

A NOVEL



SURVIVING SINGLEHOOD

written-by
HEPHZIBAH FRANCES

SURVIVING SINGLEHOOD

A NOVEL

**WRITTEN BY
HEPHZIBAH FRANCES**

Unless otherwise indicated, scripture quotations marked “AMP” are taken from the Amplified Bible. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked “KJV” are taken from the King James Version

Scripture quotations marked “NIV” are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version.

Scripture quotations marked 'NLT' are taken from the New Living Translation.

SURVIVING SINGLEHOOD

Copyright ©2020 by Hephzibah Frances

ISBN:

okorofrances@gmail.com www.hephzibahfrances.com

Book cover design & Publishing done by:

BEAUTIFUL FEET PUBLISHING



Beautiful Feet Publishing

beautifulfeetpublishing@gmail.com

+2347035539092

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be distributed in any form without the written permission of the author.

DEDICATION

To the Holy Spirit, The giver of all wisdom.

Chapter 1

It was 10pm at night and Amaka just got back from school... again.

She has been doing her masters at Unilag.

"Since man nor come nah, make we go school... maybe we go even see the man for there... na the school we dey so."

Amaka hissed as she remembered the conversation with her friend Ugo.

"Babe howfar nah? Any new man on the block?"

"Sssshhh, new man ko? New man ko? No man don look my face for the last six months."

"But how shall they nah? When the only thing you know to do is go to work and church; your church that has like six male members with five of them married. I can count them on my fingers."

Babe you need to spread out. Either find a new church or let's do something else to help your matter'

"What can we do?"

"Have you gone on vacation from your office for a while?"

"Yes I have. I took one last Easter and Christmas period too".

"Okay, have you considered going back to school to do your masters? Most of the fine bobos in Lagos go to Unilag to get a fresh certificate so they can scale up in their office. You should try it. It would be like putting you in a fresh sea where the fisher men are looking for fish. Try am babe".

Just like that the journey started. Her office gave her a study leave and every day when she went to class she would survey the class for one man – just one man who may perhaps be looking for her. The last situation at class had been epic.

Ah!

Le sigh.

“What have my life turned into...”

“Ok sir... I will look for how to research and get the files over to you tomorrow...”

Yes sir...

Yes sir...

Thank you sir...

Goodnight sir.”

Lara flung her phone across her bed and hissed. It was official. Her boss was deaf and daft!

After all the eye cutting and hand chasing, the man still couldn't get that she dug him. Ughh! What more could she do to shoot her shot!

She pulled out her phone and called her friend Kate.

“Kate howfar? I thought you said if I bat my eyes and be at his every beck and call he would notice me? I have been working backwards for three weeks and all I get is ‘thanks’. As if it's every secretary that takes her boss's clothes to the laundry and brings him lunch she has cooked herself. Why can't this man see me? I don tire oh.”

Kate took a deep breath. She had suggested Lara work for her boss in the office, not bend over backwards as a wife material.

“Lara I'm in shock. You did what? You are bringing him food cooked from your kitchen? I hope you know that this man is a married man oh?”

“He is separated not married!”

“Ehen, what is the difference? This man still has a wife answering his last name. Can't you go for other men in your company? What about Ade you told me about?”

“It would take too long for Ade to come up to date and be a husband my family would accept, Kate. Have you forgotten that he came into the company as an intern and was just made a permanent staff last year? With my status as a secretary and him as a level one staff, please tell me what hope would there be for our beginnings? Abeg, I cannot go through that stress.”

“So you decided to go for the oga at the top?”

Lara rolled her eyes on the other side of the phone with no remorse.

‘Yes!’

Please I did not call you for a sermon; after all you were the one who told me the strategies to apply, why are you going all pastor-ish on me now? If you don’t have anything better to say, then bye!”

Lara disconnected the call before Kate could say anything on the end. She kicked off her shoes in anger and plopped on the bed. As soon as she did that her eyes strayed to her boss’ clothes lying at the corner of the bed.

“Arrrrghhhh! I’m not doing that again!”

Lara was sitting beside aunty Kokoro at her younger brother’s introduction party. She wondered how she got herself into this sitting arrangement she would forever mourn. She tried to focus on her pounded yam, rolling it in her hands with all the focus and precision of a person sitting at her desk at work. She could feel aunty Kokoro’s eyes on her and from the corner of her eyes; she could see her deadly mouth preparing to open up.

As soon as Aunty Kokoro’s mouth formed the words, “Lara”, Lara deliberately hit her plate and poured her efo riro soup on herself. Anything was better than sitting through the question of ‘where is he?’

“Ah aunty please excuse me, let me wash up the stain from my dress. I will be back.”

Lara hurried away to the bathroom in her room mumbling under her breath.

“Me go back, God forbid”.

She sat on her bed again – the place where she found her only solace.

‘But God wait first oh, what’s up? What’s happening to me? I am happy for Segun oh but it still feels like a movie, all my younger siblings are gone oh. I heard Regina saying her fiancé is also coming for her introduction this year. What am I still doing here?’

She counted her age on her hands.

“I have been in this house for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, going on 9 years after my NYSC. What’s up?”

She thought back to her conversation with her friend Priscilla. It was her friend's opinion that she should check if she had a spirit husband.

"Maybe I should go see the baba she suggested oh. This thing is too much. Before you know it, everybody would leave me in the dust."

Lara thought for a minute.

"No it's not that bad nah; I nor fit let marriage matter carry me enter herbalist house nah."

She thought again for a minute and arrived at a decision:

"God I will give you one year to connect me with my husband. I will go to church, serve in the choir and be a good girl but if you don't do anything after that one year then I will have to go my way and do what I want."

Content with her decision, Lara prepared to go back to the sitting room armed with the answer of "God go do am" for aunty Kokoro.

Chapter 2

Femi sat up in bed just after his morning devotion, he was scrolling through Instagram, looking at pictures of girls he knew getting married to their heartthrobs. It was December and another season for weddings and marriages. He was so tired and sick of this.

“God when nah? When? I am an eligible bachelor with a ready house and a good job. What’s up? I am ready for marriage, where is my girl?”

Femi looked at his standing male organ, angry and pissed.

“God I have been dealing with this for 28 years of my life, staying celibate all the while at it. When will you give me a wife with whom I can make love with your blessing? You say sex is for the married – I agree. Okay now give me a wife so I would not sin against you, you nor gree.

Ogah oh. This one hard me. Is it when I fall into sin that You'll answer my prayer?”

Femi could feel the Holy Spirit chuckle within him.

“So if you sleep with a girl outside of marriage, who you do? You are the one enjoying here, I am protecting your destiny and stopping you from having soul ties with numerous women and creating harmful generational patterns. You should be thanking me for protecting you from the consequences of premarital sex, instead you are complaining.”

The absurdness of the situation and the fact that the Holy Spirit was speaking in Pidgin English didn’t register in his mind. All he thought about was on how God wasn’t even joking with him... but of course he has been a Christian for the past thirteen years, so he should know better.

“Okay God, I am sorry...”

He wanted to leave the rest in his mind but he determined that after all God could still read his mind, so he continued.

“But God!, please just give a wife. Please, please, please, please...”

He wanted to force tears to come out of his eyes but right from the beginning of time he had never been one who cried easily.

He waited for an answer.

No answer.

He started another conversation.

Go to work.

"Ok oh God. Thank you sir. Bye.

"This would be a very long depressing day."

TWO MONTHS LATER

Amaka had met this very amazing guy at her Masters class at Unilag named Lazarus.

'Laza, the resurrected' was his nickname.

At first Amaka never noticed him, but the whole class were fans of his. He was funny, intelligent and good looking all at the same time and as if that was not enough, he also worked in an oil company. Ah! This was it!

Two months ago, Amaka began planning on how to get him to be hers. She plotted on how to meet with him as soon as he was stepping into class and on how to be at his tutorial classes. She was successful as everything went according to plan. It was fairly easy after getting into the tutorial class to get his number from the tutorial class attendance sheet.

At first she simply introduced herself as his classmate and flattered his intelligence by asking some questions as the main reason for her calls. Afterwards she moved onto WhatsApp chats and finally asked him for his house address. By the time she visited once and then twice, they had had multiple trysts in bed and it was official; they were an item. Only deal was she had also heard that he was a chronic womanizer with no plans to change but Amaka was sure she could change him.

They were seated on the couch at his apartment after another wonderful time together in bed. Usually when they had sex, Amaka liked to just laze around and cuddle with him but she had noticed that Lazarus would get up immediately and also ask her to

do same. Within the next fifteen minutes, one way or the other, she would find herself being sent on her way home and today was no different.

She tried to lie on his back, “baby, can I spend the night today?”

Her heart was pounding as she asked the question and she could feel him drawing away even as she formed the words in her mouth. She waited a heart-beat before adding more words, “we could stay in the Jacuzzi, bathe together and make love all night...”

But Lazarus had already pulled away.

“I told you Amaka, I don’t like to have ladies over at my house through the night. Night-time is for me alone and it stays that way.”

Amaka looked at him conscious of the sudden mood change between them.

“In fact, I think you should be leaving right now. I need to take my rest.”

He checked his wallet stretched out some money to her and asked her to take an uber home.

“Thanks for coming Amaka, I will see you in class tomorrow.”

In an attempt to hide her shame, Amaka took the money and silently left his apartment. She couldn’t figure out why Lazarus would do this every time they were together. They would have a good time in the bedroom – he never seemed to be less than excited to see her and then after the sex, it would almost be like a drastic change would come over him and he couldn’t wait for her to leave.

Amaka thought to herself, “What can I do? Hmm. I will change him with my unconditional and never changing love.”

Lazarus was simply glad to be rid of Amaka, good girls like her type were the worse; always looking for a man to rope into marriage. He could see it in her witchy eyes.

“If it were possible she would propose to me herself. Hmm. Let the world know that me, Lazarus, I will die in singlehood; there is no resurrection from death to life for me here”.

Lazarus thought to the only girl he had ever loved and hoped to marry. Lisa was his everything but the babe was a cheat!

He was getting angry just thinking about it.

He had caught her red-handed with different men and the stupid thing was that he was still willing to get married to her till she called it off herself.

Well, every woman after her would pay for it. If he wasn't good enough for Lisa then he wasn't good enough for any other woman. He would take the ones like Amaka who were content to give him husband privileges like sleeping with him, cleaning his house and cooking for him but no more.

"Absolutely no more!"

Lara had fully embraced her new found role at church as a member of the choir. Today was Bible study and she was fully enjoying her new church. She had scouted and searched for the best church where singles were most likely to meet and she had found one; Christ the Lover Christian Centre. She loved the name – she hoped to also find a lover there apart from Jesus.

Right from the first, her clothes were to kill for; designers through and through with just the right amount of both cover and disclosure - enough to be a born again Christian and enough to be a trendy 'Christian lady'. She had ditched her car and had decided on using the church bus to and from church each Sunday in an attempt to at least meet and mingle with people. Instead of just sitting alone in her car, she could take the opportunity to be 'seen'. There were better chances to be asked out when you are seen.

She had read all she could find on twitter on the right behavior to adopt as a single lady who is looking for a husband in church. She had found a pastor on twitter who spoke to singles like her and she had taken his advice. He had said to:

- 1: Ditch the badass girl attitude outside. Guys come to church for Christian girls so please ensure you are a Christian girl.
- 2: Dress appropriately. For girls like her who didn't know, church guys don't actually take too kindly to cleavage opening - they run the other way.
- 3: Join a unit department at church; either meeters and greeters or the choir or something that has to do with getting you in front of people. Do not murder your chances on the altar of joining a unit like the media team. Aim to see and be seen.

4: Smile. Let every man feel the fruit of the Holy Spirit flowing through you when they come in contact with you.

5: Tone down your achievements; be and learn to be a wife who is submissive and is willing to let her husband be her head even over her achievements. If you are asked questions about your job and what you do in church, tone it down.

6: Participate in prayer meetings A LOT! All Christian men want a prayerful wife.

7: Always stay fresh, dress well and be well put together.

8: Repeat all ten steps and you will be married in a year.

The man who wrote the steps on twitter was a pastor himself and he swore that he had shared these points from a survey from the 100+ women that have gotten married in his church. Amaka trusted him and had put his steps to work judiciously for the last two months. No man had showed up yet but they will. God still had 10 months to fulfil his part of the deal. She trusted him. He is the God that faileth not.

Chapter 3

"You are the God that changeth not, you are the God that changeth not..."

You are the God that changeth not, you are the God that changeth not.

