



Single and Thriving

*INTENTIONALLY NAVIGATING THE
SINGLE SEASON*

*by
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DEDICATION

To all single ladies who are seeking to become God's best during this single season and all other seasons of their lives.

PREFACE

This short book- *SINGLE AND THRIVING* is not about single ladies remaining single or single ladies rushing out of the single season. It is about encouraging single ladies to perceive this season like any other season created by God with a purpose. Through this book, we want to direct single women's attention towards understanding and navigating through the single season. We want to direct a single lady's heart towards the Creator of seasons (the Almighty God) who best knows the purpose of every season and can best make the single ladies understand this purpose and how to intentionally navigate through this season.

Many women grow up in societies which have attached negative stereotypes to the single season which has made ladies to strive to leave the season rather than striding through the season and fulfilling specific purpose of the season.

Single and thriving is about perceiving the single season through God's wisdom and intentionally thriving through the season with the help of the Holy Spirit. Thus, this book draws inspiration from biblical single season narratives of Ruth, Rebecca and Esther. These were ladies who had faith in God, diligently carried out the task they had to do during their single days and patiently waited on God who moved them to the next season of life. Let us journey through and discover the essence of the single season.

INTRODUCTION

As single ladies, many of us desire marriage which is a very important institution established by God and is “*the center of human existence*”.ⁱ Marriage is such a blessing and a season in life we admire and most of us desire. Nevertheless, before marriage is the single season. In other words, you are single before marriage. The single season refers to the season when one is not married. It is a foundational season which cannot be overlooked.

The essence of the single season will be discovered as we learn from biblical single season stories of Ruth (Ruth chapter 1-3); Rebecca (Genesis 24) and Esther. From these narratives and for this write-up, our focus will be on “*THE CHRISTIAN SINGLE SEASON AS A SEASON TO IDENTIFY AND DISCOVER YOURSELF AND SOME IMPORTANT CHARACTER TRAITS CHRISTIAN SINGLES SHOULD NURTURE.*”

PART 1:

IDENTIFY AND DISCOVER YOURSELF

CHAPTER 1

SINGLE SEASON: A SEASON TO IDENTIFY YOURSELF WITH GOD

Singlehood is a season with its own challenges but by the Grace of God we can overcome these challenges. Your Identity in God is of great essence during this season and during the other seasons of life. ***A SINGLE SEASON WITH GOD AS THE FOUNDATION IS A STEPPING STONE TO PURPOSEFUL LIVING***

1.1 My Identity

What is Identity?

Identity is a condition or character as to who a person or what a thing is; the qualities, beliefs, that distinguishes or identifies a person or thing.

Where can I find my Identity?

There is just one simple answer to this question. If you buy a new laptop or any electronic gadget, there is always a user manual that comes with it. In the user manual, you find the uses and functions of the gadget as intended by the manufacturer. The same occurs in life. If you are wondering who you are or what you were made to do, it's but normal to go back to the manufacturer of your life to get answers. The manufacturer is God the father almighty so you find your identity in God (*Ephesians 2:4-7, Psalms 139, Jeremiah 1:5*).

How can I go to God the Father of All?

The true and only way to get to God is through His son Jesus Christ.

(Jesus speaking) Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going."

"No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." (John 14:1-8).

There are many people who do not know who they are or "Christians" who are not sure of their identities in Christ or what God created or wants them to do. Hence, they find themselves where they don't want to be, trying to be who they are not, doing what they are not called to do. This little message will enlighten us a little bit about the concept of identity and also some scriptures to help our understanding.

Where won't I find my identity?

Many people suffer in life because we find our identity in the wrong places. Here are a few places or things which should not define your identity.

- **People:** People will do no other thing than condemn you. But God will never condemn you. **John 8:1-11.**
- **Your challenge:** Most people identify themselves by their challenges. They even own their challenges. e.g my high blood, my diabetes, my bankruptcy, my this, my that. This should not be so as it only helps you to keep thinking low of yourself.
- **Profession:** Yes, you can identify yourself by your profession but what if you get into a situation where you make a mistake. For example, you are a banker today and everyone identifies you as a banker but later you lose your job. Then, you start hawking clothes. Will people now call you a banker or a hawk? Was your life identity "a banker"? That's why you don't need to base your identity on your profession because it may fail you sometimes. And many more.

Why should I find my identity in God through Jesus Christ?

- God is our creator. He knows every detail of our lives and the purpose He created us for (Genesis 1:26-27). He has the complete manual for our lives and only Him can give us our identity
- It changes the way you think and live. **2 Corinthians 5:17**
- When we identify in/with Christ, our identity changes and He remolds our destinies. For example, Gideon (**Judges 6:1-11**), Abraham and Sarah (**Genesis 17:5 and 15**)
- We are sure of constant protection and provision. **Psalms 23.**

1.2. Biblical inspiration from the story of Ruth, found in the book of Ruth chapter 1-4

"But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God." (Ruth 1:16)

Ruth's single story is so inspirational. She was from Moab meaning she was raised in paganism because Moab was a pagan community involved in idol worship. The woman Naomi and her family had moved from Bethlehem (a community which served the Living God) to Moab, where her two sons married Moabite ladies- Ruth and Orpah. Unfortunately, Naomi's two sons died, making Ruth and Orpah widows, meaning they were back to singlehood.

Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem, her place of origin. She persuaded her two daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth not to follow her because of the difficulties she was facing and that season of her life was bitter (Ruth 1:13). Orpah decided to go back to Moab but Ruth refused to go back to Moab her place of origin. She insisted on following Naomi despite every difficulty, Ruth 1:16 *"But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God."*

Ruth was a Moabite as earlier mentioned. Moabite women were noted for the detestable things they did like sexual immorality, idol worshipping and more (Numbers 25:1-3). During this single season of her life, despite all difficulties and different choices she could make, Ruth choose to identify herself with Naomi and worship the LIVING GOD whom Naomi worshipped. Ruth did not want to go back to Moab where Idolatry was a norm. She was determined to worship the Living God and wanted to stay close to Naomi and her people who worshipped the Living God. Nothing could stop Ruth, not Naomi, not even the challenges of that single season could stop Ruth from identifying herself with God.

