DESTINY
ALSO BY T.D. JAKES

Instinct
Reposition Yourself
Maximize the Moment
64 Lessons for a Life Without Limits
Making Great Decisions
The T.D. Jakes Relationship Bible
The Great Investment
The Ten Commandments of Working in a Hostile Environment
On the Seventh Day
Not Easily Broken
So You Call Yourself a Man?
Woman, Thou Art Loosed!
He-Motions
Mama Made the Difference
God's Leading Lady
Can You Stand to Be Blessed?
Let It Go
DESTINY

Step into Your Purpose

T.D. Jakes

Faith Words

New York  Boston  Nashville
I would like to dedicate Destiny to the TDJ Enterprises staff and team, who allowed me to learn to lead while leading them. To the Potter’s House family—your hunger to know drove me to dig deeper in life. To my many friends who challenged me, inspired me, prayed for me, and encouraged me along the way. I always tried to make sure you knew who you were and your value to me.

To my loving wife, Serita, and my five gifted children, Jamar, Jermaine, Cora, Sarah, and Dexter. To my siblings, Ernest and Jacqueline. You are all my family, I love you dearly! I’ve learned so much from you all about life and love and what matters most. I’m sure I couldn’t have survived without you giving me a reason to grow on! Thank you for giving me the gift of having you in my life!
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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
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
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
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
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
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
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
purposes to give birth to Destiny is important in the life of every individual. Every person has a destiny to fulfill. It is essential to craft an environment that facilitates the fulfillment of Destiny.

First Draw Internally

In the account of creation recorded in the Bible, I am fascinated by a line that most overlook. It says that God created every living thing with a seed inside itself. Wow! Isn’t that how all of life is formed? It re-creates from what exists within itself. The seed to achieve comes from the divine thoughtfulness of God, who has prewired us to produce. Your creativity is within you. Your peace and power come from digging beneath your surface and locating your own core of potential.

Our tendency is to look outside ourselves for comfort, happiness, or fulfillment. You may look to a new job to feel successful and worthy. You believe a relationship will bring you a sense of fulfillment and purpose in your life. You buy a new car or a new house, thinking that will impress others and increase your social standing. All of these are wonderful, but all of them depend on people or conditions that are outside of you. Nothing outside of you can make you who you are. It’s already in you. God has already implanted in you the raw materials needed to shape Destiny into reality. You already have what’s needed to actualize your vision for your life. It is a God-given vision; otherwise, you would not have it.

Think about the fact that since God created the world, nothing new has been created. Many, many devices have been invented, but nothing has been created. Everything that humankind has developed came from what God had already put in or on the earth. Every invention and modern convenience that you enjoy was created out of resources that are
already on this earth. Someone simply had the vision to bring it into reality.

Steer toward Destiny

If you think of the human mind as the steering wheel that determines the direction of one’s destiny, then we are transforming our lives by the way we turn our minds. You limit yourself when you operate only on an intellectual or psychological level and refuse to pay attention to the spiritual inclinations residing in you.

You can turn your mind to education, but somewhere along the line, even a PhD will leave you lacking. You can turn your mind to logic or reason or common sense or even coincidence in search of life’s answers, but all of these will leave you lacking. Tune in to the fact that the instinct pushing out from you and the purpose pulling at you are a part of God’s larger plan for you to fulfill your destiny.

Your mind may guide you in what you do, but your heart affirms your passion to do it, and that leads you to resolve the why of your life. Within your passion lies the clue to your deeper purpose—and ultimately, your destiny. As you stand back from yourself to see the push of instincts welded with the pull of purpose that leads you to Destiny, you will know the events and circumstances in your life equate to more than coincidences or mere facts. The coming together of all these events and connections, some seemingly random, are the result of divine orchestration to empower you to accomplish what God has placed you here to do.

Destiny is so much bigger than you. Trust that the results are not in your hands. An encounter with Destiny generally comes only after intentional exposure and heeding the pull of purpose.
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Think about a girl or guy you wanted to date. You wanted to impress that person. If you were still in school, you might have updated your wardrobe and started wearing makeup and heels. You might have gotten a part-time job so you could afford to take her out. You did all of that to get that person's attention. You did all of that to show the person you were worthy of getting close to him or her. Show Destiny that you're worth getting close to. Show Destiny that you won't mess up the opportunity to travel in the same circles with her. Destiny is a fastidious companion that is rarely, if ever, stumbled upon. But until you find her, she will tease and taunt you. She will call out to you as you endeavor to discover the why of your life.

