

Mahalia Cooks

Chapter 2:- Me Too

As the last of 9-nine siblings, growing up was mostly fun. By the time I came, my parents were no longer as strict, so I was able to get away with many of the things my older siblings couldn't.

My amazing and selfless Yoruba parents opened up their home as a hub for many. We had children of close relatives living with us. Lunch was cooked in excess because guests would always show up at the nick of time. Sometimes even travellers (known and unknown) would sleep over at our house. Not only were all the four rooms usually occupied, but our living room was also frequently turned into a sleeping area many nights.

When I was much younger, I actually didn't really know which of the bigger brothers were my biological siblings. It was a large family. And for many years, I was always the youngest of the bunch. As much as my childhood was fun, I had some pain too. One pain I had was that because I was always surrounded by many who were much older than me, my opinions were usually not smart enough. I remember feeling like whatever I thought or said wouldn't make sense. I wanted to matter, but how do could I get to have a say when everyone around me was much older and smarter, was more intelligent?

By the time I was a teenager, I could hardly wait to have my freedom, to be able to think for myself, and to make my own decisions for me, to and choose whatever I wanted without having to submit submitting to so-called wiser counsel from everyone.

While I was trying to matter, many of the things that I was excited about or stressed about were not concerning for people around me. Adults were busy doing important stuff, or at least that's what I thought. I was the one that who always wanted to play and enjoy myself and wanted playful moments. I wished someone would pay attention to me in my own way, but everyone was busy trying to figure life out.

I was an exceptional student in primary school (elementary) and was good enough in secondary (high school). I remember there was a time this guy a family friend came to live in my house; I think I was in the senior secondary class 2 (grade 9). His dad, who was a friend to my dad, and I think his dad was a school principal out in a more rural neighbouring village. Though his this family friend's accent was not as refined, I noticed he was very smart. He became my big brother for the few months he stayed with us. He would study next to me at the dining table and show me how to solve tough maths-mathematics questions. I gained more confidence in tackling higher level mathematics just by watching him. That helped me.

However, for some reason by the time I got to UN university, things had begun began to go down-south. I was still very smart and intelligent but no longer exceptional academically. Prior to gaining the admission into The the university, I started the processes involved with travelling to the US for studies. Of course I had watched many American movies by this time and would much preferred to study abroad. I actually wanted it badly but sBut somehow, the process did not fall fell through. So, I reluctantly accepted the an offer to study bBotany at the Obafemi Awolowo University in the same town where I grew up.

Commented [MR1]: Changing this title to something like "Finding My Purpose" can give readers a clearer view of what this chapter is about.

Commented [MR2]: I changed all of the body text from justified to flush left; justification is usually reserved for the published book, not the manuscript.

Commented [MR3]: Might be worth briefly expanding on what these things are—it would give more context/personality to your siblings and family dynamic.

Commented [MR4]: I like how this information about your parents is mentioned right away; it immediately sets the stage for understanding your upbringing, which also helps us know you.

Commented [MR5]: As you were the last one born, you would always be the youngest. "For many years" implies that this changed after a point—maybe briefly explain why/how this changed, if so?

Commented [MR6]: "Much older" is mentioned earlier (as well as the smart" terminology), so I changed wording to vary the vocab. OK?

Commented [MR7]: This makes me curious about what important stuff they were preoccupied with—explain more?

Commented [MR8]: "Play" and "playful moments" essentially say the same thing, so I changed the wording. OK?

Commented [MR9]: I recommend moving this sentence to the beginning of the next paragraph, as it flows better/has more relevance there.

Commented [MR10]: Can we get a name for this friend? This would help reduce the amount of he/him pronouns that refer to different people, therefore bringing clarity.

Commented [MR11]: Instead of saying "somehow," could you add specificity here? Introducing this information makes me as the reader want to know why the studying abroad plans didn't work out.

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The plan was to do the first year as a botany student and ~~change-over-to~~ study ~~p~~Pharmacy in my second year. Why ~~p~~Pharmacy? you may ask. ~~Well, I don't know. Besides the fact that o~~One of my ~~acquired~~ senior brothers studied pharmacy, and I loved it each time he came home in his lab coat ~~and that;~~ he ~~even~~ gave me my ~~very~~ first Rubik's Cube. ~~But other than this childhood nostalgia,~~ I don't know any ~~other~~ ~~specific~~ reason ~~why pharmacy.~~ ~~Anyway~~ ~~However~~, my pharmacy plans never ~~actually~~ ~~co~~me through. In short, I failed my first year of ~~b~~Botany and almost got sent out of school due to my poor academic performance.

Commented [MR12]: What exactly does "acquired" mean here? Is he one of those family friends who you weren't related to?

Commented [MR13]: Does this description work for you?

~~Meanwhile,~~ ~~b~~efore I was offered the admission to study ~~B~~otany, a family friend, who was also a teacher in the ~~A~~ccounting department, offered me the option of studying ~~a~~Accounting, ~~but,~~ ~~T~~he ~~s~~Science student's arrogance in me made me turn down the offer without even considering it.

