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PREVIEW

CHAPTER 1

The Change That Occurs When Your Whole Life Crumbles Before Your Eyes

I believe that every single one of us has a purpose in life—gifts and talents that we have been uniquely equipped with that allow us to serve a specific purpose in life. For over three decades, I searched for my purpose but could never quite figure out what it was. There has always been an inner voice prompting me from within, making me sense that, surely, I am called for something more in life.

However, I settled for the usual path—completing my education, establishing a career, getting married, buying a house, and starting a family.

So, what changed?

In June 2018, I found myself in the emergency ward of a local hospital. Before getting to that point, I'd undergone a prolonged fever for about one month without any explanation for why it was happening. The doctors took some blood tests and came back with the results.

A severe bacterial infection.

That first blood culture identified the nature of the bacteria. However, it didn't tell the doctors which part of my body the bacteria had affected. So, they ran another battery of tests to find out where it was. The eventual answer was the worst that I could imagine.

My heart.

During the family conference in the ward, my doctor informed us about the bacterial vegetation around my heart.

I needed to have open-heart surgery to remove the infection.

At that moment, it felt like my entire life crumbled before my eyes. It was the deepest level of adversity that I'd ever encountered. There was a very real possibility that I could die from this condition. All I could think about were my two beautiful daughters and what would happen to them if I didn't make it.

I was their world, as they were mine.

It all felt like a surreal scene from a movie. The doctor explained that the condition was called endocarditis, which is an infection of the heart valve. He told me about the procedure I'd have to undergo and the risks involved. The idea of going under the knife petrified me to my core, as did the knowledge that I'd have to deal with needles and all manner of medical procedures during the process.

And yet, I had faith in the face of this adversity.

Somewhere deep down in my infected heart, I knew that I wasn't going to die on that surgical table. My faith, both in myself and God, surpassed any adversity that life could throw at me. On July 5th, 2018, I underwent a successful open-heart surgery. The doctors removed the entire infection and replaced my damaged valve with an artificial one to keep my heart functioning.

It was the most traumatic period that my family had ever faced.

But I survived.

During my recovery, I began to contemplate life and the roads I'd taken to lead me up to this point. I believe that several issues had ultimately led to my condition. My own thoughts played a large role. I worried too much, allowed stress to get on top of me, and laboured with periods of depression. If nothing else, this near-death experience taught me that I needed to change my mindset.

I needed a transformation.

And to achieve it, I needed to look back on my life to figure out how I'd reached this place. That period of reflection took me to 2012 and the birth of my elder daughter, Shayna. To this day, I still remember the immense joy I felt when I cradled my little girl in my arms for the very first time. I remember feeling so overwhelmed by her immense beauty, and I committed myself to the lifelong responsibility that having a child brings.

My thoughts then turned to the birth of my younger daughter, Nina, the following year. The same waves of emotion washed over me as I held her in my arms. My little family was complete, and life felt perfect.

However, motherhood changed everything for me.

I soon realised that this change wasn't always for the better. My husband, Bala, is truly my pillar of strength. Even when the world crumbles around me, I know that I can simply hold onto him for support. He is one of the greatest blessings in my life. Despite having such a wonderful husband, amazing parents and a beloved sister, I found myself slowly sinking into depression. I wanted to be the best I could be in all the roles I played—especially as a mother and in my career—and I wanted to do it perfectly. This led to severe anxiety.

I tried to fight back by dedicating all of myself to motherhood. I believed that by becoming super-mum while simultaneously juggling my career, my depression would lift. Unfortunately, that's not what happened. Instead, I lost myself in this new identity that I'd created. I couldn't sleep, felt exhausted to the bone, and often felt like I was on the verge of losing my sanity.

Through it all, one big question began appearing in my mind...

What is my purpose?

It's the very same question that I had asked myself for years. And through reflection, I realised that I'd lacked a sense of purpose long before I had children. I was in a stable career, but I knew that there was something more I could contribute to. I also knew that before I could serve others, I needed to fill my cup and find my purpose for living.

I spent months racking my brain for ideas. I read motivational books, listened to some amazing speakers, and researched intensely. As a Christian, I also prayed for God's infinite wisdom and guidance to help me find what I truly wanted.

At first, I couldn't figure it out.

All I knew was that I had a higher calling. Deep down inside, I knew that my purpose surpassed being a mother, wife, daughter, sister, and teacher. Something told me that there was a reason for the trials that I'd faced and my eventual deliverance from those trials.

