

Acres of Diamonds

Jentezen Franklin, senior pastor of the multisite Free Chapel based in Gainesville, Georgia, explains the concept of his latest and

most important book—

Acres of Diamonds—with a real-life parable originally popularized by Russell H. Conwell.

“There was an old Persian farmer, and he worked hard for everything he had,” Franklin says. “A traveler comes through and tells him, ‘It’s a shame you have to work so hard with that plow and that ox in that field day after day, when people are getting rich in India discovering diamonds.’ The farmer became so discontented that he decided to sell his farm and everything he had, and he became a soldier of fortune. He left his family, saying, ‘When I come back, you’ll sit on your own thrones. We’ll be fabulously rich.’ To make a long story short again, he spent all that he had, found no diamonds of course, and ended up jumping in a river in Spain and taking his life.

“But the strange twist is the person who bought that old farm took the same plow and worked in the same fields. And as he would plow those fields, he kept digging up these black rocks. One day he put one on the mantel, and a priest saw it and said, ‘Do you know that’s an uncut diamond?’ The man said, ‘You’re kidding. They’re all over this property.’ And sure enough, it was the world’s largest mine. ... The man who took his own life felt that the acres of diamonds were out there somewhere, but he never realized that he was living in acres of diamonds.”

Franklin believes the story teaches a valuable spiritual truth for believers everywhere.

“Many times, we quit too early,” Franklin says. “We walk away

too soon. We want everything handed to us, and we fail to understand that we're living in a place of tremendous potential right here right now. Wherever God has you, there are acres of diamonds."

Franklin says he has seen this truth illustrated over and over again in his own life—from his teenage years all the way to the present. For that reason, he says *Acres of Diamonds* is the most important book he has ever written and calls it his "life message."

"Rarely will God give you everything you ask for like you asked for it," Franklin says. "It will come in a way that you don't see coming, and it will require intense heat and pressure and trials and walking through difficulty to reap the ultimate promise God gives you. This book was birthed out of a lot of experiences that I have gone through in my own life, family and ministry. Had I walked away, I would have walked away from acres of diamonds. By that, I mean I would have walked away from spiritual blessings and amazing things that God wanted to do in me, my family and my ministry. But we went through a season of pressure and heat—and that is required to give birth to diamonds."

Using stories from his own life and ministry, Franklin spoke to Charisma Digital about the ways God uses the waiting period to shape us, why we should be patient with the promises of God and how Christians can discern God's timing for their lives.

Diamonds Under Pressure

When Franklin was 16, he witnessed Rev. Ronnie Brock preaching "under a mighty anointing" at an old-fashioned camp meeting. He had never seen anything like it. His words moved Franklin to tears—uncharacteristic for a teenage boy—and Franklin ran to the altar and prayed that God would use him for ministry.

"I never accepted the call publicly, but I knew from that moment forward that I felt like God was calling me to preach,"

Franklin says.

Fast forward only a few months later, and Franklin was bedridden and out of school with sickness for weeks. For a year, he battled a skin disease and blood issue that left him covered head to toe in boils and swelling. He went from a popular kid at his high school to a social outcast—he was stuck in isolation while all of his friends had the time of their lives. He visited doctor after doctor, but none of them could offer a solution. Franklin still vividly recalls the depression and loneliness he felt during this season. The experience shattered his fragile teenage self-esteem—and softened his heart to the things of God.

“During that time, I began to develop a relationship with the Lord for myself,” Franklin says. “I began to read the Bible and listen to messages on my cassette tape player. I began to pray and seek God and cry out to Him. That one year of my affliction actually became the greatest thing that God used in my life to cause me to go into the ministry. I don’t believe I would have ended up in the ministry had I not gone through that.”

Franklin says God knew there were acres of diamonds inside him—but first, he needed to undergo the pressure and heat that produces these gems. To this day, whenever he prepares to preach, Franklin remembers his year of sickness, and it allows him to empathize with the suffering, the outcasts and the marginalized in his own church community.

“It’s one thing when you pray and nothing happens for a week, but for a 16-year-old kid to pray every day, ‘God, help me. Why don’t you heal me? Please help me,’ and receive no answer was almost more than I could take,” Franklin says. “Boy, it’s either going to destroy you or make you into something God can really use. Even that sickness was a package. It was a strangely wrapped gift to me that, looking back, I’m thankful that I went through, even as painful as it was. The same is

true for other trials and tribulations I have gone through over the years. I wouldn't be who I am or be able to relate what I can to the pain other people experience had I not gone through those highs and lows."