Commented [MR14]: I recommend moving this whole section earlier to keep things chronologically sound; it could go after the sentence "I reluctantly accepted..." which would then become a separate paragraph from the university paragraph.

And, after ~~failing~~ ~~I failed~~ at ~~Science~~science, the same family friend (~~Accounting Prof~~) ~~was the one who~~ came to my rescue. I got another chance to start again in the ~~Management~~management and ~~Accounting~~accounting department I had ~~previously~~ turned down about a year prior.

Well, I wish I can tell you that I was exceptional in ~~Accounting~~accounting, but nah! Not quite. I struggled through my time in the ~~a~~Accounting program ~~me~~. I even failed an essential course ~~that was a~~ (pre-requisite to many others) ~~that,~~ ~~which~~ kept me in school for another ~~extra~~-year. ~~Any who,~~ I eventually passed and finished with a just-~~ok~~-OK result. All along, I knew there was more to my life than ~~a~~ career in ~~a~~Accounting. I believed I had more to offer and began the search to find meaning in life. I tried ~~running~~ different businesses, ~~and~~ I noticed I enjoyed ~~doing~~businesses ~~entrepreneurship~~. Thank God for ~~the~~ ~~support of~~ my family and friends; I started various businesses ~~before~~ I got married, invested a lot of money, ~~and~~ made ~~some~~ money ~~in turn~~, but still I knew there was more.

Commented [MR15]: This has a more casual tone than the rest of the text and can be a bit jarring for readers. Rephrase or delete?

Commented [MR16]: Can you confirm? Were you initially running businesses or working for them?

Commented [MR17]: Is this what you mean? If so, how did they support you?

Commented [MR18]: The mention of your marriage comes off as an afterthought here—delete?

I remember having visions of how I would be helping people around the world. I remember telling my ~~d~~Dad once that I would one day be on CNN ~~one day~~. I think that was my own way of saying that my work ~~will~~ ~~would~~ become ~~so~~ important and ~~that it would~~ cut across cultures and borders. And I remember ~~how~~ I used to connect ~~well~~ with the ~~Bible's~~ story of Joseph ~~in the bible.~~ ~~T~~he great-grandson of Abraham, who knew he was made for a bigger purpose but instead ~~had series of~~ experiences ~~and~~ events that were completely opposite to what he saw in his dreams.

Commented [MR19]: I like this comparison you make between yourself and a well-known Bible figure; it shows that human experiences can be the same no matter the era.

Fast forward a few years later, I moved to Canada to join the man that loves me more than any other, my sweetheart, Ade.

Commented [MR20]: Was this after or before marriage? Your relationship helps give a stronger idea of your life outside of your family and schooling but isn't given much detail—consider expanding?

~~Beautiful~~ Canada was a beautiful country, ~~i~~ Living there ~~t~~ was like a dream come true but ~~somehow~~ harder than I thought it would be. I needed to learn the new culture, ~~I needed to~~ ~~and~~ make ends meet, ~~a~~. A new baby was soon on the way, everything seemed to be moving faster than ~~t~~ I wished, and still I ~~haven't~~ ~~hadn't~~ nailed what on earth ~~was~~ ~~I~~ was made for.

I considered continuing my accounting ~~career~~career, ~~and~~ I took some classes at Concordia University, but that didn't help either. I tried to find ~~A~~ccounting ~~j~~jobs and later took ~~some~~ other related jobs. I ~~especially~~ ~~liked~~ ~~loved~~ my ~~job~~ work as a ~~F~~inancial advisor. ~~I was~~, helping people structure their finances. ~~I~~ ~~loved~~ ~~what I was doing~~ ~~b~~ut somehow, I still felt there was more. I wanted to affect the lives of many people with my unique gifts.

Commented [MR21]: Consider giving a hint of what your unique gifts are. At this point in the story, it isn't clear to me what they are.

Then ~~Suddenly~~ in 2011, I lost my big brother. I was extremely ~~in shock~~shocked and didn't believe ~~h~~He was actually gone ~~for real~~. I couldn't believe that life ~~was~~ ~~could be~~ ~~so~~ short and flimsy. This was a big

Commented [MR22]: Naming this brother and giving some of your backstory together can help the reader connect with him and your loss more deeply.

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wake-up call for me. ~~Life is so short and so flimsy.~~ I began to ask myself the tough questions of ~~live~~ life. If this was the end for me, would I be glad to go to my grave and ~~go~~ settle accounts in heaven? Would I say that I have used every gift I was given to make the world a better place? This was a tough time ~~for me~~. I was grieving the loss of my brother and trying to wrap my mind around it ~~and was while~~ also struggling with answering questions about my major life's purpose ~~questions~~.

Commented [MR23]: Great contemplative paragraph that also represents a huge turning point for your life

Thankfully, my hubby decided that I should travel ~~led~~ to Nigeria with my two boys to visit my parents after the loss. ~~It was d~~uring that trip ~~to Nigeria that~~, I realized I had been living for ~~the other~~ people and not ~~for~~ what I was designed for. That was when my childhood dreams started coming back to life.