If we read the entire story of Ruth in the later chapters, we would see the effects of a single season with foundation in God. Ruth finally married Boaz, had a son Obed who was the Grandfather of King David and Jesus Christ came from this lineage, insinuating Ruth belonged to the ancestral lineage of Jesus Christ the Messiah, the Savior of the World.

Because of her identity in God, Ruth was able to face and overcome the challenges of her single season; she was blessed with the right company who gave her wise counsel for her life and helped to mold her character; she fulfilled her vocation and she discerned and lived her purpose.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 and 12:6-7 *“Young people, it’s wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do...Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don’t wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well. For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”*

Action Plan to discovering my identity.

Repent of your past ways and Accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and remain in Him. Watch Him lead you through the help of the Holy Spirit, and by His grace your single season will be a good foundation for the other season(s) of your life just like it was for Ruth.

If you desire a new beginning in Christ, pray this with us.

“Heavenly Father, I believe that Jesus Christ came to earth to save mankind. By His death on the cross, He paid the price for the sin of the whole world, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. I confess that I am a sinner in need of a Savior. I believe that Jesus was the sinless sacrifice that died to pay the price for my sins. I turn away from all my sin and pray that, I will grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus. Thank You that by the death and resurrection of Jesus, He has washed away all the sin in my life and by His blood, I’ve been made whole and pure. Thank You for the beautiful gift of salvation. I turn to You in total surrender, keep me holy and set apart for You only. I ask all these, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, Amen.”

(Get more on how to pray in Matthew 6:9-15).

We will like to warmly welcome you as a new member of God’s Family, as you have decided today to follow Christ. Hurray! No matter what your past held, today marks a new beginning in your life.

The old things have passed away, behold all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Begin your new life in the assurance that, though you are in an imperfect world, Jesus Christ is your Companion, counselor, ally, comforter and Savior (Isaiah 9:6). We rejoice in your desire to follow Jesus. May His peace and love always be with you, Amen (John 14:27).

Here are some tips to help grow you in faith:

- 1) Meditate on the word of God daily. (Joshua 1:8; 1 Peter 2:2). Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Hearing may entail having daily quiet time to read, study and meditate on the word of God; listening to teachings from trustworthy teachers of the word and sharing the word with others or in small groups. Faith is sustained by believing the word of God (Jesus Christ is the word which became flesh) and acting on the word (Ephesians 1:13-14 & James 2:17).
- 2) Make prayer, praise and thanksgiving a lifestyle. (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18; Philippians 4:6)
- 3) Strive to flee from evil and bad habits. (1 Thessalonians 5:22; Psalm 37:27)
- 4) Fellowship with other Believers. (Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Corinthians 14:26)
- 5) Seek Christian mentorship. (Philippians 4:9; Titus 2:3-5)

With all these revealed truths what should our assignment be? I wish to encourage us all to do the following and put the devil of stagnation to shame. See yourself as God sees you. How does God see you and what does He say about you in His word?

- You are a new creature (**2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 8:1**)
- The righteousness of God (**2 Corinthians 5:21**)
- We have been healed. (**1 Peter 2:24**)
- We have been made rich (**2 Corinthians 8:9**)
- We are accepted (**Ephesians 1:6**)
- The head not the tail (**Deuteronomy 28:13**)
- Call those things that are not as though they were. (**Romans 4:17**)

I wish you the best on your journey to identity discovery and may you enjoy the best of God this last quarter of the year.

ASSIGNMENT: *(You can jot down your answers and be intentional about acting on what you write).*

a) What steps can I intentionally take to Identify with and draw closer to God?

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CHAPTER 2

MAXIMIZING YOUR SINGLE SEASON FOR SELF DEVELOPMENT

The single season is a season of your life you do not have to joke with because when it is gone, you cannot have it back. It is in maximizing your single season that helps you enjoy it. How do you maximize the season? Through knowing your identity in Christ, discovering your purpose and pursuing it, and nurturing your character. In chapter 1, we looked at identifying with Christ. In this chapter, we will deal elaborately with the subject of discovering your purpose.

2.1 Purpose

Every human being is endowed with different talents and abilities which are usually a sign post in discerning and functioning in your purpose. Purpose as defined by Myles Monroe is the reason for creation. Vocation in the context of this book focuses on occupation/profession which falls too within purpose.

The single season is a season where we can maximize for our self-development in every dimension of life. Self-development entails training yourself now to be who you want to be in order to attain your life vision. Proverbs 29:18a (KJV) says “*where there is no vision, the people perish...*”. Vision helps give you direction on where you are going. Purpose Provides Vision and vision is a direct result of purpose, providing the impetus to act on the direction set by purpose.

Myths about Purpose

Before we enter the subject of purpose, it is vital to clarify certain myths about purpose.

- i. Your purpose is not your job. The fact that you are a lawyer, doctor, teacher, carpenter does not mean you are walking in your purpose.
- ii. Your purpose is not what you are passionate about. Purpose gives birth to passion and not the other way round. We will elaborate in the later part of this chapter.
- iii. Your purpose is not your call. Knowledge of your purpose is what helps you to know your call.

After stating these myths about purpose, let us go further into the subject matter. As defined above, your purpose is the reason why you were created. If your purpose is the reason you were created, then what is your call?

What is the Difference between your Purpose and your Call.?

Your purpose is the reason you were created and it is that inner motivation that makes you to do what you want to do. While your call is the method by which you carry out your purpose. In other words, Purpose is the WHY and your calling is the HOW.

Let us look at this illustration. A young lady is very passionate about female reproductive rights and she believes she was created to help women in this area. With this inner drive, she decided to go to medical school, become a medical doctor and thereafter a gynecologist. Her Purpose (the reason she was created-the “WHY”) is to help women in their reproductive health. How will she go about achieving her purpose? That’s where her call comes in. Because of her purpose, she is called to be a gynecologist.

