

*Equipped*

for the

*Journey*



*Blind* but now i *See*  
*ministries*



# Foreword

It is hard for me to point at one part of my life as the foundation for who I am today, as I like you, am the sum of my life experiences. My childhood was full of powerful lessons and memories of my parents and siblings. But I also have the experiences from my adult life where the things I learned in my youth helped me to surmount the challenges and difficulties I have faced.

Nevertheless, no matter the things in life that have tested me, I have always faced life with determination and faith in my ability to beat the odds. And it is my hope that reading this will encourage you because you are not alone in this.

*Tonya Hunter-Hurst*

Evangelist and Life Coach

# My Foundation

## *Leaders In Action*

Reflecting on my childhood, so many things stand out, and I recall the beautiful memories that have helped to make me who I am. I can remember the typical Sunday morning in the Hunter household, when I would wake up to a knock at my bedroom door. That knock meant it was time to get up and prepare for the day which started with a family breakfast. Breakfast which greeted me when I opened my door to the smell of bacon and coffee. I remember the gospel music that would often play softly in the background as we ate with one another.

I recall my mother brushing and braiding our hair, apply lotion to our faces, and making sure our white ballerina socks and black patent leather shoes were on properly. All this was in preparation for the real task, which was getting me and my six (6) siblings loaded into the car for the one-hour drive to church.

You see, my dad was a pastor and my mom a singer and minister as well, so naturally I loved church. I went to Sunday School, regular Sunday Services, Prayer Meetings, and Bible Study. We travelled throughout Virginia and North Carolina when my dad would preach revivals and each time I would sit with my mom and watch my father walk in his calling (sharing the good news of Jesus Christ).

My dad often quoted Luke 4:18 where Jesus said, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Watching my parents engaged in ministry often made me wonder, would God use me to sing and preach as they did? I can remember times when my dad and mom would go to the hospital to visit the sick and pray with families. They would do weddings, baby dedications, funerals and workshops. And in all that ministry, what I remember most is watching the expressions of people in despair change and they be uplifted to smile because of the compassion and spiritual guidance of my parents.

Every day of my youth, I watched my parents offer leadership to those who needed it. They helped me reach

the determination that I wanted to be a leader and a coach, so I could bring a message of hope to those in tough situations. They made me realize, early in my teens, that leading people to Christ was my goal. But most importantly, they laid the foundation for me to love and serve others through actions and not just in words. Now that I have gotten older it is my responsibility to implement the lessons they passed on to me.

# The Test of My Resolve

## *Leaders In Action*

I graduated from high school at the age of seventeen (17) after which I enrolled in college going on to graduate from Patrick Henry Community College in 1993. It was around this same time when I became engaged at age (20) a year after which I got married. I had a beautiful church wedding (with all the bells and whistles) and at that point, I moved from my parents' house in Martinsville, Virginia to Greensboro, North Carolina. It was a very special time in my life, as it was all going in the right direction; I landed an excellent job (at fortune 500 company) and bought a nice car. I was well on my way to what I thought was the American dream. I had the next three years planned out; advance in management, purchase a new home, and then have my first child. But life got in the way.

Two years into my marriage I was laid-off and my then husband made me aware of life struggles he was dealing with.

To make matters worse I was having severe health problems from the stress of it all, but I had resolved I would get my plan back on track. I was going to reassert myself as in charge of my life and resume the plans I had in place. For years I labored away at fixing things that only God could correct. I became both mentally and physically exhausted and for the life of me I could not understand what God was trying to teach me. I was in a place where I wanted to blame him and everyone else for my troubles. And even though I know now that wasn't the right thinking, I still had a lot to learn. Those experiences taught me that in life you should look in the mirror and not at others, because in the blame game nobody wins.

