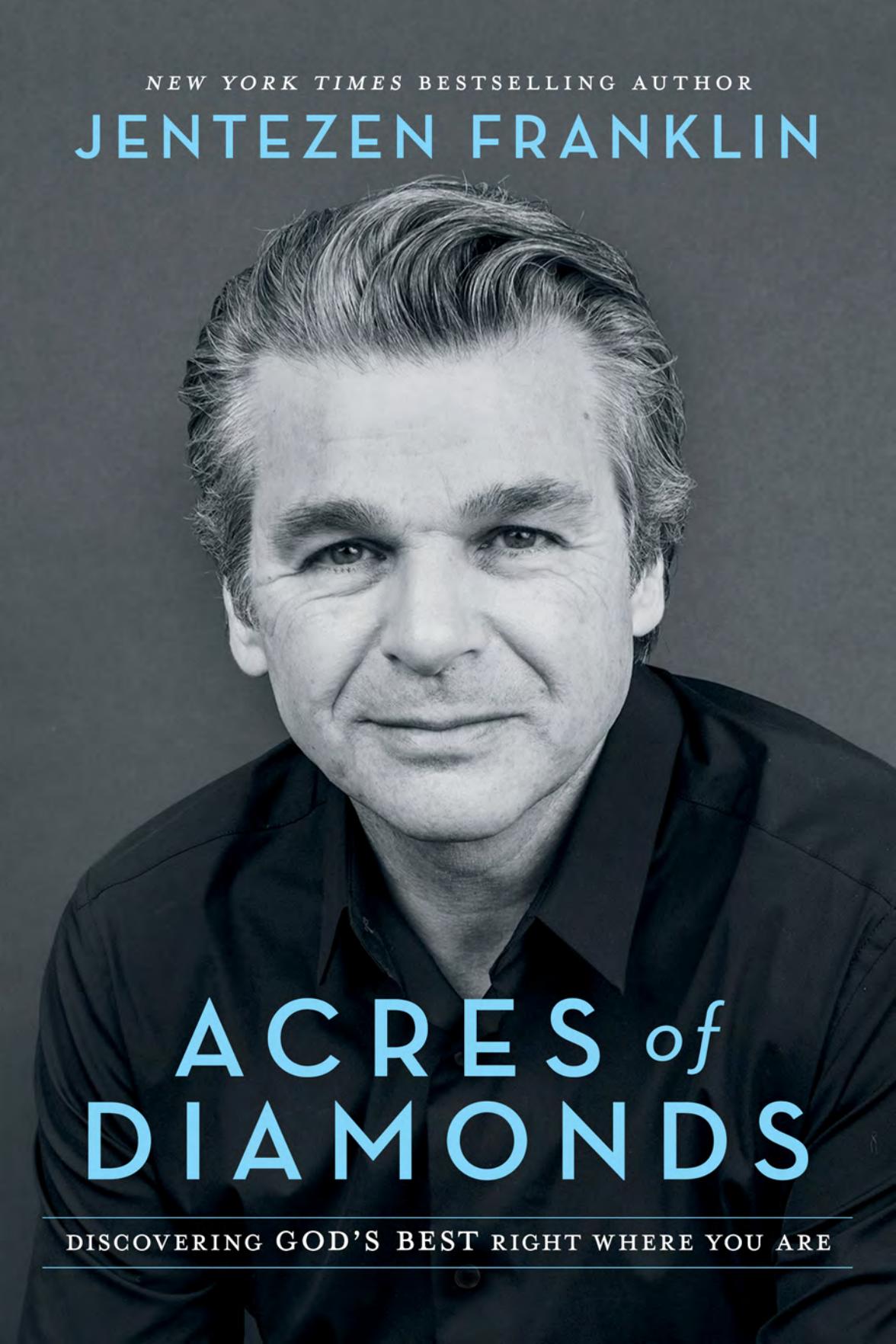


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

JENTEZEN FRANKLIN

A black and white portrait of Jentezen Franklin, a middle-aged man with short, wavy hair, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He is wearing a dark, collared shirt. The background is a solid, dark grey.

ACRES *of*  
DIAMONDS

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DISCOVERING GOD'S BEST RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE

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# ACRES *of* DIAMONDS

DISCOVERING GOD'S BEST RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE

JENTEZEN  
FRANKLIN



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Dedicated to the people who saw a diamond in me . . .