Your purpose is always steady and never changes throughout your life because that is the reason you were created. But your call may change in different seasons of your life. Still using the illustration above, this young lady has become a gynecologist and decides to organize workshops in the clinic where she works, educating women about their reproductive rights. She travels from one village to another, speaking to rural women in different groups. However, she is unable to do these tasks again due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the social distance restrictions. This lady decides to engage in making you tube videos for the same purpose. She is now called to be a youtuber in order to achieve her purpose of reaching out to women concerning their reproductive rights. From this illustration we can see that at some point, she was called to organize trainings in rural communities but now her call has changed to become a youtuber but her purpose has not changed because everything she does is to achieve that particular thing she was created to do on earth.

How do you discover your Purpose?

The first thing to note in purpose discovery is that everything God created is for a purpose and everything God created was to solve a problem. The light was created to solve the problem of darkness, just like the mouth was created to solve the problem of dumbness and inability to eat. Also, anything of value people have innovated in the world has been innovated to solve a problem. The television was created to solve the problem of lack of information and also as a source of entertainment. Lawyers solve legal problems and teachers solve illiteracy problems. With this understanding, you know that you were not created by mistake. God created you because He wants to use you to solve a problem on earth and that is your purpose.

Steps to discovering your purpose

1. Go to God in prayers and ask him to show you exactly what He created you to do on earth. Only the manufacturer of something knows the use of that thing. God is your maker and He knows you more than you know yourself so it is vital to go back to Him and this takes us back to what was discussed in chapter one.
2. Look at what you hate. It is a pointer to what you were created to fix.ⁱⁱ For example, if you cannot stand injustice in the society, maybe you were created to solve that problem of injustice (your purpose) hence you may be called to be a lawyer to enable you fix the problem of injustice in the society, A good example is Moses in the book of Exodus. He could not stand the sight of the Israelites being treated as slaves in Egypt. He hated it to the extent that he even killed an Egyptian because of it. Thus, we can see in the book of Exodus that Moses'

purpose on earth was to free the Israelites from slavery and lead them into the promised land. This accounts for his persistence even with the resistance from Pharaoh.

Note that before you were born, God had already planned what you have to do on earth. (Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 2:10). That's why He puts some burning desires in you to effect change in a certain direction. When you discover this inner motivation, you will be able to walk in alignment with that which He created you to do on earth.

3. Do not ignore your weakness. God will use your weakness to achieve the reason he created you on earth if only you will surrender that weakness to God and allow the Holy Spirit to work on those weaknesses.
4. Take advantage of opportunities to serve. There are people who do not know what they like or hate or what they are good at or can do. That's why it's important to engage in service. It is in serving that you will discover some of those things you care about or hate and in trying to fix what you hate, you will notice that you are already walking in your purpose.

Benefits of discovering your purpose

1. It gives meaning to your life.
2. It simplifies your life. It determines what you should do and what you should not do. Your purpose becomes the standard you use to evaluate which activity you should be involved in.
3. It makes you focused in life and gives you vision. Walking in your purpose will concentrate your energy on what is important and you will be able to plan well about what you want to achieve.
4. Knowing your purpose motivates your life. When you are walking in your purpose, it produces your passion. It just automatically happens that you can spend hours talking it and you are excited waking up every day to keep doing what you do.
5. Knowing your purpose prepares you for eternity (Romans 14:12).

Pursuing your Purpose

1. Take advantage of opportunities. This has to deal with identifying the specific need you want to meet or problem you want to solve and start doing something about it in your immediate community.
2. Keep working to improve yourself. This may include attending conferences, trainings, reading books, listening to teachings online, joining a small fellowship group etc.

Step out in faith. Don't be scared and do not limit yourself. Remember you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. (Philippians 4:13).

How do I know I am pursuing my Purpose?

1. Peace. When you are fulfilling your purpose, you experience some inner peace that brings joy to your countenance. When you sense that peace, that is definitely the still waters God has let you to as is said in Psalm 23:2.

2. Provision. *Proverbs 18:16* “*the gifts of a man maketh room for him...*” When you are fulfilling your purpose, you will notice you are very good at what you do and you would have impacted many lives in the course of it. For this, people will bless you especially financially for your value on earth.
3. The place of your purpose is where you are celebrated not tolerated (Mike Murdock). This is one of the ways you know you are walking in your purpose, when people celebrate you for your value and not tolerating you which is a sign that you are not adding any value.

You can spend many hours talking about that subject matter any day, anytime. Also, you find yourself going extra miles to get things right in that direction. For example, you can be up at night doing research and digging deep into the area of interest because you want to impact lives in that direction.

Steps to take after discovering your purpose.

1. Be diligent. *Proverbs 22:29* “*see a man diligent in all his ways, he shall stand before kings. He shall not stand before mean men.*” It is walking in your purpose that will announce you to the world once you are focused and diligent.
2. Position yourself where your purpose is fed. This has to do with where you choose to stay, who you hang out with, the church you attend and for singles, it determines who you marry. Marriage is not supposed to kill your purpose but it has to give you a better way to fulfill it. Two are better than one (*Ecclesiastics 4:9*), “One shall chase a thousand two shall put ten thousand to flight” (*Deuteronomy 32:30*)

2.2. Biblical inspiration from the story of Ruth, found in the book of Ruth chapter 2

Let’s draw inspiration from the story of Ruth on how we can maximize the single season to discern and function in our purpose and vocation.

a. Ruth’s Vocation.

Ruth had a talent in gathering grain (*Ruth 2:2*) and Ruth decided to exploit and develop this talent. With consistent hard work, she found herself working in Boaz’s field as one of the harvesters (*Ruth 2:3-23*). So, we can say Ruth’s occupation was farming. It is also worth noting that this occupation was a source of livelihood for Ruth and her mother-in-law (*Ruth 2:17-18 and 23*).

b. Ruth’s Purpose.

In chapter 1, we saw how Ruth left Moab; decided to follow her mother-in-law Naomi to Bethlehem; decided to worship the living God and live among people who worshipped the living God. One of the abilities Ruth had was caring for others. This is evident in the way she humbly and respectfully catered for Naomi her mother-in-law (*Ruth 2:11-12; 17 & 23*). If we read ahead, in *Ruth 4*, we notice Boaz married Ruth and they had a son Obed who was the grand-father of David and this is part of the ancestral lineage of Jesus Christ.

