a falling short of the standard of God; something to be frowned at by the society. A total mess created out of ignorance. Wow! What a deep sense of disappointment and shame my birth was to my maternal family. To have their very own daughter 'do this to them'. It was unacceptable and vehemently opposed. My very life was a thing of shame and disgust. I was to them nothing but a plague. I was stigmatised, rejected and ostracised not just because my mother was a teenager and unmarried, but much more because I came out looking totally different from the entire family and my immediate community.

I was indeed a strange child to the very family God brought me into. My personal gateway into this earth rejected me and handed me a sentence of death. My very own earthly bloodline, community and society rejected and ostracised me, because in that era, black girls who laid with white men were considered to be prostitutes by the society. A mixed race child was therefore a constant reminder of such immoral acts and thus scandalous to the family. To compound the matter, these white men did not stick around to father the children they sired.

Moreover, there was always the possibility of a handful of questionable men who generated, spawned or engendered these children due to the fact that the young girls engaged in multiple affairs. My mother was snubbed and scoffed at. I suppose life must have been unbearable for her. I can only imagine what they would have done to me given the chance.

Men will always reject, cast away, quit on or even seek ways to eliminate you if you do not measure up to their self-acclaimed standards. Does this mean God rejects you too? Is He also going to quit on you? Will He kill you because you do not measure up to His standard? God's love for us is not dependent on what we do, say or even are. It is unconditional, it is pure and true; not corrupted or dictated by men. The Bible says in the eighth verse of the fifth chapter of the book of Romans that God loved us even while we were yet sinners so much that He gave up His only begotten son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, to die for us on the cross at Calvary. He did what no man can do for you and I. Laid down His life for our sake and was slain for our errors. What a great God we serve! This is not the same with man. It is no wonder that shortly after my birth, my mother was married off to a young military police officer to cover the shame she had brought to her family.

How amazing that God orchestrated the union of my mother to my now earthly father; for he became the only father I have ever known. Strangely enough, yet by divine order, this young, handsome military officer who had just graduated from Nigerian Defence Academy and was now a full lieutenant. He had never been married and had no children of his own; with a great future ahead of him, yet graciously accepted my mother with her excess and questionable baggage - signifying me, the mulatto. Oh! My God is marvellous, compassionate and an ever present help to quiet our troubled waters. When there seem to be no way, God shows up just to point you in the way He had already created for you. I, the rejected one was now not only accepted and loved by my earthly father but also given an *identity*. I was now a 'somebody'. Someone with a last name that was not my maternal grandparents. I now had an earthly father to lay claims over. The best part was that, there was no one to compete with me. He was mine. All mine. As for my mother, God had given her a fresh start. He gave her a loving and dedicated man who loved her in spite of her past mistakes

and accepted her and her unwanted child. God demonstrated His unconditional love for her by affording her a fresh start. This clearly shows that men can reject you for all kinds of reason but God will accept you for no reason at all other than the truth that His love for us is absolute. This kind of love is untainted, it is pure and unwavering.

It is easier for God to forgive us than it is for men. It is even harder for us to enjoy the fresh beginnings God gives us for the fear of what men will say or do. We are more inclined to focus on what men will do to us than what God has done or is doing for us. Here was my mother, being given a fresh start to have a family of her own. She now had my father and me to bond with, but for the fear of men's judgement, rejection and stigmatisation she gave me up to my new father's mother at the tender age of nine months to nurture. She messed up the opportunity God afforded her to groom me into an exemplary young lady. Well, she may have had her reason, which might have been that she saw this as her only chance to enjoy her new found love and acceptance. If so, then how selfish of her not to consider the effect of that decision on me. I can only speculate. Her plans may have been self-centred but to God the plan was different. God was preparing me for the future. A future unknown to men and not even my parents. I am so thankful that God's ways are not man's ways. To cut the long story short, my parent's union later produced two beautiful daughters. I am grateful to God that I now have two lovely half-sisters, four step-sisters and three step-brothers with whom I share all of my life experiences with. We laugh together, cry together and enjoy each other's company. I will talk more about my growing up in the next chapter.

Let us get back to my lovely grandmother - Hannah (bless her soul) to whom I was given to at an infant age of nine months. In contrast to my original earthly bloodline grandparents, who considered me a misfit and a thing of shame to their family.., my newly found grandmother turned out to be the angel God appointed here on earth to nurture and prepare me for the journey ahead. '*Mama*', as I came to refer to her, showered me with so much love and affection as though I was her biological granddaughter. Typical of grandmothers, my grandmother spoilt me so silly that I became the envy of her biological grandchildren. She was a rare gem. It doesn't matter who

rejects you be assured that God cannot reject you. He rejoices over you for He knows all of the great things that lie ahead, which man is ignorant of.

God used *Mama* to lay the foundation of my life, enabling me at such a delicate stage of my life to experience love so pure and immensurable, far more than human minds can comprehend. I was in my formative years and God knew I needed this kind of love. My parents were the right people to show me such love but for the fear of been shunned by society they didn’t. I was lavished with love by grandma Hannah and I was loving it. Little did I know that these memories will later become the bedrock, the pillar to fall back on in times of hurt and rejection.

The author and finisher of my destiny knew this ahead of time, therefore He strategically placed me into mama's arms to lay a solid foundation for me to build on later in life. How awesome is our God, who makes a way for us in the wilderness, instructs brooks of water to flow in the desert and even parts seas for us, His very own people. My God, the all-knowing God knew my end from my very beginning and paved the way ahead of me. He gave me a fresh start. A new beginning, blameless and pure.

Praise be the name of our God!

CHAPTER TWO

# GROWING UP

Growing up is synonymous to increase and increase is instigated by several variables. Thus, the growing up of a child will also require a handful of variables to enhance that child's destiny. These may include but not limited to provision, protection, direction, control and consistency. When all variables work well together, the result is ‘healthy growth.’ This means that, in order to nurture a healthy child, both physical and spiritual factors are required. The physical and spiritual development of a child is the key responsibility of the earthly parent(s) or those with legal responsibility to such a child.
The Bible states that parent(s) or those with legal parental responsibility are to bring up their children in a godly fashion, teaching them the word and the consequences of disobeying God's directions and standard. And above all, making Yahweh the centre of all family affairs. In other words, teach your children God's truth. That is, His principles and promises as recorded in His word. This will instil loyalty, promote holiness and provide answers to doubts that may arise as they grow up

"*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*" Proverbs 22:6 (KJB)

Children require guidance and discipline from parents and or guardians. Left to their own devices, they will end up on the path of destruction. The Bible teaches that if you love a child you will correct that child. Failure to do so will translate to hate. Carefully correcting your child will not kill them. It will rather build them into godly children and save them from a lot of heartaches in future. Only unwise parents spare the rod of discipline in the name of observing man made policies and regulations.

"*Don't fail to discipline your children. They won't die if you spank them. Physical discipline may well save them from death*" Proverbs 23:13-14 (NLT)

Growing up was so much fun, as I call to mind my childhood. In my eyes, this was the best time of my life. I remember

growing up in a very large household, made up of my grandma, Hannah. Her oldest son with his three wives and over 10 children, her oldest daughter (widow) and her six children, my dad and his entourage, another son, his wife and children; and so on and so forth. It was and still is a large house.
Our house was more of an institution than a home. I remember meal-time was one of such memorable times filled with drama. We were grouped according to age and gender and our meals served on large trays or in massive bowls. Everyday was more or less a celebration. One major meal was cooked and served centrally to the entire family after school, while all other meals were left to the discretion of each family unit. For instance, every morning some family units would have breakfast with their children, while others chose the option to buy food by the roadside. This was what distinguished each family unit from the others. We were well provided for in terms of shelter, food and clothes. However, we were not protected, controlled or guided. We were constantly left at the mercy of everyone else but our parents. We had no spiritual direction. I do not remember God been the focus of our family. Sadly I seem to recall that the *foundation* laid for us was that of polygamy, keeping up with the Joneses, broken marriages and early deaths. As I was made to understand at time… it was with the generation before our parents.

I bless God for my grandmother. She executed her role of a parent so well in my life because she took good care of me. I cannot say the same for the other children. The best part I remember was that she took me with her everywhere she went. In hindsight, I guess she was afraid of what the other children might do to me in her absence. She shielded me. I recall been bullied on some occasions when I was left with my cousins or extended family. I was called names like, bastard, white monkey, reject and so on. At this stage of my childhood, all that had little or no effect on me, or so I thought. The key reason for this was that my grandmother would always reassure me of my uniqueness and most of all my full rights as a member of the family. Her words became a weapon and comfort for me when things got heated up with other members of my family.

As 'parents,' we must weigh our words. We must avoid derogatory language that may stigmatise and most likely lead to inappropriate or unsuitable behaviours in our children

2 Timothy 2:16

Our words carry more power than we think. The power of our words can make or break our children. Even in discipline, we must correct in love. Gentle words encourage, reassure and empower our children in their endeavours. It affirms love, acceptability and value; which in turn empowers self-worth. The perceived identity of a child lies in nurturing them in their formative ages, which in my experience as a Sunday school teacher is between the age of one and seven. I have seen how children transform at these early stage of their lives. They learn partly from their environment and what they hear, but more from what they see. Children are more likely to imitate what we do than what we say. Parents must therefore be mindful of their words, but more importantly their actions because children learn more by copying than instruction.

As a child I was good at imitating others. I would imitate everyone I came in contact with. So, if a child lacks adult supervision or correction it can be damaging like it was in my case.
I got into lots of fight as I witnessed the other children doing same. I would never back down especially when I was called names like 'white' girl (wan-batu / oinbo) or white monkey. Nevertheless, I was a happy, bubbly little girl full of life, oblivious of all that was happening around me just because my grandmother loved, shielded and provided for me. She was the constant figure in my life. However, she never could discipline me, for some reason. I put it down to the guilt she felt because both of my parents were absent in my life. I felt safe and invincible, all because I had a loving grandmother, who spoilt me rotten. I was the princess on the block, if you like. I had it all, as far as I was concerned. However, I lacked discipline.

I need everyone with parental responsibility to understand that it is possible to protect, provide and be a constant figure in a child's life and still discipline them. In fact it is a necessity to correct your child does not equated to hating them. It only means you are observing your covenant duties as parents. We

are not to spare the rod of correction simply because we love and value their lives. Children would prefer to be left alone, allowed to have their way, permitted to go wherever they please and do whatever they want. Only a parent who lacks understanding of godly principles of bringing up children will yield to these demands that can only end in destruction.

"*Whosoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.*" Proverbs 13:24 (NIV)

Parents, let us be mindful that our instructions and actions towards our children linger in their lives. They hardly forget our gestures towards them or others, good or bad. I found that to be true in my situation. I hardly remember my childhood except what people told me. However, I still remember been pampered, provided for and shielded by grandmother. I can also recall how she would take me with her everywhere she went, showing me off to anyone and everyone as earlier mentioned. I must say that I was special to this angel of mine. To Grandma, Hannah, I was the embodiment of perfection, hence she named me in her dialect Erdoo - meaning: “Perfectly done". In hindsight, I wonder how the same unwanted gift, the rejected child was now become a blessing and a person of importance to this awesome woman with whom I had no blood link. This is indeed a great testimony.

It is important to mention that the names we label our children have spiritual significance; it is part of the mortar that holds the different aspects of their destiny. I recently met a young lady in her mid-twenties, who shared her testimony at a women’s summit in the United States. She shared her story on how she was always angry because things never seem to workout for her, without knowing the root cause. This had a negative impart on her life for as long as she can remember; her mother left her matrimonial home when she was barely four years of age. She started feeling abandoned and rejected. It became worse when her father was deported and she was forced to move and live with her mother whom she had come to despise at about the age of thirteen. This negative emotional baggage continue to affect her relationship with other people.
At a point she met and fell in love with someone and even got engaged. In her desire to do things properly, she proceeded to

travel with her fiancée to Africa to introduce him to her father, as per the African culture. On her arrival in Africa, she was not only shocked but also devastated of the father's situation and living condition. To her greatest surprise, she found out that her father was now blind and living alone. He was abandoned by the wife he remarried. She was devastated that her father was living in a dilapidated building while his wife and her child lived in a better house and a better part of the town. More frustrating was the fact that her financial contributions to his upkeep were diverted to other purposes by the estranged wife. This young lady arranged and moved her father to a better environment. This attracted the estranged wife and child to return. This sparked the nagging thought of whether her plans to marry may interfere with the quality of support she affords her father.

The fiancée was well received by the father. However, there was still that concern for continued financial support for her father. In her quest to do the right thing, she was faced with making the hard choice of either remaining single to cater for her father's needs or going ahead with the marriage with the hope that her husband to be would allow her to continue to support her father. The relationship ended after they returned back to the States to no apparent reason. It was a mystery that three times she got engaged and three times it ended without good reason; this  left her confused and even more angry. She often wondered what she had done wrong to deserve these sequence of misfortunes. To a large extent, it was inferred that her misfortunes were based on generational sins, which she needed to be delivered from.