Eventually, I grew tired of feeling stuck and I decided to pursue a fresh start. So, after seven (7) years of riding an emotional roller coaster (finances, jobs and physical health included) I decided to get off the ride. I relocated to another city, got a new job and found a new church (that I rarely attended). I can remember feeling so alone, embarrassed and forgotten by everyone. A few months later I ended up in the doctor's office where they administered several tests and they told me I needed surgery. And at age twenty-seven (27) I had major surgery that would force me to use a colostomy bag and would leave me unable to carry a child. And I remember, after the procedure, two doctors standing over me telling me the good news that I did not need a

colostomy bag. However, they had to perform a complete hysterectomy because of severe endometriosis, ending the possibility of childbirth. My life had unraveled before my eyes and all my dreams were shattered.

It was at this point the chaplain came to pray with me and I reluctantly smiled and said, “thank you.” After the chaplain prayed, I was left with my thoughts, and I remembered the story of Joseph in the bible (Genesis 37). He had dreams that were seemingly sabotaged by his brothers; Joseph was sold into slavery, falsely accused, and placed into prison. But it was all a part of his destiny and Gods’ plan. And that thought gave me some strength because I had no idea what the goal was but that is just where I needed to be. After some time in the hospital, I mustered up enough strength to walk and my doctor recommended I moved back in with my parents.

In addition to my physical recovery, that took several months, I needed to recover emotionally and mentally. I did this through counseling provided by my job, and I hated it. I would cry unexpectedly for no reason, I was withdrawn, and depressed. It felt as though I had no direction and after a few sessions the counselor informed me of the Al-Anon support group. I had no desire to attend, and I initially refused to. This was a challenging time for me, and I made sure to only attend church, go to work, and back home. The information sat on the counter in my kitchen and each day I passed by it until I finally decided to attend.



I remember arriving to the facility and feeling uncomfortable as I did not feel like I belonged. I sat in my car, frozen by my own apprehension and I watched as people hugged, smiled, and shook hands. Despite my fear, I pulled myself together and I finally made it inside. I saw chairs in a circle and I sat down quietly looking down at the floor as the tears welled up inside of me. I was broken and it was in that moment that I realized it. I spent that evening listening to the different participants share their stories and I suddenly realized that I was not alone. I came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore our faith. It was a power I was familiar with but had buried deep beneath all of life's disappointments. Despair and hopelessness had set within me and destroyed my confidence in God but as I regularly attended meetings and engage in conversation with the group I got the support and strength I needed. God used a support group, something many would consider nontraditional, to put me back in place.

# Building on My Foundation

## *A Leader In Action*

I have always been a goal oriented person and I like to meticulously plan life. Therefore, you might understand why the past few years took a toll on me. And yet, rediscovering God caused the dark clouds in my life to slowly move away. In this time, my divorce was finalized and the healing I need gradually became a reality; and as a result, I developed the courage to grow and develop. Through the Al-Anon support group, I learned to focus on the important things such as forgiveness of others which gave me freedom.

In our support group we would often recite the *Serenity Prayer*, “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. The courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.” This served as a reminder to put things in the Lord’s hands and allow him to lead us to the correct pathway.

When I reached my mid-thirties, my life took a completely different path. I was single and happy for the first time in a long time. I was working in the banking industry, had been promoted to a better position in management, and I was building a house. I am living proof that you can turn your dark days into victory by not dwelling on the past and learning to forgive. The growth I experienced in this phase of my life prepared me for the things that were ahead.

I remarried at the age of thirty-nine (39) and have been married to my wonderful husband and best friend for seven years. At the age of forty-one we became foster parents which was a beautiful experience that has been rewarding in so many ways. Learning to trust again was not easy (I have had some good and bad days) but the payoff for my patience and forgiveness was worthwhile.

Now, my days consist of going to work on the week days and managing a small business on the side. In addition, I have been able to preach and teach the word of God on my television ministry. Through ministry, my husband and I have fed the homeless in our community while also empowering and supporting women throughout the world.

The journey to the pathway set for me has equipped me to stand firmly on my foundation. From my experiences, I feel confident in say you must never give and we must put God first in our life. Remember “tough times never last but tough people do.”



# Afterword

Each of us has a story to tell and no matter how we try we will encounter some difficult times. But, it is not a matter of what trials you encounter it is how you respond to them.

*Thank you for reading and God Bless*

