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DESTINY

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ALSO BY T.D. JAKES

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Woman, Thou Art Loosed!

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God's Leading Lady

Can You Stand to Be Blessed?

Let It Go

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DESTINY

Step into Your Purpose



T.D. Jakes



New York Boston Nashville

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CHAPTER 1



Instinct Plus Purpose Equals Destiny

Step beyond Instinct

As I quietly stepped onto the elevator and gently pushed the L button to return to the lobby, the incredible blessing I'd just experienced held me spellbound. On the elevator ride down, I pondered the glimpse into history just shared with me by the legendary Mrs. Coretta Scott King during her last days of health and vitality.

We had enjoyed a lunch in her elegant Atlanta penthouse suite, where she lived during her elder years with dignity and class. As we dined, Mrs. King retold many of her amazing experiences from the bird's-eye perspective of her deepest reflections. The memories she shared were moments I had witnessed only through newsreels and history books.

She guided me down a hallway decorated with gripping images reflecting a life on the edge of death, yet illuminated by passion and conviction. She shared what it was like during her

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years with the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., including many moments of peril. As she recalled heart-wrenching experiences, she spoke with the compassion of a mother—somehow, everyone’s mother—and not just the mother of her four enigmatic, intriguing progeny.

One of the many topics we discussed that day was a piercing question I posed, a subject considered taboo by many. I asked her why she never remarried. Before responding, she looked at me as if my question was actually rather foolish. Mrs. King smiled and almost giggled when she responded, “Martin was a tough act to follow.” Indeed he must have been. Few men have ever affected the culture, the country, and the world as Dr. King did. But what she said next took my breath away. “I was called to be his wife,” she said. “It was my destiny to stand beside him.”

This woman, whose legendary singing voice merited a career of its own, whose speaking skills and intellect qualified her for many roles, clearly perceived her destiny. Mrs. King could have been anything she wanted—from university president to entrepreneur—yet she chose to support the civil rights movement, underscoring the mission and keeping alive the dream of her martyred husband! She shared so many experiences about her life, little did I realize she actually was reflecting on them from the posture of her imminent demise. Only in retrospect did I consider her small plate of slowly consumed fruits, and her contentment watching me enjoy the ample offering of culinary delights prepared for me.

Her contented smile betrayed the gravity of her condition, which I knew to be a battle with cancer, and one she would shortly lose. Or did she really lose at all? Her smile taught me the value of contentment with a life well lived, a life that had run its course. Coretta Scott King lived comforted by her belief that despite the turbulence of her journey, she had lived on course with a destiny far more important than the waves of

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grief and tumult she experienced in the life and in the murder of her husband. She was at peace!

If only you and I could replicate her resolve in our own lives. Could it be that we allow the conditions in our lives to distract us from the meaning of our lives? Is it possible that we don't spend enough time checking the dials and reading the compass of Destiny and its intrinsic pull on the human soul?

If we are wise we will see the predestined purpose we were created for and, in our brief life span, find it and do it. It is my hope that each of us will be free from the purposeless living that causes so many to stumble aimlessly through life.

Like Mrs. King, we all were created to fulfill some role only through which we can find the great elixir of contentment and courage. Whatever the assignment, death loses its license to threaten those who are certain we have lived before we face its clutching grasp.

As the elevator descended the thirty-nine stories to the lobby, I reflected on the fact that I, too, have lived a life to which I felt drawn. I have been pulled by a call that has drawn me from the mundane acquisition of life's mementos to the far more rewarding task of doing something with my life that only I could uniquely accomplish.

Instinct Is Only the First Step

Sometimes we are amazed by what human beings can endure. Looking at the life of Mrs. King, we wonder how she withstood the challenges of raising her children practically alone, the death threats, the bombings, and the relentless FBI probes. What motivates a person to find contentment in a life of struggle, as Nelson Mandela did during his nearly twenty-seven years in a South African prison?

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When we watch people fully engaged in their purpose, it's confirmation that God has given each of us a destiny. How else could one person be so fascinated by the accuracy of numbers while another is totally obsessed with the accuracy of words? What allows you to have great interest in something that bores other people to tears? Why are you able to pick up anything and fix it—from a clock to an automobile—while other people should be arrested for even picking up a hammer? Why are you able to devote countless hours to reading a book while other people will never know the story line if it's not on video? The gift or desire that God has wired you to express is unique to you. Others can't understand how you do what you do, but neither can you understand how they act in their gifts.

Why do you get angry when you see certain things not done properly? It's your instinct. You are irritated by the fact that you know it could be done better.

I remember reading a story about an Olympian who was charged with a serious crime. After he was released on bond, the first thing he did was resume his workout routine. As I was reading his story, I thought, "If I were under the public microscope for that kind of crime, no way would I be spending my time working out." But then I considered the fact that this man was a champion athlete, and real champions cannot help but do what they are gifted to do. It is their therapy. It is how they fortify themselves. You are a champion when you overcome adversity and go back to doing what you were doing before.