My lovely wife, Cherise, for seeing who I could be and believing in me enough to join me in this exciting adventure called life

My mom and dad, who encouraged me to pursue my dreams in music and in ministry

Rachel Joyner for encouraging me to never give up when I was just starting out in ministry

Bob Pauline, my piano teacher and mentor in music

Bishop T. F. Tenney, who was a diamond I lost that can never be replaced until I see him again on streets of gold

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# Introduction

In 1869, near the banks of the Tigris River, Russell Conwell found himself on the back of a camel, listening to what seemed like the thousandth story told by his Arab guide. An attorney who had once attended Yale, Conwell was getting tired of his guide's vast treasury of stories, but, he later wrote, he was always glad he had listened to this one. His guide told of a man called Ali Hafed, who owned a large farm. I imagine he had a camel and a plow to work his land. He labored tirelessly for everything he had, day after day. In many ways, Ali Hafed was blessed, and he was content—until, that is, he had the pleasure of entertaining a stranger one day. An old priest came to visit, and by Ali Hafed's fireside, he told Ali Hafed about the discovery of diamonds in a distant land. With a handful of diamonds, the priest claimed, one could buy a whole country. With a mine of diamonds, one could place his children upon thrones.

That night, as Conwell explained when he shared this story, Ali Hafed went to bed a poor man. His contentment had evaporated, unseated by thoughts of the diamonds he did not have. The next day, he sought out the priest and begged, "Tell me where I can find diamonds."

The priest answered, “If you find a river between high mountains that runs through white sands, in those white sands, you will always find diamonds.”

*I want a mine of diamonds!* became the cry of Ali Hafed’s heart, and that day, he determined to chase his dream. He sold his farm. He hugged his wife and kids good-bye. And with a final, bold declaration, he said to them, “When I come back, we’ll be fabulously wealthy. You’ll be set for life.”

Then Ali Hafed went off as a soldier of fortune, hunting for diamonds. He went to East Africa. No diamonds. He went to Palestine. No diamonds. He went to Europe. No diamonds. Finally, after consuming all of his wealth in search of greater fortune, Ali Hafed wandered into Spain. Still no diamonds. In Spain, this discontented man reached the point of such despair that he decided to end his life. He stood on a shore, watched a giant wave thunder toward him, and jumped into the raging waters, never to be seen again.

One day, the man who bought Ali Hafed’s farm was leading his camel to a stream on his new property. It might, I imagine, have been the same camel Ali Hafed had owned. As the camel drank, a curious flash of light in the stream caught the man’s eye. Looking closer, he reached down and pulled out a black stone. He noticed that when the sunlight hit it, the stone lit up with all the colors of the rainbow. The man thought to himself, *Pretty stone*. Then he walked back to his house, laid the stone on a mantel as a decoration and forgot all about it.

The next day, the same priest who had told Ali Hafed about diamonds stopped by. As he was talking to the new owner, the priest paused abruptly in midsentence. His eyes had fallen on the black rock sitting on the mantel.

Pointing to the stone, the priest exclaimed, “That’s a diamond!”

The farmer shook his head. “Nothing of the sort. It’s just a stone.”

“I’m telling you,” the priest insisted, “it’s a diamond. Where did you get it?”

“I’ll show you.”

The priest followed the farmer to the garden by the stream. When they stirred up the white sand with their fingers, countless diamonds appeared, bigger and shinier than the first. The man who had bought the farm from Ali Hafed had inadvertently discovered the diamond mine of Golconda, the most magnificent diamond mine in history. In fact, crown jewels worn by royalty all over the world, including the Queen Mother in England, come from this very mine—from the same land, the same garden, the same stream and with the same camel that Ali Hafed had left behind.

Ali Hafed had traveled the world to find what he’d had all along. He never realized the potential of the place where he was. He never realized that he had been living on acres of diamonds. He thought, *If I could just go to Africa, or Palestine, or Europe, or Spain, I will find great worth.* All the while, diamonds lay right under his feet.

This story became part of a speech that Conwell was asked to give 6,152 times in his life, a fact included in *Ripley’s Believe It or Not!* Years later, he turned it into a book, *Acres of Diamonds*, which became a bestseller. Conwell poured the profits into the newly built Temple University, founded in Philadelphia in 1884.<sup>1</sup> At the time I wrote this book, more than forty thousand students were enrolled at that fine institution—and it all began with this one story Conwell heard.<sup>2</sup>

What especially messed me up about this story is that the man who bought the same farm, the same garden, the same stream and

the same camel that Ali Hafed thought were worthless turned them into acres of diamonds. You may feel the same way Ali Hafed did. You may think your life is worthless. You may think where you live is worthless. You may think your spouse is worthless. You may think your job is worthless. You may undervalue where you are and all you have. Know that there is hidden potential where you are right now. In your job. In the little town where you live. In your current marriage. In your family. In your church. The answer to your dreams may be right at your fingertips, if only you could see what is possible and believe.

