
Introduction

Ephesians 3:20

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us ...

If a Bible verse could sum up my journey with God, it would be Ephesians 3:20. God has taken me from a place of destruction to a promise of destiny, from a pauper to a princess, and from a near-bankrupt woman to a woman blessed with a promising business. I did not know that my life would drastically turn around when I gave myself fully into His hands.

Growing up without a father was hard. Living with a mother who had a broken heart was even harder. Rejection and a sense of abandonment were my constant companions. Survival was my only approach to life. Though I grew up attending Sunday school and hearing Bible stories, I didn't really witness His reality in my life. I tried to be a good Christian but struggled to live by faith. I was taught to love God, but trusting God was quite another matter.

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When I finally finished with university, I took off for the world to find a sense of worth. I was sick and tired of feeling unworthy, but I knew that feeling unworthy *and* being poor was worse. I set out to find success and climb the corporate ladder as a means of self-validation. However, after six years of searching, I found myself back in the same place called “emptiness.” But this time, that place was made worse with debts that came from trying to live beyond my means to fabricate my worth.

When it seemed like all was lost, God put people in my life who brought me back to Him. At this crossroads in 1995, I decided to stop running away from God and to run toward Him. I decided to give Him my life. I didn’t know then that He would give my life back to me with all that I have today. Indeed, as Ephesians 3:20 says it is above and beyond all that I could think, ask, or imagine! Back in church, I began to devour the Word and discovered my worth. The Lord divinely guided me to the financial industry, and I took a leap of faith to build a business from scratch. God truly is a debt-canceling God! In short two years, He prospered my hands and I was able to pay back all my debts to the banks! I couldn’t believe that God would move so quickly, but little did I know that He was preparing me for greater things ahead.

In 1997, God showed me an open vision of the verse about the threshing floor in Luke 3:17. Immediately, I heard the Holy Spirit speak the word “preparation” into my heart. I knew God was prompting me to sign up for our Bible school in church, but I resisted. I was not intending to be a preacher, and I never thought I would end up marrying one. I was determined to be a successful businesswoman and to fund the work of the ministry. I did not respond to God’s vision and ran, yet again. However, just like Jacob, God met me and gave me my ultimatum. It happened on a business-incentive trip to Milan, Italy, in September 1997. The company had paired me in the same room with another Christian lady, with whom I was chatting away as we sat on our beds, each leaning

against the opposite walls. She was ranting about how good God was to her. Suddenly, I experienced the weirdest sense of *déjà vu*. This scene felt all so familiar, as if it had happened somehow somewhere before in my life! Yet I had never visited Milan, and I had never seen this lady before that day! Besides that, I felt deep pain as every word that came out of her mouth pierced like daggers straight into my heart. She spoke good words, but the more she said, the more I began to realize that I was lacking the favor of the Lord. Though I was a believer who faithfully tithed and served the church, He was still not Lord of all. Yes, I had decided to rededicate my life, but I had not intended to fully surrender it before that day. In that hotel room, God was ready to put His finger on that area that was yet to be on the altar.

That night, I could not sleep. Questions raced through my mind: “What is wrong with me?” “Why don’t I have His favor?” My answers would come the next day. That morning, my roommate left for breakfast, and I stayed back to seek the Lord. As I prayed on my knees, God’s tangible presence began to fill the room. The Holy Spirit lifted up my hands, and a voice said to me, “Susan, if I had died for you, would you live for me?” At that moment, tears flooded my eyes. I was bawling. God was exposing my fear and allowing me to see the foundation of my heart. I saw that my unwillingness to obey Him and to be trained came from my fear of letting go of security in this life—the security that came from the very thing He had placed in my hands: the success in my business. God wanted this back because He wanted to give me more. In that moment, I realized that my greatest fear was never about not being successful or rich but that I would miss out on everything I was meant to be and to do. In that wrestling experience, I allowed God to break me so that He could remake me into someone He had in mind. That day, I built an altar in my heart and became determined to live fully as He has intended—not my will but His be done.

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Now looking back, I can see that God was changing the course of my life and getting trained was pivotal to the fulfillment of the ultimate calling in my life. After graduating from Bible school, in January 1999, the Lord began to impress upon me the passage of Proverbs 31:10-31. He gave me two promises. First, my work shall be blessed, and second, that I would find my life partner, a man of spiritual authority. My business took off after I finished Bible school, and God has not stopped in the area of His provision. My business continues to grow as He continues to provide through my work for the ministry. Today, I run a financial advisory business managing more than thirty consultants and I continue to thrive in this industry. As for the life partner, well, God certainly has a sense of humor. The man turned out to be my very own pastor! Not only did I marry a pastor, but he—Derek—and I now pastor a church in Orange County, California. Derek, who left California for mission work in Malaysia in the nineties, felt called to come on staff in the church that I was a member of in Singapore. Back then, he was also my leader in our connect group.

Fast-forward: Derek and I started dating and eventually married in 2001. Over time, God began to reveal to Derek His plan to bring him back to America to start a new ministry. God also began to move in my heart to prep us for the next season. Exactly ten years later, in 2011, and with the blessings of our senior pastors, we began our journey into what we believe is our “promised land.”