Despite the fact that Ruth was a Moabite of origin, her purpose was linked to being part of the lineage and caring for the family from which Jesus Christ came from. Nevertheless, discerning, functioning and fulfilling her purpose only came after she decided to follow her creator God. In living up to her purpose, she fulfilled the specific tasks which came with the different seasons of her life. Ruth 2 records the singlehood season of Ruth's life and one specific task linked to her purpose here was caring for her mother in-law Naomi. We should also notice that even her occupation (vocation) of working in Boaz's field was linked to her purpose. From this we understand that even our vocation is usually linked to our purpose. For instance, King David in the Bible was skillful at taking care of sheep and his occupation was a shepherd of sheep. This was his vocation during one season of his life. However, this was linked to fulfilling his life purpose of being King of Israel, the shepherd of people. David may have wanted to build the temple of God, but that was not his God-given purpose. God had purported Solomon to build the temple. Meaning everyone was created for a specific purpose. God is a God of purpose and everything He created has a purpose. Just like the fabricator of every product has the best mastery of the product's purpose and how it should function to fulfill the purpose for which it was produced, God knows why He created each individual how they should function to attain their purpose. Imagine the original producer of a refrigerator did not make known its purpose of food preservation by keeping food cold after connecting the refrigerator to a power source. I can imagine how some people would have used a brand-new refrigerator as a cupboard to pack plates, cups etc, and the lack of knowledge of the purpose of the refrigerator would have led to abuse of its use. The essence of our existence is to fulfill our God given purpose and our creator God is the best to help us discern and function in our purpose.

Jesus Christ's purpose on earth was to save mankind. This purpose was the driving force for Jesus Christ's life on earth and everything He did. Jesus' life in fulfilling His purpose had different seasons and He maximized these seasons to fulfill the specific task for that season. For instance, when Jesus was twelve years old, He used that season to learn and grow in wisdom (Luke 2:41-52). Jesus was about thirty years old when he started His public ministry and during this season, He was tempted by the devil in wilderness. Jesus knew his purpose and was steadfast in living every season to fulfill his purpose. So, because he had a secured relationship with God who set out His purpose, He was committed to fulfilling this purpose. There was a season when Jesus embarked on teaching the word of God and there was a season of performing miracles. No wonder in John 2:1-11, when Jesus' mother told him about a shortage in supply of wine, Jesus replied... "My time has not yet come". Even the season of crucifixion, death and resurrection were all in line with fulfilling Jesus Christ's purpose of saving mankind.

"FULFILLING THE PURPOSE OF EXISTENCE IS THE ESSENCE OF EXISTENCE".

Each one is created for a purpose and each season of life has specific task to fulfill which leads to fulfilling of life's purpose. So, maximize the single season to discern and function in your purpose and vocation. There are specific tasks during this season which leads up to fulfilling your life's purpose.

Let us go to God by believing in Jesus Christ. He is the creator and created each one with talents and abilities to fulfill purpose and He will lead us through the Holy Spirit's guiding. Reading

inspirational books such as Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren; In Pursuit of Purpose by Dr. Myles Monroe, Reclaiming God's original Purpose for your life by Myles Monroe, Understanding Your Potential by Myles Monroe and many more can be of help. Getting a spiritual mentor and taking out time to discover the hidden talents in you, the things you are passionate about will help too.

2.3. Single season: Social identity consciousness.

Our social identity has a great role to play during our single season. Social identity is defined as “*the part of the self that is defined by one's group membership* (www.thoughtCo.com)”. The singlehood season is a season of self-development, be it spiritually, professionally, morally etc. The right social identity will help you develop yourself positively, which is part of a strong foundation for purposeful living and a wrong social identity deters you from positive self-development.

It's necessary to ask yourself who are your close associates during this season. It is good to be very sociable, love everyone, be with family, friends, and colleagues, however it's good to identify what is called “close associates”. By Close associates here, it means those who you are strongly connected to, your close company, be it through Christian fellowship association, professional association, friendship etc. These close associates are usually people you listen to, whom you can take advice from etc. They are a strong part of your social identity, and in one way or the other influence your decisions. The right social identity will help you grow in the different spheres of your life while the wrong social identity may deter your growth in these different spheres of life. 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV) says “Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for bad company corrupts good character”.

During your single season, having the right company really helps especially in the decisions you have to make. Also, good mentorship (Christian, professional, peer etc.) is of great essence. It is good to have a mentor with a sound mind you can look up to. You may have mentors in the different spheres of life. For instance, you can have a Christian spiritual mentor who will help your growth and your Christian faith walk; a professional mentor will help your professional growth; a peer mentor who may be friends who are your close company and can give sound advice etc. It is also good to have people below you who look up to you as a mentor. These people you mentor will also help you do your self-checks to be sure if you are actually a role model to them. All these form part of your social identity and the right social identity is of great essence during the singlehood season.

2.4. Biblical inspiration from the story of Ruth, found in the book of Ruth chapter 1

But Ruth replied, “Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us.” (Ruth 1:16-17)

Ruth had a choice of whom she wanted to be her close associates. She also had the choice of where she wanted live. Naomi persuaded Ruth and Orpah (Ruth’s sister in-law) to return to Moab their area of origin. Moab was a society whose women were noted for idol worshipping and sexual immorality (Numbers 25:1-3). Orpah chose to return to Moab but in chapter 1:16, Ruth chose to set her social identity by choosing to go with Naomi to Bethlehem and living with Naomi’s people. This means Ruth chose the environment where she wanted to be (Bethlehem) and who she wanted to be with (Naomi and her people). Interesting to note is that before making these choices, Naomi had notified Ruth that things are bitter for her Naomi, insinuating that if Ruth has to follow her, things may not be easy too for Ruth. Notwithstanding, Ruth still chose Naomi and her people as those she wanted to be with and live with. If we read the later chapters of the book of Ruth, we will discover how the right social identity and mentorship from Naomi helped Ruth to fulfill her life purpose.