Some people cannot fathom the unsearchable riches of Jesus that they are living in right now. They keep looking for something greater. They keep believing that there is something out there better than what they can experience in Christ. I am here today to tell you that if you know Jesus, your name is written in the Book of Life. If you have a Savior who has promised to never leave you nor forsake you, you are presently living in acres of diamonds.

I am going to give you a four-letter word that will change your life: *stay*.

Learn this word and live it. The grass is not greener somewhere else; you just have to learn to see, value and grow what you have, right where you are.

For you to get the most out of this book, you need to understand the type of staying I am talking about. There is a time for everything, as Ecclesiastes reminds us—a time to live and a time to die. A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to scatter and a time to gather. A time to plant and a time to uproot. You get the point. There is no question that times change, and our lives along with them. We switch jobs. We move to a new city. We get married. We have another child. We attend a new school. We strive for a new dream. Life requires change. And certainly there are

times when we have to shift in a new direction because the old one was unhealthy. Maybe we have to cut ties with toxic people or make a move to better the future of our children. That is all well and good. But there are other times when the place we are in feels fruitless and unexciting, and while we may be tempted to cut bait and run, we just do not feel the release from God. You might be in this very situation right now. Deep in your spirit, you know that you know that you know that you are not supposed to quit, give up or leave the place God has called you to.

You may feel stretched, or inadequate, or exhausted, or unqualified. You may feel as though nothing God has promised is coming to pass in that place, but you are not supposed to go somewhere else. I want to encourage you to push past the giving-up places. It's easy to quit, but it takes faith to go through.

When things get tough, don't sell out so cheaply. Don't believe the lies. Quit jumping from relationship to relationship. Quit running from church to church every time something happens you dislike. Quit hopping from job to job because you think it isn't giving you what you believe you are worth. If you leave, you may be giving up something that somebody else would give anything to have.

Know this: Inside of you are diamonds. In order for them to come out, it's going to take time. It's going to take setbacks. It's going to take disappointments. It's going to take trials. It's going to take going through challenges.

The same can be said of diamonds. It takes three things to make a diamond: time, extreme pressure and intense heat. Diamonds are made purely of carbon and are formed about a hundred miles beneath the surface of the earth. It takes high temperatures and extreme pressure for carbon atoms to bond to each other in a particular way that produces a diamond. Over time, this structure of

carbon atoms locks into place and eventually grows large enough to produce a diamond.

Pressure, heat and time.

What does this mean to you today? Your trials serve a purpose, so don't run from them. Stay where you are and make it fruitful. When you stay in that place, you will learn more. You will grow more. You will become more. You will do more. God is turning up the pressure and the heat on you so that He can bring forth a diamond.

You cannot live for the Lord and not have trials. In fact, you cannot live on your own without having them. I tell people this all the time: Everything is better with Jesus, including trouble. If life is going to bring trouble with or without Jesus, you might as well choose Jesus. After all, He is the one who can carry you through. When you cannot make it, He can. He can conquer. He can triumph. God will not put more on you than you can bear. Dear reader, you are made of dirt. In other words, you're acre-age. And only Jesus knows how to give birth to the diamonds of purpose and destiny in your life—no matter what you are facing right now. It will never happen without Him.

I think about the story in the Bible of the Prodigal Son. (Most of you probably know it. If not, you can read it in Luke 15.) I do not know what this young man was thinking when he left his father's house. I do know that he asked for his inheritance. I'm sure that he had some friends who were telling him something like, "Man, out there in the real world, everyone is having fun—parties like you've never experienced, freedom, unbelievable opportunities. You'll never find them if you stay here. You oughta leave your dad's house and get out there."

This young man bought into the lie that the grass was greener on the other side. But after leaving home, he lost everything. He

ended up broke, eating slop with the swine in a pigpen. He finally woke up to the realization that everything he had ever wanted was already in his father's house. It wasn't out in the world. This young man was living on acres of diamonds he never should have left.

I have watched young people leave home because they're bored or feel restricted, thinking they can find fun and fulfillment elsewhere. I have watched people leave their marriages because they think they can find someone better with fewer problems. I have watched people leave their churches because they think they get nothing out of going or because someone has offended them. These people go off searching, trying this and that, because the enemy has convinced them that whatever they are looking for is out there. But it's not!

