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# Chapter 1

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## What is My Purpose?

When someone is close to death and survives, it is often said, “There must be a greater purpose for you.” When I was eleven years old, I almost drowned while taking a swimming test. I was tired, but I kept on swimming, eventually sinking to the bottom of the pool. The lifeguard who rescued me reiterated this very profound statement when she said, “Sweetie, thank God you are alive. He must have a greater plan for you.”

There were many occasions where my life seemed to take on inherently unexpected circumstances, some of them discussed in this book. Even though I attempted to control my life, it appeared my life would take on a life of its own. It was as if, while I was aiming for a certain direction, conditions forced me in an entirely different direction. I was lacking strength. I concluded that my faith, or perception of God, was being tested.

Over time, I came to realize this turmoil was both a blessing and a veto from God. I did not know it at the time, but I was being guided to take another path. I was also being protected by some higher power. Why else would I have survived?

I imagined God had a plan for me. However, what it was, I did not know. Like most Catholic girls, or so I had supposed, I wanted to be a nun, thinking this was what God wanted. My mom constantly remarked how much I reminded her of Sister Florentine, my aunt, who was a nun. Even Sister Florentine herself made the same comments when she visited.

As I grew older, I realized I was indeed a great deal like my aunt. She and I were both very spiritual and, with each passing year, our relationship grew closer. Sister died at age eighty-four. I knew long before then, however, that I did not want to become a nun. That was definitely not my purpose.

What is my purpose? Why am I here? What is the soul? What is our real existence? What is anyone's purpose? These are fundamental questions asked throughout the ages. I, like scores of others, have asked myself these questions countless times in my life. Many people look outside themselves to find the answers, such as to others or to organized religion. I was the same.

After much contemplation, I thought I knew the answer. It was love. Yes, love! Sounds pretty solid,

doesn't it? After all, just about every religion speaks to the unconditional love of God, who encompasses all, including the past, present, and future. We hear it every day. God is love. Love is all we need. Love conquers all. Love is the answer. What do you think? Is this answer valid?

Authors, poets, songwriters, and the like from every age, have all written more about love than any other emotion. Why? Do you suppose love is the most sought-after aspect of the human condition? We all have experienced some form of love in our lives, including me.

For instance, I have always felt love from my sister, Mary. I guess this is why we are so close today. I sensed it from infancy, in the very first memory I recall, when I was just twenty-one months old.

With vivid clarity, I can recount a scene when I was in the crib. My memory all takes place in the kitchen and includes orientation of doorways, furniture, and relatives. Even though I was supposedly too young to summon up the incident, my mom concurs I am correct about all the details. She cannot explain it, other than I must actually remember it.

My parents, three of my other siblings, and my mom's oldest sister and her family were eating pumpkin pie in the kitchen. Therefore, the event more than likely occurred around Thanksgiving. I do not know how I know it was pumpkin pie; I just know instinctively.

My crib was in my parents' bedroom, which was adjacent to the kitchen. It was a light chestnut-colored crib with thin, battered and scratched slats. The bedroom was quite cramped, and the crib barely fit in the room, so my mom had it parked halfway in the doorway to the kitchen.

On this particular day, everyone was crowded around a table, laughing and eating pie. Although the kitchen

was very small, they seemed to be having a grand old time. I was fussing and my mom kept strolling over to my crib, stuffing a bottle in my mouth. She picked me up and then laid me back down on my back with the bottle in my mouth, hoping I would stay still and be quiet.

As soon as she walked off, I popped up, beginning to wail while looking through the jailhouse rails. I was asking for pie! She could not understand my request. What is hilarious is, as an adult, I do not even like pumpkin pie. However, at twenty-one months, I was fascinated with the goings-on in the kitchen, and I wanted some of that pumpkin pie.

One awesome thing about the whole incident was my sister Mary. She is only fourteen months older than I am, so she had to be not quite three years old at the time; yet she came up to the crib and comforted me. I still can see and hear her as she looked through those bars, saying, “What’s the matter, Cindy?” She gave me love.

Although I recognized Mary’s love at the time, I always associated a more impactful emotional response with the scene. It was not the emotion of love; instead, it was one of being alone and separated. I was not included in the fun that everyone else was experiencing. Furthermore, my mom reinforced this feeling whenever she tried to keep me quiet, instead of holding me in her arms, comforting and loving me, and giving me some pie.

So beginning from a very young age, I felt all alone. And because I felt isolated from the whole group, I craved love. This condition predominantly pervaded my life, starting with that first memory. I was unhappy. If my purpose in this life was love, and God loved me unconditionally, why did I not feel love? Why was I unhappy?

Even though I knew—deep in my soul—love was the answer, something was missing. Was I alone? Did I have

love? Was love really the answer? These questions would plague me for almost fifty years. But God gave me clues throughout my life, and it was only a matter of time before I found the answers. Thank God I did!

When I discovered the evidence about my purpose, I changed directions. It is never too late to change directions and change your life. I am over age fifty, am not married and have no children. I used to think this was a tragedy. But wouldn't ya know it; I discovered how to be happy! We all can be happy, if we so choose.

I am happy with the choices I have made in my life. I realized that by allowing the goodness of the universe into my life, my reality and my world could and has changed. Although I am not currently married, if I so choose, I may get married in the future. Even though I do not biologically have any children, I have a chance to nurture so many more by telling my story. Humanity is my family and my children.

All the incidents that transpired in my life—whether you perceive them as good or bad—after all was said and done, guaranteed my development and devotion to spiritual work. I had to allow a new awakening to my true purpose in order to fully understand and accept the events in my life. Before I could change my reality and, therefore, alter future events, I had to realize certain happenings in my life were necessary. As I did, I also uncovered the secret to health and happiness.

That adjustment took time because I, like so many of us, was trained to think otherwise. This is the story of that new perception and the resulting spiritual awakening. It is a continued journey, available to all, allowing comprehension of true joy and purpose in life. In the process, it can inspire others with the fact that despite adversity, there is always light.

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Before I could find out my purpose, I had to go back and reexamine my life and the events that emerged, awakening me to a new awareness. So to begin, let us go back to my past.