BE CONSCIOUS! YOUR SOCIAL IDENTITY CAN HELP OR MAR YOUR POSITIVE SELF-DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS ESSENTIAL IN ATTAINING PURPOSE.

During this singlehood season, may God link us to the right company, people, social environment which will help us grow positively in the different spheres of life.

ASSIGNMENT: *(You can jot down your answers and be intentional about acting on what you write).*

- a) **What steps can I intentionally take to discover my vocation/purpose during my single season?**
- b) **Are the groups or company I identify with helpful or harmful to me? What steps can I intentionally take belonging to groups or company that is helpful for my growth?**

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PART II

NURTURE GODLY VALUES AND CHARACTER.

CHAPTER 3

INTENTIONALLY NURTURING VIRTUOUS CHARACTER DURING THE SINGLE SEASON.

What is Character?

Character is physical expression of the values in a person's mind. Values are principles or standards of character. This means our values shape our character and our values are influenced by the deep-rooted things in our mind. The single season is a season which we can maximize for our self-development in every dimension of life. Part of this development is in Character.

3.1. Some Intentional Steps to Nurturing Character.

i. Getting the right values for your life from the Creator.

The manufacturer of every product knows the best values which will enable the product to function in the best of its abilities. Our creator God Almighty knows the right values which will enable us get the right character. These values are contained in the word of God. We need to go back to God through His word, Jesus Christ so that we can get the right values for our lives, instill the word of God in our hearts so that it can produce the fruit of godly character in us. Galatians 5:22 shows us the core character traits which come as a result of identifying with our creator which include: Love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

ii. Be intentional about feeding yourself with the right content.

The deep-rooted things in your mind can influence your values. Things get into your mind basically through your senses like seeing, hearing etc. Intentionally choose your content so that the right content can transform your mind, shape your values and your character will just be an expression of this.

For instance, persistently reading or hearing the word of God helps implant the values of God such as love in your heart. When you believe this word and let it transform your mind, then this will be expressed in your character

You can also read books, listen to motivational speakers, attend conferences and so on. Nevertheless, just make sure the content is healthy and will help in building you.

iii. Don't be proud. Be humble to learn and one way of learning is through mentorship.

Your mentors should be people who hold same VALUES as you and who can tell you when you go wrong.

3 types of mentors that can help you in character development:

- **Upper mentor:** Someone with similar values who portrays the character and qualities you aspire to have. This person should be someone who can advise you and correct you when you are going wrong.

- **Peer mentor:** Peer mentors may include the people you spend most time with and your friends (but not all your friends.) You may have many people or friends around you, but you need to have a few inner-core friends who have similar values like you and express or aspire to express virtuous character. This is important because our close associates play a great role in feeding our minds. For instance, persistent discussion gives us information which gets into our mind and can influence our values.
- **A junior mentee:** A junior mentee is someone who looks up to you. Mentees act as a check to your growth. Knowing that someone is being inspired to nurture character by looking at your character helps you to be intentional about expressing the right character. This is because of the awareness that what you do affects your mentee. The mentee is like a check to you.

iv. Service.

Constant practice also helps in nurturing Character. Service is an opportunity for practicing and nurturing character. Your area of service can be the family you live with, your job, your church, your local community etc. You can utilize your area of service as a platform to practice respect for others; generosity; patience with others, self-control etc.

3.2. Some Important Values and Character Traits Christian Singles Should Nurture

The single season is a season which we can maximize for our self-development in every dimension of life. Part of this development is Character development. As Christians, through the works of the Holy Spirit in us, we are able to bear the fruits of the Spirit and our character is an outward manifestation of the fruit we bear. As singles, we can avail ourselves for the Holy Spirit to help us bear good fruit and we also have to go along with the circumstances we face, which may present us with the opportunity to nurture some character traits. Here, are highlights of some important values and character traits Christian singles should nurture, drawing inspiration from the story of Ruth in the Bible

Single season: Nurture godly values.

- i. ***Develop a love relationship with Christ:*** Take advantage of your time as a single to get busy with the things of God. Ruth chose to cling to Naomi's God. She diligently worked at what she could and God sent a man to protect and provide for her. Boaz recognized her devotedness to the Lord and remarked about it when he said "may the Lord reward your work with wages". As a single use your time to commit to God and as you seek Him with all your heart all else that you need will be added unto you.
- ii. ***Be pure:*** We live in a world of blatant sexual impurity. 80% of most unmarried women have given away their virginity. God wants you as a single to be pure so as to protect you from the consequences that sex before marriage brings. If you have indulged in sexual sin, the good news is that you can repent and turn away from it. God is ready to forgive you and make you pure again.
- iii. ***Have faith:*** Ruth chose to trust God with her future. She looked not with sensual eyes but through eyes of faith. She chose to trust with her heart for the future, what eyes couldn't

see. God providentially directed her to the field of Boaz. God rewarded Ruth's faith and will reward yours as well dear Christian single.

- iv. ***Have the capacity to wait:*** Ruth chose to cling to God when her mother in-law was bitter on God. Contentedly facing each day's task, Ruth received the attention and blessing of the eligible bachelor in town. Women experience much needless pain when they run ahead of God. Being single can be difficult enough for a woman but the heartbreak of being led on by a man can dangerously lead you to a ditch of discontentment. Hence as a Christian single it is very necessary to learn to wait on God. God's time is always the best and His gifts add no sorrow.
- v. ***Be contented:*** Ruth had every reason to be discontented looking at her past failures but she chose to cling to God, facing her day's tasks in contentment. When your happiness in life is based on your terms the result is a hollow of gladness and true contentment as a single comes only from God.