This is why the psalmist asked God to "open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (Psalm 119:18). The implication in this verse is that wonderful things might be all around you, but your eyes are closed. You cannot see them. I find that many people are living in spiritual poverty while they're surrounded by untold spiritual wealth. Maybe this describes you. Even as you read the introduction to this book, pray and ask God to open your eyes. You will find wonderful things in your life right now if you'll just quit looking at the half-empty part of the glass. God did not leave you without potential. He did not leave you without opportunity. You need to open your eyes to the good things.

That makes me think of Abraham and Lot, uncle and nephew. Lot knew Abraham had an incredible blessing on his life, and Lot was a smart guy. As his uncle became wealthy in livestock, silver and gold, Lot attached himself to Abraham. And Abraham increased in blessing—so much so, in fact, that his herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen started arguing. Conflict erupted. The tension got thick.

As Abraham was the elder, Lot should have submitted to Abraham. But Abraham was also a peacemaker. He did not want strife to infect his family. So he said to his nephew, “Let’s separate. I’ll let you choose all of the land in whichever direction you want to go.”<sup>3</sup>

Lot looked over at the well-watered plains of the Jordan and saw the green grass and flourishing trees. He looked the other way and saw desert, tumbleweeds, cacti, rattlesnakes, rocks. He shook his head. “I don’t want that,” he said. Pointing to the well-watered plains of the Jordan, he continued, “I want that!” Suddenly, Lot looked a little further toward the horizon. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah glowed like the lights of Las Vegas. “It looks like diamonds out there,” he said. “I want that, too!” So Lot pitched his tent in the plains even as far as Sodom, and he began to chase after diamonds.

He never found them. In fact, the Bible tells us that over time Lot lost his wife. He defiled his relationship with his daughters. He lost his reputation. He lost his honor. He lost his place.

Abraham, on the other hand, settled in the desert, where it was hot and dry. *Pressure and heat*. I imagine Abraham looking at the ground and seeing sand. Many would call it worthless. A reminder that he was in a godforsaken place. But when Abraham looked at that sand, God gave him a vision for his life:

[Abraham,] I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.<sup>4</sup>

Later, He told Abraham, “As are the stars of heaven, so will your seed be.”<sup>5</sup> The sand represented Abraham’s natural family that would come through Isaac. The stars represented his spiritual

family, the Body of Christ. God gave Abraham a vision that he would give birth to a spiritual and a natural family. But it did not happen in the well-watered plains of Jordan. Nor did it happen in a city of lights. God opened Abraham's eyes in a hot and dry dust bowl.

What will you see when you ask God to open your eyes? When you begin to see what He sees in a place of heat and pressure, you can give birth to a vision that will change your life forever. Acres of diamonds.

Think about the thieves dying on either side of Jesus on the cross. One thief looks at Jesus and sees nothing but a man on a cross. He sees blood spurting from His side, His feet and His hands. He sees Him crowned with thorns. He hears the Master moaning, groaning and praying, "Father, forgive them." And this thief curses and mocks the Savior as he hangs there sentenced to die.

On the other side of the center cross, the second thief looks at the same thing the other guy saw. Same cross, same blood, same suffering, same wounds. But his eyes open to wondrous things. This man doesn't see a worthless piece of trash. He sees treasure. He sees acres of diamonds. And he begs Jesus, "Will You remember me when You enter Your Kingdom?" Jesus turns to him and says, "This day, you will be with Me in Paradise."<sup>6</sup>

Both men looked at the same cross, the same Jesus, the same trial, the same suffering and saw two different things. Isn't that something? See, it's about perspective. It's about vision.

Have you ever thought that you will finally be happy when you get such and such or when this or that happens? *When I get that house, then I'll be happy. When I get my breakthrough, then I'll be happy. When things settle down with my children, then I'll be happy. When I finally get that promotion, then I'll be happy.* You don't realize your greatest treasure is right here, right now—Jesus.

When Cherise and I came to the small town of Gainesville, Georgia, to pastor our first church, some people we knew wondered why we had settled on a no-name place in the middle of nowhere. “Why not go to a big city like Atlanta or Los Angeles?” they asked us. But when I got here, God opened my eyes to the potential of a church called Free Chapel. I saw, by faith, acres of diamonds. I saw a church that could touch the world. I saw precious people that loved God. I saw souls being saved. I did not see the small building on Browns Bridge Road; I saw a place where families were healed and marriages restored and lives changed. Funny, the 150-acre property we are on today used to be a dairy farm and a bee farm, a land literally flowing with milk and honey.

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*When you stop  
undervaluing  
where God has  
placed you, you  
will start to see the  
hidden potential  
of where you are.*

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But the owners didn’t want it. They were tired of it. They saw one thing, but God saw another type of land flowing with milk and honey, and it fell into our hands. A place where thousands of souls would be saved and families healed.