The drive to do what you're good at is instinct. It's what God has created you to do. The kind of instinct given to God's highest creation is not the same as the instinct that causes a sea turtle to make her way to the ocean shoreline to lay her eggs and then return to sea. Human instinct in action is a pure joy to behold. It's like a work of art in motion, like watching Michael

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Jordan dunk a basketball or listening to a hypnotic melody offered by violin virtuoso Itzhak Perlman.

Why Is de Elephant “Ova Dere”?

In my previous book, *Instinct*, we explored how people are wired. That book became a best seller because a great many people are searching for a way to tune in to what God has embedded inside them. I shared my experience of being on an African safari, attended by a zoologist and a guide. I discovered that the zoologist knew everything about the biology and habits of the elephant, but it took the instinct of the safari guide to tell us, “De elephant is ova dere.” We found the elephant, but no one on the safari was able to tell us *why* it was “ova dere.” The answer lies in God’s purpose and plan for creating elephants.

If you’re like me, you’ve experienced times when you wondered, “Why am I here?” You may have asked the question as you found yourself in the midst of an amazing, divinely orchestrated opportunity, or you may have asked it in reaction to having made the worst mistake of your life. You may wonder why you are in a chosen position that was sought by dozens of people with equal or greater qualifications. You may wonder why you went to college but all of your boys ended up dead or in prison. You may wonder why all of your goal-oriented friends have slowly pulled away from you, and now all your time is spent around people who have no goals and don’t want you to have any, either. You can know the logistics and mechanics of how you got where you are but still not answer the question why. Without the why, you can never connect to purpose; through purpose you connect to Destiny.

Instinct shared how you are wired and gave strategies to unleash what God has already placed inside you. Instinct is the

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how, but Destiny reveals *why* you are wired. I felt particularly compelled to write this book because the “why” is always more powerful than the “how” of life. I’m excited about this book as an opportunity to move beyond the how and explore the why. Both connect to direct you to Destiny.

It’s a powerful life transition to unleash what lies inside you, but that unleashing only becomes viable when it can be validated by the why. We know how babies are made and, as mystical as the science of procreation can be, we can absorb that miraculous information much easier than the why of life. Why are we born? Why were you born?

One of humanity’s central life questions relates to the why of life. All of us have grappled with the question of a personal purpose that confirms our destiny: Why am I here? For some people, the question is little more than a short-lived intellectual pursuit. For others, it is a lifelong quest. Yet the mere fact that the question has been posed through ceaseless generations affirms that there is an internal quest that pricks the human heart. That quest is fueled by humanity’s need to know that our efforts and actions are congruent with our passion and purpose.

As we follow the instinctive path of our passion molded into action, we connect to Destiny. As we explore the path to Destiny, we gain a barometer by which we may measure authentic purpose, otherwise known as success. One can’t define success in dollars or cents. It can only be quantified by the accomplishment of a predestined purpose! This need to answer the why of life cannot be satiated solely by fame or wealth or notoriety, or even education, as none of these acquisitions guarantees that action has aligned with purpose in our lives.

Destiny is the push of our instincts to the pull of our purpose. That push-pull is what keeps the sun, moon, and stars from crashing. It causes the seasons to change from planting

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to growing to harvest to dormancy. If that divine push-pull, known as gravity, accurately sets the galaxies and the seasons in motion, will the same principle—the push of instinct and the pull of purpose—not set your life in the right motion? What gravity is to the order of our universe, Destiny is to the meaning of your life.

Feel the Rhythm of Instinct to Connect to Your Authentic Self

Walt Disney's *Cool Runnings* movie is an entertaining, fictionalized account of a Jamaican bobsled team's journey to the Winter Olympics. Their team captain encouraged the novice bobsledders to follow the methodology of the Swiss, who had many more years of experience competing. They tried following the techniques of the Swiss team, but it wasn't working for them. Their performance couldn't qualify them for Olympic competition; that is, until they made the pivotal decision to bobsled like Jamaicans. Their rallying cry became, "Feel the rhythm, feel the rhyme. Get on up, it's bobsled time!" While the Swiss effectively counted themselves into position—"Eins, zwei, drei"—the Jamaican competitors finally figured out their strategy: "If we walk Jamaican, talk Jamaican, and *is* Jamaican, then we sure . . . better bobsled Jamaican!"

The Jamaican Olympians had to learn how to function in their gifts authentically. The problem wasn't that they had no talent for bobsledding; they weren't in touch with their instinct on the matter. In the same way, people must learn to live genuine lives that allow them to perform the life tasks they are gifted to do.

Barbra Streisand and Aretha Franklin are both music icons with tremendous talent. But what if you went to one of Barbra's

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rare performances and heard her trying to sing like the Queen of Soul? You'd know something was wrong. The performance would not ring authentic.