Presuming that her troubles were as a result of personal or generational sins. Without discerning of spirits, this view point can be uncalled for or religious at best. We all need godly counsel to minister to those held in bondage. The story of the blind man,  sprang to mind. This story demonstrates God's view point; not the view point of religious people. It is amazing how God sees us  totally different from man. Man sees us strictly on the outward manifestations of what we may be passing through in life. So, the question now is, how does God see this young lady? Is she in this situation because she sinned or due to generational iniquities or for the demonstration of the works of God in her life? To answer these questions correctly, you must turn to God for revelation. In this regard, the one cap-fits-all approach was not appropriate.

Let’s put religion aside and seek God’s opinion. You or your parents don’t have to commit sin or be living in disobedience for you to go through certain challenges, it might just be so that the works of God should be made manifest period. In my opinion, it was not enough to conclude that her misfortunes were as a result of sin on her part or her parents or their parents, even though her situation may have transform her emotionally coupled with the generational issues that needed to be dealt with in her life.

This is Jesus Christ’s view point when His disciples asked Him about the man born blind. They asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus responds, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him…” (John 9:3-4)

When God changed Abram’s name to Abraham, his identity was altered to align to his destiny. However, on other occasions like the case of Naomi, she changed her name to Mara, because she felt that the Almighty had dealt very bitterly with her. In her perspective her situation, who she was at the time, having lost both her sons and husband qualified her as a bitter person. The void created by these mishaps made her change her name.
I unreservedly know names are important, take the names of God for instance, they are not meaningless titles or labels but are very significant as they inextricably connote both His nature and personality. To recapitulate, examine the following names of God, ‘God The Creator’ is Elohim, El Olam is ‘The Everlasting God’, El Elyon is ‘The Most High God’, El Roi is ‘The God who sees’, Jehovah Rapha is ‘Healer, the God who heals you’, Jehovah Jireh is ‘Provider, the God who provides for you’, to mention a few; you will find that all of these names tell us of who God is and or reflect His character. So, when we are called by the names that are hinged on the promises of God’s names, you are declaring who you are in Him. In many situations, more often than not, your name carries with it your identity, who you are. Other times, it describes or defines your situation or state. So, a name change becomes imperative to change your destiny.

Interesting is the fact that the young woman in question continued to experience misfortune and the question that would come to mind was, ‘what did I do wrong?’
In this case, we cannot say for sure, but we can only infer that her all the hurtful events of her life caused her to be bitter, this translated into anger, that may or may not be the root cause of her misfortunes. So assuming her mother leaving, separation from her father due to deportation, her having to move back in with her mother, e.t.c. were mere triggers, which transliterated to who she had become, then a change of identity was eminent.
At this point, she was asked the meaning of her names. The translation of the name her father had given to her was: ‘what have I done wrong’. Right there was the pointer to her problem. The meaning of her name followed her wherever she went and in whatever she did. This presumably brought frustration into her life. The need for a physical name change was pertinent at this point, to effect a spiritual chain reaction that imparts her preordained destiny.
Recall that her name pointed to questioning her journey in life. ‘What did I do wrong?’ So some sort of deliverance from bitterness, anger, and other emotional baggage was of vital importance.
Consequently, her name was changed immediately after an intense session of prayer, anointing to break the yoke. A mantle of glory was also placed upon her head and a new name assigned to her to permanently disconnect her from the effects of her questionable label.
In summation, we must prayerfully name our children to set the right foundation for them.

Now, permit me to veer off a little, so as to bring to light an important point I would love you to note about family. To many, family is limited to the people related by blood: your father, mother, brothers and sisters and to some, it is extended to grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. These are however qualified as extended family. According to the Free Dictionary of English, family is commonly defined as "a fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children."  Hence to the generalisation –it is a unit that consists of one or two parents (a father and or a mother) plus their children coexisting as one. This is a fact, however, the truth remains that you do not have to be born of

the same parents or share blood links to be a family. Family, to me, can be seen as people who open their hearts and welcome you into their homes. They attend to your daily needs, and remain constant in your life irrespective of your behaviour. Family loves you no matter what.

Now it's time to refocus our attention on my growing up. Recall that I was considerably a spoilt-child with little or no discipline. However, my days of pampering and not having a care in the world were short lived. Just as I turned nine years old, my father decided to shock me with one of his brilliant ideas. He decided to separate me from my grandmother. He said this was for 'my own good'. How is ripping a child from her familiar grounds good? In my childish mind, this was a killer move. A move designed to frustrate me. My father was adamant as he believed that this decision was to ensure I was fashioned and groomed into a responsible young lady. To him, there was no one more qualified to do this than his beloved sister - my aunt who at the time lived in Northern Nigeria. A very noble decision you would say. It is definitely a good idea from the perspective of a parent, who has taken stock of the situation and is bent on proffering solution for the good of his or her child.

As parents, it is our responsibility to make decisions for our children. However, in doing so, you must consider what is right for the children. Weigh our choices on a scale of what is best for the children and not necessarily what is convenient for you or the children. Our choices enormously impart the lives of our children more than we know. So, we must discuss with our children and educate them on what is underlining our decision or choice. Getting their opinion or perception on such decisions will allow us correct any misgivings they may have about our actions.

I am a living example of how children can misinterpret parental decision due to lack of communication. Apparently my father's decision to send me away was considered noble and the best option by most people who saw a lack of discipline in my upbringing. This felt like wickedness to me. I questioned his love for me, and concluded had not given due consideration to my feelings nor to the special bond I had with mama. I felt

like a reject all over again. This time, he was rejecting me because of his new wife.

I was aware that my aunt was pregnant at the time and I seem to remember her husband (God bless his soul) coming home for the sole purpose of finding her a maid. I was not a maid, so why was my father sending me away to be a maid. My father may have considered this as a good opportunity for me to be trained and disciplined into a responsible adult but I did not. I would have preferred that he exercised his parental duties to me by taking up the fatherly role required to instil discipline in me and not shifting the responsibility to someone else. After all, I live in the same compound as he did. I had a hard time accepting that this move was truly in my best interest especially when things did not go my way. It turned out to be my worst nightmare. Considering I was coming from an unconditional love setting to a somewhat different type of affection and covering. I lost my fun and enthusiasm for life. I withdrew into my shell and lost my voice too. You will agree with me now that this decision was not in my best interest but for the convenience of my dad at that time.

CHAPTER THREE

# My Youth

At the tender age of nine, as mentioned in the previous chapter, I had to go and live with my Aunt. What my Father had intended for my good turned out to be my worst nightmare. This was neither because I was lazy nor was it because I could not handle the mountain of chores assigned to me. It was mostly rested on the fact that I lacked understanding as to why I had to do the things I was asked to do. I was not aware of the reasons behind the strict rules and unending list of chores. Living in an unfamiliar territory, I needed to understand why I should carry out all the instructions and tasks assigned to me. No one offered any explanation, all I received were instructions, which had to be obeyed. At the time, it felt like I was been used and ill-treated, which made me feel inferior to the other children. Remember, I was not used to this kind of treatment. It probably would have fostered a positive self-image if I understood why I needed to carry out my chores and or if I aware of the benefit(s) my actions could bring to the entire family including myself. This probably would have made me feel useful as opposed to being hopelessly used.

Knowledge is a master-key to everything we do. It puts us in an advantageous position. However, my lack of knowledge and understanding of everything happening around me was of a disadvantage to me. I felt lost! In my young and confused mind, I felt my aunt was a strict disciplinarian who enjoyed torturing me. Recall that children are suggestible, so to a nine year old waking up at dawn to intense numerous chores was a daunting task. It did not also help as I felt my father was not be bothered to take care of me, hence his decision to ship me off to be tortured by his sister. I kept on imagining and questioning why my father would do this to me. Why couldn’t he just keep me with him and take care of me like all the other fathers did to their children. It was no wonder that I became withdrawn due to the feeling of abandonment, rejection and betrayal by my parents as well as my aunt. I became a withdrawn and lonely child who found herself in this

unfriendly environment and had to earn every affection. In my opinion, no child should be made to feel this way.
Children are meant to be loved, pampered and cherished. They are to be protected by their parents, provided for and made to feel special. My experience was the opposite so I felt my life was marked for doom. I tried my utmost best to be obedient, submissive and hardworking just to prove myself. Yet I could not meet up with the set standards. The more I tried to gain approval and appreciation, the more rejection I got. I was pushed down and my self-esteem knocked out constantly. I found myself swimming in the pool of abuse daily.
Kind gestures were scarcely and only existed in my made up world. In reality I had become accustomed to insults. It became part of my daily routine. So each day I got up out of bed expectant. It felt like a disappointment should a day go by and I was not lavished with harsh words. When this unlikely moment occurs, I would be overcome by anxiety. A constant nagging thought of not knowing how long before the tide change, an overwhelmed feeling of the uncertainty in the silent moments, wondering if the next second, minute, hour could be the moment it all changed. This crippled my ability to enjoy the peace and tranquility these quiet moments were meant to provide. I always lived with expectation that it was a matter of time before the day normalised. It was so bad that I perceived these moments as bad omens. I felt it wasn't a good sign when no abusive words were fired at me. I would analyse and conclude that could only mean something more serious was about to happen or was happening. In my little head, I will play out all the scenarios. I would ponder on what it could be. Could it be that someone was very sick and dying or dead, or could it be a bait to give me false hope in letting my guard down? For many a times these moments have transformed into memories went I bad news about a loved one or gotten the beating of my life.
These moments of silence, I came to refer to as interludes, in which fear and anticipation of pain was a constant dampened my spirit and deflated my otherwise bobbly personality.
One would expect that when a child makes the effort, they should be appreciated, acknowledged or at least, recognised for such efforts. In my case, the more efforts I made the more hurtful words were showered upon me to a point it no longer mattered. I became like a rock been heavy rained on. The

offensive names became as pet names, the abuses as regular garments.

To a child, tormenting words like ‘you will never amount to anything’ are like arrows fired at their malleable hearts capable of piercing their tender soul. It is easy for children who are emotionally bruised, especially with hash and abusive words to start manifesting a behavioural pattern that represent the pronunciations made over them. I say this because it was not long before I began to exhibit these traits. I didn't really care much, after all I was never going to amount to anything. I even began to fail at my chores for I did not make the effort required anymore. I felt worthless and thus saw no need to even try.
I am not sure how to explain the deep sense of worthlessness I felt. As far as I was concerned, I was completely worthless and useless. My situation was at this point becoming helplessly hopeless. I had even issued out to myself a death warrant. I became daring in my ways for it was hard for me to embrace what was happening to me. My understanding was limited, as that of any child of my age would.

It is very important for us to know that children are not edified by abusive words but by encouraging and helpful words. The bible says that the power of life and death lies in the tongue, *(Proverbs 18:21)*. As earlier said, words are powerful enough to make or break the self-esteem of a child. It is not wise to allow unwholesome words proceed from your mouth, for they do not command respect from a child or anyone else. Instead, they instil ungodly fear, which encourage hypocrisy and pretence. This paves a way for children to act up in your presence and do the opposite when you are not around. The reason for this pretentious attitude is because the parents dish-out strict orders, which they expect the children to obey regardless. Failure to explain to the children the importance of the set rules and the lack of outlined consequences of not keeping to these set rules leaves the children at a disadvantage. Hence, their hypocritical behaviour.

A child should be afforded the opportunity to be a child, and not overburdened with chores and responsibilities that end up stealing their childhood fun. I felt my childhood was stolen from me as I was over burdened with responsibilities. In my

small mind, I concluded that I was being raised by a tyrant. I was convinced of this because my aunt ran a tough squadron and I was the patsy. It is no surprise that I was hating every moment of this new life I was now living. In the eyes of a child, enormous tasks maybe considered as punishment. The schedule of chores we saddle our children with in our quest to toughen them up may result to crushing their tender spirits. Some of us run tighter schedules than the itinerary of a task force. I know this might sounds like an exaggeration to most people. However, I will like you to evaluate the itinerary below designed for a young child less ten years old on a typical school day:

- wake up time was  4 am
- Fetch firewood from the backyard
- Make fire & boil bathing water
- Then boil water for breakfast
- Clean the large courtyard
- Wake the older children to bath
- Bath, groom & dress the two younger children
- Ensure school bags are ready for school
- Ensure their breakfast is set before them
- Ensure each person's lunch-meal was packed and ready to go
- Check that all breakfast items for next day were available or make a list of unavailable items to be purchased
- Retreat to take my shower

Phew! This was what my typical school mornings were like. You would expect that to be all. Well, God help me if I forgot to check that the breakfast supplies were all available in store i.e. Items like bread, butter, sugar, milk, sardines, eggs and so on. If any of these items for breakfast was unavailable, I will have to run about half a mile or more, to the next estate to purchase it. It was sometimes too early that I will have devise a way to attract attention of the vendors. They had to wake up in order to sell whatever item I needed as retuning home with stories as to why I could not purchase the missing item within a stipulated time was not an option. I must not make the children late to school, if that happened I got beaten. I was always behind schedule; hence never early enough to make the vehicle that took the children to school. This meant I would have to walk about three miles to get to school. I got beaten

each time I was late to school by the school officials. In fact, I became a perpetual late comer and was always flogged for late coming. Our God neither sleeps nor slumbers. In my distress, God heard the cry of my heart. He heard the cry I never cried out, saw the pain I dared not make public and came to my rescue.