Commented [MR24]: A clearer timeline throughout (such as you mentioning your brother's death in 2011) would help readers grasp the time span more effectively. The first baby is mentioned earlier, but we don't know when the second child was born.

I quit my job one month after returning home to Canada. My boss had ~~another a~~ better plan ~~and~~ got me a job with about a 70% percent increase in pay, better benefit plans and all. How could I say ~~NO no~~ to such an offer? It was hard, but somehow God opened my eyes to a glimpse of what was ahead. I was able to do a comparison of what I saw in my dreams to a life of ~~somewhat~~ slavery ~~again~~ to another employer that wasn't going in the direction I felt I was made to go. I couldn't help but turn down the offer.

Commented [MR25]: We don't know the specifics of your childhood dreams at this point; mentioning them earlier when you speak of your childhood can create a more cohesive narrative.

Commented [MR26]: CMOS usually avoids setting words/phrases in full caps—can read like shouting/anger.

I embraced God fully. Today, I look back and give thanks to God. Now my family and I just hop ~~and on~~ the a plane and go wherever we believe God needs us. It's such a blessing to be influential in other people's journeys to fulfillments. ~~And finances is are~~ no longer an issue ~~because not only~~ are we helping people around the world to know the love of Christ ~~for them around the world, but we are~~ also solving real problems that people have and are desperately looking for real solutions to.

Commented [MR27]: This is an inspiring passage. Giving more detail on the specific type of work you're doing for others could help readers feel more moved by it.

Back then I was looking for permission; I was looking for approval. Whoever was in front of me was in charge. No ~~one~~ knew how weak I was on the inside because I am ~~also a very a~~ reserved person and seemed to carry myself in a confident manner ~~that~~. ~~This made makes~~ people assume I knew what I was doing, but deep down it wasn't true. I was seen as highly influential, but I was always scared that people ~~will would~~ soon find out I ~~am wasn't not~~ as strong as they thought I was.

I cared so much about the impression people got of me. I really wanted to be respected, and this was the foundation of most of my decisions. For some reason, I thought I wasn't good enough and needed to do more to get others to like me.

Commented [MR28]: This is a really introspective, genuine moment that I think a lot of readers will find relatable!

I shared my story here because this is the foundation for this book. For many years ~~what~~ I was looking forward to a day when I would suddenly have the sceptre; I was looking for someone to come and appoint me to become ~~who~~ I was born to be. I was waiting for the permission to exist as ~~ME~~ me. You will see throughout this book how I continued to search for this permission.

You may find that you relate personally to some portion of my story, and that's ~~ok~~ OK. Just read along.

Have you always know n you were made for more? ~~Maybe~~. ~~You~~ know you were not designed to have a traditional job and ~~may be you~~ would rather set your own schedule. ~~You~~ would prefer to find a group of people whom you can serve with your God-given gifts. If you don't ~~really~~ love ~~the~~ life in the supposed rat race, then keep reading.

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You are not alone, and you are at the right place, at the right time. This book will help you find clarity ~~in the area of~~ why you are here on ~~ee~~earth. Many people, like you know quite alright that they were created to make a difference but for some reason ~~are not been able~~ ~~have not been able~~ to nail it.

Quick question for you before you continue reading: What if you found out tomorrow morning that you only have ~~three~~ ~~3~~ more years to live, ~~W~~ What would you do differently? Would you be ready to create the space and time necessary to embrace the real reason why you were ~~created~~ ~~put here~~?

Pause for a few minutes and think about that. ~~Would you?~~

Until you are ready to focus, you ~~are not going to be able to~~ ~~won't~~ become all you were made to be. ~~You won't~~ ~~or~~ be able to earn a good living doing what you really love; ~~b~~. But don't worry, ~~—because~~ in this book, I'm going to teach you how to get there as quickly as possible. ~~It usually takes my clients just 60 days!~~

The solution is not to please everyone or ~~to~~ try to solve everyone's problems. ~~T~~ the answer is to discover who God made you ~~to be~~ and why. The answer is to boldly embrace ~~whom~~ ~~how~~ He made you, in order to become ~~YOU~~ you and, ~~to~~ take on your permission in Christ. Trust me, ~~they~~ your permission ~~to be you~~ is granted! ~~The permission to be you is granted.~~ And your world is desperately missing that ~~REAL~~ ~~real~~ you.

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up ~~to~~ to others, you'll prompt people to open up ~~with~~ ~~with~~ God, this generous Father in heaven." (Matt. ~~ew~~ 45:14–16 MSG(The Message)).

Commented [MR29]: This line feels commercial/salesy compared to the tone of the rest of this text. Rephrase?

Commented [MR30]: Spelled out this version of the Bible for clarity for readers and adherence with CMOS.

Commented [MR31]: Made a change to the book numbers; this should be Matthew 5 and not Matthew 4.