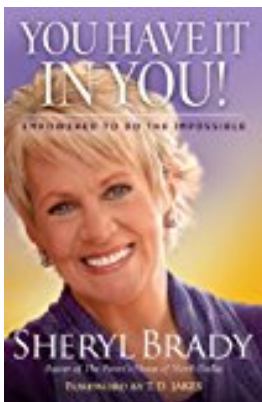


[PDF] You Have It In You!: Empowered To Do The Impossible

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Description:

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CHAPTER ONE

THE GRACE TO START OVER

MY LIFE OFTEN SEEMS TO REVOLVE AROUND MOVING Sometimes when I see the boxes in our garage, I can't remember if they are there for me to pack or unpack! And I know my experience has become the norm. As technology makes us more mobile, we're used to moving from state to state, country to country, to advance our careers, keep our jobs, or be closer to the people we love. Perhaps it's not the physical act of moving that's unsettling so much as the context of why we're moving.

Most of my moves have centered around my relationship with God and commitment to serve his church. In the introduction, I shared how I first met Bishop T. D. Jakes and indicated what an immediate, powerful impact he had on my spiritual journey. In fact, the outcome of that meeting in Cleveland on that hot summer night was the move my family made a few years later to Charleston, West Virginia, to serve with his ministry.

We were elders and elated to be a part of the church, but I must confess, I think we *took* much more than we *gave*. Not that we weren't givers, because we were, are, and always will be givers, but what we gave in terms of our time, talent, and treasure could in no way compare to that which we received in our spirits. I was hungry and thirsty for God, and week after week I would pull my chair up to the table that Bishop had spread and eat until I couldn't hold any more. God called us there, and for that I will eternally be grateful.

This move began a wonderful season for me and my family. The people were kind and welcoming. Our home in Charleston was very comfortable. Being born and raised in Detroit, I never would have thought I'd be so happy living in the hills of West Virginia, but I was! Due to our schedule of constant traveling to preach and sing, we hadn't had a home in a while, so just having our own place was refreshing. We had been in full-time ministry at this point for almost thirteen years, most of which was spent traveling. On top of it all, I got to sit under the teaching of the man who woke up things in me that I didn't even know were there!

A few years later, Bishop Jakes shared the calling God had placed on him to move his ministry to Texas, in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Along with several other families, we pulled out boxes, packed, and made the trek west, becoming a part of The Potter's House.

Exactly one week later, with pieces of my life divided up into a gazillion boxes, I stood at the podium and opened the first service of a record-breaking, history-making ministry in a word of prayer. I still do not recall how I ended up being the one asked to do such an important task. And I will never forget how honored I was to be there and experience the awesomeness of that moment! Could it get any better than that? I was in a great church, serving with a great leader who was carrying a great Word, living in a great city—life was just, well, great!

After a few years, my husband, with whom I've worked hand in hand in ministry for the last thirty-four years, started getting that "I'm hearing from God look" in his eyes. Surely not! Why? Where? What for? Not that I was rebellious, but I just wanted to understand. Just a little bit of *explanation* would make *cooperation* a whole lot easier! As he talked and I cried, he said God had put it in his heart to go back east.

He made a statement to me I couldn't understand at the time, but I've never forgotten it: "Baby, I

need to get you out of here, because if I don't, you'll never become who God has called you to be." Looking back, I see that it was time for me to put all I had learned to work. As long as I just stayed there, eating from his table, I would never have gotten the hands-on experience I needed. It was as if I'd been in a twelve-year internship, and it was finally time for me to live out all that had been poured into me over the many years that I learned from this great ministry. With Bishop's blessing, we pulled out of the great state of Texas with our children, our dogs, our boxes, and a sense of purpose we couldn't even describe.

I felt a little like Abram when God spoke to him to leave his country and his kin, and then journey "to a place I will show thee" (Gen. 12:1). We were taking every step by faith and ultimately our *faithwalk* led us straight into Faith World Church in beautiful Orlando, Florida, under the leadership of Pastor Clint Brown. We knew this would be a temporary landing spot for us, where we would continue to wait upon the Lord for his direction. We knew he had planted a desire in us to build a church of our own; however, we were not exactly sure at the time where it would be.