You did it for Rebekah, you will do it for me...

You are the God that changeth not."

Lara was at a vigil she had been invited to by the pastor from twitter. He had posted that he was holding an emergency intercessory prayer for women who needed God to show up for their marriage martially this year and Lara had sworn that she wouldn't miss it.

She had reached out to him privately as he asked and was asked to pay a fee of 20,000 naira only for the special emergency prayer. The pastor had sworn that God would have an encounter with everyone who showed up that day.

"Praise the Lord. My name is Sister Nike. I came to the last emergency intercessory prayer held by Pastor last year as single as a flat board."

Everyone laughed.

"But to the glory of God, I met my husband exactly three days after that all night prayer. I was shocked. In three months he had proposed and we got married exactly five months later from the day I was here. Praise the Lord!"

She gestured for a young girl standing in front of her to give her the child she was holding.

"This is my first son from our marriage. Praise the Lord!"

Lara was shocked. The boy looked to be exactly one year old. She tried to calculate the time frame. Getting married five months after the prayers would actually mean that she was married seven months ago. Even if she got pregnant on the wedding night, her baby should still be in her womb at seven months.

What's happening here?

She didn't have to wait long for her question to be answered.

The Pastor from twitter took the microphone and started to talk to them.

"Praise the Lord!"

"Hallelujah"

"Praise the Lord God most High!"

"Hallelujah!"

"The Lord is good"

"All the time"

"And all the time"

"The Lord is good"

The pastor continued.

"We are going to be merging the spiritual with the physical. Prayer is good but prayer without works is dead. You see this testimony sister Nike gave, when she came to us, I told her, as soon as you finish this prayer vigil, the very first man that comes to you, make sure you sleep with him and carry his baby. That way, it would speed up the process of marriage.

You see, men are very stubborn creatures that need a greater reason for tying the knot. Why should he marry you? You give him a reason and that reason can and should be a child. I am telling you: you can decide to hold your legs closed or open them and let it be a ticket for you. Before we begin to pray, I really just want to share this secret of merging both the supernatural and the physical with you.

Do not say I have prayed if you are not ready to put in the work and do all it takes including opening your legs."

Lara heard a woman behind her gasp. She was actually surprised that more women did not think this suggestion preposterous. Many of the women were nodding their heads as though what the preacher was saying was making a lot of sense to them. These were women currently tying head-ties to show how pious and deep in God they were. Wow!

The pastor continued, "I see many of you understand this concept. It doesn't matter whether you have followed it before or not, all you have to do is follow my lead. I am telling you this is the way to go. "Believe in the Lord your God so shall you be established, believe in His prophets, so shall you prosper." Let us pray.

"I am going to give you prayer points and all you need to do is pray along with me.

Let us pray.

Prayer point number one; my Father, my Father, turn my mourning into dancing. Turn the siege of singlehood into marriage. Let me smile again oh Lord. Turn my mourning into dancing.

Prayer point number two: Father, wherever my wedding gown is hidden, I tear it out of their hand by fire, in Jesus' name!

Prayer point number three: Father, I want to get married as soon as I leave this place, please open my womb and let the first man I sleep with impregnate and marry me in Jesus name. Father you have told me the secret here in this place; let this strategy work for me in Jesus' name, amen!

Somebody pray, pray pray. Let the Lord see intensity and fervency in your prayer. Let Him know you are serious. Come on pray.....!"

Lara looked all around as everyone prayed, shaking their heads vigorously and screaming on top of their voices. She shook her head also as she prayed but for another reason... could she do this?

Anyway na singlehood cause am.

Chapter 4

Amaka was out on another date with Lazarus and as usual, they were reclining in his house after another round of steaming hot sex.

Amaka again toyed with his shirt sleeve as she prepared to ask him where their relationship was headed. They had been at this game of sex and nothing else, not even being able to spend the night at his place. Every time for the last six months when she would suggest this, Lazarus would flare-up and end up making excuses to push her out of his house. She thought she could change him but now at six months, she wondered if this wasn't a futile effort she should just give up on.

She began the speech she had practiced all day...

'Uhm, Lazarus, I wonder if this is a good time to talk.'

Lazarus grunted, "Shoot!"

He would push her out of the house if she started one of those 'I want to spend the night with you' talks. She already knew that was out of the question..."

Amaka gathered all the courage she could muster.

"Okay, here's the thing. I wanted to ask where this relationship is headed."

"Headed?"

"Yes. You know, like, where are we going with this?"

"Well, who said we are going anywhere? We are just having fun."

Lazarus scrunched up his nose at her when he got no reply.

"Isn't that what you came for? Fun? Because you heard that I am good in bed?"

Amaka scrunched up her nose and decided to be truthful.

"Yes I had heard about you in school, only good things of course and I wanted to be with you. I am in love with you, Lazarus."

"What?!"

"Yes, I am in love with you."

Lazarus sighed, here's another one of them.

"So what do you want me to do about that?"

"Is that your answer, Lazarus?"

"Amaka let me spell it out to you: I am dead to the marriage thing and I never want to be resurrected. Read my lips N-E-V-E-R."

Amaka wondered about what to do. Did this guy really think that she was just a loose girl that desired to grace his bed for six months in a row?

Something tripped inside her brain. She couldn't explain it.

She got up without a word, took her bag and left.

Amaka decided to join a public transport bus back home and not call an uber like she normally would after a visit with Lazarus. She left without a thought for what she would do and how she would get home eventually; she just wanted to leave. The nerve of this man... but she could not blame him, after all she was the one who came to him on the guise of just wanting to check on him.

Ah, the curse of this single life.

Is this me at 36 years trying to pursue a man? She thought

What happened to me?

I was spoilt for choices of men when I was between ages sixteen and twenty-six. Men rushed me like a thirsty man rushed water.

What really is happening to me now?

'Ajah, Ajah, Ajah'.

She thoughtlessly entered the bus. She would later call the moment providence because right there in front of her, at the seat she was sitting on was Baba Ibeju's flyer.

Femi was in tears and deep prayer to and before God, filled with deep agony of soul.

“Lord what do I have to do to show you that I am serious and ready? I have gone on different fasts, I have fasted and I have prayed. I have sowed seeds. What’s happening here? I won’t leave you till you bless me oh God. Bless me. Bless me with a wife, my own wife, oh God.”

Get Up Femi, searching for a wife is not that hard.

“Lord I am not getting up except you tell me what’s wrong and what you want me to do. How can you keep telling me it’s not hard? Lord in case you forgot; permit me to put you in remembrance please: I am 28 years old. In two months I will be 29. I have been begging you and praying about my marriage since I was 16 years old. God, is this really too hard for you to answer or are you just punishing me for nothing?”

Femi, I said get up. Finding a wife is not that hard.

First of all, let me ask you a question: are you just in love with the idea of marriage or are you ready to be a husband, to one wife, and for life?

“What do you mean Lord? I have been ready to have something like my mother and father had since I was 16. I have been praying to get married since I was 16. I am ready, Lord. I want love.”

But have you ever prayed for this woman who would be your wife? Have you been in love with the idea of marriage or of her herself?

I see how you go around thinking you are ready, but I have never heard your prayers as a priest over your wife. Not once.

You have simply made marriage a god.

When He said that, Femi was gripped with fear and cut quick to the heart.

“How Lord, how?”

Think back Femi to all the times I sent you young men to groom and raise for me. What was your answer then? You said to me that you do not have time.

“But Lord, I really do not have time; I am busy with my job.”

But did you ever read that it was when Adam was working on the job I gave him to do that I brought Eve to him? I gave you a job so you could fund other visions I have for you not to fold your hands and do nothing else but wait for a wife.

And what do you mean you don't have time. But you have time to fast and pray for 21 days for a wife and marriage. Why have I never heard your voice cry out to me for the young boys whose burden I have put in your heart?

You don't have time. But you would have quickly gone on a date with any woman who might have looked like your wife. In fact you tried; if not that I blocked the way and made all the women you asked out look the other side. I was trying to send you a message but you still did not understand.

Femi your priorities are misplaced.

"But Lord, is it that you don't want me to get married?"

No, that is not what I am saying. I am saying that I want you to follow the Biblical pattern. Become a man in whose hands I can place my work then I will send you help to fulfill that work.

You currently want a wife only to gratify your selfish desires; you are not ready, neither are you groomed enough to protect her, nurture her or intercede for her. I have been watching you. You are selfish and self-centered, never looking to or caring for anyone but yourself.

"What do you want me to do then, Lord?"

Begin the mentorship sessions for young boys.

And pray for your wife.

Chapter 5

Lara could not believe her eyes; that she who was once called prude by men because of her refusal to sleep with any man before marriage had now slept with a total of six men since the prayer vigil with her 'Twitter Pastor'. With all of these men she had failed to get pregnant and with encouragement from pastor, she had moved unto the next man who came to her on the list.

What was surprising was also the fact that she had met these men in church.

She didn't know when the words "ah mogbe!" slipped from her mouth. She was really in trouble. Was this her life? How many men would she have sex with before she met the one who wouldn't 'chop and clean mouth'? Eat his cake and have it? Milk the cow and leave it dry? How many?

She decided to ask another sister who just got married two weeks ago if this was how things really worked. Because this nil rate of success was killing her. After all, what was the essence of doing this if there would be no marriage in view.

Nene had been watching this well primed and beautiful single sister since she joined the church. It was impossible not to notice her as she was always looking well put together and beautiful per time. Her figure was perfect; her dresses flawless, her skin tone looked like caramel, like pure honey... It was simply impossible not to notice her.

They had never spoken to one another but today surprisingly she had walked straight to Nene and asked to speak with her after Bible Study. They were now seated at a fast food joint close to church.

Nene opened the conversation with, "So how are you doing, sis?"

"I am doing well ma'am and congratulations! I saw it was your wedding ceremony that was held about two weeks ago. How was it? How has it been going? And how was your honey moon also?"

Nene smiled, "everything went well and as they say, we are still on our honeymoon stage but I really just thank God for everything".

"God?"

"Yes God!, God has been involved in my love story right from the beginning."

"Please ma'am, can you tell me your love story? I know this seems intrusive but this issue on love and relationships is actually the reason why I asked to see you. I have had different experiences regarding marital issues so far and I am really not happy about that area of my life. I don't understand how a man can meet a woman and say he wants to marry her. Like, it has never happened for me. What reason will make a man say he wants to marry a woman *biko*? What does she have to have or do for that to happen? Is it *juju*? What exactly?"

Nene smiled.

"I smile because I was exactly in these shoes like you when I got married. I got married at 35 years of age after years of waiting.

How old are you if you don't mind me asking?"

"I am 28 going on 29 and I really want to get married before I hit 30 years old but if I go by what I have been seeing so far, I don't think that that would be possible."

"What have you been seeing so far?"

Lara fidgeted in her seat.

Nene looked her straight in the eye, "if you want me to help you Lara, then you have to be honest with me."

"Okay, here is the deal. I have never been pretty enough for the boys all around me. Right from when I was a young child, the boys in my class called me ugly. I never received letters or red roses during valentine. I have been passed up on love all my life but that's okay. That was me as a child. As a 20 year old in the university my story changed, I blossomed. Men and guys loved me and wanted to have me and they had me till I met Christ and decided that I won't go down that route again. I became a Christian in the university, complete with staying off sex and sexual immorality till about six months ago when I called it quit. In just the space of six months I've slept with six guys."

"Ok... thank you so much for sharing your life with me Lara. I don't take it for granted at all" Nene began, reminding herself to tread carefully while also asking for wisdom to say the right thing.

"You want me to tell you about my love story so you can know how it works, right?"

“Yes”

“Ok.

I met my husband at a restaurant in Lagos but we really didn't say anything to one another till we met again at Shoprite Lekki Mall about two weeks later. This time we were both surprised and pointing our fingers at one another saying 'I have met you before, right?'"

Nene smiled as she went down memory lane.

'I didn't meet my husband at a typical place like the church where Christians meet their spouses, we met outside of the church but that didn't stop the fact that he was a God fearing man through and through.

First of all when I was away at the U.S doing my Masters, I had identified things God would want me to have in my husband. I don't mean things I wanted to have but things God wanted me to have in my man. I knew I wanted a man who is a priest, one who could lead me in the way of life and in God's ways. My husband fitted that bill perfectly. We would literally spend hours sitting in his car and all he wanted to talk about was the Bible. I even had to call a friend to ask if it was normal.

Secondly, I wanted a man who would uphold God's standard of purity before marriage. I didn't want to buy a ring with my body especially because I knew it is very important to God."