3.3. Single season: Nurture godly character.

- i. ***Submissiveness:*** Some qualities embodied in submission *include humility, obedience, respect and yielding.*

Ephesians 5:21-22 tells Christians to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ and wives to submit to their husband as to the Lord. The story of Ruth makes us understand that Christian singles can start nurturing this quality during their single season. Ruth was very humble, yielding and obedient to her mother in-law Naomi. In Ruth 1,2,3 we see how Ruth respected and obeyed Naomi. Before going out to the fields, she informed Naomi and went to the field after Naomi had given her approval. We see humility in Ruth when she fell at Boaz's feet to thank him for the favor he showed her. We see how Ruth yielded to Naomi's advice in Ruth 3. It's our Christian duty to be submissive to one another and with the help of the Holy Spirit we can keep on nurturing these qualities of being submissive to those whom we are subject to and in our relationship with other brethren.

- ii. ***Hard work:*** Living a purposeful life entails continual work. The single season is a great time to invest and build on different dimensions of our life. For instance, your vocation, profession, home management, time management, multitasking etc. During her single season, Ruth's profession was farming and she worked so hard on Boaz's field that she could not go unnoticed. Her task in line with her life purpose for the season was catering for Naomi which she did with a lot of passion and while doing that she was surely learning how to cater for a home. Ruth developed multi-tasking which is seen in how she worked well in Boaz's field and took good care of Naomi. Therefore, an attitude of hard work can be nurtured during the single season.
- iii. ***Generosity:*** *Generosity is usually expressed in giving lovingly to others or putting others before yourself.*

Our world today is characterized by a lot of selfishness and self-centeredness. Someone seeking what pleases him alone even if it hurts every other person. We need to be generous

in our actions. This too can be nurtured. Ruth in her singlehood was very generous towards Naomi that Boaz heard the story of her generosity even before encountering her. Boaz surely heard of how Ruth left her home of origin to follow and take care of Naomi. This implies she put Naomi's interest before hers.

iv. Honesty: *Honesty embodies being loyal, truthful, trustworthy, accountability and integrity.*

One of the things Ruth really portrayed was honesty. She was loyal to Naomi, very truthful, accountable and acted in all integrity. She told Naomi where she was going and she went to the field to do exactly what she told Naomi she was going to do. On her return, she gave account of all what happened and Naomi trusted Ruth such that she gave her sound advice knowing Ruth will surely obey. In our society today, honesty seems to be far-fetched but it can be nurtured. We can start by being honest with those around us.

As singles, many of us desire marriage which is a very important institution established by God and is *the center of human existence*. Marriage is such a blessing and a season of life we admire and most of us desire. Become a princess if you wish to marry a Prince. Boaz was also attracted to the virtue and character displayed in Ruth's life. A woman of virtue is irresistible to a godly man. In Ruth 2; 10-11, Boaz said all that you've done for your mother in law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me. The beauty of a woman as stated in 1Peter3;4, should be that of inner self, unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is of great worth in God's sight. To marry a prince, you must first be a princess. The characters you want to see in a man, first possess them. Rebekah did wait, she was a hard worker, she worked full time for her father tending his sheep (Gen 24;15-16). Rebekah was therefore, not a lazy woman but one of noble character, she extended her hands to the poor, she was kind. Are you becoming a virtuous woman that a man may need as a helpmate?

Life has different seasons. Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 11(NLT) says "*For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven... Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time...*". Adam lived a single season in the presence of God and carrying out a God-given task of catering for the creatures under his care before his union with Eve. Thus, if there is a season for everything in the Christian journey, then singlehood is surely a season with a God-given purpose. The Bible has a lot of Narratives which teach us so much about the single season and what we outlined through our write-ups on the single season are just a few. So, let's go to God who established the single season, and through the help of the Holy Spirit, we would be able to walk through and bear good fruits during this season to the Glory of God

v. Don't view the trials of the single season as irritating grains of sand to be discarded as quickly as possible. Realize that God has them there to create something beautiful in you.

Ruth experienced many irritations or trials; she grieved the death of her father-in-law and husband in a strange land and she had to move to a new location. Through all this stress, her faith in God never failed and the end product was a pearl from the washbasin of Moab. God is using the sands of your singleness to make you perfect and complete.

3.4. Singlehood season: Nurture physical self and environmental care.

Besides developing spiritually, in character and vocation, you can also maximize the single season by learning to take care of yourself and your environment.

- a) **Self-care:** The single season is time you have for yourself. Your personal hygiene can also be improved upon in this season. For instance, you can spend time in exercising and keeping your body in shape; you can learn to be discipline in cleaning yourself, dressing properly etc. Learn to be modest and presentable in appearance. Being presentable does not mean be extravagant. It simply means being clean, smart, or decent enough to be seen in public. In Ruth 3:3, Naomi advised Ruth to take a bath, put on perfume and dress well.
- b) **Environmental care:** The environment here means where you find yourself at every moment. It is both the physical and human environment. Are you in your father's house? Maximize this single season to learn to take care of a house. This may entail practical things like getting up early while others asleep; learning to clean the house; decorate the house; washing dresses/dishes; arranging the room; sweeping the compound etc. You can discipline yourself to ensure that every environment you find yourself has to look well catered for. Nurture environmental care and Nurture a character of taking care of people in your environment. The first step to doing this is by taking care of the environment so that it is very conducive for people to live in as already noted above. Taking care of people in your immediate environment may entail practical things like learning to pray and share the word of God with them; learning to cook for them and helping in home task like farming, selling at a family business store etc. Ruth went to the field to work so she could get food for she and her mother-in-law and she met Boaz on the field Ruth 2:2; Rebekah was fetching water and she met Abraham's servant who was on mission to look for a wife for Isaac Genesis:15-59. These women were busy serving others by taking care of others around them and their environment. They were hard working and nurtured qualities and through these qualities, their husbands identified them.

The list is not limited to what has been stated above, but this is a signpost to some self and environmental care qualities we can develop during the single season.

ASSIGNMENT: (*You can jot down your answers and be intentional about acting on what you write*).

- b) What qualities do I need to improve on or develop?
- c) What qualities do I need to improve on in the area of physical self-care and care for my environment?

PART III

THRIVE THROUGH THE SINGLE SEASON

CHAPTER 4

STRIDE RATHER THAN STRIVE IN YOUR SINGLE SEASON

Pastor Michael Todd of Transformation Church preached a sermon on "***Stride***" which means to "***walk with long, decisive steps in a specified direction***". This sermon showcased that throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, it is not heard that he ran. Instead, He walked at the pace of grace, yet He was able to effectively fulfill His purpose for coming to the earth and did not miss out on anything He had to do.