There are acres of diamonds in the job you’re tired of. There are acres of diamonds in the spouse you’re annoyed with. There are acres of diamonds in the children who get on your nerves. There are acres of diamonds wherever you live, whether in a small town or a congested city. Quit waiting on somebody to give you a miracle, and recognize that you are sitting on acres of diamonds right where you are.

When you are stuck in a mentality of complaining, whining or making excuses, you are not in a position to discover diamonds. It is time to start praying, “God, open my eyes. Open my eyes to

opportunities. Open my eyes to potential. Open my eyes to the relationships I have now. Open my eyes to the beauty of the place that You have me in now.”

When you stop undervaluing where God has placed you, you will start to see the hidden potential of where you are—even in the trials. Even when it’s hard. Even when the heat and the pressure are on.

God has placed you where you are, right now. Ask Him to open your eyes and see what is right in front of you. It is time to start digging in your own backyard.



## Why Not Now?

In the United States in the late 1800s, keeping time was complicated. There was no single standard. You could tell the approximate time by looking at the position of the sun, which people had been doing for millennia before the invention of sundials and mechanical clocks. If the sun was directly above your head, it was noon and time to eat lunch. If the sun was setting over the horizon, it was bedtime. Most cities displayed a highly visible clock, like on a church steeple, but the time would be slightly different from city to city. Some were off from each other by a few minutes, others far more.

Railways operated independently on their own timetables. Similar to cities, each ran on a different time. This caused much confusion and led to dangerous conditions. Imagine the logistical nightmare in making travel plans or coordinating cargo deliveries—or, even worse, safety issues like two trains barreling toward each other from different directions because their schedules did not line up.

Finally, the heads of the major railroads collaborated to solve the problem. On November 18, 1883, they established the Standard Time system, which divided the United States and Canada into five time zones.<sup>1</sup> On that day, at exactly noon on the 90th meridian, workers at every railroad station reset their watches and clocks to reflect the new Standard Time within their designated time zone.

This was a win for the railways, but unfortunately for them, not everyone was happy with this new scheme. Many people were stubborn and chose to stick with whatever time they had established through whatever means. In some places, the gap between local time and Standard Time was as long as 45 minutes!<sup>2</sup> Even some cities refused to switch to the new time. Arguments erupted. Towns were split. It took 35 years for Standard Time to be enacted by legislation for the entire United States and for people to fall in line with the new standard.

What about you? Have you fallen in line with God's clock? That's whose time we really need to know. We cannot make our own plans in life and expect everything to go according to our timetable. When it comes to following God, we need to stay in synch with God's timing. We need to have the same intentions as the psalmist who wrote "My times are in Your hand" (Psalm 31:15).

## **Get on God's Clock**

The right timing is critical.

I've learned that God's timing rarely synchs with mine. As far as my personal preferences go, His timing usually doesn't coincide with mine. Our first entry into TV ministry was one such example. If it had been up to me, I would not have chosen that

particular season. Our ministry had grown tremendously, which is always a good thing, but at the time, I felt stretched to the max. We had just moved into our new building and were continuing to furnish the space. We were working on eliminating debt we had accumulated. We were growing our staff. And in the midst of all the craziness, an opportunity popped up out of nowhere.

I had always felt called to television ministry, and even before I went to Free Chapel, I was making appearances as a guest speaker and musician on local TV stations throughout the country. I had my own ideas and my own plans for the perfect time to go on national television. And that particular moment definitely was not it.

One Saturday afternoon (I'm pretty sure it was in 1993), I received a phone call from R.W. Schambach, a famous evangelist with a huge following. He had been broadcasting daily on radio and TV for years. The day he called, R.W. was preaching in Atlanta. He told me that even though we had never met, he had heard about our church and that we had just moved into our new building. Then he asked if I would like for him to speak at our church the next day at our Sunday evening service. I was honored and thrilled and said of course I would!

The next night our sanctuary was packed out. There was a buzz in the air; fresh excitement and anticipation filled the auditorium. And R.W. showed up late. We didn't even have time to meet in person beforehand. I shook his hand for the first time on the platform in front of two thousand people. After I greeted everyone and said a few words, R.W. walked up beside me and whispered, "Can I obey God tonight?"

"Yes, sir," I replied.

Then he asked, "Can I take the service now?"

There was no question in my mind. "Absolutely!"