Destiny will sometimes be elusive and guide you on a circuitous path as you follow her in search of why. But led by instinct as you pursue purpose, you will discover the why of your life, and then you will know that fulfillment of Destiny is the greatest kind of success you can ever hope to attain.

Destiny Awaits You

Most people have sensed the pull of Destiny's magnet that caused them to meet who they've met, to go where they've been, or to do what they've done. During times of reflection, most of us are amazed to realize that the greatest moments of our lives happened only through a series of circumstances that we ourselves did not initiate. Think about the serendipitous encounters, the synchronous timing of events, and the chance meetings in your life. Had you not been in that restaurant, you never would have met a business contact, a future spouse, or an employer. If you had not attended that summer camp, your fascination with wildlife or biology or botany or sports medicine would have never been spawned.
Instinct Plus Purpose Equals Destiny

What orders our steps? To the faithful, it is God alone. The secular may interject words like fate or luck. Whatever the name, all of us are left drawn by the pull of Destiny’s allure.

Ride the wave of life with a sense of guidance to something beyond self-gratification. It adds meaning to life. Do not halt at the rest stop of distraction nor succumb to the indulgent luxury of self-pity. The problems and challenges we face could be merely distractions from the greater force of the destiny that draws us from where we started to where we will accomplish what we were meant to do. If you sense that there is an order to your steps, a guidance that has corrected you when you were off course and nudged you when you sat in a holding pattern too long, then read on.

Destiny awaits. It is always an adventure. It drives us past the pain of life to the purpose of living. There’s more going on in your life than just you.

At moments that I felt the least adept, I have known there is a force beneath my wings for which I could take no credit. There was a perfect timing I could not explain. There was a person I could never have schemed to meet. There was an opportunity I could never have orchestrated on my own.

As I waited on the sidewalk of Mrs. King’s high-rise development for my car, I remembered that I had spoken at Carlton Pearson’s Azusa meeting. I had been a guest speaker at that ministerial conference many years ago, but the sequence of events that surrounded that single invitation to speak still amazes me. After Azusa had ended that year, Pastor Pearson had decided to air clips of the three-day event featuring three preachers. I was only one of the clips he broadcast on his weekly television program on the Trinity Broadcasting Network. The network’s founder, Paul Crouch, happened to be watching. The clip of my sermon addressed the vulnerability of showing your wounds to help others with their own. Crouch was writing a
book titled I Had No Father but God. What I said during that clip inspired him to share aspects of his story that he had wrestled with taking public.

As I stepped into my car to leave Mrs. King’s building, I thought that if the late Paul Crouch had walked away from the TV to get a ham sandwich, he never would have seen that brief video clip that moved him to invite me to appear on TBN, and later inspired him to offer me a network time slot. Without owning a camera and with only one person on staff, I was about to broadcast on the world’s largest Christian television network and be drawn more deeply into my destiny. All of this was thrust upon me without me ever inquiring about a television show or passing a business card to anyone. You have a purpose and a destiny.

Maybe your destiny is being birthed through a failed business or bankruptcy. Perhaps the downsizing of a company was really meant to shake you free to a life of purpose. It is not always the best or joyous moments that direct us to Destiny. Sometimes deep pain and torturous emotions later help to maneuver, mold, and position you into your life’s purpose.

The overarching pull of Destiny helps you accept events and circumstances that, examined in isolation, may look like failure. Upon deeper reflection, however, those seeming tragedies are the catalysts that shift you into your place of destiny. The Bible rightly says in Romans 8:28, “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” The things that are working together may not feel good. They may not even seem fair. But if you allow them to, they can usher you into arenas and opportunities that shift your life into a pattern of focus and purpose that work together for your good and the good of humanity. Perhaps we all can lessen Destiny’s learning
curve and say, like Mrs. King so eloquently stated, “I was called to play this role in life!”

Find the destiny your Creator has designed for you. Have the courage to live with a consummate decision to say yes to what Destiny invites you to. Instincts are the internal guidance system that will empower you, and Destiny is the course that you will run, ignoring distractions that could divert you. Destiny gently pulls us through wandering mediocrity.

It is the destiny of this preacher from the hills of West Virginia to help you discover your destiny. Reflect on your own life. If you have ever sensed the pull of Destiny aligning you with people, places, and things, I will help you find your way.