You may be thinking my father came to his senses and hurriedly came to get me, right? Wrong! How was I rescued then? Well, I'll tell you.
God positioned a family that relocated from the United States of America a few yards behind where we lived at the time. He did not just relocate this family to Northern part of Nigeria where we lived at the time, but He also placed them behind where I lived and amazingly one of the children was strategically positioned in my school. When God moves on your behalf, He leaves no stone unturned.  God placed the child in my school and in my class, plus made the mother a teacher in my school. This was to me a divine intervention. God made a way for me where there seemed to be no way. He lessened my fatigue of walking three miles to and from school. By this I mean God ensured I got picked up every day to and from school. Especially when I was late, I escaped the flogging at the entrance gate. While in secondary school, I learnt from the mother of my classmate how she happened to be inadvertently driving to school at the same time as I set out to school, when I visited with her while on a Local Government basketball tournament in Niger State. I was a basketball player at the time proudly  representing the local authorities where my school was located. As we sat down to dinner, she began to narrate how her otherwise very punctual and organised son changed a few months after they relocated to Nigeria. At first she put it down to the change in environment but as it persisted she had to investigate. She looked at me, with a smile on her face, and said, 'it was all because of you'. His strange behaviour was because he noticed I was always late to school and was sad because I was beaten alongside other children not just for been late to school but also for not handing in my assignments on time in class. She gently added that her son then devised a plan to lock himself in his bedroom for some reason and when he would finally emerge he will be as happy as ever. Then she discovered that it was because he stood at the window of his bedroom, which enabled him to see

the backyard of my house. He would wait for me to set out for school before coming out of his room. This was his way of ensuring I got a ride to school. I thanked her and her wonderful family for taking such good care of me. Even though I was oblivious of this as at then, I remembered taking solace in knowing that this family was always late and as such I was assured of a ride to school daily. To her it was down to a smart choice on her son's part. But to me, it was all a divine plan, which God put in place for my good. I now had a way out of my predicament i.e. walking three miles or more to school became a thing of the past. What an amazing God we serve! This divine plan cleaned up the mess in my life and simply turned my muddled up situation into a blessing. God move mountains for the sake of His children. He promised to give nations as ransom for our sake. In my case, He moved a whole family and positioned them to be a blessing to me. Just as the barrel of flour and the oil sustained Elijah, the widow of Zeraphath and her son throughout the famine (1Kings17), the ride to school always came as far as I recall. I will forever bless His holy name!

How awesome this was! The buzz I felt from these pickups were the underpinned reason for my morning happiness. For it did not matter what the morning dragged in, I *knew* (without a doubt) that I would get a ride to school and whether I was late or early it mattered not, as I would not be punished nor flogged. God has a way of comforting His children in times of distress and providing for their needs. I never had to ask God for my needs, He knew of them all and provided for them all. I like to assert that you must not doubt God's ability to turn your battered situation into a blessing. He did it for me, He will do it for you as well. Just believe, have no doubt about the extent of His potency to perform miracles and you will enjoy His uncommon supernatural blessings. Do not be like the fool who doubts the existence of God, hence is without expectancy of divine favour. Just as Jesus stated when He was teaching about prayer and fasting.

"*Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!*" Matthew 6:8 (NLT)

For as children of God, we enjoy unmerited favour in all aspects of our lives. It is especially evident in impossible

situations. In such time, God causes His glory to shine on us. We tend to walk tall and boldly with an expectation when we believe and trust in God's supremacy. Even without knowing, I began to walk tall, expecting to be picked up each day to and from school. In those moments, I would forget the huge tasks ahead of me when I got back from school. I learnt to enjoy my freedom at school and would only worry about what was awaiting for me at home when I got back from school. It was quite a switch from who I was at school and who I was at home. I was two different persons in a way.

My chores were not any less when I came back from school. I would assume nanny duties of my little cousin (God bless her soul) and assist in the preparation of dinner, tidy up and ensure the baby goes to sleep before I could. My little cousin did not make life any easier, as she was so attached to me to an extent that she will refuse her mother when she tried relieving me of her. This only compounded my troubles. In my mind, my life was worthless, hopeless and to make matters worse I was useless. I was alone and abandoned to suffer with no one to come to my rescue. I spent most of my weekends washing clothes and not reading or playing like any other child my age. If I was not washing or cleaning, I was hawking soft-drinks at weekends. I enjoyed the hawking of soft-drinks more, as it became my time to do as I pleased. An escape route as school was on week days. I had at least found a silver lining in my clouds. It did not feel that bad when I was out and about. I would go to construction sites in search of customers. I would go far from home for the fear of been caught playing. This opened doors for me to communicate with other people. In hindsight, it also opened dangerous doors that could have exposed me to all kinds of abuse such as rape, kidnap and possibly murder.
I remember meeting interesting people during this exercise. For instance, I met a group of NYSC young men living in a flat. One of them took a keen interest in me. He was an Idoma chap called Francis. He would ask me academic questions each time he saw me and he also took over the role of assisting me with my school assignments. He would encourage his friends to buy whatever quantity of drinks I had left just to create enough time for me to study, finish my homework, if I had any. This young man will make me read random books if I had no homework. Then he would ask me questions from the book to

ascertain I understood what I had read. He was the big brother I never had. It may appear to most that he had ulterior motives, which may or may not be true. However, I am certain that God made him and the others to serve in Minna just for my sake. I believe it was for him to help prepare me for my common entrance examination. He made me study so hard that I passed with flying colours, if you were wondering. Looking back, I know it could have gone wrong for me if they had sexually molested or worse killed me but they did not. My God kept watch over me. He guarded my life jealously because I am special to Him, a vital part of His end time agenda. God was my protective shield. He kept me safe, watching keenly over my coming and going. Who can fathom what would have become of me, if my heavenly Father was not by my side all the way. No child deserves to be put in the position of danger that I was exposed to.

By the time I was twelve, I had gained admission into secondary school. Wow! I was over the moon. I felt elated at this new development. It was time to wave bye-bye to all the pain and suffering or so I thought at the time.

In the midst of all of my struggles I had no one to turn to, except strangers. My ‘parents’ had been absent from my life for the most part. Their actions cut short my childhood. I felt it was all down to their inability to take responsibility for my upbringing when their relationship went sour and they decided it wasn’t working between them and my father took my mother back to her parents and took another wife shortly. divorced. I felt abandoned and forgotten by ones responsible for me but God never left nor abandoned me. He was always with me.
I headed out to secondary school after a tough battle in which my aunt intensely opposed the idea of sending me to one of the best unity secondary schools at the time - a Federal Government Girls College, which was most sought after at that time. My Uncle (God bless his soul) however, stood his grounds and insisted that I deserved to go to the school in question. It felt like the mountain before me was insurmountable but God neutralised the poisonous venom the enemy interjected as it was concluded that I could attend the school of my choice as long as my father assumed all financial responsibilities. I met with opposition every step of the way. I felt like those around me had conspired and come to the

conclusion that I was undeserving of the good things life had to offer. I am eternally grateful to God because He considered me worthy of all good things. Therefore, He fashioned it all into His master plan for my life before I was formed in my mother's womb. At every point, He positioned people in my path to fight for me.

God is a God of purpose. I am convinced beyond a doubt that because of the great plans for my life, He was instrumental to the firm decision on the part of my aunt's husband, who was 'not blood related' to stand by me as a father does his daughter. I believe God used him to remove me from the environment that kept me as a caged child to the environment where He had divinely positioned me to be located once more by a loving couple.
When it seems as though you are having a sense of condemnation, lack of value, desperation, weakness and so on, it is very important to remember that the love and grace of God is adequate to cover, carry and sustain you through it all. As for me, I rely on the sufficient grace of God, which enables me to boast gladly of my weaknesses because I discovered that only then does the power of Christ Jesus and the Spirit of the Almighty that dwells in me empowers me for exploits.

In review, I feel that I was basically being tested for my testimony. Even though I went through this ordeal, I liken it to a process of purifying gold or silver through fire to eliminate impurities. I am who I am today because God enabled me to stand the test of time. Yes, at the time and in that moment of trial it was not fun and it is not something I would consciously wish for anyone. When you are in the midst of the fire, feeling the intense burning of the heat, your ability to look beyond that heat knowing fully well that you are made for a greater purpose is the only way to bear the pain and or face the shame. It is never simple but must and should be your only focus. You must take solace in the truth of knowing that your current situation is not your final destination. Like every other thing in your life, even this challenge will pass. Be assured that you are not at the end point yet. Trust that the end of your every situation would be better than the beginning of it. As I pondered upon the events of my life, I came to the realisation that everything that had happened in my life was the

beginning of a better end that laid ahead of me. There will be no testimony without a test, no triumph without trial.

The feeling of freedom enveloped me as I left home for secondary school. I was like a bird that had been released from its cage. There was this sense of relief that encompassed me, I could now breathe freely again. It felt like the good old days when I had no care in the world. I was free again, my free-spirited childhood days resurfaced. I was overwhelmed by this new found freedom of mine. Even though this was only true during term time, I made a deliberate effort to enjoy every moment. At the end of each term, while other children missed home and were eager to embark on school holidays, I dreaded school breaks and would look for excuses not to go home. Very sad indeed. Home should be a place where our children feel welcomed and safe to return to whether things were great or rough in their lives.

Many of us are in positions of authority over young vulnerable children. We must ask ourselves whether we are blessings to these children or obstacles to their destinies.
Do we treat them with the same love and care like we do our own children?
Do we even extend to them the same benefit of doubt that we constantly afford our own children?
Are they loved unconditionally as by us as we do our own children?
Most of us would forgive our children over and over again, whether it is for the same mistake or a variety errors; yet we find it an impossible task to overlook any mistake that these vulnerable children make. We constantly make excuses for our children, yet are quick to hang these children out to dry. Why is it so difficult to love and forgive these children who are constantly making the effort to please us, yet we effortlessly forgive our children who are ill mannered, obnoxious and ungrateful to us?
I put it all down to the lack of true love. If we truly love a person, we find it easy to correct them in love. We do not require much effort to forgive or cover their mistakes. The Holy Scriptures says in *1 Corinthians 13:4-8a* that "love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love

does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails."
This is why I say that it all rests on the lack of love on our part as the responsible adults.

Growing up, I felt like "love" was absent from my life at home. It was no surprise that I had multiple personalities. I was this free-spirited child in school and quite the introvert back at home. I lead a double-life in a manner of speaking. As aforementioned, once again at the age of 12, my Heavenly Father favourably positioned me to be located by an exemplary Ghanaian lady who took great interest in my academics and wellbeing. She taught me everything I know and cherish today. I thank God that today she is not only fondly remembered as one of my teachers but appreciated and loved for being my adopted mother. God is not a wicked God. He is a compassionate and well-meaning God. Please do not get me wrong, I appreciated my aunt, her husband and their children for taking me in when my father and mother could not be bothered because it was not convenient for them at the time. I do acknowledge also that my aunt may not have pampered me the way I thought I deserved but she did the best she could and provided shelter over my head, food for my nourishing and clothes on my back and grilled me to the marvellous woman I have become today. I cannot say same about my biological mother, who was nowhere to be found. She was absent all through my formative years.

As a little girl, I had no understanding of the situation around me. Therefore, I misjudged and misinterpreted my aunt's desperate attempt to break and mould me into a responsible young adult as wickedness and unkind gesture designed to hurt me. For a long time I resented her for that, wrongly so if I may add. This was only because I was in total darkness about her motives or the reasons she drilled me so hard. Her actions definitely broke me but I was far from being remoulded. The pieces were too shattered to be put back by any human being. Only God could reconstruct me, which He did by giving me yet a fresh start. When the opportunity for me to be reformed by my aunt failed, He presented me with yet another. He brought Mrs Aryee into the path to my destiny. She, like my late grandmother, loved me unconditionally. However, I guess

what made this different was that she disciplined me with love and would take the time to explain the consequences of my actions and or lack of it.
It was the knowledge of the “whats” and “whys” that made it possible for me to interpret her actions as unconditional love and dedication. This, coupled with relentless desire to see me succeed propelled me to view myself as important, valuable and wanted. This challenged me to push beyond boundaries to attain my highest potential. If anyone had told me that I will end up an Engineer today, I would have laughed so hard in their faces. I am blessed beyond measure, I know this now.