Lara shook her head, "so you mean your husband didn't sleep with you before you got married?"

"No Lara, he didn't. And I would have walked away if he had attempted it."

"What gave you such confidence, Nene?"

Nene thought for a minute, "Well, first of all because I was 35 years old and tired of rubbish."

They both laughed out loud at that.

"And secondly, because I really wanted to please God and do things His way; I had been burned in relationships of my own making before so I made a decision to walk in the ways and pathways of God concerning relationships."

"Ah", Lara exclaimed.

"What if God is taking too long?"

"Men would have said God was taking too long in my case but I think it's our own foolishness that makes the process long. I think about my time in my 20s where I did

things my own way, moving in and out of every Tom, Dick and Harry's bed. I was in the U.S and got roped into the 'free love' system. I gave my body to any and every man, looking for love my way. I really wasn't even looking for marriage per say, I just wanted a man that would love and take care of me. But I found none. When I came to Christ, my mindset had to be changed before God could do anything at all with me in that area of my life. I had to unlearn the world systems I had learnt and I had to really mean that I would let God lead me in this area of my life. When I did that, it really didn't take up to three years for God to send me my husband. It was relatively easy when I let God lead, compared to when I tried to buy love with my body.

God did it and I didn't have to pay for it by opening my legs for any Tom, Dick and Harry either. I didn't have to degrade myself. This man wanted me and saw me as a gift of God to him. I was treated and I am still being treated as a treasure by my husband. He also had been worked on by the Lord so I wasn't been needed as just a cook or a woman gracing his bed – though we really do enjoy a good sex life - he sees me as a helper and God's favour sent to his life to help him reach the fullest potential God has put on the inside of him.

My advice to you Lara is to quit playing games. If you are for God then be for God."

Lara was trembling.

"But what if God is the one who gave you permission to have sex with this man outside of marriage?"

"Like, you heard Him say that to you?"

"No, what if God told someone you trust that also hears God's voice?"

Nene narrowed her eyes. What had Lara fallen into?

"Tell me what he said".

Lara cleared her throat, suddenly unsure of herself.

"Erm, he said faith without works is dead so if we are believing God for marriage then we should also do all it takes including getting pregnant before marriage so both God and the man would know we are serious."

Nene's eyes popped open.

"And you believed him?"

"Well, I didn't want to but what other option do I have?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean maybe God didn't know that I meant business before so this would show him I am serious."

"What business?"

"The business of getting married."

"So you would do anything to ensure that you get married?"

"Yes, this year!"

Nene looked to see Lara's eyes spitting fire.

"But why are you so anxious about getting married this year?"

"Hmm..."

Lara's chest heaved along with her sigh.

"Because my younger brother just got married, next would be my younger sister. These are all people in their early 20s, I'm close to 30 and still sitting pretty on top of 'I am waiting on God.' There must be something I can do, so I decided to do it."

"Really? So how is it working so far?"

Lara mumbled in reply, "that's why I am here. I have done everything I know to do, even giving men what they all need; my body, sex... still it's not working. They will 'chop and clean mouth' Nene, what kind of life is this?"

Nene looked at her with compassion while also having a conversation with God at the same time.

Father what do I say to her?

"Lara please if I will help you, I want to be assured we will have an honest conversation here with one another."

Lara nodded.

Nene cleared her throat and said a word of prayer inwardly for the wisdom of God because God is always reaching out to his children.

"Lara, are you born again? I mean, have you given your life to Jesus Christ?"

Lara lowered her eyes, "Yes, but it was a long time ago."

"So you are backslidden?"

"Yes, you could say that."

“So what have you been doing in church?”

“Please, promise me you won’t judge me.”

“I promise”.

“I came back to church because I wanted to get married. I stopped attending church after my years in the university when I started working. But I felt like I would get a good man if I came back to church.”

Nene nodded, “Thank you for telling me the truth, Lara.”

“I want to take you down memory lane. Remember the first day you gave your life to Christ? Were you sincere about it?”

“Yes I was”.

“How was it?”

“Well, for the first few years, I lived clean. But it didn’t feel like that life would favour me after university when every one of us went our own ways. We used to be a clique, loving God and spending time in prayer and Bible study together and that made the whole Christian life sweet until we graduated, I just didn’t think the same rules would apply after school.”

“So you fell off?”

“Yes. And I also started working in Lagos and got too busy for church and services. I always used the spare time I had to catch up on my sleep.”

“And what was the result?”

Lara thought for a moment...

“Well.... my hunger for God and the whole Christianity thing died.”

Nene nodded.

“What you feed on is often what you desire. What you eat most is what you crave. If you spend time with God and with people who love Him, then you would love God too. If you stay away and spend time with other things then you would desire those other things too.”

“That is exactly why I left. How can somebody be okay with just prayer and Bible study for life?”

“Lara, you have the wrong mindset about God and Christianity. Nobody said you have to pray for twenty-four hours every day. Even though the Holy Spirit can actually take over and help you pray for that long but it won’t be in the flesh.”

We were actually created to fellowship with God. Remember Adam and Eve in the Bible? The Bible says God would come and fellowship with them in the cool of the day. This was a regular part of their everyday life and they loved it because it was how God created them to function. Becoming a Christian is simply being brought back into fellowship with God which is the original way we were created to function anyway. So when you fellowship with prayer and Bible study along with worship, if you have the right mindset, it is actually the most enjoyable and fun thing there is. It is your spirit, soul and body literally coming back home.

You probably got born again with the wrong mindset that it was only a university thing that's why it got hard for you.

Notice I am not even talking about your desire for marriage because that is not the first place to start. When your desire for God wanes, it is only natural that your desire for other things would grow out of proportion.

Your desire for marriage wasn't just fueled by the threat of your younger siblings getting married; it was fueled by your departing away from the Only One who can satisfy you. When you are not getting satisfaction from God then you end up seeking satisfaction from anything else. That is why you feel anxious to get married.

Do you understand me?"

Lara nodded, "A bit.

But are you saying that God does not want me to get married?"

"That's not what I am saying."

"I am saying that God created you with an inner dissatisfaction that nothing but Him can fill. And it is only when you come into Him that your desire for other things would be put in the right perspective because He would have filled you with Himself so you won't have to need marriage or any other thing to feel complete the way you do right now."

Nene was talking and praying at the same time for this soul to be brought back to the Lord.

Lara looked penitent, "So where do we start from?"

"We have to start by putting your relationship with God back on track and in the right perspective.

Lara, are you ready to come back to God?"

Lara nodded.

Hallelujah! Nene was screaming in her mind.

Outwardly she only found herself repeating, “welcome home, Lara. Welcome home.”

"Can we hold hands together?"

Lara nodded.

“Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving Lara your daughter rest. For leading her back to you. We thank you for sealing her with the Holy Spirit to ensure that she is led right back to you. Thank you Lord.

Now Lara I want you to talk to God in your own words while I wait for you as you pray. You can speak with Him silently. This is between just you and Him.”

Lara could only weep.

Lord I'm sorry for using you only as a means to an end.

Come into my life Lord...

Come and heal the broken pieces of my life..

Come and heal me and make me whole...

Nene could really see God working, this was all Him and none of her. She could only keep repeating “thank you Jesus” as she waited for Lara to finish praying.

‘I want you to do something for me, Lara. Do you have your Bible from Bible study?’

Lara nodded, “yes!”

“Bring it out and open to Colossians chapter 2 verse 10.

What does it say?’

“So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.”

“I want you to underline that Bible verse, do a Bible study on it. I mean just think about it in the light of your single life and tell me what it means to you. Is that okay?”

”Yes!”

‘We would be meeting again, let’s say in three days time and we will discuss it together.”

“Okay.”

“And yes before I forget, Lara. Having sex outside of marriage is a sin oh. You fell prey to a pastor who was just evil personified. I don’t know what his aim was but he was simply manipulating you. Open to the book to Hebrews chapter 13 verse 4.

What does it say?”

Lara read out loud.

“Let marriage be held every way in honour, and the bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers will God judge.”

“What do you see there please? What I see is that God places marriage in very high esteem. He isn’t happy when the marriage bed is kept in dishonor by either fornication which is sex before marriage or adultery which is a spouse having sex with another person other than his or her spouse. This is God’s way for every one of us and this is not to scare you but the Bible actually says God would judge such sins that dishonor the marriage bed.

There are so many consequences of defiling our bodies with sexual immorality – which is what the Bible calls any sexual act which isn’t approved of by God and God doesn’t want these consequences for us.

Do you understand this? Are you on track with me?”

"I want you to read another scripture. Please turn to the book of 1st Thessalonians chapter 4 verses 3 to 6 and read"

“God’s will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor – not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways. Never harm or cheat a fellow believer in this matter by violating his wife, for the Lord avenges all such sins, as we have solemnly warned you before.”

“That man you are sleeping with is someone else’s future husband and you are someone else’s future wife. God is not happy with sexual sin. It is a sin against your own body as 1st Corinthians chapter 6 verses 18 says. As a born again believer, you now have the Holy Spirit. He has come to live in you. If you still continue sharing your body with another man before marriage, it would be sexual sin and it won’t be honoring to God. That is the truth, Lara. That pastor was simply taking advantage of your desperation for marriage.

I know we've talked at length, so that I do not overload you with information, I want you to go home and think about everything I have said. And the next time we meet we will discuss whatever decisions and questions you may have.

Is that okay?”

“It’s okay with me Nene. Thank you so much.”

Chapter 6

Lara couldn't sleep that night. Just when she had made a decision for God, Amos, a guy from her past she hadn't spoken to in ages suddenly started calling her. She didn't want to take the call but she did. The conversation was very troubling to say the least. It went like this:

"Baby howfar? My people are still asking me to bring a wife home oh."

"Give them a wife nah."

"But it's you I want... can you come tonight let's discuss?"

Lara thought and calculated in her head. Wasn't this an answer to prayer? It could be. But could it really be? That the very night she gave her life to Christ, God answered her prayer?

"Babe come nah, we need to show them evidence."

"Evidence? What do you mean?"

"Evidence nah, that you are fruitful. See, I am an urhobo man and my people would not let me marry a woman who cannot show that she can give birth for me. You are the woman I have chosen but let's try nah, so we can let them know that your womb is viable."

Lara dropped the call without saying anything.

God why?

Why tonight of all nights when I have just given my life to you?

Lara was confused but she didn't want to call Nene so it wouldn't seem like she was drawing back so soon.

"What do I do?"

It's seeming like all I want is finally within my reach. What do I do now, Lord?"

Somewhere on the other side of Lagos, Femi just got back from work and he was just trying to relax when he felt a pull and a nudge to pray. He wanted to complain to the Holy Spirit but it felt like the pull was for his wife so he obeyed. He couldn't explain the kind of urge he felt to pray, he just simply knew that the prayers were for his future wife.

He dropped to his knees.

"Heavenly Father I thank you for this woman who is mine; this woman who you have given me to be my own, my helper and the mother of my children. I declare her blessed. I declare that the rough places of her life are made smooth. I declare that wisdom is given to her right now to unravel the rough places of her life in Jesus mighty name. I declare that the Lord God Himself helps her, therefore she shall not be moved and she shall not be shaken. Oh Father, I ask that you would keep her in You. Keep her away from temptations and the traps of the enemy. Please shine your light upon her pathways, help her to choose right and choose the way of life. Fill her with the knowledge of Your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Cause her to understand the pathways You have set before her and to realize that Your way is good and always good."

Femi had prayed like that for a while when suddenly shifted his prayer and he began to find himself making priestly decrees over her.

"Oh my wife, I declare that you won't fall. God Himself is helping you. God is holding you by your right hand, saying to you fear not, I will help you! God Himself shall help you. You shall not fail. You shall not fall. Your pathways will not be slippery before you. I declare to you my wife that you walk upon smooth pathways and clear roads in the name of the Lord Jesus. I ask for the help of the ministry of angels round about you right now, to keep you in all your ways. You will not slip nor will your feet be caught in the way, in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Father, I declare upon my wife the grace to hold unto the Lord. She is strengthened in all your ways. Her hands are strengthened, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!"

Femi kept on making decrees like these when suddenly he could feel the intense approval of the Lord over him.

"Now you are a priest."

He continued to pray till the burden lifted.

12:17am that same night.

Lara's eyes suddenly popped open at that exact time.

She had gone to sleep that night still worried and considering what Amos had told her. She had texted Amos back after she dropped the call that she would see him tomorrow, just to secure her spot in case she changed her mind in the morning. She didn't want to lose at both ends.