I sat down as R.W. began to preach, and powerfully. At the end of his message, he said, “I’m going to receive an offering tonight, but not for my ministry. The Lord impressed upon me that this young preacher, Jentezen Franklin, is supposed to be on TV to preach the Gospel. We’re going to put him there. We are going to buy whatever he needs to get on TV.”

Then, in one of the greatest miracles I have ever personally seen, one by one, people from the audience started bringing up to the platform \$1,000 checks. In a matter of ten minutes, R.W. had raised more than \$138,000. The money kept pouring in. The next week, we purchased cameras, lights, an editing suite and time on the local cable TV station every night from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. Our TV ministry had just launched.

Here’s the point: I had to get off my clock and get on God’s clock. He knew the perfect timing for me. And I had to be obedient and do it—now.

When you feel God leading you somewhere or toward something, in these moments, you have to see the diamonds—not the stress, not the stretch, not the excuses, not the difficulties, not the impossibilities. Sometimes the greatest miracle God will do for us comes during the most inopportune time. It is because only in His power will we ever be able to pull it off.

As I look back over thirty years of ministry, it seems as though every major challenge we faced, like launching a new campus or starting a new outreach, stretched us past our limitations. More often than not, God presented us with opportunities when we felt the least confident in our flesh. Now, I am not talking about being foolish in pursuit of these things. I have, for example, always been financially conservative when making big decisions. But I believe God requires of us a faith that demands we trust Him more than what we think we can handle in our own ability. When He wants

us to do something on His clock, He beckons, *Come out of your comfort zone and trust Me. You have enough to do it right now. I may not give you “the coast is clear” for the next two years, but right now, in this very moment, I want you to trust Me.*

In 2005 God spoke to me about starting an annual weekend conference for students around the world. As I began to envision it, I saw a few days in which young people would engage in incredible worship, learn from powerful speakers and grow deeper in God and His purpose for their lives. Our ministry had never done anything like that before.

When I talked to our team about it, they got excited. “Sounds amazing! Let’s start working on it, and we can plan it for a year from now.” It would take months, we knew, if not a year, to schedule popular bands and speakers for this kind of event. It would also require tons of time reaching out to churches and youth pastors and doing the marketing.

But God’s timing was not a year from now. I felt an urgency to do it sooner. The idea consumed me; I just could not get it out of my head. I approached our team again and told them I wanted to schedule the conference for the beginning of summer, only a few months out.

Their eyes about bulged out of their heads. “But that’s only months from now!” someone said.

“I know,” I answered. “So let’s make it happen however we need to make it happen.”

As it turned out, on the weekend we had planned our conference, TobyMac, one of the most popular Christian artists at the time, needed to be in Atlanta for something. When we called his booking agency, our date fit perfectly with his schedule. Normally, getting him and his band on the calendar would have taken one year. God knew what He was doing. He knows the perfect timing.

Somehow, by the grace and goodness of God, we held our first-ever Forward Conference at our main campus with three thousand young people in attendance. It exceeded our wildest expectations. The next year, so many more students registered that we had to move the event to the Gwinnett Arena, now known as the Infinite Energy Arena, which seats more than 13,000 people. This conference has sold out in advance every year, and thousands upon thousands of teens have made decisions to follow Christ. Who knows if this would have happened had I stuck with man's clock instead of God's clock?

Had I not been obedient, for sure, we would have missed the perfect timing. I would have never realized the acres of diamonds that God would uncover not only for our ministry, but for the thousands of students who attended that first conference. Many times we want absolute certainty before we step out, a 100 percent money-back guarantee. But having this certainty takes the element of faith out of the equation, and you cannot experience success without risking failure. Sometimes faith is spelled R-I-S-K.

The Greek word for “opportunity” is *kairos*, which also suggests that something is time sensitive. Certain moments in life demand that you take action. Seize the moment or you will miss the opportunity.

It is usually not easy to see acres of diamonds, but if you ask God to open your eyes—and sometimes He'll open them without you even asking Him—you will know when an opportunity is being presented that requires you to move in that time. In 1 Chronicles 12, the sons of Issachar had their eyes open. They had an understanding of the times, and they knew what Israel ought to do and when. We need to have that same discernment, to know what we ought to do on God's clock.

## Missed Opportunity

I'll admit I have not always seen the acres of diamonds in what looked like inopportune opportunities. Or rather, I may have seen diamonds, but I lacked courage to get on board with God's clock.