When I left Singapore in December 2011, I had been a volunteer pastoral leader for thirteen years. I had led 250 people and raised up leaders in what was then my home church, all while running my own financial consultancy business. The church was the largest in Singapore; it was thriving and had international influence. Every Sunday, hundreds of new converts gave their lives to Jesus; an indisputable sense of purpose and destiny surrounded the church too. Throughout my years

of ministry, God had given me a heart especially for the women. Though many of them loved God deeply, they struggled with their identity and finding themselves, sometimes having to choose to be a dutiful wife or to be fervent and dedicated to the work of the ministry. It was common to see more emphasis on the spirituality of the men; oftentimes, women's spirituality was neglected, resulting likely because women are often the primary caregivers for children.

Dilemma of the Married Christian Woman

Throughout my time of ministry, I have discipled and raised up men and women leaders. In fact, Derek and I have counseled many married couples. More women than men have sought help with their issues and problems in their marriages. Marrying God-loving men who also serve the ministry has not made their issues go away. In some cases, the more "spiritual" the men become, the more the women feel a sense of disconnectedness and discontent. While their husbands are growing in their faith, the women are finding themselves in over their heads, making sure the children are taken care of and the house is clean on top of the demand of their day job! Gradually drifting away, these women begin to lose purpose and meaning and become resentful and depressed. When husbands do not intentionally encourage their wives to develop their spiritual growth together with them, it puts pressure on the marriage and threatens the degree of oneness in their relationships.

Dilemma of the Unmarried Christian Woman

Then there are the unmarried. These women (not everyone) struggle with their insecurities in their single status and constantly feel challenged to believe that they can find a soul mate. Many of them love the Lord and desire to serve Him in their calling. As women are generally maternal and great at multitasking, they make great pastoral

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and ministry leaders. However, they soon realize that the higher they go in their leadership position, the less likely single men in their midst are to pursue them. Their “spirituality” is now deemed to be a threat to the men and perceived as a “disadvantage” to the women. They find themselves caught in a bind—should they continue to use their gifts and serve God in the area of their passion and risk the possibility of not getting married, or should they forsake their ministry and be “palatable” to the majority of Christian men seeking a future wife?

Eventually, the women who choose the former usually end up being single for the Lord even though some really desire to be married. And the ones who choose the latter may end up married and sometimes struggle with the sense that they have become compromised in their calling.

Some women fall outside of the scenario just described. They are the few fortunate ones. The scenarios just described may also be more prevalent among Asian women than Western women because of culture and traditions; nevertheless, the latter is not totally spared of the problem.

So, how can we rationalize this? Galatians 2:20 clearly instructs us to be identified with Christ in His crucifixion and that the life we now live in the flesh we should live by faith in the Son of God. This applies to both men and women. God expects that we would live an abandoned life to the Lord whether single or married. Hence, logically speaking, we must serve the Lord in every capacity possible that would help advance the kingdom. To hold back what we can do so that we can eventually end up with somebody clearly violates the Word. In their good intent, some pastors and leaders have counseled women to hold back their ministry in order to find a spouse. I respectfully do not subscribe to this counsel for the very fact that the Bible says *“for with God all things are possible”*! If we can trust God with our salvation, can we not trust God to be our matchmaker?

Whether married or unmarried, women are created in the image and likeness of God, as are men. Together with men, they have been intentionally fashioned to be the completion of the image of God. They are made to be different and in their uniqueness to complement and not compete with men or with each other. When women do not understand God's original intent for them, they will struggle with their identity and battle with poor self-worth. On one extreme, we have women not advancing because of their lack of confidence; on the other extreme, some overcompensate for their poor self-worth by being overly aggressive and even behaving or dressing in a manly way. The Bible says that Christ has come to set us free but that freedom is not for our liberality in lifestyle but for the sole purpose to bring us back to God's original intent for us—both men and women.

With the burden to raise up women who would know the purpose of their creation and to understand their spiritual DNA, the ministry Wow31 was established. Today, Wow31 women's ministry stems from our church in Orange County with the vision to develop the W.H.O.L.E Womanhood of God to work alongside the men in our generation. Our mission is to inspire the women through the **W**ord to walk in **H**oliness with the goal to be **O**ne with our Lord Jesus. Through this oneness, the women will learn to **L**ead in their sphere of influence and **E**ngage in ministry, marketplace, and society.

In this world where men's voices primarily dominate every arena of society, the role of women in their lives is not much discussed. First, it is a highly sensitive subject; any man who dare treads into the arena knows that landmines cover it and he has very little chance to navigate through this "alive." Second, women's roles in their lives are a mystery to many men. Last but not least, it really takes a courageous man of God to look at what God has planned for him through the woman.

The Last

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With this book, I hope to provide some answers to why enmity exists between the opposite sexes, not from a historical perspective but from what I believe is God's hidden agenda; hence, I hope to provide some fresh perspectives to managing our relationships with each other.

Before the coming back of our Lord Jesus, there will be reformation for the church, restoration in society, wealth transference in the marketplace, and most importantly, massive salvation in the harvest field. To see this come to pass, men and women must understand God's original intent for their creation, their divine mission (especially in this end-time season), and to learn to work together to defeat the works of Satan and prepare the church for the coming back of the Lord.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will give you all wisdom and understanding as you read this book. Especially, I pray that you will hear from God and know the areas in your life that He is putting His fingers on so that you can rise to the ultimate calling to be that woman He has made you to be. By doing so, you will find your message and be the oracle for God in your community.

It is so crucial to take serious note of what God would speak to you as you journey through this book because what God has hidden in creation, He is ready to highlight now!

Blessings,

Susan Dunn