The actions of those in authority over our lives impact us more than we care to admit. I admit that once again. I enjoyed that sense of belonging, love and identity from a woman who barely knew me. She helped me to deal with the feelings I had of been used and unwanted. Instead of taking away from me, she rather added to me. Her constant show of love helped create a much needed balance in my life.  I must confess that this was the beginning of stability in my life as a young adult. The one that watches over us neither sleeps nor slumbers. He is constantly watching over us and all that concerns us. He regularly provides us with escape routes even when we are unable to see these provided routes. Be rest assured that our God always makes a way out when the need arises.

I had always perceived myself to be a normal, regular black child, never minding what my cousins said or did to me. However, secondary school mates threw shadows of doubt on what I had always thought to be the norm. Being mulatto from a black family was simply not genetically possible. I began to have an identity crisis, as there were a variety of stories told to me as to my heritage. None of the stories were adding up to who I really was. My father and mother were black yet I was mulatto. Having my curiosity aroused I turned to my family to probe further into the issue. My family referred me to my aunt who was very light-skinned and implied that my skin tone was commonplace in our lineage. My friends in school contradicted these tales my family spun and insisted that it was not possible for my skin tone to be this way based on my apparent all-black parentage. I became quite the storyteller due to the uncertainty on the subject of my heritage. It got to a point where I chose my own version of events to tell. The version I

chose was that my mother was white and my father was black, hence my skin tone. I stuck with this for the remainder of my secondary school days. That kept everyone off my back but created a battlefield in my mind. At this point in my life, it was evident that I was having an identity crisis. It was like the rug had just been pulled from under my feet. My identity was in question. Who was I? I was unaware of the truth I have known now. Indeed this was a time of intense difficulty for me.
It was a dark time for me. I struggled with everything. I lost my sense of belonging. It brought about a major shift in my life. I was looking for an identity tied to my physical parental pedigree as opposed to my Heavenly Father's. It did not help that I had to graduate from secondary school, where I found comfort in knowing I was valued, loved and pampered by my new family. Oh, how cruel the hand of fate was to me, I thought. While others were celebrating and looking forward to going back home to be with their loved ones, I was dreading the uncertainty that laid ahead of me. I had made up my mind that come what may, I was better off at my father's house.

It is paramount to state that our identity as children of God is not based on a perfect parental lineage but in the spiritual pedigree we have in Christ Jesus. If it was based on our parental backgrounds, then David's family lineage would have been disqualified from being linked to that of The Messiah, The Saviour of the entire world. How gracious and merciful is our God, who qualified Rehab, a gentile - the prostitute, as a worthy ancestor to His beloved son, Jesus Christ.
It is comforting to know that our parental lineage has no negative effect on our identity or destiny as orchestrated by the Almighty God. I am confident thus of my identity in God just as I am sure of His purpose for my life. The lack of revelation about this truth robbed me of enthusiasm for life, self-confidence and value for a long time. This is a truth that I was unaware of. The knowledge of this truth is the power that compels us to dare to believe God's word as it relates to any situation. It is a shame that it takes so long for us to come to this realisation. The knowledge of our relevance in God's plan and purpose helps us to see the manifestation of His love that puts a seal upon us.
I wish I knew this truth much  earlier in my life, it would have saved me a lot of pain, hurt, shame and disappointments that I suffered for lack of this knowledge.

CHAPTER FOUR

# Major Shift

Having left secondary school at seventeen, I found that my father's house was unfamiliar grounds to me. It was in this strange environment where the presence of adults was scarce and I began to crave affection. Any kind of attention I received was perceived as an act of love. Taking a trip down memory lane, I realised that nothing had changed. Though my father had now relocated to a different town from the one I grew up in, not much had changed in terms of authoritative presence in the house. It was a mere house that served as residential accommodation for many, including myself. I struggled with the lack of love and attention in this house. I began to miss Mrs Aryee, for she had become the button that held everything together in my life. Existing without her or any other responsible adult caused a major shift in my life. I began to sink back into the quandary of low self esteem and my questionable identity served as fuel to the furnace of fire already burning in my soul. My mind was consumed by the fiery flames as the feeling of abandonment, loneliness and questionable heritage bore holes through my soul.

As earlier said, there was no parental guidance back at my father's house. We were left to our own devices. Just as the adage goes "an idle mind is the devil's workshop." Even though my parents were required to bring me up in a godly way, no effort nor provision on their part to develop me was made.
My learning and development was primarily attained from strangers. It was the responsibility of my parents to lay a solid foundation by teaching me the principles of good morals. How to behave in public, respect elders, obey the law of the land and so on. Even that was lacking in them. I had no one to teach me God's truth, His principles and promises as outlined in His word. I had no practical example on how to develop a personal relationship with God. There was no pattern to emulate other than that which was available to replicate -

polygamy, materialism, immorality and divorce. Having grown up in such an environment, it was no surprise that I was drawn to the first person that paid attention to me.

This is how it all started. One fateful day, I was playing with my siblings out in the courtyard as my parents had gone out for the day, when a man pulled by the dwarf fence that surrounded my parents' house. He was in a lemon-green Peugeot 504, he came looking for my father. At this point, he beckoned at me to come down from the top of a tree and I jumped down to meet with him. He gave me his business card and asked me to pass it on to my parents. This seemingly mysterious gentleman came over to the house again and made his visits a regular occurrence. He would mostly come around when my parents were absent from the house, which was pretty regular. He took a keen interest in the fact that I was out of school and set out to in search of school admission for me. It wasn't long before he secured admission for me to further my education, at the same time he was taking care of my personal needs. He also lavished me with gifts and money that I had no need for. It was not long before I began to look forward to his visits and would notice his absence should he travel out or away on business meetings. I began to long to see him, for he made me feel special. I felt that he valued my opinion as he opened up to me, he trusted me with his personal struggles and challenges. I would be the first to hear of any new development in his life. He was that comfortable with me and I with him. I will offer my two pence advice with him and he will actually implement the suggestions I rendered to him. That made me feel super-special to him. We became an inseparable team. It wasn't long before we started travelling together as a couple. He placed me on a peddle stool and I was loving it.

I misunderstood his generosity, concern and actions as love.Needless to say that I fell head over heels for him, he became my best friend and confidant. Even though the situation was not ideal I was overcome by my emotions and also blinded by his 'love'. My father fought my decision to marry this man but I ran to my grandmother as usual, knowing she will support me no matter what. She threw her weight behind me and made my dream into a reality. Little did I know that my actions were about to shift me away from the original

foundation God set for me before time began. With this wrong decision of mine I had abandoned the foundation laid for me before I was born, by my creator, to lay for myself a new one. Unknown to me, I had setup a wrong foundation and was diligently building on it. Can a builder build a house if the Lord has not built?
'Unless the Lord builds a house, the builder labours in vain' Psalm 127:1 (NLT)
Our marriage was not in *holy wedlock*. I had no idea what marriage was about. To me, this was a ceremony that would allow me to move from my father's house to my husband's house. I felt this was not just a long overdue move but also a much needed one as it will put a stop to my father's interference in my life. I believed I was in a loving relationship in which my love was reciprocated. This was my understanding of the step I had taken.
Unfortunately, most of get married without adequate knowledge of what it means to be married. Therefore, many marry for the wrong reasons. To some marriage is about the guest list, to others it is the glamour of the costumes, to some for procreation and others it is a licence to have sex, to mention a few. Majority of young people go into marriage just to fulfil all righteousness.
It is very essential that all intending couples must understand the institution of marriage before embarking on the matrimonial journey. For once you board that train, you must be prepared for a lifetime cruise. To successfully do this, we must first recognise the originator of marriage and the reason marriage was instituted. God is the institutor of marriage and whatever He does, He does for a reason. "Abuse becomes inevitable where purpose is not known." Many go into marriages lacking adequate knowledge about the institution of marriage as aforementioned.

I am not proud to say that I was clueless about God's reasons for instituting marriage. I had no prior godly instruction on what a marriage was let alone what a divine marriage constituted of. I had no godly example to follow, hence broke the very first principle of marriage, which is honouring marriage and keeping the marriage bed pure. We dishonoured and did not keep the marriage bed pure, we consummated our love before marriage sadly.

"*Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexual immoral.*" Hebrew 13:4 (NIV**)**

I was living in sin, engaging in sexual activity with a man that was not yet my husband. So, as far as God was concerned, I was counted amongst the sexual immoral. My sorry excuse is that I was not aware of the extent of the damage I was doing to my foundation. However, ignorance is not an excuse. I take full responsibility for my actions. It was rather unfortunate that I believed in what I was doing to be the best for me at the time. I felt there was nothing wrong with having premarital sex, I was over eighteen, an adult after all. In hindsight, I lacked the knowledge and understanding of the things of God as my parents failed at their duties to instil these principles in me. So, I justified my actions by weighing my life to that of my father. This was not the appropriate scale to use. However, it was the only scale available to me at the time. My father had married multiple times and the other women accepted him even though he had children. I could also do the same. Hence, my decision to marry a man who had children. I was of the opinion that I would make a great step-mother because “I had so much love to give”. How myopic was my naïve mind of the true state of what I was getting myself into. I lacked understand and the knowledge required to make such a huge decision. I was so oblivious of the consequences of my choices. I unknowingly set in place an alternative foundation, which was unsuitable and inadequate for my God ordained destiny. Foolishly, I began to build on a pseudo future, ignoring the authentic solid foundation God had set in place for me. It is common knowledge that one can build successfully on a wrong foundation no matter how skilled a builder you are. I had now entered into a marriage unprepared and unequipped, lacking in all essential knowledge needed for a successful marriage. No wonder the scripture says in Hosea 4:6 that God's people were destroyed for lack of knowledge. I learnt the hard way.
Shortly after the birth of my first child, I gave my life to God and made Christ Jesus my personal Lord and Saviour. I had numerous counsel concerning my marriage. The more advice I got the more confusing it became for me. It had become apparent that my marriage was formed on a faulty foundation. This happened due to my lack of understanding of the godly principles that governed this divine institution. There was not

much I could do. I was faced with the choice of either quitting or making it work. I chose to make it work. I was determined to make it work. I did not want to be seen as a failure. I considered my marriage the only good thing I had going for me at the time. My focus was not on God, even though I was now a born again Christian. I was still feeding on milk, and not yet on solid food. I was immature concerning spiritual matters.
If only I turned my full attention to God?
If only I made a different decision?
The 'if onlys' were far too many at this point in my life. I began to drown in the sea of wrong choices. Choices I made willingly.

Brethren, if you try to walk on waters without focusing on Jesus, sinking will be inevitable. I was sinking in my marriage at this point and had no one to talk to. Yet I was determined to prove that I was not a failure. I worked hard and harder at remaining a virtuous wife. I gave it my all but it was not good enough because the foundation was faulty and there was nothing I could do about it in the physical. My marriage required a supernatural surgery. A divine intervention from God not men. The marriage ship finally sank. I was now faced with the nightmare of waking up a failure just as I feared. Here was I, a failure yet again, just like my aunt said I would be. I was rejected once again just as I was at birth, growing up and so on.
I was now a certified failure. I had failed at my marriage. As a single mother, I was clothed with shame. The feeling of rejection and abandonment overwhelmed me. I took my children and ran to a foreign land. I tried to make sense of why my husband of over ten years would reject me. The questions began to mount. I questioned his love for me. Why did he reject me?
Was it because his love was not genuine from the start?
Was I just a bait to reel in his beloved?
The questions were endless. I spent countless sleepless nights awake, weeping and pondering on the whys of what was happening to me.
I dug deep, reflecting on the Biblical lessons that stated that God blotted out our sins and remembered them no more. So, why did it feel like God was punishing me for all my wrong choices. I was of the opinion that He always protect His children from hurt and the wicked deeds of the enemy.

Clouded in confusion and dejection, I questioned why this was happening to me now that I had given my life to God and to the best of my ability leading a righteous life. I couldn't make sense of anything. The more I thought about it, the more confused I became. In my eyes, I saw myself as a born again child of God who was living the life of a good Christian woman. So why was this happening to me? My desire for answers pushed me to dig deeper into my lifestyle in an attempt to make sense of what was happening to me. I began to count my righteousness before God. In my mind I was charitable, I was serving Him in numerous positions in church and I kept my distance from all and anything that remotely resembled evil. So, why was I going through this storm? Why did it feel like I was weathering it alone? Where was God?