She had a dream where she found herself before a dog. The dog smelled so badly, she found herself gagging and throwing up in front of it. Then all of a sudden, as if controlled by a force greater than herself, she found herself kneeling down in front of the vomit, intending to actually use her fingers to scoop the vomit back into her mouth. She felt it was gross to do such and yet she just could not seem to help herself.

All of a sudden, she heard a voice scream, 'stop!' Then the last thing she remembered were the words 2nd Peter 2 verse 22 written on the floor in the midst of the vomit.

The first thing she did when she woke up was to look at the time: it was 12:17am.

The dream had seemed so real.

"God, what does this mean?"

Open the Bible.

Yes, that last message of 2nd Peter 2:22 written in the vomit.

She read, ***“They prove the truth of this proverb: “A dog returns to its vomit.” And another says, “A washed pig returns to the mud.”***

She heard it like a voice in her mind saying, ***that would be you if you agree to what Amos is saying.***

Make a covenant with me on your marriage. If you would abide by my terms and honor me I would give you a man you could never have given to yourself.

Over and over she could hear the voice in her mind saying, ***‘if you will make a covenant to honor me with your marriage and the choice of a husband, then I would give you a man you could never have given to yourself’.***

Was this really God speaking to her? Lara started to cry at God’s love for her.

“Yes Lord, I will make a covenant with you. Yes Lord. What do I do?”

Just speak.

“Ok Lord”

How do you do such things?

She decided to kneel and lift up her hands to God.

“Lord Jesus I come before you, my name is Lara and I have made a lot of mistakes in having sex with men who are not my husband. I have made a lot of mistakes in relationships also but I thank you for showing me mercy tonight.

Tonight I have heard your voice. I have decided to enter into a covenant with you. I cut every connection between me and men in the past and I also declare that I cut every connection with every other man who I may want to choose for myself in the future. I will not go back to my vomit. I ask you for your mercy and I say that from now on, I will honor you with my body in holiness and purity before marriage. I will not give another man my body in sex when he is not my husband. Lord, please give me the grace to do so.

Also Lord, I am deciding to do all things about marriage your way. I will only make decisions on marriage as directed by you.

I also declare that I will wait for you to fulfil your own part of this covenant which is to give me a man better than I could have given to myself.

Signed by me, Lara Omotosho, this day, February 14th 2014.

Thank you Lord. Thank you.”

Lara got up. She didn’t hear the voice but she was filled with such joy. She also decided to write the happenings and the covenant she had made with God in her journal, putting in the exact date and signing her name and signature on it.

The very next thing she did was to take her phone and text a break-up message to both Amos and every other guy who she had dealings with. As God helped her to fulfill her part of the covenant, she trusted that He would fulfil His part of the covenant too.

He was the God that faileth not.

Lara could only bask in joy as she relived all that had happened tonight; it was a new dawn for her.

Chapter 7

Amaka's meeting with Baba Ijebu had gone really well and everything had gone back to normal between her and Lazarus. All she was required to do was to rub a black substance on her vagina and to sleep with Lazarus on the same day.

But it had come with a warning. Baba Ijebu had said that if she wanted all to be well, Lazarus was never to have sex with any other girl other than herself because the bond was to bind both of them together alone with no third-party. She had not been afraid of that warning because Baba had said that a key part of the charm was that Lazarus would have eyes only for her and he would obey anything she told him without question.

Getting him to sleep with her was not a problem. All she had to do was to show up feigning remorse for how she had acted and offer him free sex with no strings attached. In fact she had left the house of her accord and was surprised to see Lazarus calling her the next day to show up at his place urgently. The way he sounded made her feel as though he was in pain. As soon as she had entered the house that day, he had grabbed her and undressed her with speed and couldn't seem to get enough of her.

He finally, after several tries of begging, convinced her to stay the night in his place. She wanted to pay him back as the charm had worked like fire. Lazarus could not seem to function without her. He wanted her close by him every day. She had called Baba Ijebu to send him extra money while thanking him profusely. This thing was the answer to her problem.

It had been six months of bliss and she was even pregnant with their first child. They were planning their wedding to hold after she had given birth. She deliberately got pregnant so she could secure her place with him. She also decided to not just spend the nights but move fully into his house where she could monitor Lazarus' dealings with women just to be on the safe side against those Lagos girls who had eyes like hawks.

All was going well if she could say so herself.

She rubbed her belly as she sang in happiness to her little one. She was carrying a boy.

But little did she know that trouble was lurking around the corner.

It was a sunny afternoon when Suzzy decided to set out for Lazarus' place. Suzzy, his longtime girlfriend, the one he wanted to get married to. She had decided to settle with him because, of all the guys she had dated, he remained her best bet.

She had planned and staged the day so cleverly.

She had been told he now had a girl who lived in his house during her chats with Lazarus, he had been so love drunk, telling her about his wedding plans, so much so that he had also mentioned that her pregnancy was going fine and at her antenatal visit to the hospital on Tuesday, even the doctor had said she was doing fine.

He was on leave at the house happy to serve his wife in any way he could.

Suzzy knew she had competition so she brought her *'talk and do'* charm, the one she usually used for her sugar daddies. Coupled with the charm if it didn't work, was another sinister plan to drug him, sleep with him and send his girlfriend the pictures.

What Suzzy didn't know was that there would be hell to pay for the consequences of her actions.

The D-day was at hand. Suzzy had planned to spend only thirty minutes in and out. If she remembered clearly, Lazarus was also a fan of fast sex and that was what she aimed to give him.

He was reclining on his sofa when she came in, resting as he had said during their WhatsApp chat.

"Laza, how are you doing? It's been long oh; I said I should visit you today."

She smiled.

Lazarus looked up at the words and scrunched his face.

"Oh it's you."

Suzzy knew she was in trouble because Lazarus had never greeted her like that before, even when she had said she would leave him, he had begged her to come back.

She hid her agitation at his greeting.

"How are your wife and your baby? I was hoping I could meet her." *she lied.*

"They are doing fine, thank you. She went to the hospital."

Just like Suzzy had hoped for. She smiled.

"Tell me about her."

Her head was racing a mile a minute on how she would give Lazarus some portion of the drugged food she had brought.

Meanwhile, she could see Lazarus' face lighting up.

"Well, she is the best thing that has ever happened to me. Her name is Amaka. Did I show you her picture? This is what she looks like currently. Even her baby bump is so cute. Look at her."

Suzzy brought out her food pack, drew closer to where Lazarus was sitting on the settee and feigned interest in looking at the pictures he was trying to show her.

"Hmm... she is so cute just as you said, Lazarus. I hope she treats you well?"

I guess she might not have been able to prepare something for you to eat before leaving for the hospital. I came with some food, you can join me."

Lazarus absentmindedly took a spoonful of her food just as he continued talking about Amaka a mile a minute.

Suzzy screamed in her heart!

Mission accomplished!

Yes!

Now all she needed to do was to wait for him to fall asleep.

And indeed it wasn't long before Lazarus was dozing. Suzzy quickly resumed her plan of undressing him and making moves to have sex with him while also recording the entire scene on her phone.

Record time, 20 minutes!

Done and out!

She didn't realize that by the time she got around to sending the video to Amaka, it wouldn't be needed any longer. The consequences of breaking the warnings that followed Baba Ijebu's charm would have taken care of that.

With just one act, Suzzy had shattered Amaka's well-crafted plan from months ago.

By the time Amaka got back home, she could sense that things weren't right.

First of all, Lazarus had not called to check on her all the time she spent at the hospital.

Secondly, the house was erringly quiet. *What's up?*

"Lazarus? Lazarus?"

She saw him sleeping on the sofa; her gift from heaven.

She made to wake him up.

"Hey baby. Wake up."

She tugged at him gently.

"Hey baby wake up, I'm back."

She made to kiss his lips.

Lazarus woke up from sleep with his eyes glazed over; he had a glassy look over his eyes and didn't look like he could recognize her.

Amaka became scared. Did something happen here?

The very first words out of his mouth confirmed her fears.

"Who are you?"

Amaka stayed silent out of shock.

"I say who you be?"

You nor go answer me?"

She was confused because Lazarus had never spoken pidgin to her hearing before.

"Baby, it's me."

"You feel say I dey joke? I say answer me!"

"Babe... Lazarus, it's me."

"I say you feel say I dey joke? Who you be? Okay nah, you still dey stand there."

The very next thing she saw was Lazarus pulling out his belt and trousers as he made to flog her.

She ran into the neighborhood screaming and it just became practical mayhem from then on.

Her neighbors had to call the officials from Yaba left.

Lazarus had gone mad.

Amaka was frantic. She called Baba Ijebu immediately.

"Baba Ijebu. I am finished oh. Baba. My boyfriend has gone mad."

"What did you do?"

"Nothing oh, Baba. I did everything you told me to do."

"Did he sleep with another woman?"

"Baba, I met him here in the house oh, I don't know what happened."

Amaka's heart was beating a mile a minute and she could barely talk out of her tears and hiccups.

"Baba, I swear I left him at home alone and saw him alone when I came back."

"There's no way. He must have slept with another woman."

"Ah! Baba! What can I do now?"

"You cannot do anything. You would have to stay with him like that. Both of you are bound together. If you leave him you will run mad too."

"Ah Baba!"

"That's all Amaka. There is no reversal."

"Baba, would I stay by the side of a mad man for the rest of my life?"

"That is it oh Amaka, that is it. I warned you before."

"Eh! Jesus help me! Help me oh! Help me!

I'm in trouble oh, Baba. I'm in trouble."

“I cannot do anything Amaka, my hands are tied.”

“Ah, Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!”

Chapter 8

Lara could hardly recover from the encounter she had had with God the previous night.

She fixed an appointment with Nene the very next day to discuss what she had experienced with God.

They were seated currently at The Fast Food Place and she could hardly hold herself from blurting it all out as soon as they entered the door of the restaurant.

She was just about wrapping up her recount of the whole encounter to Nene.

“... and that was how I made the covenant with God and I feel so joyful, Nene. No more scheming. No more playing games in church and no more desperado moves. So help me, God.”

Both of them said, “Amen” at the same time.

“I have broken up the relationships with all the guys and committed to stay pure till marriage but I am a bit concerned Nene. What do I do now in this time as I wait for God to bring the man He promised?”

Nene smiled, “I love this question. Let’s open our Bibles again, shall we?”

Let’s go to Colossians 2 verse 10.

It tells us that we are complete through our union with Christ. So the first place to start is in your union with God. John chapter 15 also says it better; it says remain in Jesus – in life giving relationship with Jesus so His life would flow through you and if you are remaining in Him, then he would also remain in and with you. The result will be you being full to overflowing with the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ so you would not have to opt for cheap imitations of Him.

Jesus wants you to know that you are complete in Him. You have all that you need in Christ and as you remain in union with Him – abiding in and with Him in word, prayers, worship and fellowship, what’s really happening in those times is that more of Him is being poured into you so you are being filled with Him and have no sense of lack.

“Do you understand this Lara?”

"I do. But is there a practical way to spend time with God? Like I get it, prayers and worship and reading the word but how can I break this down?"

"Okay. So the very first thing you need to do is to have this as a regular set habit in your life. In the Christian fold it is called 'quiet time'. A quiet time is a time for you and God alone, it means crafting out a time in your day where you can be isolated to be with Him. Personally, I use mornings for my quiet time before I do anything else, this is very important especially when you become a wife and mother with children, you want to ensure it's a time when other things are not screaming at you.

Another thing is you shouldn't make it like a strict routine, 'thou shalt and thou shalt not thing'. In that place of fellowshiping with God, spend time to pray, talk to God as your Father. Prayer is simply communicating with God in words and just like you heard Him in last night's encounter, He would speak to you too. Sometimes He speaks with words, sometimes it's just an impression or a nudge in your heart. It's the Holy Spirit speaking still. Listen to Him. Get a notepad or a journal you take to your quiet time to write down what He says.

You can also take worship music there that you like and sing and dance. God doesn't just want to fellowship with you; He also knows your taste in music and songs too. So take worship music that can bring heaven down for you and sing to God.

A most effective way to have a time of fellowship with God is also to ask the Holy Spirit to come make your time with God exciting. Before you leave, I will pray with you to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues which would significantly amp up your prayer life. Speaking in tongues that is praying in the Spirit or praying in the Holy Ghost as some people call it, gives you a greater ability to speak to God praying for hours and it has so many benefits. It is like a secret coded language between you and God where everything you pray in tongues is the perfect will of God. It also helps you even pray for others and for things you do not know how to pray about. Romans chapter 8 verses 26-28 and also the entire chapter of 1st Corinthians 14 explains the gift of speaking in tongues. It is a priceless gift given by the Holy Ghost to every believer and all you need is to receive Him. Like I said we would pray for you to receive Him.