The end result of that process of maturation is a focus on God over your circumstances, according to Franklin. The goal is sanctification.

"By the time God gives you your acres of diamonds, whatever it is you're dreaming for and believe that He's put in your heart to give you, by the time you get to it, it won't be about that," Franklin says. "It'll be about Him. Because He's sanctifying your dream. That heat and that pressure are causing all of the impurities and motives and things in your heart—that may be selfish ambition—to come to the top."

Still, knowing the end goal will be worth it doesn't make the suffering any easier to bear in the moment. Franklin recommends the wisdom of Psalm 1 to anyone who feels they are currently in a period of waiting and frustration.

"Psalm 1:2 says, '[The blessed man] meditates on the law day and night,'" he says. "The word 'meditate' in Hebrew means 'to utter or speak,' and one translation says it means 'self-talk.' So in the tough seasons of life, you have to have proper self-talk. You have to remind yourself that when the enemy attacks you and tries to defeat you, depress you or tell you to give up ... to say what God's Word says to you: I am a child of God. He did call me here. I will see the goodness of the Lord in this place. We will see this marriage through to victory, or we will see these children become the diamonds that God has given us. In other words, confession is very powerful."

He also says Psalm 1 points to the importance of remaining "planted" like a tree—to be rooted in a stable community and set of spiritual disciplines.

“You have to get planted in the Word, planted in a church, planted in prayer,” Franklin says. “You have to get planted in those different seasons. So many people just uproot, and they are tumbleweeds. They blow from one move of God to the next, from one place to the next, from one church to the next, from one job to the next. When you get planted, the psalmist says, then you’ll flourish.”

But despite the talk of flourishing and diamonds, Franklin is quick to clarify that he is not referring to material wealth or possessions or worldly success. When he refers to the blessings of diamonds, he is referring to the purpose and dream of God at work in someone’s life—a calling more valuable and beneficial than even the finest diamonds.

“I was a little worried that somebody would think Acres of Diamonds was just a get-rich-quick prosperity book,” Franklin says. “I believe God wants to prosper His people, but that’s not what this book is about at all. This is a book that is saying the things God has for you are already there. Everything He promised, He’s going to bring—but it may not show up in the package you thought it would come in. ... That’s what happened to Job. That’s what happened to Joseph.”

Discerning Decisions

The decision to stay put and not chase success can be a difficult one; sometimes, it’s unclear whether a favorable opportunity seems to be God’s hand at work or a fleshly temptation. Franklin experienced this dilemma firsthand during his early years at Free Chapel, when the church was significantly smaller and less well known than it is today.

“A nationally known pastor—who is now deceased—called me,” Franklin says. “He had just built a megachurch, and he said, ‘Come. I want you to be the one who takes this ministry.’ Everything in the natural said, ‘Do it. Do it. The grass is greener on the other side. There are your acres of diamonds.’”

... This person said to me, 'I want you to come and talk with me. I want to see if it's a fit.' He wanted me to begin to pray about taking this ministry."

The move would have been a tremendous promotion for Franklin and a "financial game changer" for his family. But when he and his wife prayed and fasted about the decision, they could not get peace about it. Franklin cites the aphorism, "If it's not quite, it's not right."

"I cannot underscore enough: Never move on a maybe," Franklin says. "Never move for money. Never trade influence with people for money. There are just certain principles that the Bible teaches that we have to obey, and we could not get peace ... [even though] everything in my flesh screamed do it."

Instead, as he fasted and sought the Lord, Franklin felt God telling him to do the opposite: "Stay here in Gainesville, Georgia. This is the place I've called you to." So Franklin turned down the offer to pastor the new megachurch. That ministry later fell apart and no longer exists. Meanwhile, Free Chapel in Gainesville has flourished.

"When you know God has called you to a place, if you'll be faithful, that is the doorway through which God will take you to what He has for you," Franklin says. "Big doors swing on little hinges. When you're obedient in the little seasons and refuse to despise the day of small beginnings, God will cause the big doors to open."

Staying put and staying content can be less glamorous or exciting than chasing new opportunities or upending your life. But patience and faithfulness are both fruits of the Holy Spirit—and will be spiritually rewarded in the end.