Entertainers, scholars, preachers, and athletes alike all have admitted to being influenced by the skill and style of someone who came before them. Michael Jackson and Prince were clearly influenced by the performances of the Godfather of Soul, James Brown. Many preachers a generation ago were influenced by the oratorical styles of Martin Luther King Jr. and Billy Graham. Exposure to others who are good at what they do can be highly motivating and instructional; it helps us understand the manifestation of our own gifts. Observing others can help us set the bar of excellence high for ourselves. But there must be a point where one respects, admires, and learns from others, and then turns inward to connect to his or her authentic expression of talent. Robert Frost and Maya Angelou were great poets, but each had a distinctive style. Your instinct will draw you to the unique expression of your gifts.

You can prosper effectively only by drawing on what is authentically in you. The drawing process starts from your core. You can only be fruitful out of your understanding of and connection to what is in your core. In the movie *Ray*, as singer Ray Charles tries to establish a recording sound, he mimics the styles of his contemporaries until he hits upon a style that is uniquely his own. In real life, Charles was criticized for his innovations in music, but he carved out a new blend in music and found his authentic sound.

It can be frightening to own your authentic self. What if other people don't approve of the authentic you? What if they criticize or make fun of who you really are? That's a painful prospect to consider, especially when disapproval or criticism comes from the people who mean the most to you. Are you

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prepared to brave the negative reactions, comments, criticisms, and complaints that may arise from owning your authentic self? Can you handle it? Some people can't. They live without expressing the authenticity of what abides deep within them because the approval of others is more important to them than self-approval.

Those who live according to what others expect or accept because they do not have the courage to be the person their instinct draws forth from inside are only existing. They really haven't learned how to live. Real life means discovering what God has placed inside you!

God has invested a great deal in you, and for all the Creator has put in you, there is only one thing God wants to know: "What will you do with what I gave you?" God expects you to work excellence at the level given to you. As the late author, professor, and motivational speaker Leo Buscaglia explained it, "Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God."

Instinct Must Merge with Purpose to Find Destiny

Instinct is that inherent aptitude or capacity to use your emergent God-given gifts effectively at the appointed time and place. It's the urging inside you that tells you to make your move now, to reach out now, to hold back until later, or to never give up.

Instinct must merge with purpose to give you a life that fulfills your destiny. All gifts must be given a place of expression in order for Destiny to unfold.

We are most effective when we yield to the allure of destiny! Every gifted person needs a place to engage the gifts that are

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rooted inside. No matter how gifted you are, you need a place of expression. That place is Destiny.

Your instinctive gifts are the metal inside you. Your destiny is the magnet that draws you to its predestined arena. People who have instinct with no apparent destiny are waiting to be lifted by something higher than what led them to tune in to instinct. We must be drawn by something deeper. Destiny pulls us beyond the familiar toward our future.

Even if you're not a Bible reader, you're probably familiar with the biblical story of Moses at the burning bush. This great leader of Israel was drawn to a bush burning in the wilderness because he noticed the leaves did not burn off. Destiny is the fire that attracts us to come toward her. She ignites our curiosity. Moses' entire world had been turned upside down. He was a fugitive who fell from sultan to shepherd. His traumatic ouster from Egypt helped connect Moses to his instincts. When he was no longer a pampered prince, he got in touch with the gifts and abilities that God had given him to survive a wilderness existence and prosper in a life of hard work caring for a flock of animals—exposure that would be essential to Israel's survival when God used him to deliver Israel from slavery in Egypt.

There at the burning bush was the cross point at which Moses' former life met his future life. It was the place where the instinct that pulled him to the burning bush connected with the destiny that would push him back to Egypt and beyond and connect to his destiny. Like Moses at the burning bush, we may not comprehend why we are thrust beyond our familiar surroundings, but we can trust that we are being drawn by Destiny. Instinct and purpose often operate like a marriage. It's not always a fifty-fifty proposition. Sometimes you may function more from a sense of instinct, while at other times the quest

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for purpose may have a gale-force wind propelling you forward. But the sometimes unbalanced partners will direct you. When instinct and purpose connect, their progeny is Destiny.

Move from Intention to Inception

If the road to hell is paved with good intentions, the road to heaven is paved with relentless faith. Faith requires the prenatal care of dreams, the nourishment of dream makers, and the feeding of dragon slayers until the abstract becomes concrete.

There are perhaps millions who are sitting on the couch saying, "I'm gonna..." They'll do it when their finances are perfect, when their children are perfectly grown and stable, when they've achieved seniority on the job or some other life marker. Your life will never be perfect. Parts of it will be, at times. You will always be juggling and adjusting in some area of your life. Step away from the couch sitters who are awaiting the single perfect day to begin living their dream. You can choose to live your dream every day if you just take the first step. Every day will not feel dreamy and some may feel like a nightmare, but if you never get off your intentions, your vision for your life may never become a reality. Have enough faith to believe in God and in yourself and know that together the two of you can do anything!

Increase your capacity to receive what is destined to happen if you believe! If you can see the invisible, you can do the impossible. You may have to stretch yourself or enlarge your circle of associates. You may have to expose yourself beyond your comfort zone or speak when you are naturally introverted. Stretch yourself; it's worth it!

Understanding this synergistic connection of instinct with