So this is what you can do spiritually to walk in being complete in Christ Jesus in this time."

"Hmm... so a man doesn't make me complete..."

"That's exactly what Jesus is trying to get across to you. You got it! You don't have to place your life on hold, waiting for a man to show the world that 'you've got it'. Jesus is the only One who completes your life and now you have received Him, so grow deeper into Him and walk in Him.

I also want to speak to you about what to do with your single life. If you check 1st Corinthians chapter 7, you will see that the Christians in those early days were confused about the single and married life whether to remain single or to get married.

Look at what Paul said. Paul told them that some people like him were called to be single and given the gift of singlehood but he also said that one person gets one gift and one gets the other. So if you are called to be single, it is no sin. Also if you are called to be married, it is no sin.

But here is the key point here: a single person he says in verse 35 has the liberty to simply focus in totality on the Lord and also to serve the Lord without distractions.

I would ask you to go a step further with God. Don't just wait for the Lord to fulfil His covenant to bring your husband and while the time away. Get busy really serving the Lord from your heart; pour out into others and do the things you are passionate about for the Kingdom of God. Do not be afraid to be a successful single lady, go out, go loud and go big. If God puts a dream in your heart, go for it. Be a single woman who is serving the Lord without fear and without drawing back and in the seed of your service to God always lies the answer to your desires.

Remember God never fails and He never breaks His covenant with any man. If you spend yourself for God even as a single girl, in return, He would spend Himself for you. God does not owe any man.

You want my advice? Run with everything you have in you for God. Pour yourself into building a relationship where you are complete in Him. Enjoy your single life; be a successful single lady and build everything the Lord asks you to build and do for Him even now without fear, and watch God blow your mind with the seeds you are sowing for Him both now and in the future.

Let us pray...

Heavenly Father I commit your daughter Lara into your hands, I declare that this woman is a mighty power house for the Lord. I declare that she is made by the Lord to do great things. Lord, reveal who she is to her. Unveil her to her. Give her the sense of purpose you have built on the inside of her and cause her to walk without fear or favor of man.

Father please make Lara a force upon the earth, let her be a mighty tree that cannot be pulled or brought down. Cause her life to shine and flourish and may her life story in you bring many men and women into your kingdom, in Jesus mighty name we pray, Amen.

Chapter 9

Femi was teaching some of the young boys he hosted in his house on sex and sexuality. They usually gathered every Sunday and from about 10 boys they had grown to almost 30 boys who were calling him “Papa Femi”.

Most of the boys were young boys he usually saw on his street while coming from work every day. Most of them either had no fathers or had absentee fathers so he had taken to hosting them at his house every Friday at first after work because that was the time most of them would usually get into trouble. He would invite them with an option of watching a football game as well as providing snacks and some meals for them and afterwards he would share the word of God on any topic God placed in his heart.

He wasn't sure if the work was yielding any results till he saw how week after week he didn't have to go out anymore. The boys were bringing their friends even from the other street to join in the weekly boys2men hangouts at his house. As a result, he moved the dates to Sundays after Church so they would have a lot of time before their mothers came looking for them. Somedays they met from 4pm to 8pm officially but by 9pm many of the boys would still be in his house just talking with him, sharing their lives with him and asking him questions. He found out God had done a great work where he was essentially being a disciple to these boys in Christ and filling in for the places where their fathers had failed.

It was a heavy responsibility God had given to him, making him a father of many but it was one that also gave him joy.

Femi turned his attention to Ochuko, the boy who was about to ask him a question after class.

“So Papa Femi, you dey say sex before marriage na sin so make we stay away ba?”

“Yes, correct. I use myself as example to show you say you go fit do am.”

“Okay no problem. But what about those wey don do am before?”

“Ah, how many of una remember wetin I tell una about Jesus and being born again?”

One of the boys sitting at the opposite end of the room raised up his hand.

“Okay, Fela tell us”.

“You say, once any person dey for Christ na new creature so all the bad bad thing wey e do before don pass. He go fit start fresh as if nothing don happen before.”

“Ochuko shey you hear am? You go fit change. Jesus go change you and he nor go judge you. He go wash you clean and na so e go dey.”

It was actually alarming to find that majority of the boys from as early as 12 years old had already started having sex. In their cliques, it was a show of maturity to say that you had slept with so and so number of ladies. But also rife among them was sexual abuse. Because the women generally left their sons to roam the streets, they were easy prey for a lot of loose women. Most of their habits and characters they actually got from the streets.

“So Ochuko, you ready to change from today? Remember wetin I tell you say any man wey sleep with woman before marriage, he dey actually dey exchange he bright destiny for less. Na that kind life una want?’

All the boys said no.

“So who ready to change? I promise you say Jesus go help you become strong man wey go fit withstand temptation with the help of God.”

Ochuko and a few other boys raised up their hands.

“Oya make we pray; repeat after me.

Say ‘Lord Jesus, I ask you for help. I wan stay pure sexually from today till I marry. I wan be man like Joseph wey go run from anything wey fit spoil he destiny. I nor wan sacrifice my future because of pleasure today. Abeg help me. Help me stay and shave aside sexual temptation from today world in Jesus name I have prayed, Amen.”

Lara was excited! She just heard from God to go teach and share her story of finding God after being desperate for marriage with young girls in the university.

Wow!

What was God doing?

She even found herself thinking about writing a book on her story.

Of course Nene must hear this.

Grrghhhhhhhhh – phone rings.

“Nene. Nene are you there? Guess what?”

“Lara slow down. What’s up?”

“Guess what? Guess what?!”

Nene laughed.

“Just tell me already before you burst”.

“Okay, God just told me my purpose. Something to do for Him; I was praying when I felt like I should go to the university I graduated from and organize a seminar to talk with the girls about my story”.

“Wow Lara!, that’s amazing!”

“And He even talked about a book...”

“Wow! Lara, how do you feel about this?”

“I am excited because I have been asking Him what I can do for Him for weeks now but also scared a bit, I don’t know... my story is a bit shameful, except the part of finding Jesus of course. And then also I don’t know my way around. How do you organize something in a university?”

Lara could feel Nene’s smile through the phone.

“Well it’s good that your first port of call is to obey. It’s not like that for so many others so I salute your heart to obey God.

Secondly, your story is **not** shameful. Emphasis on not; that Lara is dead and gone, this Lara is a new Lara and the only reason you share is to give Jesus glory of how He can radically transform a life.

Thirdly, I have some links with some fellowships at your university. Our church actually runs a Satellite fellowship there; I will speak to the pastor and link you up.

Lara was shaking where she was. Like what are the odds, Lord? So, obedience sorted. Fears sorted. Making a way for the platform is solved. All I need to do is show up. Thank you Lord.

Lara stood on the stage speaking to the young ladies in University of Calabar and she was so overwhelmed with all God was doing in her life.

They couldn't get into her university yet but the pastor at church in connection with Nene had been able to get an open door into University of Calabar.

"So you see", Lara was saying, "I sank deep down low. My lowest of lows was sleeping with guys and trying to wiggle my way into marriage with them by wanting to get pregnant for anyone; anyone who would have me. I am not so proud of the things I did and my level of desperation then but the good news is that Jesus saved me. Jesus saved me and accepted me just as I am and He did not do that, He took my mess and made it a message. I am standing here today all because Jesus had mercy on me.

I will still get married. That's not even a question, not because I am desperate but because Jesus made me a promise and I know He would fulfil that promise.

We have also come to a very crucial point where you have to make a decision for your life. Are you okay with going on with your life the way you are right now? Where having a boyfriend in school is seen as a badge of honor? Would you not want to see Jesus do what only Him can do with your life if you would only accept Him and ask Him to come into your life and fill you up?

Jesus can and will make something more of your life just as it is right now. You may have to separate and cut off from those boys but oh, you will gain so much more. I'm telling you, you will gain so much more. You will gain Yeshua, Jesus, your eternal bridegroom.

So I am going to make an altar call right now for those who feel empty, who feel like they have been chasing shadows, you want more, you want the real deal but you have only been thinking the big deal is in getting a man who loves you. No. it is in seeing the man Jesus – God, Papa, Daddy God, the One who first loved you. You need to accept His love so you can be whole, needing nothing and no one else but your necessary survival in the Lord Jesus Christ. So come up here let us pray together."

Lara remained with her head bowed, simply praying for the Holy Spirit to move in the hearts of these young girls who were very much like she was in her younger years. She prayed for God to give them encounters with Himself just as He gave to her, for Jesus to radically transform their lives. For the Holy Spirit to transform their lives just like He did hers.

Work on their hearts Lord, work on their hearts.

And as she prayed silently in her heart, she saw them coming one after the other, milling around her. Some were crying.

She heard the Holy Spirit say, ***pray for healing Lara, pray for healing.***

So she started to pray, "Heavenly Father, please release your healing over your daughters. Heal broken hearts, bring their hearts home. Bring them back to you Lord.

Pour out your healing oil and lead your daughters' home to you. To be complete in you... in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Chapter 10

TWO YEARS LATER

Femi was having a conversation with God in his heart.

"Lord, howfar? I have been faithful; I have been praying for this woman I don't know for the last two years. I have been faithful with the boys2men mentorship sessions. Thank you for growing it, thank you for blowing our minds."

Femi had been so amazed at how fast it had grown like wild fire. He had shared the work on his social media pages and all of a sudden he started getting invites to churches and schools and universities to speak to young boys and teen boys. A bank even called him to be on a mentorship panel for young boys. God had been establishing the work but he still felt an ache in his heart.

"Lord when? My own woman, when? Now I am not just asking for my fleshy desires, I really need a woman that can help me in my work with you. To grow faster and push stronger together and by the way, some of these young boys have been bringing their girlfriends to speak with me, we all need a mama Femi."

He chuckled at himself.

"But Lord for real... when?"

It almost felt like he heard God smile.

I am springing a surprise...

"Ah God, you shouldn't have told me you are springing a surprise on me. Now I am looking everywhere for the surprise lady. How would I know her? What would she be wearing? Please God, give me some clue."

Silence.

"Okay oh. Have it your way, we will play by your rules. It's even good *sef* so I cannot manipulate anything."

Femi was on his way to a speaking engagement he had been invited for at University of Lagos. It was a mixed crowd of both young boys' and girls' audience and he along with other speakers had been invited for the day.

He prayed as he went, "Lord, may this be a day of salvation for somebody out there today. May this be a day where they encounter your grace in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

He walked into the hall a bit late and the very first sight that greeted him was her.

He was struck by her beauty, and then by her words. He had to lean over to ask the protocol officer attached to him, "who is that lady?"

"Oh her name is Miss Lara Omotosho. She is a Lawyer who has been in the Human Resources space for the last six years. She also has a ministry to young ladies called 'Complete In Him'. We invited her here to speak with the girls today."

"Hmm..." Femi nodded to himself. He hadn't asked for that information overload but he couldn't help but remember the servant who read Ruth's CV to Boaz in the Bible, without her knowing.

Lord is that what you are trying to do here?

What do I do?

He couldn't concentrate all through the time he was speaking in his session with the boys and when he sat at the panel session with her, he kept tumbling over his words.

Get a grip on yourself Femi.

Lord what do I do?

He decided to take action, track her and take her out, at least to find out why he was so attracted to her.

After the event, he noticed her about stepping out and he stepped out along with her.

“Hi...”

Lara looked at the man standing in front of her, tall, dark and looking distinguished.

“Hello sir.”

He stretched out his hand for a handshake.

“My name is Femi. We just met in there as fellow speakers and I was really impressed with your story and journey. You are such an inspiration to young women, Lara.”

“Thank you so much, I appreciate this encouragement sir.”

“Well, I also lead a boys2men mentorship session in my community, and they always end up coming to meet me with their girlfriends. I would love to see if we can have something in partnership together to reach out to both demographics of young people. I believe if we could have something like what we had here with the girls and boys in my community, it would really have a high impact on them.”

“That is amazing sir. I am open to working with you and doing my best to bring your vision to life. I have a dire passion God has placed in me to see young ladies live full and complete lives in Him so anywhere God opens the door, I am ready to go”.

“Ok thank you so much ma’am. Can I have your number please so I can call and fix an appointment with you?”

“Of course sir.”

“Please type it here on my phone.”