"Is the grass really greener on the other side?" Franklin says. "Because that man didn't understand he was walking away from acres of diamonds. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth. [Something

better] is always out there: If only I had that man for my husband or that woman for my wife; if I just had that perfect family on Instagram that I follow; if I just had that church, or that success or that opportunity. God has blessed you with tremendous potential right where you are. These are acres of diamonds where you are, but you have to start digging in your own yard.”

Franklin reminds believers that success is often incremental—even Israel had to take over the promised land a little at a time, rather than all at once. Stay faithful. Persevere. And when you are truly uncertain whether God wants you to remain put or move on to a new opportunity, stay close to God and His Word. Franklin even suggests seeking counsel from a few trusted spiritual advisers.

“Stay connected to trusted and prophetic voices and people who you know have a strong relationship with God,” Franklin says. “Don’t move without having that urge confirmed by two or three trusted voices. ... Don’t forsake the power of partnership. Know that you’re not the only one who can hear from God. For me, I need to know that my wife is at peace with a major move. I need to know that other trusted voices that I’ve learned to lean on are at peace with what I believe God is telling me to do.”

And though Franklin can share many stories of times he has correctly stayed put and obeyed God’s voice, he wonders sometimes how many times he has failed to do so—and missed out on the resulting benefits. He doesn’t want others to have those same regrets.

“Just think of what that man walked away from,” Franklin says. “I guess that’s why that story touched me so much when I heard it. How many things have I walked away from that were acres of diamonds, had I just not given up on it?”

On God’s Time

People today take the concept of time for granted, but Franklin points out that time used to be a matter of guesswork.

“For a long time in America, there were no clocks and people just guessed at what time it was based on the sun,” Franklin says. “Then someone finally put a clock up, maybe on the steeple of a church where everyone could see, but even then, who could be sure if it was consistent city to city and state to state? Sometimes time would be off from 30 minutes to an hour in any given city.

“But when the railroads were built, they could not allow trains to be late and crash into each other. So the government created a standard time that everyone would set their clocks to. ... Some cities rebelled and refused initially, but in the end, everyone complied.”

Franklin pauses, as if to let the story sink in, and then concludes the story: “Here’s the point. We do the same thing with God. We’re on our time, and we think things should happen according to our plans. But we have to get synchronized with God’s clock, with God’s timing.”

He says understanding and obeying God’s timing requires cultivating a deep relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. It requires reading the Word, praying and even fasting. (“The bigger the decision, the more attention I give to fasting and prayer,” Franklin says.)

Often, God wants His people to stay put and exercise patience. But other times, when they are aligned with His will, His timing may be even faster than anticipated. Franklin gives the example of his debut into TV broadcasting as one such example.

Free Chapel had just built and moved into its first sanctuary when Franklin received a call from televangelist R.W. Schambach. Schambach was in Atlanta that weekend and asked to hold a Sunday night service at Free Chapel. Franklin agreed,

eager to meet this famous preacher.

When Sunday night came, Schambach was late and went onstage without getting to speak with Franklin beforehand. He began his remarks by saying, “The Lord spoke to me during [worship] that this church and this pastor are supposed to be on TV. We’re going to take up an offering and buy his TV equipment right now.”

Schambach took up a cash offering and raised \$138,000. Franklin and his team went out and bought cameras within a few days and began filming programs for local cable TV. That’s how his now-international television ministry first began.

“In my mind, TV was something I knew I was supposed to do, but it was three years out,” Franklin says. “We were in debt. We had just moved into a new building. We needed staff. We needed money. We needed furniture. We needed all kinds of things. ... I would have sat around and maybe missed that opportunity forever for us. But God had a greater plan, and we’ve got to be open to His plan and understand where we are right now. The concept of “now” is so powerful, and so many times we let someday or one day stop us from seeing the acres of diamonds that God has for us right now—today.”

Franklin hopes his book and message will inspire other believers to see God’s blessings in motion within their own lives and ministries—right where they are now.

“I feel like this book is a message of hope and encouragement,” he says. “I feel like it’s going to save marriages, ministries, businesses and dreams. Don’t become impatient for the Lord to act. You have to hold on sometimes. You have to wait on the Lord. You have to stand and not fall, right where you are planted. And when you’ve stood as long as you can stand, keep standing and don’t give up.”

READ MORE: To learn more about Jentezen Franklin and Acres of Diamonds, visit acresofdiamondsbook.com. or go to

<https://jentezenfranklin.org/broadcasts/285>.

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