Many years back, after we had built our first building, I got a phone call out of the blue. I can't remember every detail of the conversation, but the person on the other end asked if I wanted to buy a local full-power television station for \$3 million. Later, in person, he offered it for \$2.5 million. It was a fantastic opportunity, and while \$2.5 million was a lot of money, at the time it was a bargain. I felt God nudging me to say yes. Meanwhile everything in me was screaming no. We didn't have the money. We had maxed out our credit. Every penny we had was invested in the new facilities. When you're talking about building parking lots, buying furniture, outfitting offices, updating sound equipment and laying down flooring, it's pretty easy to spend \$2 million, and quick. I knew the board and our staff were stressed to capacity with planning and budgeting for this new transition. How could I pile on one more thing?

Not only were we stretched financially, but spending \$2.5 million for the station was just the beginning. A ton of overhead was involved. We would need to spend more money to hire the right staff and buy the right equipment to keep the station running. God may have been leading me in this direction, but I opted out. I just did not have the faith for it. I later learned it sold for \$50 million.<sup>3</sup>

It is one of my biggest regrets. I would give anything to get that opportunity back. We didn't have \$2.5 million lying around, but we could have stretched ourselves. It may have been a bit reckless, but it was possible. Not long after the offer was presented to me, the government enacted a must-carry regulation, which means

that local-licensed television stations must be carried on a cable provider's system. The station I had said no to was not going to broadcast just in a local area; it would have reached the entire Atlanta metro region. I would have gotten all of Atlanta and more!

I'm not proud of my lack of trust. I should have had more courage. I should have listened to God. I should have tried harder. I should have somehow made it work. Instead, I chickened out. But I learned something: It is more important to stay on God's clock than trust my own.

A present opportunity plagued with problems is better than an

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*A present  
opportunity  
plagued with  
problems is better  
than an awesome  
opportunity that  
has passed.*

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awesome opportunity that has passed. If you wait too long, you can miss your destiny. You can miss your purpose. You can miss what God desired to give you. Now is the time. Today is the day.

I think of the woman who anointed the head of Jesus while He was at a dinner party. I picture her like a silent shadow, tiptoeing over the lounging disciples with her alabaster box. When she gets near Jesus, she breaks the box open, pours out expensive perfume all over His head and begins to worship Him. This perfume was costly, worth about a year's wages. In this holy moment, the other guests start to scold the woman. Knowing the hidden purpose behind this offering, Jesus rushes to her defense. "Let her alone," He commanded the judgey guests. "She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial" (Mark 14:6, 8).

This woman got the timing right. She had an urgency inside of her that prompted her to think, *If I don't do this now, I'll never get*

*another chance.* Shortly after, Jesus was arrested and would hang on a cross to die. Before He breathed His last, it is possible He could smell the aroma of the anointing the woman had poured over Him at just the right time.

Now is the time to break open your life and pour yourself over the Body of Christ.

## The Power of Now

When we focus too much on what our own plans and timing should look like or the fear of what might or might not happen, we will miss the power of now.

Jesus knew this. In John 2 we read about the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus, His mom and His disciples have all been invited to a wedding. Suddenly, the wine runs out. When Jesus' mom discovers this social atrocity, she asks Him for help.

"What have I to do with this?" Jesus responds. "It's not my time yet."

But Mary is a discerning woman. She knows she has to push her son out into the ministry. Without a word in reply to Jesus, Mary turns to the servants, points to Jesus and says, "Do whatever He tells you."<sup>4</sup>

You know the story: Jesus gives His instructions and the servants fill six 20- or 30-gallon jugs with water. At the sight of its creator, the water blushes and becomes wine. Someone brings a sample out to the master of the feast, and the host is well pleased. "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine," he praises the bridegroom, "and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!" (John 2:10).

I want you to pay close attention to that statement: You have kept the good wine *until now*.

You probably know the popular saying “Save the best for last.” If we’re not careful, we can live our entire lives that way. Thinking that the blessing, the revival, the move of God, the miracle you need, the answer to your prayer is always out there, coming one day. Some day. Way out there.

But God does not just save the best for last. Sure, He can do that if He wants to; He’s God. He can do anything. But He has also saved the best for *now*. We need to be careful that we’re not living ten years out there, one day, someday. We can have victory now. We can have revival now. Lives can change now. Marriages can be restored now. Families can be reunited now. Addictions can be broken now. Breakthroughs can happen now.

The enemy wants to distract us from the power of believing, standing and trusting that right now is where the victory begins. The great days are not behind the Church. The great days are not behind you. God is not the God of the past. He is not sitting around waiting for someday to show His power and greatness.

God is the same yesterday, today and forever.<sup>5</sup> This means that if we comprehended the power of now, we would not have to wait. *You have kept the good wine until now.* God’s best is not in the past, and it’s not in the future. It’s now.