As Lara moved over to type her number on his phone, he caught a whiff of her perfume, noticed she had very silky hair along with a perfect figure to boot.

Lord I am lusting over a woman. Forgive me.

He had never been attracted to a woman the way he was with this one. What was it about her? His spirit was drawn to her like a moth to a flame.

Lord, let's find out.

Lara got back from the speaking engagement ruminating over all God has done and was still doing in and with her life. She was in awe.

From that very first seminar at University of Calabar, God had literally taken her all around the world. Even brands came to her when they had young girls and teens

high-impact events. She truly believed that only God could have done this and she was just in awe of His grace over and over in her life.

‘Ah, thank you Lord’.

As was usual with her, she found herself slipping into an internal dialogue with God concerning the man she had just met at the University of Lagos event.

“Lord what do you think of him? I know I am still waiting for my husband and I don’t mind waiting for your perfect best as you told me to do but I am just curious. Maybe it was just me sha but there seemed to be kind of like a connection between us. Ah, I admit, maybe it’s my flesh oh. But then maybe you also sent him to me as another open door for the work and I should stop having silly ideas in my head.”

And as usual He spoke back to her.

I can merge both your work and family, Lara.

“What do you mean Lord?”

I mean, I can merge both your work and your family to function from and through the same stream. Didn’t you ever read and see how I actually brought Eve to Adam to help him in his work for me?

You need to start taking marriage classes to learn afresh about my purpose for marriage.

“Yes, I really do.”

But open your Bible let me teach you myself for now.

When I brought Eve to Adam, I brought her as his helper to help him with the work I had put in his hand. What do you see there in Genesis chapter 2 verses 15?

Lara read out loud, “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”

So you see, Adam had a work I had given him to do before I brought his wife to help him in his work and it is the same with everybody I create, both male and female. You and your future husband already have a work I have given the both of you to do.

You will love him and he will love you but my main aim is for my work in both of your hands to flourish.

Two can better achieve more together than they can when they are single. This is you and your husband. I have brought him for this reason.

Lara's ears perked up. She didn't hear anything again.

"What did I just hear? You have brought him?"

"But I didn't see anybody oh, who is he?"

It felt like God smiled.

It's a surprise.

Right from his car on the way home, Femi had started to pray about this girl who he had just met but had an inexplicable pull towards. And as usual he found himself carrying on an internal conversation with God about it.

"Holy Spirit, see, did you just see that girl? Beautiful, fresh, lovely skin... I know I'm tripping Lord, please don't fault me; you made her.

But Lord seriously though, is she the one? Is this the surprise you were talking about? Please help me and guide me. I don't want to make mistakes of the flesh; I've waited too long to be buried in the valley of wrong decisions.

Lord what do I do?"

Femi pray. Pray in the Spirit where your desires would be refined and uninterrupted by the flesh.

And so he obeyed; praying in tongues even right there from his car. This matter was a serious one; he had not waited so long to make a mistake at the end of it all.

There was more at stake here, his life's work, his ministry, his calling, the lives connected to him that were waiting for Christ to be revealed to them through her.

"Holy Spirit, please help me."

Femi had spent the last five days praying like crazy about the Lara girl matter and he was exhausted. He had baptized the thing in tongues and midnight prayers and praise. It was intense yo! But God told him that it was because he was in his marital season and he was processing prophecy to come to life.

He explained to him that prophecies were to be used as weapons in both prayer and praise and any other key He would give us to cause them to come to pass, otherwise we would never see prophecies fulfilled.

God told him he had been obedient and now it was time to wage war with the word so it would be brought and processed from words in the realm of the Spirit to earthly reality.

The Holy Spirit made Femi to understand that when you carry out keys of prayer or praise or instructions the Lord gives to you in the season and time for your manifestation, then nothing can stop it from coming to pass.

It was exactly as Jesus' mother revealed to her servants: "whatsoever He says to you, do it."

So he had simply been doing what the Holy Spirit had said to him to bring the miracle of his marriage to come to pass. But this one thing he knew, it was time. And it was also time to call Lara.

Lara's phone rang *grrrrhhhh*.

It wasn't a number she was familiar with.

"Hello..."

"Hello, am I speaking with Lara please?"

"Yes you are."

Femi took a deep breath, it had been a while he asked a lady out on a date, he was fidgeting a bit.

"My name is Femi, I met you at the mentoring meeting for young boys and girls at Unilag about a week ago."

Lara's heart was beating too because she had been wondering why he hadn't called.

"Yes, I remember you!"

Ok chill Lara, don't be too excited.

Femi smiled, "Oh you do?"

This may not be a lost case after all.

“I hope your work is going well and God has been keeping you.”

“Yes sir and I trust it’s the same for you too.”

“Yes, God has been faithful.”

Femi allowed for a few seconds of silence.

“I am not sure how this would sound but I want to ask if you could please oblige me an appointment with you.”

Femi mentally knocked himself in his head. Why so formal uncle?

He continued.

“You know, you strike me as a very interesting lady. I would love to pick your brain and as God wills, see how we can work together...”

There you have it Femi! Way to go!

“Okay.... When sir?”

“How does the day after tomorrow sound?”

“Uhm.. that’s perfect but I also work at a 9-5 job so I can only make it in the evening.”

“That’s perfect for me also. Where do you work please?”

“I work on the Island.”

“Do you like Chinese?”

Lara’s was surprised at how fast the conversation shifted into food.

“What?”

“I’m trying to figure out where to take you. Do you like Chinese?”

“I love Chinese food!”

“Ok great! Allow me to text you the venue and address then?”

“Yes please do.”

“Okay, thank you so much Lara. I don’t take this for granted at all.”

“You are welcome, Femi. I look forward to learning a lot about your work with teens too.”

“So see you the day after tomorrow by God’s grace.”

"Yes, see you too."

"Ok bye."

"Bye."

Femi dropped the call ecstatic at how he had managed to pull things off.

Lara on the other hand was wondering...

What's happening here Lord?

A text message came into Lara's phone.

Thank you for speaking with me tonight Lara. Here's me following up on the address for our meet up. Can we meet at Xing Yang Restaurant, 2 Delamo Akintola Street, VI, Lagos, Tuesday by 6pm. That good with you Lara? Femi.

Lara waited for a moment and typed back.

Yes, it's good with me. Thanks so much, sir.

She only added 'sir' just to keep her heart from making assumptions but she knew she needed to pray and pray right *now*.

On the morning of their 'appointment' Lara woke up at exactly 12:17am, her time of encounter with the Lord almost two years ago.

Lord what's up?

She listened for His voice and when she heard nothing, she started to pray in the Spirit since she didn't know what else to do. As she prayed, Femi's name came up more than once and she felt a need to pray for him. Her mind was all over the place.

Who is he Lord? Tell me who he is.

She heard nothing but the persistent nudge to pray for him and she did pray in the Spirit for him.

At the end of almost one hour of prayer she heard just one word, **Go with my Spirit.**

Early in the morning by 7am prompt, Lara called Nene.

“Sis please I really need you to pray with and for me. I don’t know if there is anything to it yet but I met a guy at a mentorship seminar I spoke at last week. His name is Femi. He fixed an appointment with me today to talk about work and as much as I am not trying to allow my mind wander, it just seems like there is more.”

“Have you heard anything from God about this?”

“No. He only told me to go with His Spirit. But I am calling because I want to stay accountable to you and I want you to please pray with me, my nerves are all over the place.”

“This is serious.”

“Yes it is Nene. I haven’t been out with any guy for two years now. I don’t know how I would behave and what I would do. What if I say stupid things and I don’t know how to conduct myself?”

“Stop it, Lara.”

“No, for real, Nene. I have forgotten how to relate with the male species in the earth...”

“Haha”

“Sis laugh all you will, just please pray with me. There’s a lot at stake here oh.”

“Okay, let’s pray.

Heavenly Father we thank you for how far you have led and carried your daughter and my sister Lara. Thank you for your great grace in her life. Thank you. Thank you Lord. Father, You said we should commit our ways unto You and You will make our crooked places smooth. You said we will hear Your voice behind our ears saying this is the way to go, for us to walk in it. We are not sure about what’s really going on here but we ask that you take control over Lara and Femi’s appointment today. Give Lara direction today. Cause her to hear your voice, to hear more than is being said and beyond what is seen. May her eyes be open to see and know your will in Jesus name.

And oh, teach her how to rightly conduct herself with grace on this date in Jesus mighty name, Amen.”

Nene could hear Lara breathe out loud in relief at the other end of the phone.

“Haha sis, it’s not that hard. Go with God.”

Wow! Lara was floored. There’s that word again.

Okay God.

Okay.

Lara was seated with Femi at the Chinese restaurant he had planned for them to be at VI.

“You look good, Lara.”

Lara found herself smiling, “Thank you.”

After taking their orders which he helped her choose since he said he was a huge fan of Chinese food and could be trusted to be the best guide of the Universe, she found out that she was actually having a good time. Femi was witty, bright, and intelligent and his passion for young boys literally poured out of his pores just like hers for young girls did. They were alike in every way.

They had spoken for a long time on both their passions. Lara couldn't believe how alike they were in every way.

“So tell me about how you found God. What's your salvation story?”

Lara cleared her throat.

“Well, you heard a bit of it at the mentorship session in-between my talks. I didn't accept Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour till I was well into my late twenties. I found God after series of mistakes. But Jesus found me, showed me grace and that was actually how I came to discover my passion for young girls.”

Femi stared at the flawless beauty before him. Now he realized it wasn't just her physical beauty that attracted him to her. She radiated a light from the inside of her that was hard to dim.

He wondered how truthful he could be with her this soon.

“Lara can I be honest with you please?”

“Yes Femi, please go ahead.”

Femi looked directly into her eyes, “I like you Lara. I really do. You have caught my attention like no woman has in a long time. I am being honest to God and sincere about this. I like you.”

Lara could feel her cheeks burning hot.

What do I say to this Lord?

“Thank you Femi.”

“Can I see you again please?”

She found her emotions too choked to speak so she nodded her head in affirmation.

You said to go with your Spirit Lord, is this it?

Femi was saying, “Thank you very much for having dinner with me tonight, Lara. Today serves as one of the best days of my life. I don’t want to be so expressive emotionally but it really is. I look forward to seeing you again soon.”

He paused for a bit, “Can I text you?”

“Yes, you can Femi. Thank you so much for tonight.”

And silently she also said, *Lord thank you.*

Lara had a mission tonight and that was to spend some time talking to God about Femi at midnight.

He had texted as soon as he got home to once again thank her for their outing and to fix another date by weekend. Now she knew that it was a date and not an appointment. She didn’t want to go to their next date clueless. She liked everything she heard and saw about Femi tonight but she also didn’t want to go ahead with her senses.

“Lord please give me an answer. Is Femi the one?”

She opened the journal where she had written God’s covenant to her about her husband from two years ago. As she read she noticed some of the things God had told her before.

- 1: This man would be better than you could have given yourself.
- 2: God wanted her to remain chaste till marriage so this guy would uphold her purity.
- 3: God was bringing them both together for a work for Him so they would both be a couple with a vision for expanding the Kingdom of God with their marriage.

And then He had said, go with my Spirit.

What was the Spirit of God saying to her?

If she would be sincere, there was something about this guy she couldn’t yet place her fingers on. She had found herself being deeply drawn and attracted to him even before their date and the tug from the Holy Spirit to pray for him... but she could only have been praying for him as a sister in Christ right?

She sighed. Lord make this clear.

When she heard nothing still, she went to bed.

This time around Femi let her choose her best restaurant for them to eat at. She chose one of the places she had always liked around Lekki. It was a new place that boasted of really good and affordable meals as she didn't want to send the wrong information across to Femi. She was still so mindful of her conduct at their dates.

He had asked her to guide him in choosing a meal since she said the place was so good. And after having a good meal, he didn't want to waste time in sharing what was on his heart.

Femi began the conversation, "How was your week, Lara?"

"It went well. And yours?"

"Well, it was good but I found myself thinking about you through the days."

"Ah Femi!"

"Seriously Lara..."

Again he looked deeply into her eyes.

"I want to marry you, Lara. I believe that you are the one for me."

"What? You don't know me Femi."

"No, I do. You are the woman I have been praying for all my life."

"You don't know me Femi. If you do you won't say that."

"Okay try me, tell me some things about you that I do not know."

"One, I don't like cooking and doing house chores."

"No problem, we will eat out."

"You can't eat out all day."

"We will work our way around it, I like to cook and clean actually."

"Two, I travel a lot for ministry."

"I don't mind and I won't stop you. I would even travel along with you if need be."