When we stride, we are not lazily standing on one position, neither are we striving and running too fast and missing on many things which adversely affects attaining our goal. Rather, when we stride, we take long decisive steps in a specific direction towards attaining our goals in life. The things that are certain about striding is ***COMMITMENT (walking); PERSISTENCE (walking long decisive steps) and FOCUSED (in a specific direction)***. The process of becoming a medical doctor needs a lot of striding. Your goal is to become a medical doctor. To attain this, you take decisive steps like enrolling into the medical school, passing exams, going for practice sessions and obtaining medical license at the end of the training. You see, there are different seasons which you intentionally walk in on the way to becoming a medical doctor. You don't skip any part of the process or you may end up destroying lives rather than saving them as a medical doctor.

Just like the saying goes "all fingers are not the same", according to God's purpose for you, He plans the seasons in your life which is unique to each individual. So, God is also intentional about the single season in our lives. For some, He may let you go through a shorter single season. For some it may be longer. Societal perspectives today have made the single season to look very unimportant so much so that many people especially ladies strive to get out of this season rather than striding to fulfill purpose during this season while moving to the next seasons of life. One thing we know is that just like we desire to be married one day, you reading this may desire that too and we believe God placed those desires there because there is a purpose for us to fulfill by being a wife/husband. Nevertheless, if you are still in your single season, understand that God may also have you there for a reason and learn to stride in it.

Is it possible to stride in the single season?

Let's draw inspiration from the single season of some ladies in the bible. They are Ruth, Esther and Rebecca. These women had different single season experiences and we believe many single ladies fall under one of these categories. Through their stories we learn how we can stride in the single season as they did. So, let's go!

4.1. Biblical examples

- a. **Ruth – An example of a single season amidst a filthy past, present challenges and experiences. (Ruth Chapter 1-4)**

Ruth was a Moabite and Moabites were noted for idol worship and also immoral conducts. Ruth married a man from Bethlehem which means she married a man who worshipped the Living God. Her father-in-law died and later on, her husband died. So, she became single again, left with her mother-in-law Naomi. Naomi encouraged Ruth and Orpah (the other daughter-in-law of Naomi who had lost her husband too) not to follow her because she had no other sons for them to remarry and rather encouraged them to stay in Moab, most probably to remarry. Orpah decided to remain in Moab, while Ruth decided to follow her mother-in-law to worship the living GOD whom Naomi worshipped and live with Naomi's people who were godly people living according to godly standards. Ruth followed Naomi to Bethlehem despite all the difficulty which they faced. She took care of Naomi and worked hard to earn a living for herself and Naomi. She nurtured godly characters during this season which was evident in the way she catered for Naomi; how she obeyed Naomi; how she patiently and devotedly worked on the fields behind the harvester; humility as she bowed when talking to Boaz etc. During this season Ruth invested her time in functioning in her vocation (farming) and her purpose for the season (catering for Naomi). Boaz noticed Ruth because she went out to work and was very committed to her work and he also mentioned that he had heard of all Ruth had done to Naomi. Even when Boaz had showed His interest for Ruth, she took Naomi's advice to lay at Boaz's feet (This was not suggesting a seductive act. Rather it was acting in accordance with Israelite custom and law and by observing this custom, Ruth was informing Boaz that he could be her guardian-redeemer). She was patient in her single season until Boaz fulfilled all the procedures for marriage and married her.

It is amazing how Ruth walked long decisive steps in her single season through which she ended up fulfilling purpose. Maybe if she had to strive for a cute life after the death of her husband, she would have remained in Moab and idolatry just like Orpah. Rather when she found God she started to walk at her pace of grace in the single season. She chose to leave old Moabite ways to follow God's ways and lived in hardship with her mother-in-law. Despite the hardship, her single season focused on serving God, developing godly character, working in her vocation and purpose for the season. At the end, we see how her single season was a foundation for a marriage which fulfilled a God-ordained purpose of bringing forth and taking care of the lineage through which Jesus came from.

Do you have a filthy past characterized by things like idolatry; immorality; theft; deception etc and you feel downcast about your life especially your single season? The good news is that it is not too late to begin a new walk. God can cleanse you and make everything new for you.

b. Esther- An example of a single season of an orphan girl (Esther Chapter 1-10)

King Xerxes was the king of Persia. He gave a banquet in his palace and during the banquet, he invited queen Vashti in-order to display her beauty to the people for she was a beautiful woman but Vashti refused to show up. The king was not happy with Vashti and consulted with the wise men who advised the king that Vashti's conduct was not right and other women may know of such conduct and begin to despise their husbands. The king was advised to give Vashti's royal position to someone else who was better than Vashti.

Esther was an orphan who was brought up by her cousin Mordecai, a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin. When king Xerxes' order to search for a young lady to become queen was proclaimed, Esther was among the many ladies who were taken to the citadel (palace) of Susa and put under Hegai's care. Amongst the other ladies she pleased Hegai and won his favor nevertheless, Esther obeyed Mordecai and did not reveal her nationality and family background. Esther and the other ladies had to go through twelve months of beauty treatment before meeting the king and when they went to the king, anything they asked for was given to them. When it was Esther's turn to meet the king, she obeyed Hegai and asked for nothing other than what Hegai had asked her to ask for. Esther won the favor of the king and all the other people who saw her. Eventually she won the king's approval and she was crowned Queen in place of Vashti.