Pastor Clint and the entire Faith World family were a great blessing to us. They welcomed us with open arms. They loved us, made space for us, encouraged and laughed with us, and helped us believe in "us." Pastor Clint has reckless faith. He built such faith in us regarding the gifting of God in our lives that it wasn't long before we felt as if we were "well able to take the land" (Num. 13:30). The Lord began to put the city of Raleigh, North Carolina, on my husband's heart.

With all of the Word Bishop Jakes had planted in us, the faith Pastor Brown poured into us, and the prayers our family had prayed over us, we gathered up our kids, our dogs, and our boxes, and set out once again with an inexplicable grace to start over! Every step of the way we saw the provision and the protection of the Lord. Once we made it to Raleigh, we settled in for ten wonderful years, during which we founded The River Church. I was honored to co-lead and guide this baby through its infancy into a beautiful, mature community of believers. We'd never had to use as much faith as we had to use there, yet we'd never seen as much favor as we were shown there either.

On the very day of our tenth anniversary at The River, my husband and I were sitting at the dinner table with Bishop Jakes, and he began talking about vision. He shared with us how God speaks and brings a shift to his life, seemingly every ten years. Needless to say, he had my attention simply because this was exactly where I found myself, at a major milestone on my journey. I didn't say anything about it at the time, but somehow I knew this conversation was not one that we haphazardly stumbled into. Somehow I knew there was something seriously sovereign about the moment I had found myself in. Somehow I knew a significant shift was about to take place in our lives.

After dinner I thanked Bishop and his wife for their beautiful spirit of hospitality and we left Dallas, returning to North Carolina with an unexplainable excitement. What was God up to?

My eyes hadn't seen it, my ears hadn't heard it, but my Spirit knew that God was about to jet-propel us once again into his divine purpose for our lives. Sure enough, less than three weeks later my phone rang, and Bishop Jakes was on the line. "Sheryl, I'd like to ask you and Joby [my husband] to pray about coming home to Texas." He shared with us his vision to establish a campus extension in North Dallas that would be part of The Potter's House. At the end of our conversation, Joby and I thanked him for offering us such an awesome opportunity, assuring him we would pray for the perfect will of God to be made manifest. Hanging up the phone, I couldn't help but wonder if what I heard was actually what he said.

Could this really be God's plan for our lives? Could God really be asking us to return to Dallas? Was

it his will for us to leave North Carolina? Out of everyone in the world Bishop Jakes could've called, he called us? It was one of those rare times I felt speechless and knew that I had to spend some major time alone with God in order to sort through the swirling emotions inside. We needed to hear his voice. We needed to know that, once again, he would give us the grace to start over.

HER FEET WERE SO TIRED, AND YET SHE KNEW THERE were many miles to go before they would reach the border. Dust hovered above the road and choked her, making her more aware of her thirst. How could her life have changed so quickly?

For a while they had all been so happy together, so grateful to have formed a new family. It seemed like just days ago Ruth had been sitting with her husband, his brother and wife, and her mother-in-law and enjoying a meal of bread and fish. Her husband's father had died many years before, but they had endured their grief, grateful that he had saved their lives from the terrible famine in their homeland. Even though she hadn't conceived a child yet, there was still much joy and hope for the future. Ruth and her husband looked ahead with anticipation.

And then the worst happened. He didn't come home from the sea one afternoon, and then an old man came and brought them the terrible news. Her husband was dead. Before the shock of his passing could fade, the unimaginable struck again, and her brother-in-law drew his last breath as well. She and her sister-in-law, Orpah, and mother-in-law, Naomi, consoled each other as best they could, but the double blow felt unbearable. Naomi wailed and sobbed with such anguish.

Now they walked in silence, the three of them. Naomi had decided that she would return to her home in Bethlehem, where the Lord was providing food for the Israelites. The woman who had become like a second mother to Ruth worked hard each day to contain the wells of gut-wrenching grief, anger, and bitterness that ran so deep. Ruth herself continued to grieve, but what choice did she have but to go forward? Everyone told her that she was young and would marry again and bear children, but she wasn't sure. After what had happened to them, nothing was certain anymore. (Ruth 1)

PERHAPS OF ALL MY MOVES, RETURNING TO DALLAS from North Carolina was the hardest. I can't even begin to articulate all of the thoughts that raced through my mind over...

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