"Three, I am not a virgin; I have slept with other men before."

"I am a virgin but I don't mind. Jesus has washed us clean of all our sins. Who am I to condemn you?"

Lara was shocked.

"You are a virgin? Look, Femi, you wouldn't want a girl like me...."

Femi took her hands with his heart beating so fast. Maybe he moved too fast. But he was really sure and didn't see the need to drag things around.

"Lara, I am very certain that you are my wife. At least, please pray about it before refusing me? Please?"

"Yes, I will."

"Then that's all I ask. Thank you Lara."

Two weeks later, Lara was still wondering about how her meeting with Femi had gone from an appointment for her work with teens one moment to a marriage proposal the next moment after waiting for two years with no man in sight.

"God, is this how you work?"

In her heart of hearts she had such peace about Femi as well as he ticked the box on everything God had told her about her husband. He had even brought up the purity topic himself and said that he didn't even want to kiss her before their marriage. Every time they spoke he found even more reasons to be so awesome. It was unreal!

She had asked for a break for some two weeks from seeing him so she could pray and get clarity about accepting his proposal. They were only allowed to text each another.

The two weeks were up today but she needed more than the words and alignment she had seen between him and the list God gave to her. She wanted his word.

Her phone rang. It was Femi.

"Hello Femi."

"Hello Lara, how are you doing?"

"I am doing well. How are you?"

"I am good and just so glad to hear your voice. I have missed you and was wondering if I could see you this weekend?"

"Oh no, Femi. I'm so sorry. I have a meeting with the girls tomorrow and I am praying today."

"Oh that's great. I can come pray with you then?"

"Really?"

"Really. You live with your parents right?"

"Yes".

"So please give me the address and I will be there at your prayer time."

"Thank you Femi".

Lara sent the address and Femi really showed up at the time he said he would. She didn't know what to expect as it was their first time of praying together.

As they made to pray and began praying in agreement about her ministry meeting the next day, suddenly it felt like the Holy Spirit swooped into their midst and began to speak to her heart.

This is him Lara, this is the better I have for you.

This is him Lara, this is the better I have for you.

This is him Lara, this is the better I have for you.

He said it three times and Lara started to cry.

As soon as she started to cry, Femi began to pray over her and bless her and call her by her names of destiny. He kept prophesying and prophesying over her as she cried.

He is your covering Lara.

He is the one I have prepared for you.

The one you would walk better with as a partner than when you are single.

This is him Lara. My better for you.

Lara could not help it as the tears rolled down uncontrollably from her eyes.

"Such a surprise, Lord.

Such a surprise."

And as soon as they were done praying, Femi said just one thing, "you light up my senses Lara, every time I come within ten feet of you; it is like something takes over my senses. I want to marry you as soon as possible. In three to four months tops. Please say yes Lara, please say yes."

Epilogue

“They looked to Him and were radiant. And their faces will never be ashamed.”

(Psalm 34:5, NIV)

Lara could not believe her eyes; she was getting married. In five short months.

"So a person's life could really change in months?"

Months, Lord?

Months?

What kind of God are you?"

Here she was lying on her bed, thinking about tomorrow, the day she would finally be joined in marriage to Femi, God's chosen man for her life. She was overjoyed.

"How God? How?"

“Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces.” (Psalm 34:5, NLT)

From The Author

Hello there!

I hope you had an amazing time while reading this book and perhaps also had some of your own encounters with God too... that is my earnest prayer for anyone reading this book.

A few things:

1: You would find out that I inclusively ended Amaka and Lazarus' story.

Did Lazarus get healed of his mental problem?

What would Amaka end up doing?

What would happen to the unborn child being born to a mad father?

The consequences of sin are grievous but when we call on the name of the Lord He saves us.

The Bible says in the book of Acts chapter 2:21:

“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

The craziness to get married in today's world has seen many women taking drastic measures to make this possible without caring about the circumstances.

I once read of some true life stories on Temitope Olagbeji's Instagram page (please check her out) on how so many women have actually dabbled in these ways all in a bid to get married. If you fall into this category, please desist from this. The wages of sin remain death and the consequences for evil doers are never pleasant. Please call upon the Lord Jesus today.

I may take up Amaka's story in a sequel only if the Lord gives me leave and grace to do so.

2: I was once a girl like Lara. The one who went down sloppy narrow roads because I wanted love... But Jesus saved me.

He also gave me such an encounter like Lara had with Him, where as I sought Him on the night I was quarrelling with God and didn't think that I could it take anymore, I

felt Him wrap His arms around me in a tangible cloak of His love, forgiveness and acceptance of me. That encounter with God in the year 2011 gave me strength to leave the wrong relationship I was in at the time and courage to have stayed as a single lady in God, choosing to wait for His best, while adamantly and stubbornly refusing to settle for less.

You can have this same relationship with God too. I pray for diverse encounters with the Holy Spirit in the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ as you read this book.

If you want a relationship with the Lord please say this prayer after me:

'Lord Jesus, I come to you today, I ask you to come into my heart. Forgive me for my sins. Cleanse me of my iniquity, seal me with your Holy Spirit and create in me a clean heart to love you and learn of you deeply. And dear Lord, please give me divine encounters and revelation of you in Jesus name I pray, Amen.'

If you just said this prayer, I want you to scroll up to Lara and Nene's conversation on knowing God better and start spending time with Him. Also do join a great church or a community of Christians who can push you to grow in God. You would notice how God gave Lara, Nene to hold her hand through her journey. That is always God's pattern for helping a new Christian grow in Him. May God bring you into your own family too.

You can also check out our ministry, ['The Women At the Well'](#) (On [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) to join our Spiritual growth community) on how to grow in God.

3: If you currently find yourself in this place like Lara and Nene where you are just 'winging' it with your singlehood, that's not God's plan for your life.

God's plan is that you have life and enjoy life more abundantly even as a single person (please see John 10:10). God never intended for you mourn your way through singlehood. I want you to please renounce that way of life and let it end after reading this book. Find life again and get your groove back.

Listen to the LETTERS TO SINGLES PODCAST INTERVIEWS on PodcastsByHephzibah and please pick up your life again.

Like Lara and Femi, may a new life be introduced to you by the Lord, one where you find fulfillment by walking in a close relationship with the Lord Jesus while also walking in your purpose, impacting many with the solutions the Lord Jesus Christ has given to you for them.

May a new door open to you through this life of working and walking intentionally with the Lord and may your seeds sown by serving the Lord speak for you in time to come.

And just like the surprise the Lord gave to Femi and Lara, may the Lord also reward your faithfulness to Him, giving you the gift of a spouse; one which you could never have given to yourself.

Remember:

***They looked to Him and were radiant. And their faces will never be ashamed.
(Psalm 34:5)***

If you gave your life to Christ or you have any questions or need to talk, you can write me at okorofrances@gmail.com

Lots of Love,

Hephzibah Frances

Hephzibahfrancesbooks@gmail.com

www.hephzibahfrances.com

10:32pm

Thursday, February 13th 2020

Ughelli, Delta State,

Nigeria.

BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

1: From all the characters in this book, as relating to your single life, which would you say you currently are?

Femi, Lara, Amaka or Lazarus?

2: Can you trace the reason why you are the way you currently are in singlehood?

Like Lazarus, Have you had heartbreaks you need to heal from?

Like Femi, are you still running around with a wrong view of wanting to be married, cloaked as a desire to love a woman?

Are you a man who has found, understood and is currently running with God's purpose and plan for his life?

Are you a priest over your home? Are you currently praying for your future wife, the woman who you would one day marry?

Are you like Amaka, looking to use any desperate means to trap a man into a marriage?

Have you ever used charms and juju on a man before? Repent now please. Call upon the name of the Lord and you can be forgiven and saved before your evil deeds blow up for all to see.

Are you like Lara? Even ready to give your body to a man, to bear his child just so he can be forced to marry you?

3: **"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4, NKJV).**

What is your view of this scripture?

Are you currently honoring God by keeping your bed undefiled before marriage?

Like Lara, you can make a U-turn today.

Bring out your journal and make your own covenant with God on this issue.

Remember as you chose to honor the Lord, even in a morally decadent society, the Lord will honor you too.

Please, take a look at this scripture and make a decision for yourself:

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (2 Timothy 2:19)

No matter what society may think, God still hasn't and would not change His foundation of holiness for anybody. Not on the altar of marriage. Never. Please get in line with God's programme. It pays.

“...But now the LORD says: ‘Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1st Samuel 2:30b).

4: Are you currently in a wrong relationship you can't leave or do not want to leave because you are settling for less than you deserve?

Please do not leave this book without making a U-turn, renouncing the less and opting in for the greater that only God can do.

God still writes love stories and He can give you a perfect love story if you trust Him.

Please ask God for grace, take your phone, break up and leave that wrong relationship today.

It is better to be single than to spend the rest of your life managing something that was never God's intention for you.

God has greater and better for you; believe Him.

And it would be better if you can make a covenant with God concerning the kind of relationship you are trusting and relying on Him to give you while you leave the less to pursue His vision for your life right now, living for Him and not just for your own self as a single person. You will quickly find out that the Lord does not joke with covenants.

He says:

***“My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips”
(Psalm 89:34).***

Covenants are deep and serious bonds with the Lord. He always fulfills His covenants in our lives. If you make one with Him on your marriage, while fulfilling your own part of the bargain, then and only then, you will see Him do what only He can do.

MY COVENANT WITH GOD ON BOTH MY SINGLE AND MARRIED LIFE

I, _____, do make a covenant with you today Lord, to

1

2

3

4

5

6

I have handed over my love story to you and I will not take it back. May it be yours. May the spouse you chose for me be your will and not just according to my flesh. May my marriage please you and be used for the expansion and growth of the Kingdom of God even in this end time.

I make this covenant for my children also, may my generations after me ever live to make the Lord Jesus Christ, the ruler and Lord over their marital destinies. I also hand over every marriage in the generations after mine; they would be for you Lord. Please, come in Holy Spirit and seal this covenant in the name of God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Signed,

Witnessed by the angels

This day-----

1 Corinthians 7 The Message (MSG)

To Be Married, to Be Single . . .

7 Now, getting down to the questions you asked in your letter to me. First, Is it a good thing to have sexual relations?

2-6 Certainly—but only within a certain context. It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder. The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. Marriage is not a place to “stand up for your rights.” Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out. Abstaining from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both agree to it, and if it's for the purposes of prayer and fasting—but only for such times. Then come back together again. Satan has an ingenious way of tempting us when we least expect it. I'm not, understand, commanding these periods of abstinence—only providing my best counsel if you should choose them.

7 Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me—a simpler life in many ways! But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is. God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others.

8-9 I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me. But if they can't manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married. The difficulties of marriage are preferable by far to a sexually tortured life as a single.

10-11 And if you are married, stay married. This is the Master's command, not mine. If a wife should leave her husband, she must either remain single or else come back and make things right with him. And a husband has no right to get rid of his wife.

12-14 For the rest of you who are in mixed marriages—Christian married to non-Christian—we have no explicit command from the Master. So this is what you must do. If you are a man with a wife who is not a believer but who still wants to live with you, hold on to her. If you are a woman with a husband who is not a believer but he wants to live with you, hold on to him. The unbelieving husband shares to an extent in the holiness of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is likewise touched by the holiness of her husband. Otherwise, your children would be left out; as it is, they also are included in the spiritual purposes of God.

15-16 On the other hand, if the unbelieving spouse walks out, you've got to let him or her go. You don't have to hold on desperately. God has called us to make the best of it, as peacefully as we can. You never know, wife: The way you handle this might bring your husband not only back to you but to God. You never know, husband: The way you handle this might bring your wife not only back to you but to God.

17 And don't be wishing you were someplace else or with someone else. Where you are right now is God's place for you. Live and obey and love and believe right there. God, not your marital status, defines your life. Don't think I'm being harder on you than on the others. I give this same counsel in all the churches.

18-19 Were you Jewish at the time God called you? Don't try to remove the evidence. Were you non-Jewish at the time of your call? Don't become a Jew. Being Jewish isn't the point. The really important thing is obeying God's call, following his commands.

20-22 Stay where you were when God called your name. Were you a slave? Slavery is no roadblock to obeying and believing. I don't mean you're stuck and can't leave. If you have a chance at freedom, go ahead and take it. I'm simply trying to point out that under your new Master you're going to experience a marvelous freedom you would never have dreamed of. On the other hand, if you were free when Christ called you, you'll experience a delightful "enslavement to God" you would never have dreamed of.