This led me to the next phase of demanding to know why God had allowed me to face such shame and hurt. In this respect, I quizzed God the more for answers to my endless questions. The list of unanswered questions was growing by the minute. It even birthed an endless emotional torture in me, which became a wedge between me and God at that point.
It is easy to let the hurt, rejection or even natural events create a distance between you and your maker if your understanding of God's power and love is limited. I may have had a great knowledge of who God is at the time but my understanding of the extent to which He loved me was limited. I was not aware of how special I was to God. It is often a grievous mistake by most of us who assume that we know and understand who God is to us and who we are to Him, just because we go to church and even serve in one position or the other in our local churches. Even as an altar counsellor prior to my divorce, I was still not in full knowledge of who God was to me nor did I understand what I meant to Him. For this reason, my focus was not completely on Him or His ability or love but on mine. I thought it all had to do with my works, so I struggled to lead a life of righteousness. I thought this was the only way to get God to defend me. So in my myopic mind, I felt I deserved God's help but did not get it. This widened the gap between me and God. I just did not understand why God could let this misfortune befall me. After all, I concluded in my mind that I had done all that God asked of me, so why was I still suffering these misfortunes. Why was I still being punished by God? I continued to recount my righteousness before God.

At this point in my life I was lonely and confused like many are today. Do not be like me, I made the call. I trusted in man instead of God. I had no friends, my best friend had been my husband. So now that he was no longer in my life, I was left totally empty and was in need of replenishing. I needed the void created in me filled. I began to seek affection from the wrong places and the wrong people, just so I can fill the void, the emptiness I felt.
It was easy for me to blame my husband because for a long time I saw him as my source of joy, my pillar in society, my lifeline. He had alienated me from others and I had come to depend on him for everything. I could not see any reason for happiness without him in my life. He was my world and everything. This was a costly mistake on my part. I put my husband first, I made him come before God in my life. Oh, how I regret this choice of mine because I have had to pay dearly for it.
I need your full attention on what I am about to state now. If you have not discerned or learnt anything from all you have read so far, please take this as important to your existence as you consider breathing to be.
Do not idolise anyone!
If you do, it will set you back further from your destiny, so much so that only the grace of God can realign you to the right path.

If you put any man before God, it simply means you are idolising such a person. It could be your children, spouse, pastor, etc. In my case, my husband became my idol.

Make sure God comes first in all your endeavours.
Be very conscious of this or you will bear the brunt. I soon realised that I idolised my husband without being aware of it. An error sufficient to provoke the wrath of God upon me, enough to destroy me beyond repair or recognition, but for His faithfulness and mercy, He did not. I only had to bear the consequences of my choices or actions enough to bring me to the realisation of my grievous mistake.

If you fail to heed to this advice, you will end up in the same position as I did or even worse. I was saturated by the feelings of rejection and worthlessness, so I went after anything to fill

the void that had been created in me because my joy was tied to man, my husband. My heart ached, my self-esteem took a nose dive and my life now hung in the balance, once again trying to earn the approval of others instead of searching for God's validation.

It is disheartening how people, you consider friends or family, kick you in your lowest points. I remember a young man, I considered a friend, once told me that no one will genuinely love me enough to marry me in my situation. So, I should stop deceiving myself, just because I will not let him have his way with me. The 'my situation' that he was referring to was my children and divorce status. He was of the opinion that men would only lust after me because I am physically attractive and nothing more. Therefore, if I wanted him to continue to assist me then I must let him have his way with me. These cruel words hunted me for a very long time. I started experiencing men assisting me and wanting me to pay in kind.

I remember the first time I had to lay with a man that wasn't my husband, I was so devastated. I wept for days. I scrubbed my skin over and over as though I could remove the stains from my body. I felt like scum. I was no different from a prostitute. The only difference is that I wasn't standing in some dingy corner or street waiting for pickups at night. I was no better than the call-girls I once frowned at. I felt so ashamed of myself, yet I know I needed help.

The reality of my friend's words resonated in my mind. I realised I was a woman not only aggrieved but also a woman in need of help but without a support structure in a foreign land.

When a mother, who can hardly pay her utility bills, is presented with the option to either feed and or keep a roof over her children's head or watch them suffer, she seldom stops to think. Her first instinct would be to snatch that opportunity so as to cater for the basic needs of her children. I had to raise three children in the UK as a foreign postgraduate student. I had to cater for the needs of these three children, who were barely 9, 6 & 2 years old at the time. To ensure their needs were met, I had to work three jobs, sometimes four, around my studies. I had to pay for private tuition for the girls and a nanny for my son just so I could attend lectures. Life was hard for me. I needed help, no doubt: but I turned to men instead of God. I had misplaced my trust in God.

In despair I compromised all of my values, for I limited my God in my life. I couldn't see a way out of my troubles. I felt God was far from me. He had forsaken me, I felt alone. This was coming from the guilt I felt for lack of faith in God and abandoning my call. I rebelled against God, even the more. I blamed Him for losing my best friend, my husband... my confidence in God took a nose dive. It was a choice I made. Other women would probably react different. I had the choice to look up to God for my supplies but I did not. I had the choice to lead a righteous life, keep my moral values but I did not. I chose to turn to mere men for my supply. I believed at the time that I was without option, but was I? Of course not.
Our beliefs are affected by what we allow into our minds.I had allowed myself to believe that I was unloveable. Like my friend said, I was only good for sex. So, I gradually eased into the life of exchanging sex for necessities. I even justified my actions, as I convinced that as long as I maintained a relationship with one person then I was good. Please note, that because I was leaving sexual relations with one person did not make it right. I was a fornicator regardless. Sex outside of marriage is a sin just as extra marital affair is. So, do not ever think there is a lesser sin. A sin is a sin irrespective of its magnitude. Adulterers and fornicators alike, none will inherit the kingdom of God.

My actions, my choices, my decisions had opened the door of my soul and spirit to the enemy to reside in and run my life.
The Bible admonishes us to flee from sexual immorality as it affects our bodies. For our bodies are not meant for such pleasures outside of marriage but for housing the Holy Spirit (***1 Corinthians 6:18 - 20***). At this time in my life I was facing God's judgement as I was a fornicator (***Hebrew 13:4***) I concluded.

The feeling of condemnation compounded my problem. I began to experience stagnation in all aspects of my life as time went by. No matter how dedicated and hard I worked, I kept experiencing near-success syndrome. At the verge of a breakthrough, all my hope and expectations will be shattered leaving me worse off than I began.

My life lost all meaning and substance. I was gradually becoming a walking corpse, constantly disgusted by my

reflection. The lack of satisfaction with the person I saw in the mirror hurt more than the rejections of men.

I began to examine my life deeply. I dug deeper in search of the child that was so happy and content with life; nothing else mattered just because her grandmother loved her unconditional and was always there to wipe her tears as well as bandaged her wounds. I began to seek the Rock that is higher than I. I needed a major shift to towards my destiny this time, not away from it as I was currently experiencing. I had to do something to effect a change. I wanted to be happy again. To genuinely smile not faking it. I needed to smile out of fulfilment and  not because I was trying to hide the pain that laid below. I needed a change desperately. It was time for me to say enough is enough. It was time to stop playing ball with the enemy. The time for serious business was now. Time was no longer my friend. I began to yearn for the presence of God. For this reason, I moved from one big church to the another without desired results. I could not find what I was fulfilment. My spirit man was still yearning for a reconnection. The power was out in my life. I needed it back with immediate effect. I kept on searching for God in different Ministries. All this time, God was standing at the point I left off with His arms stretched out towards me. To God be the glory, that I found my way before it was too late.

During one of my visits to my country of birth, I followed my family to their church. It was a little church, but I was so blessed by the pastor’s message that day and subsequently, from the love shown to me by other members of the congregation. How I was warmly received without judgement or condemnation by the pastor even after listening to my story. Instead, the pastor prayed with me, encouraged me and worked with me to rebuild my life even after I returned to the country of my residence, he kept on praying with me over the phone. Once again, my God reminded me that He is always with us, not for our works or efforts but because of His unconditional love for us. He remains faithful and merciful to us, just like He had been all this while to me. He afforded me fresh starts over and over again, but I lacked the wisdom and understanding; hence unable to discern this in the midst of my storm. My focus was on the storm instead of God like most of us do. Let me fill you in on what I was focusing on. I was to a

lesser degree focusing on the mess that had been created by my ignorant mother and her family, and to a larger extent on the basket of overflowing wrong choices I made in life. I wonder what God was focusing on?

CHAPTER FIVE

# Mess to Message

My testimony began before I was born, when God chose to turn the mess made by two ignorant people, into a message of hope for the hopeless and rejected in this present and future generations. Irrespective of my the tons of wrong decisions, bad choices and foolish actions on my path, God’s plan prevailed.

What I am saying is that though the enemy's report stated that I was a rejected child, whose arrival brought nothing but shame, God had a different report. His report stated that this so called “shame” was going on record as the beginning of an extraordinary journey to fulfilling His master plan for the rejected, the abandoned and the battered in generations to come, come what may.

There is an important truth that we must all be aware of. The truth that our heavenly Father is present at the start of every experience. He is loaded with solutions to every possible challenge that we may encounter. And the good news is that this has nothing to do with your background. Consider the life of Isaac. He was the promised seed of Abraham yet he faced famine in the land of the Philistines (Genesis 26:1). This means that even the children of God can experience challenges as well. The presence of challenges in our lives does not mean God has forsaken or abandoned us. It is usually easier for us to quit in the face of pain, disgrace or even disappointment, as oppose being still and knowing that our God is bigger than the biggest, mightier than the mightiest and greater than the greatest of all challenges we can ever face.

As children of God, our reaction should be to seek divine direction. It is important to ask God for the direction to follow or what steps to take in such moments of despair. Sometimes, God requires us to be still, to be calm and to be trusting of Him in such situations. In Isaac's case, he was required to sojourn, stay put and endure the famine. This famine is but for a stipulated time just like all of our troubles. Unfortunately, we do not always have a clue as to when the famine will end or the storm will blow over. Therefore, the uncertainties of our troubles weigh us down. However, these are the times we are

required to trust in God the most. Paramount to mention is that if only we can dare to trust God through the famine or stormy times, then we will surely experience a turnaround in such circumstances. The blessings of God located Isaac when he chose to obey God's divine order to sow in the land that was not yielding any harvest at the time. From a natural perspective, anyone who decides to sow in a land experiencing famine will be mocked and even considered insane. It doesn't matter what people think of you when you are living a life of obedience, what matters is what God says. Isaac would have chosen to listen to reason and created a big mountain of wrong decisions, which would have fought his destiny.
There are numerous wrong choices that works against our destinies. These choices could stem from altars and foundations built by us or our ancestors. For instance, if a couple looking for the fruit of the womb decide to go into a blood covenant with the so called god of fertility, then the birth of such a child will erect an altar for demons in such a family. This would give these demons access into the family's affairs and possibly hinder the fruitfulness of the children in the future. For the devil never gives without taking more from the recipient.

My life at the time was a typical example of how someone can usher in demons into their own life, affording these demons the opportunity of causing mayhem.
Besides the mess my parents ignorantly created, I largely contributed to my detriment a whole lot of chaos through wrong choices. My choices were not good at all, they were mostly based on ignorance and desperation. First and foremost, I failed to observe the principles of God concerning the holy matrimony. I allowed flesh to rule over me, and the price was ten years of frustration, dejection, rejection and shame in my marriage, which unavoidably ended in a divorce. I failed miserably in this great institution of God, because I went about it the wrong way. I never asked God for His opinion whilst considering a life partner. I allowed my flesh to rule giving rise to a faulty foundation. The foundation of my marriage was not built on Christ, the solid rock, but on decadence. However, grace found me. God is always looking at us with compassionate eyes. Look at Simon (Peter), even after he fell, Jesus chose him to feed His flock. ***(Luke 22:32)***

I want you to know that God has a divine plan and purpose for each of us, just like He did for Prophet Jeremiah. He was not only known to God before he was formed in his mother's womb but was also set apart and appointed prophet to nations before his conception. ***(Jeremiah 1:5***). What about Isaac whom God told to sow in a dry land? God had a plan to bless him in the midst of the famine. His obedience accounted to him a great harvest. We can only wax stronger under God's will and purpose. For before we were formed in our mother's womb, God had set-out a master plan for our lives. God is set out to use the unpleasant circumstances like birth, marriage, career or business, for the sole purpose of making us an inspiration to future generations just like in my case. Let us all be glad that Gods plans for us are of good and not of evil, meant to bring us to our expected end ***(Jeremiah 29:11)***.