I realised that by examining and establishing the very crux of one's identity, one can chart one's own purpose. By sharing what I have experienced with depression, as well as other challenges and lessons I have learnt along the way, I can guide women who are in the same shoes I was once in. This book endeavours to address the needs of women searching for a higher calling, youths and young adults seeking to establish their sense of identity, and finally, mothers looking for meaning and fulfilment as both mothers and individuals. I have done this through the Identify Framework that I have created, which forms the foundation of this book.

The Importance of Purpose

Why did I tell you this story?

I believe that we all have moments in life when we question why we're here and why we're leading the lives that we lead. If you're reading this book, that likely means that you're facing the very same questions that I faced just a few short years ago. You want to know what your purpose is. You know that you have a higher calling, but you can't seem to find it.

In telling you my story, I hope you will come to the realisation that you have gifts and strengths that give you the ability to touch people, impact lives, and even change the world. You deserve to be somebody who wakes up every morning knowing that you have a sense of purpose that goes beyond being a part of the robotic routine that life often leaves us in.

Your life is for living, not for simply existing.

When we get lost in our daily routines, we sacrifice our drive for purpose to attain a life that feels comfortable. And it is the knowledge that you've made that sacrifice that can leave you feeling disillusioned, no matter how many wonderful gifts life gives you. If you're feeling unfulfilled with the rhythm of your life, you're in the same place that I was in.

You're searching for purpose because you believe that your life is more than what it is about right now.

I'm certain that this belief is the correct one because I've experienced that very same disillusionment. I understand what it feels like to feel lost and uncertain about yourself, your life, and your reason for being here. And it is in helping you find your sense of purpose that I find my own.

In his wonderful book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl writes:

'The meaning of your life is to help others find the meaning of theirs.'

These are powerful words that influence everything that I now undertake. And it is to help you find your meaning, your sense of purpose, that I've written this book. In the pages to come, you'll learn about the importance of identity and the role that it plays in helping you find your purpose. You'll discover how to move beyond the limitations that hold you back today so that you can find out who you are and why you're here.

PREVIEW

CHAPTER 2

The Identity Framework

I created the Identity Framework with a clear and simple purpose: to help you define your true self.

Developed from my own experiences, it's a framework that lends some structure to your journey of self-discovery. The Identity Framework consists of five key domains we all must work through to find out who we are and our purpose for being here. I've defined those domains in the following framework:



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What does each of these domains accomplish?

That's a question I will answer throughout the pages of this book as I dig deeper into each domain individually. However, it's worth having an overview of each domain before we start to discover how these domains influence your path in life.

Domain #1 – Self

This step is all about learning how to love yourself before you try to be of service to other people. As I learned during my journey as a mother, it's impossible to help others to the best of your abilities when your own cup isn't full.

As part of this step, you will focus on your physical and mental well-being. You should be able to draw your strength from within, both physically and mentally, before you can nourish others. You will also understand a little more about your identity and how it can never be defined by a single trait, such as being a parent or the role you play in your career.

Domain #2 – Decision

No change can occur in your life unless you first decide to create and embrace that change. You have to make a decision today in order to seek your higher purpose and calling in life.

This domain focuses on helping you become a decisive person who can make the choices that lead you to where you want to be. Using the decision-making processes of some of the world's foremost leaders, you will learn how to create your own goals and work towards them.

Domain #3 – Focus

In a world that's become obsessed with technology, there are now hundreds of things that can divert your focus away from your higher calling. As the world becomes more interconnected, it's easy to feel a greater sense of disconnect and struggle to maintain focus.

In this domain, you identify the distractions in your own life and what you need to do to step away from them. These distractions may not be technological in nature. All the same, they serve to pull you away from the purpose you establish for yourself.

Domain #4 – Strength

What are you really good at? How can you take those strengths and put them towards creating a life of purpose and meaning?

These are the questions that we strive to answer in the strength domain. This is all about discovering the strength that lies within you. During your journey through this domain, you may uncover strengths you never knew you had, and this realisation will help you uncover the path that you should pursue.

Domain #5 – Purpose

Moving through the domains of the Identity Framework will ultimately lead you towards the purpose that you have in life. This is the one thing that's congruent with your strengths, aligns with your sense of self, and allows you to make an impact on the world.

Your purpose feeds into the legacy that you hope to leave behind. For me, that legacy will hopefully be the many amazing people whom I've helped discover their own meanings in life. For you, that purpose may take an entirely different form.

Are you ready to find your true identity?

Let's begin with an examination of the first domain of the Identity Framework: self.