23-24 All of you, slave and free both, were once held hostage in a sinful society. Then a huge sum was paid out for your ransom. So please don't,

out of old habit, slip back into being or doing what everyone else tells you. Friends, stay where you were called to be. God is there. Hold the high ground with him at your side.

25-28 The Master did not give explicit direction regarding virgins, but as one much experienced in the mercy of the Master and loyal to him all the way, you can trust my counsel. Because of the current pressures on us from all sides, I think it would probably be best to stay just as you are. Are you married? Stay married. Are you unmarried? Don't get married. But there's certainly no sin in getting married, whether you're a virgin or not. All I am saying is that when you marry, you take on additional stress in an already stressful time, and I want to spare you if possible.

29-31 I do want to point out, friends, that time is of the essence. There is no time to waste, so don't complicate your lives unnecessarily. Keep it simple—in marriage, grief, joy, whatever. Even in ordinary things—your daily routines of shopping, and so on. Deal as sparingly as possible with the things the world thrusts on you. This world as you see it is on its way out.

32-35 I want you to live as free of complications as possible. When you're unmarried, you're free to concentrate on simply pleasing the Master. Marriage involves you in all the nuts and bolts of domestic life and in wanting to please your spouse, leading to so many more demands on your attention. The time and energy that married people spend on caring for and nurturing each other, the unmarried can spend in becoming whole and holy instruments of God. I'm trying to be helpful and make it as easy as possible for you, not make things harder. All I want is for you to be able to develop a way of life in which you can spend plenty of time together with the Master without a lot of distractions.

36-38 If a man has a woman friend to whom he is loyal but never intended to marry, having decided to serve God as a "single," and then changes his mind, deciding he should marry her, he should go ahead and marry. It's no sin; it's not even a "step down" from celibacy, as some say. On the other hand, if a man is comfortable in his decision for a single life in service to God and it's entirely his own conviction and not imposed on him by others, he ought to stick with it. Marriage is spiritually and

morally right and not inferior to singleness in any way, although as I indicated earlier, because of the times we live in, I do have pastoral reasons for encouraging singleness.

³⁹⁻⁴⁰ A wife must stay with her husband as long as he lives. If he dies, she is free to marry anyone she chooses. She will, of course, want to marry a believer and have the blessing of the Master. By now you know that I think she'll be better off staying single. The Master, in my opinion, thinks so, too.

PLEASE WATCH OUT FOR THE SURVIVING SINGLEHOOD BIBLE STUDY AND
DEVOTIONAL ON YOUVERSION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I could never have written this book by myself in record time. I am always scared when God lays an idea for a fiction book in my heart because to me, I feel it's always harder to write than a regular non-fiction book. And sometimes I feel like the 'ink may finish' so to speak. Maybe the creative juices won't flow as such and I would have to abandon it somewhere. These are my fears whenever I am writing a fiction book and it also doesn't help that it is a faith walk; what I mean by that is that, sometimes God gives me just the name of the book, then He gives me a few words and I have to be forced to go and write with those few things I have been given.

I start scared, I start terrified. What if I fail? And because of that I write praying and blasting in tongues.

The Holy Spirit is the source of all wisdom and creativity so I am very grateful that the Lord finds me and trusts me to birth His own words. Lord I am grateful! This entire book is your own idea and also your own product. Thank you Lord for finding me worthy; enough to co-sign my name along with yours on this book's pages. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you Lord!

I am also so grateful to Goodness-Mercy who edited this book overnight, running with me and facing the pressure of a deadline. Thank you so much.

And to you my reader friends who God would bring to read this book; thanks for being my cloud of witnesses – a testimony to the fact that what God gives to me is for someone out there.

Thank you!

-----> NOW THAT YOU HAVE READ THIS BOOK, PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO SHARE THE BOOK COVER AND ALSO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS AND REVIEWS ONLINE AND ON SOCIAL MEDIA. ALSO, PLEASE TAG ME [@HephzibahFrances](#) on Instagram and Facebook www.facebook.com/AuthorHephzibahFrances and [@HephzibahFran](#) on Twitter. I would love to read and hear from you. Xoxo.

TRANSLATIONS

Since man nor come nah, make we go school... maybe we go even see the man for there - Since a man hasn't arrived, then let us go to school, maybe we would even find a man there

Na the school we dey so – we have been going to the school

Bobo's - fresh and cute men

Howfar – how are you?

I don tire oh – I am tired

Abeg – Please

Oga – boss

I nor fit let marriage matter carry me enter herbalist house nah – I will not allow marriage issues take me into the house of a herbalist

God go do am – God will do it

Ogah oh – this one is hard

Who you do – Who bears the consequences of what you have done?

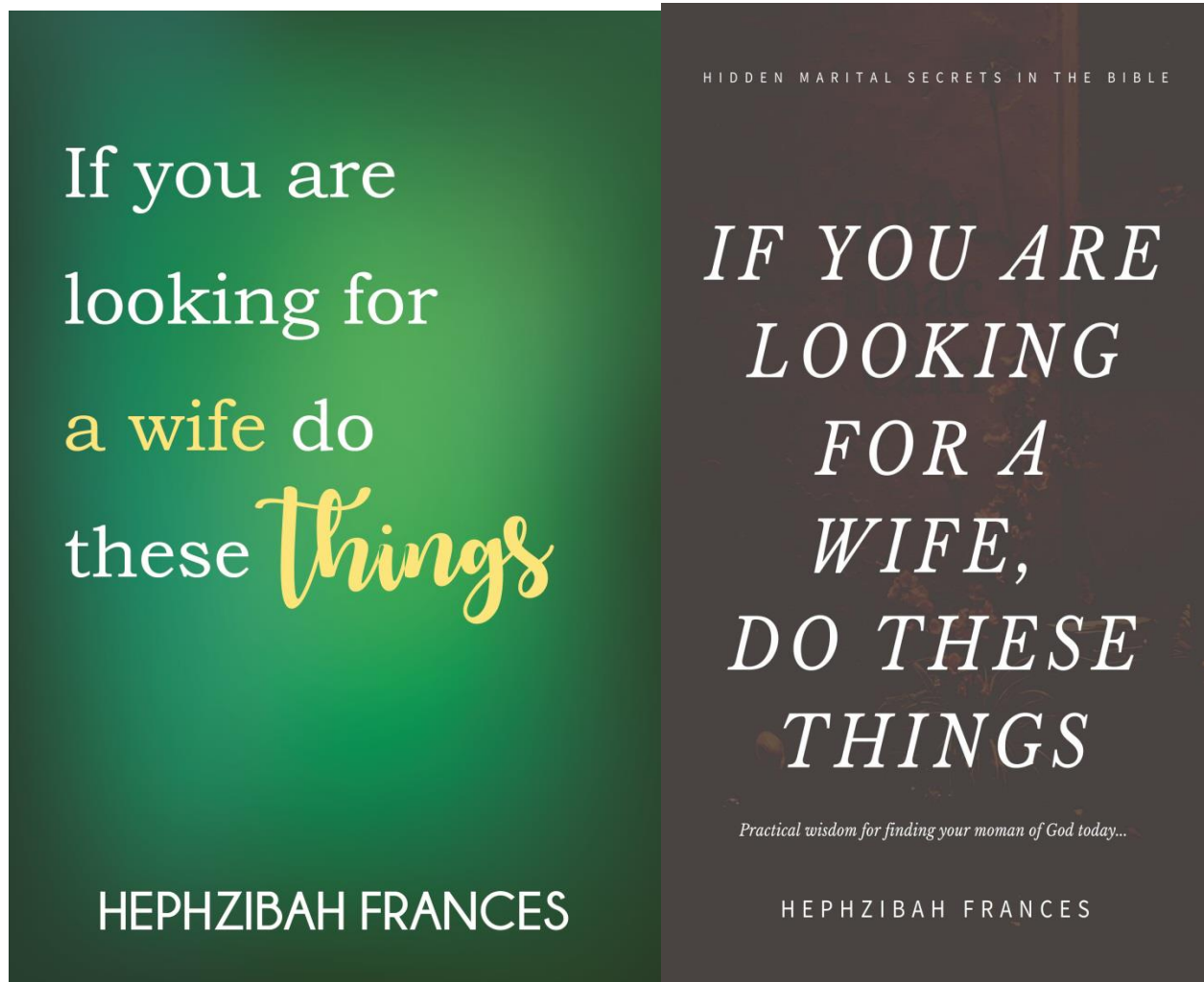
Juju – charms

Biko – Igbo language for 'please'

Chop and clean mouth – its counterpart means 'eat your cake and have it'

Who you be? – Who are you?

COMING SOON ON ALL HEPHZIBAH FRANCES AUTHOR CHANNELS.



IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A WIFE, DO THESE THINGS IS ALREADY OUT AND YOU CAN GET IT ON ALL SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS:

[Amazon](#)

[Okadabooks](#)

[Smashwords](#)

[Bambooks](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Hephzibah Frances is a child of God and the Lord's delight. She has a background professionally as a Lawyer. She is an author and Christian Blogger.

As a Social Entrepreneur, she is the founder of Awakening Youthful Seeds for Christ initiative (AYSCAFRICA)

She is also the founder of "The Women At The Well Ministries" a Christian ladies ministry based in Nigeria, passionate about raising women filled with Jesus.

She is the owner of “Beautiful Feet Publishing” ([@beautifulfeetpublishing](#)), email: beautifulfeetpublishing@gmail.com) a publishing house that exists to help aspiring authors’ birth their books to life.

She believes that she is a scribe for the Lord and her writing gift is meant to be used for Jesus.

She enjoys traveling and sight-seeing adventures and hopes to travel the world in an all-expense paid trip someday.

If you are a woman passionate about growing in Jesus, feel free to join "The Women at the Well" at www.4thewomenatthewell.com

Visit Hephzibah’s website at www.hephzibahfrances.com

FOLLOW HEPHZIBAH ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

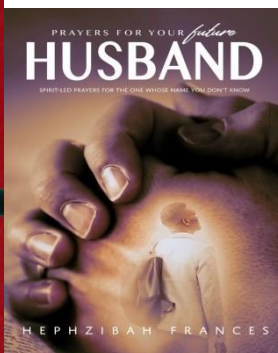
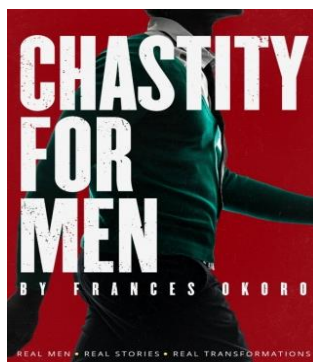
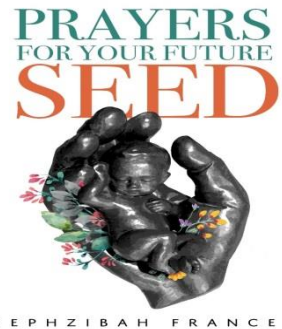
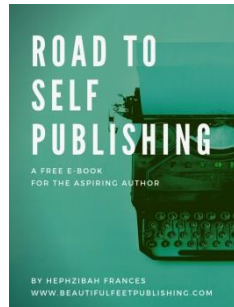
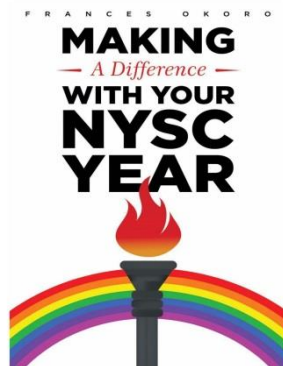
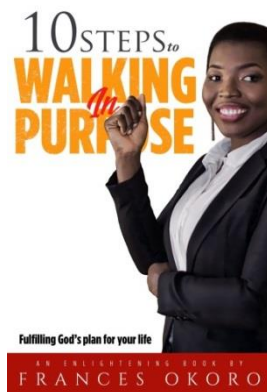
Twitter: [@HephzibahFran](#)

Instagram: [@HephzibahFrances](#)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Hephzibahfrances

Blog: www.hephzibahfrances.com

OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR



FICTION BOOKS



- **ALL HEPHZIBAH FRANCES' BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE IN BOTH HARD COPIES AND SOFT COPIES on:**
- [Amazon](#)
- [Okadabooks](#)
- [Smashwords](#)
- [Bambooks](#)
- **Send a WhatsApp Message, text or call +2347035539092 to reach the author.**
- **For book needs on distribution etc. email:**
Hephzibahfrancesbooks@gmail.com
- **For personal needs and correspondence, email:**
okorofrances@gmail.com