I have come to realise that when God is silent through our hardship, He is only getting ready to make people jealous and envious of us especially those who mock us. Therefore, we need to be mindful of those that will choose to react to our overflowing blessings, for it becomes inevitable that our mockers would try to deter us from enjoying our blessings. They will accuse us of our past to steer up guilt or even place obstacles in our way to prevent us from getting to where God is taking us to. The Philistines did the same to Isaac, they filled the wells he dug, which were the source of water for the farmland in an attempt to frustrate him. When all that failed to work they chased him out of the land. The good news is, the harder they tried to frustrate Isaac, the more God prospered him. We must therefore be prepared to face opposition for oppositions may try to knock us down and or frustrate us. It is not only the ones we have overtaken that we should be worried about, we must also be mindful of the mighty amongst them. People may perceive us as threats, thus seek to destroy us. When this happens, we must not give up. If we press forward instead, we will find out that our God who promises not to leave or forsake us will propel us to the success, breakthrough and victory that lies ahead. Sometimes, it is essential to be prepared to move to temporary territories as God leads. For even in that unfamiliar setting, God, who is the architect of the move will take us by the hand and guide us. He will do this to demonstrate that He is indeed the one and only true God who can summon a great harvest from a dry-land.  In most cases,

we miss it because we are afraid of stepping into unfamiliar territories. If the question arouse and we were to be asked." who amongst us have ever been afraid to take a step of faith into unfamiliar grounds," I will be the first to raise hands. For I am guilty of always trying to reason every move I make, weigh my choices and have a plan B in place. This is an error to those that God have instructed to go. For when He says go! We go!! I am grateful to God that He enabled me to overcome this fear of uncertainty through the promise He made Jacob in Isaiah forty-three. Whenever fear is stirred in me I pray this prayer:

*Lord, this is Erdoo, who you created.*
*I whom you created is listening.*
*I am not afraid for you have ransomed me.*
*You have called me by my name, and declared me yours.*
*You have promised to be with me when I go through rivers of difficult*
*Or walk through fire of oppression; hence I will not drown nor will I be burnt or consumed. After all you are my God, my redeemer, my Father who gave up your beloved son, Jesus Christ, for my sake because I am precious to you. It is you who have honoured me because you love me dearly. Lord take me by the hand and guard me to the place where you are taking me; only then will I be able to bring out the people who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf. For I am your daughter, your chosen one, who knows you and believe in what you can do. You alone are God, there is no other God - never has been, and never will be. You first orchestrated my rescue and then saved me, now you*
*proclaim me to the world. I am a living witness to the truth that you are God from eternity to eternity and no one can dare to snatch me out of your hand neither can anyone undo what you have done nor is about to do in my life. Thank you for being God in my life and showing yourself strong in every circumstance that befalls me. I will go wherefore you command me to go, in Jesus' name!*

After I had affirmed God's love for me and might over all, then I take that step in faith knowing that God has me by the hand and is leading me to where He has instructed me to go. When we yield to His leading and direction, the storms of oppression or the floods of difficulties cannot stop our breakthroughs. For in the storm we soar higher on His wings to victory. God will

contends with those who contend with we as we go forth in obedience to His instruction. However, it takes a long time for many of us to come to this realisation, simply because we are more focused on the facts that we consider such moves as impossible moves in  our current circumstances.

Most of us convince ourselves by outlining the reasons why we cannot achieve the task ahead of us. We question when it will be possible, convenient or even when we think we will be ready to make that move.
I understand this line of reasoning because I also reasoned that way. I constantly measured how I would carry out what God was asking me to do, through the scale of my limited ability instead of the limitless ability of God. That is, I keep trying to attain God's plan and purpose for my life on my own instead of obtaining it through faith in the finish works of Christ Jesus on the cross of Calvary. In my myopic mind, all I see of the task ahead of me is how big a task it is instead of how big my God is. This will happen when or if we spend time visualising the magnitude of the problems we are facing, instead of the magnanimity of the promises of God in our lives. The fact is, our lives will always be consumed and or inundated with uncertainties, so much so that we will be tempted to become cautious in our ways or try to reason or rationalise every move. The application of our intellectual minds would usually bring us to the conclusion that we are only being rational, realistic or logical. Sadly, we fall prey to the deception of the enemy, which is designed to implant fear into all we do. A very clever strategy the enemy employs in tricking us into limiting God in our lives, intentionally  messing us up real bad.

Fear is not of God, people. The Spirit of God in us is not meant to keep us in bondage to fear. Rather, it is to enable us cry out 'Abba Father' in times of distress, without reference to whatever mess we may be in. It is the Spirit that reminds you that all is possible with God. The same Spirit teaches us to understand that the race is avowed in our favour, thus we must keep on moving in contentment not contention. Joyce Myer will say 'Keep on keeping on'. Isaac kept on digging new wells as his oppressors persistently filled them with earth. He made a deliberate choice not to quit because he understood the principle of divine provision and supply. Yes, it was hard

for him and it even became harder for him as his adversaries persistently pressured him, he persevered.
Put yourself in his shoes, at the time when there was no motorised drills, digging a well took time and energy. It was hard work. Would you have continued to dig new wells just to have them filled up with earth afterwards by your neighbours? It is easier for us to give up on things when they get really hard and we cannot seem to see immediate benefits of carrying on. When you decide to hold on to the Biblical truth that God promised to bless you beyond measure, yet seemingly drowning in disappointments, we tend to become weary and discouraged if care is not taken. When this happens, it means it is time for you to re-evaluate your situation in order to determine whether your initial decision was based on divine instruction or self-gain motivated. If the answer is the latter then you must realign your thoughts to reflect the position of God in your life. However, if it was made in obedience to God's instruction, then you must press on and weather the storm. Success, breakthrough and victory are sure for those who persevere in His divine assignment.
Moreover, it all depends on our choices in life. How we choice to perceive life will eventually affect how we live it. So, we can choose to move in contentment or in contention. Whatever our choices maybe, there will always, without a shred of doubt in my mind, be consequences.

For a long time I chose to believe in my good works and self righteousness, I suffered frustration in my marriage and life in general because of this. I had the choice to believe in God and His promises for my life, but instead I put my trust in man. The arm of flesh is limited and self-centred, hence is more likely to disappoint us. However, God does not fail. So, He will never fail us. God seem to show up on time whenever we call upon Him, this is because He never left. He is sometimes forced to look away because He cannot behold iniquity. Sin separates us from God. Otherwise, He is there constantly to protect, provide, preserve and perfect all that concern us. Any wise person will reassess his or her choice when equipped with the knowledge and understanding that God is capable of creating a way through the sea to grant His children safe passage. He provides a safe passage for His people yet used the same passage to consume their enemies. Therefore, the importance of knowing God’s goodness and faithfulness cannot be

overemphasised. Not until we change our mind set and choose to believe by faith in the finished works of Christ Jesus, we will have no peace, no understanding and certainly no wisdom for possessing our possession.

Possessing our possession may be our right as children of God, but without making the decision to totally depend on the righteousness and finished works of Christ Jesus, we will be unsuccessful in obtaining our place in life. This is simply because we are operating within our human limitations. Our righteousness and good works can best enable us to attain some degree of success, which is far from where we ought to be; as inscribed within God's blueprints for our lives. However, a total dependency on God, will break barriers, overcome challenges and obtain success without tears.
The first step to achieving close proximity to your place in life is via unwavering faith in Christ Jesus. If you are yet to know Christ on a personal level, then yours will begin with a *new birth*. Eight key principles include:

- A radical born again experience in which you are not easy prey to sexual sins or any other sin for that matter.
- Taking responsibility in three key areas of life: your spiritual atmosphere by becoming the bishop of your soul, the health of your body and the cleanliness of your environment.
- You have dedicated prayer time in the presence of the Lord
- You have a time to read, study or meditate on the word of God
- A time of worship
- A time to pray in the spirit.
- Pursuing your job assignment in the kingdom
- Set time to confess the word of God for the radical resetting of your destiny and foundation.

For most of us our foundation, which is the unseen part of our lives, are buried and unknown to us. These could be the generational iniquitous patterns or diseased states that are passed from one generation to another. It is almost as if nobody can reach a certain age or level of achievement in life in our lineage. It is almost as if a ceiling or dark cloud has been placed over lives of members of our families. In effect, it means that our lives are most likely built on faulty foundations

or God is just allowing these mishaps for His glory to be made manifest at the end of it all.
There are two unfortunate things about a faulty foundation. The first is that the superstructure, no matter how solid, must be demolished in order to fix or lay a new foundation for a new structure to be built. The secondary thing is the assumption that once we are 'born again' all things in our past are also passed away. However, this is far from over without proactively subjecting yourself to some form of deliverance. Many of us sadly subscribe to the notion that once we surrender our lives to God, without the appropriate confessions made during deliverance to reset our foundations back to the original one set by our creator before we were conceived in our mother's wombs. Consequently, we begin to experience a sequence of misfortunes because we have failed to shot the doors opened by our past.
It is sad but true that it is only after repeated circles of ups and downs or failure do we come to the realization of how foundational issues, if not expunged, can affect the destiny of individuals and or families for that matter. In this situation no amount of going to church or window dressing can obliterate or solve the problem. Our self-righteousness cannot extirpate matters for us at this point. This is why the psalmist says:

*If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?* Psalm 11:3

Fortunately there is a sure foundation that can be laid without destruction of everything one has laboured for. That is the original foundation God set before the existence of time, is the only sure foundation that needs no fixing.
Our God is able to do a surgical foundational repair without destroying us. Furthermore the bible says:

*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ*. 1 Corinthians 3:11.

To experience the spiritual paradigm shift from our self-laid-foundation to God's foundation laid for us, His true seed. Thus, we must lay aside the spirit of pride and sin and put on the spirit of humility, cultivate a two-four-seven prayer life, seek God's face concerning everything and turn away from evil in

preparation for the spiritual surgical procedure of foundation reset.

*But God's solid foundation stands firm. Here is the message written on it. "The Lord knows who his own people are."(Numbers 16:5) Also, "All who say they believe in the Lord must turn away from evil."* 2 Timothy 2:19 (NIRV)

When we become radically born again we can demand that any other foundation that was laid, by our earthly family lineage before or after we were even born, bow to the name of Jesus who is our new foundation. This will transform us from a flesh-focused-being to a Spirit-filled-being and allow us to operate on a supernatural echelon. Only then will we begin to enjoy the divine blessings set aside for us before our physical existence here on earth.

*He will be the sure foundation for your times a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure*. Isaiah 33:6 (NIV)

There is usually a notable difference when we are born of the Spirit, as our minds are renewed. We begin to exude unexplainable courage for the force within us subdues fear and doubt. Our believes, hopes and trust are reinforced within us regardless of the past, present or future threats life has or will pose on our way to achieving success and purpose. So, if we are still in the state of profligacy, like I was, I urge us to believe and receive in faith the finished work of Christ Jesus. He took all our imperfections to the cross and turned them all into perfection over two thousand years ago. We have since been washed, cleansed and made righteous in the righteousness of Christ Jesus. I challenge us to reach that place of no return in our walk with God, where we are confident that whatever we hope for will materialise whether the facts surrounding us say so or not.
Believe that the task ahead is possible by His grace and mercy. Anytime, the devil comes with a report contrary to that of God, we must recognise that he is only trying to ignite the feeling of or a sense of condemnation, lack of worth or value, desperation, weakness, and so on; we must always bear in mind that the love and grace of God is sufficient to cover us, to carry us and or to sustain us in all as mentioned before. As for

me, I no longer rely on man but on the sufficient grace of God; which enables me to boast only in the power of Christ Jesus.

'*Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.*'
2 Corinthians 12:9 (NLT)

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

## CHAPTER SIX

### New Beginning

Our God is gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. His love for us is unquantifiable and for this reason, He made the ultimate sacrifice by giving Jesus Christ, His only begotten son for the remission of our sins. This gives us the opportunity to come boldly to Him in spite of our background, mistakes, pain or rejection by men. God seeks to give us new beginnings if only we humble ourselves, pray and seek His face and turn away from our wicked and evil ways. Even though our sins may have separated us from God, through Jesus Christ we have been reconciled, reconnected, restored back to Him.

*“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:*
*Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*
1Corinthians 5:17 ( KJV)

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.* Ephesians 2:8, 9 (NLT)

However, we must understand that our salvation, which brings about our new beginning is by faith in Christ alone and not by works, lest anyone boast in their abilities. The Bible tells us that under the law we needed works to be justified but under the new everlasting covenant, we are justified by faith alone, created in Christ Jesus and predestined to do good works for the fulfilment of God's purpose for creating us.

"*So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law*".
Romans 3:28 (NLT)

"*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*"
Ephesians 2:10 (KJV)

Let me put it another way.
The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith in Christ Jesus as clearly stated in the book of Galatians, chapter three from verses twenty-three to twenty-nine.

*23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.*
*24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.*
*25Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.*
*26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,*
*27 for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*
*28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
*29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Galatians 3:23 - 29 (NIV)

Therefore, I cannot boast that I have attained salvation. It was simply handed to me freely. It cost me nothing but gained me all I can ever need or want. So, I can boast of obtaining salvation through the finished work of Christ Jesus alone.

I stand perfect before God been justified by faith. Believing in Christ Jesus with all my heart and confessing Him with my mouth daily, I have rendered Satan powerless over me. In other words, I have shifted the goal post and the devil cannot score goals in my life anymore; I am kept safe from his traps, he can no longer pull the wool over my face anymore. I now belong to new joined family, a new echelon and my priorities have changed. My days of shame are over. I am overwhelmed with the sense of self-worth for I belong to a family of love. I am acceptable by my spiritual family, Irrespective of my mangled background and ugly past. Wow! Even the accuser of the brethren has his work cut out for him. No wonder he keeps missing me at the points of weaknesses I once had, when I operated within my own power. I no longer walk the walk in my strength but in the mighty power of Jehovah Nissi.