Vashti was physically very beautiful, the other young ladies who were presented to the king were physically beautiful. So why did Esther, a lowly orphan find favor in the king? The second chapter of the biblical book of Esther carries a lot of information on Esther striding in her single season. She was an orphan with a godly upbringing. Despite the hardship that is usually attached to growing as an orphan, she remained focused and nurtured her character as a single. For instance, Esther portrayed a lot of obedience, humility, quiet-spirit etc. If she had to strive to meet the king, she should have skipped doing the things Mordecai asked her to do while she was single and she may have also denied the twelve months treatment offered before meeting the king and thus she may never have been Queen. Instead, she walked long decisive steps through her up-bringing and went through the twelve months treatment before being taken to the king. She walked at her pace of Grace during her single season and at the set time she found favor in the king. Apparently, the king was not just looking for a beautiful lady (Vashti too was very beautiful) but for a lady who was better in character than Vashti and whom other women could emulate. Esther had utilized her single season to nurture noble characters so the king chose her to become Queen. The later chapters of Esther show how God used Esther as queen to save a whole nation.

Certain unfortunate circumstances in life have caused some young ladies to lose faith in God and think attaining their life purpose is hopeless. In some communities, poverty has made some young girls to forget their dreams and turn to prostitution as a means of livelihood. Some of them have ended up being heart broken, depressed, some with diseases etc. The story of Esther demonstrates God's sovereignty and His loving care over his people. Your situation may not be easy, but if you can trust God, while you see yourself as a poor single young orphan girl, God is seeing a queen to liberate nations and is using your difficulties during this single season to groom your character in order that you are able to handle the great task He has ahead for you.

c. Rebekah- An example of a good Christian girl with a lengthy single season (Genesis 24)

Abraham sent his servant to look for a wife for his son Isaac. The servant prayed to God and asked for a sign to choose the wife for Isaac. Many women were visiting the spring to draw water. The servant prayed that if he asked a young lady to give him water to drink and she gives him and also offers to feed his Camel, then let her be the one God has chosen for Isaac. Before he finished praying, Rebekah showed up. Rebekah was a single lady born of a God-worshipping lineage. Some of the qualities the Bible mentions of Rebekah is that she was very beautiful, old enough to be

married but she was still a virgin (Genesis 24:16). Abraham's servant asked Rebekah for water. She offered him water and offered his Carmel water to drink until they had enough water. Rebekah also offered room for the Abraham's servant to live in her father's house. Rebekah, with the permission of her family went with the servant. While they were approaching the field where Isaac was, from a distance, the servant introduced Isaac to Rebekah as his master. Rebekah took her veil and covered herself. The servant told Isaac all he had done and thereafter Isaac married Rebekah.

In the context of some African societies, when a lady is above 25 years and still single, it looks like a taboo. You usually hear statements like *'she is too selective, or she is too educated or she has a character problem'* that is why she is still single. All these may be true in peculiar circumstances, but in other circumstances, it may be God's will that some people have a lengthy single season. Rebekah is a real example of a God-fearing lady who "strides" in her single season. She took decisive steps of taking care of her family, nurturing godly- character such as humility, generosity, hard work, obedience, patience etc, which she emulated. She did not strive to shorten the single season. Instead she had to stride in it. See how it is mentioned that she was old enough to be married yet she was still a virgin. The Bible also mentions that Isaac got married at the age of 40 (Genesis 25:20). So we imagine that if Rebekah was old enough to be married then she may have been in her 30s. Yet she still kept godly characters like being a virgin. Rebekah had done nothing wrong to be single but it was God's plan that she had a lengthy single season and she kept striding in this season, not complaining or becoming depressed but serving God and those around her. She waited until her family accepted that she could go with Abraham's servant. Even when she met Isaac in the field, she did not rush but decided to veil herself until Isaac took her and married her. We see how one act of her service, humble and obedient character was a confirmation from God about being the wife of Isaac and not only that but also as one of the women through whom the descendants of the Great nation which God promised to Abraham was to be made manifest.

The single season has its own challenges. We (arise sister team) face similar challenges. When we commenced doing write-ups on the arise sister platform, we were all single. We are grateful to God for wisdom about the single season given through His word, the help of the Holy Spirit, guidance from spiritual leaders, our parents and godly-advice from elderly people and peers. We are sharing what we are learning and endeavoring to act on what we learn. Nevertheless, we are not perfect and can be made perfect only through Jesus Christ who is our perfection. It is only by the Help of His Spirit that we can stride during this single season. God has shown us that He is a sovereign God and determines the seasons in our lives. We celebrated the weddings of two members of the team in the same week and we can testify of how God brought the husbands of our sisters through different ways at His appointed time.

Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us from sin and every burden. This salvation package also entails being saved from the pressures of life that may keep us downcast. All you need to do to attain this salvation is believe in Jesus Christ and sincerely accept Him as Lord and savior. Study the word of God daily, pray, praise, fellowship with other Christians etc. Remain in Christ and you will notice that one secret to finding peace and joy in God is to discover, accept and appreciate God's perfect timing and seasons.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven...” (KJV). This shows us that God has a plan for our lives and for every season of our lives. God provides cycles in our lives, each having work for us to do and the challenges we face during these seasons should not be barriers for us to quit achieving our purpose or to try to skip certain seasons of life. Rather, the challenges should help us depend more on God and His timing and this will help us stride (walk at the pace of grace) rather than strive on way to attaining our live goals.

Life has different seasons. Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 11(NLT) says “***For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven... Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time...***”. Adam lived a single season in the presence of God and carrying out a God-given task of catering for the creatures under his care before his union with Eve. Thus, if there is a season for everything in the Christian journey, then singlehood is surely a season with a God-given purpose. So, maximize your single season for God’s glory.

ASSIGNMENT: (*You can jot down your answers and be intentional about acting on what you write*).

- a. Which of the biblical single season experience do you relate closely to- Ruth, Esther or Rebekah and what lesson have you learned about your situation from the biblical ladies cited?

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Recommended books

1. *Woman: helpmeet or hell loose* by Yetunde Ayeni
2. *The Assignment* by Mike Murdock
3. *Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren
4. *In Pursuit of Purpose* by Myles Munroe
5. *Lady in Waiting* by Debby Jones and Jackie Kendall

Arise Sister is made up of a group of women passionate about bringing people of all nations to the light of the Glory of God. Our desire is to see you become all that you were created for, despite the turbulence in the world. Thank you for taking out time to read this short book. We would be delighted to hear from you, share in your testimonies or help you in your walk with God.

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