## **Release Your Faith Right Now**

Lazarus had been dead for a few days when Jesus finally showed up, and Martha had a few choice words for Him. “If You had only been here when my brother was alive, I know you could have healed him!”

Jesus looked at her with compassion and promised, “Your brother isn’t dead for good. He will rise again.”

Martha was looking ahead to one day. “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day,” she replied.

“I am the resurrection and the life,” Jesus said. “Whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this, Martha?”<sup>6</sup>

On one hand, Martha had mountains of faith—in the past. She knew if Jesus had been there when Lazarus got sick, Jesus could have healed him. She also had mountains of faith in one day. She believed that Lazarus would rise from the dead at the last day. On the other hand, what Martha did not have was faith in the present.

Jesus said, “*I am* the resurrection and the life.” And He proceeded to resurrect Lazarus before Martha’s eyes. Now is the time.

We need to decide when to quit saying, “One day, I’m going to live my purpose.” “One day, I’m going to get our marriage fixed.” “One day, I’m going to work through these problems.” “One day, I’m going to take time for my family.” “One day, I’m going to forgive.” When are we going to realize that now is the time? This is the moment! Right here, right now.

Right now is all you have. This is where the power lies. And this is the key to releasing miracles in your life.

The word “now” spelled backwards is “won.” We have to live knowing the battle is already won, even if we can’t see it with our natural eyes. We have to praise God now, not when we see change in our circumstance. We need to trust God now, not when we understand everything. We must decide to believe God now, not when the manifestation comes. This is what faith is.

The Bible puts it like this: “*Now* faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1, emphasis added). The definition of faith is not someday. Faith *is*. It’s now.

## Start Living Today

Jesus Christ was the greatest gift the world has ever been given. The next greatest gift is now. Today. We are not promised tomorrow.

We are not promised another month. But you do have the incredible gift of right now. If you remember, Jesus was crucified between two thieves. I like to think one of them represented “yesterday” and the other “someday.” Both want to steal your joy. If you’re not careful in how you live and what you think, you will crucify “today” between those two thieves.

Yesterday is over, my friend. The past is past. It’s done. You will never get it back. But if you allow it, that thief will steal the joy of today by getting you to live in the shame, the pain or even the success of yesterday. You will get stuck living back there instead of living right here, right now. Quit talking about one day or someday. You are right now living in acres of diamonds.

If the thief of yesterday fails in stealing your joy, the thief of someday will try and take it. And if you fixate on the future, what might happen or what might not happen, you are failing to realize the power of now.

“As your days, so shall your strength be.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, God gives us enough grace to handle whatever day we are in. If you let your mind wander over into someday, worrying about the fear of the unknown, God doesn’t have grace for you in that space. If you let your mind wander over into yesterday and allow yourself to get stuck because of what happened to you or what did not happen to you, God doesn’t have grace for you there, either. God isn’t *there*, He’s *here*. Now. And He is not going anywhere. If you want to live in peace, if you want to stay out of depression, if you want to keep away from worry, anxiety and high blood pressure, then starting living today.

I love what the psalmist wrote: “This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24). I am not going to let the thief of yesterday or the thief of tomorrow steal my joy today. I am going to enjoy this day.

Your treasure is today. Yesterday is a cashed check, tomorrow a promissory note. Today is cash in the hand. Your miracle, your healing, your peace, your opportunity, your joy—all are one word away: *now*.

Learn to enjoy now. Learn to live in now. Learn to be obedient now. Learn to say yes to what God is calling you to do now. Focus on the now—that is where your influence is greatest.

Let's use the disciples as an object lesson. In Matthew 14, they find themselves in a boat when the waves are restless. They fight for control of the boat as it is tossed by waves and pressed upon by a mighty wind. Out of nowhere, Jesus shows up, walking on the water. But the disciples do not recognize Him. They think what they see is a ghost and cry out in fear. Why are they afraid? Because they aren't expecting Jesus, they are expecting an evil spirit. The disciples were waiting for the devil to show up. Is this you? Do you usually expect bad things? Or do you expect Jesus to show up in the middle of your storm or your need? The power in now is that you expect God to work in your life now, not someday.

Release your faith today.

The prophet Isaiah said, "Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert" (Isaiah 43:19). Notice he says, "*Now* it shall spring forth." Sometimes you have to put your foot down and say, "Now." Release your faith today. Believe for God to move the mountains now.

When Jesus turned the water into wine, that miracle was the beginning of many more. You know when a miracle will begin for you? Not when you start seeing things change, but right now. When your faith says, "Now!" When you seek God with gratitude and praise and faith wherever you are, however you feel, in this very moment.