The memories of my past no longer have any effect on me. Whenever the devil tries to use my past to make me feel guilty, he fails because I have in me the Holy Spirit of wisdom and the hedge of protection built around me by God. I have been taken out of darkness into God's marvellous light.

"*He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm*" (Psalms 40:2 NLT)

My new found identity became possible after I heard, understood and embraced the truth of God's wonderful grace. What people say or the magnitude of your sins does not matter. The grace of God prevails over people's judgement.
In the first verse of John chapter eight, a woman was brought to Jesus by scribes and Pharisees. They had condemned her and needed an approval from Jesus to kill her, for she was caught in the act of adultery. Jesus exposed their "self-righteousness" and forgave the woman. He saw her value and purpose in life. Therefore, He asked her to go and sin more without condemning her. This singular act of forgiveness was what the woman needed in order to fulfil purpose and destiny.
God loves you and can save you if you choose to follow His ways and place your past mistakes and peoples opinion about you in the past where they belong. He will sanctify you and fill you with the Holy Spirit just as he has done to me. My story has changed from gross to glory.
I am now a new creature. My old filthy self is gone. I have been washed in the precious blood of Christ Jesus who took away all of my sins and made me into this whole new person I am now. I have had a new birth experience and I am now born again.

New birth simply means accepting in our hearts that Jesus Christ is the son of God, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, sacrificed for the redemption of our sins. He died and rose again after three days to give everlasting life to all that believe in Him and will come in His glory to take us home to His Father's house where there are many mansions.

Everyone who experiences the new birth is transformed by the Holy Spirit from his or her old self to a new person who

willingly and totally surrenders to the will and purpose of God for their life.
While addressing Nicodemus who was a religious leader, about the new birth, Jesus Christ said that those heavenly bound are those born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5-6). Referring to those who have been washed and filled with the Spirit of God. Those who are born-again are born of the Spirit. He proceeded to say that those born of the flesh are flesh, and those born of the Spirit are spirit.

*Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.'* John 3:5-6 (NKJV)

Consequently, our identity as a believers is in the nature of God because we are born of God and are dependent on the Holy Spirit. In other words, our lives, as believers, reflect our spiritual pedigree and not that of our biological parents. In the past, I defined my children's identity in relation to mine. After all, I am the *proud* 'mother' of these four wonderful children. Like every mother, they represented my world and joy. I saw myself in them and felt a sense of pride. So, for a very long time, I considered them my utmost achievement despite my successes in other areas of life. However, I soon discovered that they were not me. They all have their own identity and did not necessarily define me just as I did not define them. They may be a reflection of me, but they certainly have their individual personalities. That is to say that each child of mine possess a mind of their own, only exhibiting in their outward character and appearance little traits that resembled my personality and physical looks.
It wasn't long before I began to speculate on what it was that made my children not just reflect my physical appearance, but also my personality. It was easy to explain why they look like me, but unclear why they also acted or spoke like I did. As I observed them through the years, I realised that their proximity to me had everything to do with their moral fibre. My daughters would say things in the same manner I would, indulge in similar activities, and so on. In their minds, my views on or reaction to things was perceived as a norm. Therefore, they emulated me in almost every aspect of life. In other words, it was obvious to me that my ways and

instructions nurtured my children through their formative ages. As young adults, their identity is rooted in both their early foundation and their immediate environment. I came to the realisation that whatever I said or did was a seed sown into their lives, which had urbane into the each child's personality.
However, the child's distinctive personality is based on their individual choices and manner of reaction to events due to their understanding and willpower. Just as their likes, dislikes, beliefs and values stem from every word spoken to or about them, every act carried out for or against them and so on.
I then concluded that a child's '*nature* and *nurture' will* impart greatly on their personality, but it is their choices and manner of reaction that will then form their Identity.

This is no different from the life of a born again Christian. A baby Christian is born of the Holy Spirit, yet continues to exhibit fleshly traits due to their background or past experiences. However, their close proximity to the Holy Spirit will reform their personality to reflect God's personality. Someone's dissimilarity from another new converts will rest in their individual choice on how they run this race of life.

Consequently, the rate at which we grow as Christians has everything to do with our choices. These choices are dependent on our proximity to the Spirit of God. Those who are filled with the spirit of God, have the power to reject the negative report from the enemy concerning them and their family members with the knowledge that God's plans for them are of good and not of evil always.

*"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope*".
Jeremiah 29:11(NLT)

Standing on Gods promises, I became dependent on the Holy Spirit for directions. I could metaphorically visualise my destiny as it was rooted in Christ Jesus. The facts of my sorry background no longer mattered, even though they were substantial pointers to the catastrophic end because I was now engrafted in Christ Jesus. Hence, I saw me in a different light. So, when facts of my past state that I was rejected at birth because I was an illegitimate child, I choose to believe in the

truth that I am a chosen child of El Elyon, The Most High because I am fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image. Therefore, I cannot be ashamed of the circumstances surrounding my birth. When facts concerning my marriage state that I am a failure, I choose to believe that I am more than a conqueror, a winner and nothing is impossible for me to achieve through Christ who strengthens me. Thus, I cannot be ashamed of my failed marriage nor any other bad choices I had made in life.
Having said this, I must also announce to you that it takes understanding to arrive at this level of confidence and total dependency on Christ Jesus. It is a process that involves cultivating the habit of hearing, believing and acting on what we receive in our spirit man. During this process, we may murmur, complain, doubt ourselves or even feel like God may have made a mistake in His selection process when He chose us. Interestingly, God knows us more than we know ourselves, He is Omniscient and His ways are past finding. Thus, we must allow His word to break and remould us in order for us to fit into His purpose for our lives.

Nevertheless, it was soon very clear to me that God does not make mistakes. He makes mysteries and masteries. His ways and thinking are too far apart from ours. While I was focusing on my past and my limitations, God was focusing on the mysteries surrounding my future as His masterpiece. Many times, we walk by sight and not by faith. We allow ourselves to be consumed by the facts around us while the truth eludes us. This route can only lead to self-destruction. We must therefore redirect our focus on God in order to change our ways and the much needed help will be made available to us.

On a frequent basis, I encountered opposition about my new identity, my old acquaintances cannot hide their doubts about my new life. It is a strange philosophy to them. They find it hard to believe and or even recognise the new me. That is because they are still at the same place I left them, operating with the physical eye and reminiscing on my old identity.
The reality that someone like me can be totally transformed into a new person is still a mystery to many. To most people, I am like the wind. They do not know where I am coming from nor do they know where I am headed to and that gives them

concern and arouses doubt in their mind concerning the mysterious change in me, the new person I had become.

This is true for everyone that lets in the Holy Spirit and makes God their centre focus. Once God is at the top of our agenda, He will transform us from being ordinary people to an extraordinary persons. If God could do it for me, He can do it for anyone else. All God wants is for us to draw closer to Him by aligning our thoughts and our ways to His and watch ourselves transform from natural beings to a supernatural beings (1 Samuel 10:6).

Many of us doubt our credibility to house the Spirit of God as I did for a long time. But need not doubt but be assured that the grace of God is made available to all through the finished works of Christ Jesus. All we need to do is believe and accept Him as our personal Lord and Saviour.
Many of us have missed it by practicing Christianity as a religion. This is without a doubt a means we employ in our zeal to obtain salvation through works, hence we end up merely playing religion. It is important to understand that there is a difference between living a Christ-like lifestyle and practicing Christianity as a religion. True Christianity is a way of life, a lifestyle led by those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose. To such, there is no law nor condemnation. Religion on the other hand is governed by laws of the ‘dos’ and ‘don'ts’. The danger in playing religion is that we end up believing it was all due to our hard-work and self-righteousness. As for Christ-like people, they live by grace and are dependent on the limitless ability of Christ Jesus. When we choose to believe in the finished work of Christ, we are invariably trusting in His immeasurable ability by implication. We no longer trust in ourselves or in our personal efforts or luck. We are actually allowing God to be glorified in and through us.

*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, which we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.* Galatians 2:16 (NKJV)

Let us not be deceived, we cannot receive anything from God except through Christ Jesus. God created everything through Him, for Him and with Him. It is for Him and His pleasure that all creation was made (Colossians 1:16). Regrettably, this truth is often times not so perceptible to most. It is sometimes due to lack of understanding about God's truth. Sadly in most cases, it is an outright refusal on our part to seek the face of God regarding His will and purpose concerning our lives.
When we are content with our own human wisdom, we end up gratifying our fleshly desires instead of fulfilling divine purpose or destiny as preordained by God for our lives. Though God is merciful, the Bible says that He is also just in nature and loathes sin. "He is especially hard on those who follow their twisted sexual desires, and who despises authority. These people are proud and arrogant, daring even to scoff at supernatural beings without so much as trembling" (2 Peter 2:10). Therefore, we must be mindful of God's wrath and judgement.
We must humble ourselves, for God hates the proud and arrogant, especially those enslaved by sin after encountering Christ Jesus and experiencing His love and forgiveness. Remember, we are slaves to whatever has control over us.

The Bible says that within us lies another power that is at war with our minds. This is the power that makes us slaves to the sin that is still within us *(Romans 7:23 NLT).*
According to Paul in 2 Peter 2:21 *"It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life"*.
Going back to embrace our sinful nature after knowing the way of righteousness, is rejecting the command of leading a sanctified life. This is likened to the level of disgust of a pig returning to the mud or a dog to its vomit. As Christ-like people, we must live a submissive lifestyle according to His will and purpose. We no longer belong to ourselves but have been purchased for a price by God.

Once we hear and receive the good news of salvation, we become the oracle of the Almighty. We then become instruments in the hand of God meant for the proliferation of the gospel to the ends of the world. For wherefore the truth about God's wonderful grace is established, lives are imparted,

changes occur and fruits are produced just as it did in our lives when we first heard and understood it.

*This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.*
Colossians 1:6 (NLT)

We have to hold on to the truth as stated by Paul in Romans 6:14 that sin has no hold on those under God's grace nor are they under the requirement of the law. Through Gods absolute power, we have been empowered to push back our enemies and by His name, we can trample our foes Psalms 44:5.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### A Vessel unto Honour

It is easy for us to go through life feeling disqualified because of our past mistakes or the negative things people have spoken against us. As a result we make up excuses as to why we cannot accomplish our desires or attain greatness. In effect, we give up without a fight.
The human mind seeks what is familiar or perceived as acceptable. Anything outside of this is considered unacceptable and impossible. Hence, the tendency to weigh things in terms of human standards or limits is high. However, we serve a God that specialises in impossible tasks.
According to human reasoning, it is impossible for a simple act such as the one Moses performed by stretching the rod, as instructed by God, and parting the Red Sea. Therefore, creating a safe passage for the children of God on dry land. It would also be impossible for a people to shout down the walls of a sandcastle let alone a fortified wall such as the wall of Jericho. Yet the children of God did. It will also be considered an abomination for a Bishop to take in a prostitute as a friend or guest let alone seek her hand in marriage, but it happened at His command. Again, I want us to consider how possible it is to sleep in a den full of hungry Lions without being shredded to pieces but so it was in the case of Daniel. How possible it is also for a raven to feed a hungry man? Well to men these are all impossible tasks but to God, they are just a part of His daily routine; all more than possible.

If I were to be placed on a human scale, it will probably read:
'Do not touch'
'Contaminated'
'Damaged'
'Discarded'

Though the scale of men may have written me off, I am so glad that God called me out amongst many and said "welcome My child, what do you need from Me"

Men will judge us based on the outward appearance or physical manifestations of the challenges we may be passing

through at the time. This brings to mind the story of how Prophet Samuel was sent to Jesse's house to anoint one of his sons as King. Naturally, he was drawn towards the first son based on how he looked physically. Eliab appeared bigger and stronger. But God stopped Samuel from anointing him saying "Do not judge by physical appearance or stature for he is not the one'(1 Samuel 16:7). God does not judge us by our outward appearance or current situation or position in life, unlike men. It is more likely that the unwise amongst us may be more inclined to focus on the outward appearance therefore neglecting the most important aspect of our lives.
We may not be fit for the position that God has placed us in according to human standards or ratings but never mind what their opinions are, focus rather on God's opinion.
To Jesse, David was too small and inexperienced to rule a nation. Therefore, he was not considered for the position of the next king of Israel. To his father, his brothers who had served in the Army and or fought in battles were more qualified than David, who was just a keeper of sheep. David was just a little boy who kept watch over his father's flock in the bush and thus was considered to have no relevant experience for such an enormous task of ruling the of nation. How awesome is our God, who counts us worthy, qualified and able even when others, including our family members and friends disqualify us. David qualified before God.

I was not worthy to bear the title of a virtuous woman, let alone lead virtuous women. However, God considered me worthy irrespective of my background and past failures. He judged me by my future and not by my past because He holds my future. If He judges by ones past or present, I doubt if I would have made the list of qualified candidates.

It is easy to disqualify yourself even after God has qualified you. God does not call qualified people, He calls and then qualifies. If Not so, Moses would not have qualified to lead His people out of Egypt because he was a killer; David would have remained a mere keeper of his father's flock because he was not the strongest amongst his brothers and Esther would have remained a servant if He chose by status (royalty).

In God lies our perfection. So, when we fret because of our imperfections God is not moved. This is because on our own,

we cannot be perfect but in him we are made perfect. Whatever we lack He makes up and empowers us with what we require and when we require it.

I was afraid of what people would say. I was concerned as to whether anyone would follow a person of my background. I was worried of not being eloquent and knowledgeable enough to address marital issues as I had failed in that area. I wondered if I was qualified to offer a word of advice to young ladies battling with questions regarding their life partners. I had not been able to do that for myself, how could I then be helpful to them. The excuses kept on coming. I considered how I would be able to encourage or counsel women facing challenges with bringing up their children. After all, I felt I had not done a good job with raising my own children. I concluded that I had nothing to offer any woman, but God was aware of my short comings and He made up for them so as to qualify me. I am so glad that men are not qualified to qualify us. Hence do not qualify us, only God does.

Whenever I encounter the old tricks of the enemy stirring me towards danger, the Holy Spirit in me would nudge me towards the right direction. Our God has promised to show us things that are hidden, things not known or heard. I was dumbfounded, and even embarrassed when the Lord called me to bear his touch. I still marvel sometimes.
God had chosen me to propagate His good news, to tell of His goodness and mercy to the rejected, the abandoned, the broken hearted and the less privilege in my generation and generations to come. He had found me, a broken vessel, useful to His agenda. How could this possible be, I pondered.
I found this choice of God not just amusing but amazing. God had picked me out of all the 'successfully married' women that encompassed me, to reach out to all women: young or old, single, married, divorced or widowed. I, a broken vessel!

At the time God called me, I had lost the steam in me. I had failed too many times to mention. I was a reject, how then could I stand before smart and intelligent women as the chosen one? Who would listen me? Nothing made sense. The more I thought about it the more I struggled to comprehend. I began to run from God. However the more I ran, the more God

sent prophesies my way. I finally surrendered to God's will and purpose for my life.

I struggled at first with this new development as ministerial work was not something I had ever envisaged I would be qualified for, considering my background and circumstances. God showed me that it does not matter what our background may be, what matters is that we possess willing and contrite hearts.
This brought to mind a story I once came across written by *Sacinandana Swami*. It really changed my views on so many things, especially as it had to do with the calling on my life.

***The Story***

*A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on one end of the pole he carried across the back of his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream, the cracked pot arrived only half full. This went on every day for two years, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots of water to his master's house.*

*Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishment and saw itself as perfectly suited for the purpose for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its imperfection and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. After two years of what it perceived as bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself and I want to apologize to you."*

*"Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?"*

*"For the past two years, I have been able to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws you have to work without getting the full value of your efforts," the pot said.*

*The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and out of compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path." Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the*

*wildflowers on the side of the path. The pot felt cheered.*

*But at the end of the trail, the pot still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and again it apologized for its failure. The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I knew about your flaw and took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them for me. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. If you were not just the way you are, he would not have such beauty to grace his house.*

*I learnt from this story that each and every one of us has his/her unique flaws — we are all cracked pots. But a compassionate and expert devotee can engage us in the Lord's service, and then we can all be useful, despite our defects.*

From this story I realised that my seemingly shameful background mistakes were known to God. He therefore took advantage of these unique flaws and turned my mistakes into wealth of experience that is meant to serve as a bank of knowledge, understanding and wisdom necessary to achieving my preordained purpose.

Today, I can draw from that bank comforting words for hurting women, wise counsel for struggling mothers and empathy for the less privileged.
This was made possible because our compassionate heavenly Father deemed me fit and valuable to be used in His vineyard just like the water bearer found the old cracked pot. I am therefore not moved by my past mistakes and failures. I am only moved by the Spirit of the Almighty God that is within and around me and by whom I live, move and have my being.

Today, I may appear a broken vessel to men but to God, I am a unique tool for the shaping and moulding of virtuous women as well as unlocking of the inner beauty of humanity. I am also privileged to be a strong pillar for upholding other women presently walking the path I walked.

We must understand that there is nothing on earth we go through that someone else had not already experienced. My experience of rejection in the hands of men has become as a dose of antidote used whenever I have to speak to women who are rejected and abandoned by their family, friends or spouses. Also, whenever I come in contact with abused children and orphans passing through hardship, struggling with physical and emotional abuse, I am able to compassionately relate to them on that level because of my own experience.

Suffice to say therefore that I consider the tough love of my aunt, her tight regime and even hash words as a preparatory process designed to empower me for God's agenda. I even consider my failures as strength today as they all serve as an eye opener for me, a first-hand means of recognising real hurt, pain and shame women face. It has reformed me from a one-time judgemental altar counsellor to a more sympathetic, understanding and compassionate person. No wonder the Bible says that we should consider it pure joy when we face various trials, for it is only when our faith is tested that we develop endurance, which is a key ingredient for growth and maturity in Christ Jesus. This in turn takes us to a place of satisfaction and contentment.

*My Christian brothers, you should be happy when you have all kinds of tests.*
*You know these prove your faith. It helps you not to give up*
*Learn well how to wait so you will be strong and complete and in need of nothing.* James 4:2-4

I soon realised that I was only being tested for my testimony. You must understand that when God sends you, He equips you. He knows what you need and He provides it when you need it. Do not focus on your deficiencies but on Gods sufficiency. He supplies all our needs according to his riches in glory. Today, I am a 'vessel unto honour'. God has turned my mess into message. A broken and rejected vessel He has found to be a worthy vessel unto honour.

Glory to God!

## CHAPTER EIGHT

**The Message**

Our God is gracious and mighty in all His ways. His goodness, grace, mercies and faithfulness are absolute in our lives. He does not look at our limitations or flaws but on the ultimate sacrifice made by His beloved son for our sakes. I am a living testimony to this truth. I, who was rejected at birth, was given a fresh start. God placed me in an earthly home to be loved and accepted. As a young adult, I was considered a failure and rejected by a man but again, God showed up to rescue me from self-destruction. I wish to announce to you that our God is a God of fresh chances and not just a God of second chances. He afforded me several chances.

I would like to correct the opinion that God fixes faulty foundations. Beloved, God in His mightiness and limitless power does not fix faulty foundations even though He can. Rather, He discards our man made faulty foundations and totally cleanse our slate taking us back to the original foundation He set for us, which aligns to His will and purpose for our lives. This requires a supernatural touch as we cannot do it naturally. A foundation that is built on Christ Jesus, our solid rock. It may look like we are in the same state physically, but I can say categorically that we have been transformed metaphysical. We are no longer the same. I made a mistake by going into a wrong marriage, which brought me heartbreak and eventually, ended in a divorce. Yet, God afforded me a fresh start. He had mercy on me and turned my mess to message. Yes, I faced the consequences of my actions, which was the stigma of a failed marriage and the task of raising my four children. However, these have formed the basic tools for the correct application of the new techniques God has given to me for building my future, and that of those He has called me to support. I know it was God that discarded my faulty foundation, which I built with my wrong choices. *He would not build on such bad foundation where building bricks were fornication and the mortar disobedience.*

God will not build on evil platforms but will empower you to get rid of such filth, giving you new beginnings that glorify His name. This is what life has taught me.

In my story, as aforementioned, God discarded my faulty foundation and dismantled the false bricks that my life was built with; this included the wrong approach my clueless teenage mother adopted in bringing me forth, as well as my uninformed choices and rebellious acts in life. My new beginning has helped me to appreciate others positions in the puzzle of life and equipped me to be a useful piece of God's bigger picture.

Everyone that experiences or is afforded a new beginning must learn to be content and secure in who they are. I have learnt to be content with who I am and where am. I do not have to be in the limelight to feel fulfilled. I also do not mind what people say about me or do to me.

The faint hearted are usually the unsecured people that are easily frustrated by the actions or inactions of others. A new beginning does not only give us confidence in Christ Jesus, it also enables us to be diligent with other's assignments. This simply means we become selfless in our dealings with others' or in dispensing our duties and in fulfilling the divine calling upon our lives. So, if we truly have turned a new leaf then it must reflect in our attitude and character, even if it means being invisible. This is a vital fruit of all those that love and trust God and are called according to His will and purpose.

The restoration of my life has toughened me to be unmoved by what people say or do as I said earlier. I have gotten to a place in my walk with God where I do not seek man's approval but that of God. For I know that promotion, change and even chance does not come from man but from God. Man can only reward deeds done in public but our God who see all things that are done both in public and secret will reward us abundantly. Therefore, we must not seek praises or rewards from men for our labour in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:57). We must depend totally on the counsel of

the Spirit of God and not that of man. The counsel of man will tell us that we must demand for what is rightfully ours or due to us. This is a wrong attitude for anyone who has turned a new leaf.

I found this truth enriching to my soul as a new beginner. For *the spirit of contentment in Christ Jesus* eliminated the *spirit of competition*, which is the father of all jealousy and ingratitude in man. As content daughters of Zion or men of valour; we must have the spirit of 'I have enough', 'I am satisfied', 'I am perfect in Christ or complete just the way I am'.

Jonathan, the eldest son of Saul, understood this principle and executed his role perfectly in David's life. He operated from the background and pushed his friend, David, to fulfilling his destiny as the next King of Israel. Though Jonathan, in men's counsel was the rightful heir to the throne. How many of us would give up what is rightfully ours to a friend? This is exactly what Jonathan did. He could have easily been distracted by the fact that he was next in line for the throne, thereby overlooking the truth that David was the destined one, who was chosen and anointed by God to rule Israel irrespective of his position and family background.

Like Jonathan, we must understand our place in life. So as to fulfil purpose and destiny. Let us be content working behind the scenes and making others look good in their roles. Do not be consumed with envy, hate or discontent and we must not despise little beginnings. Though we live in a world where people feel the need to step-on others to get to their destination, we are not to be partakers of such acts. As a Christian, leading a Christ-like lifestyle, it is vital to understand seasons and time. When to be at the background or come to the limelight (1 Chronicles 12:32). Unlike Jonathan most of us would have betrayed David instead of standing by him out of pride. Contentment is the litmus test for spiritual maturity. That is, level of our maturity as believers is evident in our ability to be thankful for who, what and where we are in

life, i.e. contentment. It asserts our understanding of the principle of God that says we should do unto others as we will have them do to us.

It is seldom true that some people do not seem to get any reward for their hard work in their life time. However, their reward is enjoyed by their children. If this is not so then it will make God a liar, for His word says that each man is due his fair wages when he works. Our work is a seed planted for a harvest. Therefore, if we do not reap our due harvest in our life time, then our children will. Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s son is a good example of this. He enjoyed a special kindness from King David due to Jonathan's role in David's life. We may need to be like Jonathan, operate with the spirit of knowledge and wisdom, which is a guaranteed road map to our diverse destinies as Jonathan did. Like Elisha, we must discover our place and purpose in life and embrace it whole heartedly without comparison to others. For there is reward in diligence. Elisha received a double portion of the unction on Elijah's life for his diligent service.

God will make all things beautiful in our lives in due season, for all of us that love and trust in Him. So, I urge us all to remain steadfast in all our endeavours, for God has great plans for us, to give us a future and a hope that would bring us to an expected end (Jeremiah 29:11).

"*But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.*" Isaiah 40:31( NLT)

At certain moments in our lives, we like to play the victim to attract sympathy, hence wallow in self-pity and defeat as opposed to basking in the victory that Christ Jesus won on the cross at Calvary. We are victors not victims. Victors gain extra-ordinary experience from difficult or unpleasant situations. Remember, if the woman with the issue of blood had resigned to the condition of her situation, she could have died in that state. We must learn from this exemplary woman who dared to believe that she was not meant to remain in that situation. She

was expectant. She got her miracle. Let us also allow our faith in God provoke Him to act swiftly in order to intervene on our behalf.

If He did it for me, He will do it for anyone who dares to believe.

All we need to do is believe, obey and proclaim.

Shalom!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joyce Aernan-Maagbe, is a seasoned teacher of God’s word. A life coach with a passion for the orphaned and less privileged. To this effect, she runs WASEM Charity Foundation and ‘Thou Virtuous’ a special ministry to the women. Via this medium, she has put smiles on the faces of so many lives. She is blessed with four beautiful children

## NEW BEGINNINGS

"A vessel Unto Honour" is an imparting heart touching piece that holds its reader spell-bound to its last page.

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May the Almighty open your spiritual eyes to eye, ears to hear and heart to receive and share your testimony to the glory of His name.

Once again thank you and God bless!