

FINDING YOUR EDGE



**HOW TO UNLOCK YOUR
TALENT & PURPOSE**

JEREMY HASELWOOD

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Paperback ISBN: 979-8-3750-8937-9

Hard Cover ISBN: 979-8-3766-7728-5

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JEREMY HASELWOOD



This book is dedicated to every person that has been overlooked and
battled the feeling of insignificance;

To the individuals that experienced setback
when things didn't go as planned;

To each person that built a bridge as they were crossing it.

May you find hope.

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ABOUT JEREMY

1 SHIFT HAPPENS

The car was totaled. It was around three a.m. I was driving home from a Christmas party that was located more than an hour from my house. My eyelids were heavy from fatigue. It had rained most of the evening, and the roads were still a little slick. These were the same tree-lined roads and curvy backstreets I took almost every day for years, less than a couple of miles from my house.

I began tapping on the steering wheel, making an attempt to stay focused on driving and not doze off. I was so close to my house, I could picture my bed and the comforting feeling I would have to finally be in it. My eyes gave up the fight and finally closed for about three seconds.

A loud noise, like a brief stab of thunder, vibrated my car, jarring me from a dazed consciousness. My eyes suddenly opened and a fear gripped me, as I was in complete darkness, yet my car was still moving forward, powering into unseen objects. Abruptly, something slammed into my windshield, leaving scattered lines of glass throughout my field of visibility.

That instant, I realized I veered off the right side of the road and quickly turned the steering wheel left in a desperate attempt to rejoin the concrete

road. My tires skipped as they tried to grip the mud and grass to find pavement. My car fishtailed a little bit and then abruptly jerked, pulling it back onto the road.

Once on the road, I pulled onto the left shoulder on the opposite side of the road, stopped my car, and immediately turned it off. In some mind fog, I had no idea what just happened. My window was completely shattered, so I couldn't see anything outside of my car.

I took a moment to collect myself, not knowing if I was bleeding, had broken bones, or the extent of damage to my car or objects I just plowed through. My eyes scanned my body, starting with my arms, then my chest, stomach, and legs. I didn't see any signs of blood, and my appendages were moving fine. I took my hands and started patting up and down my body, looking for signs of pain or blood, yet there was none. I questioned if I was even alive or if this was some sort of out-of-body experience like you see in the movies when the soul leaves the body and there is no pain.

After sitting for a couple of minutes to collect myself, I opened the door to my car so I could step out and see the damage, not certain if my legs would even work. I dropped my left leg out of the door onto the ground, and I was able to support my body weight with no issue. Next, I dropped my right leg to the ground. No pain. I proceeded to get out of the car, stand tall, and tear up in disbelief.

My body was shaking as a reaction from what just happened. I walked around the front of my car, which looked unrecognizable to me. *This isn't MY car.* The first thing I thought was that my car was totaled.

As I crossed to the right side of my car, I ended up walking across the street to survey the trail of damage I left behind. The path of destruction included a

mailbox, street sign, electrical box, and a small tree. There was a steep drop-off on that side of the road, and I had no idea how I was able to pull my car back to the street after hitting these objects.

My mind jumped around, trying to make sense of what just happened, not understanding how so much destruction occurred, yet I was OK. The immediate world around me was chaotic, yet I was OK. My car was totaled, yet I was OK.

If this situation wasn't stressful enough, earlier in the day, I had packed a box of personal belongings from my job because it was my last day at work. I was on contract with a telecom company, and my contract wasn't renewed, leaving me unemployed a week before Christmas. This was during one of the darkest periods of the Great Recession where employment was hard to come by, and I had no job prospects in the near future.

This day, as I perceived it, was one of the worst days of my life. That said, I was spared while my car was totaled, and I knew there was some higher reason this all happened. Why did all this occur on the same day?

Life will throw days at you that make you focus or fold. I've never been the folding type.

HOW DID I GET HERE?

Two questions I sometimes ask myself are: "HOW did I get here?" and "WHY am I here?" These are two distinct questions. HOW you got here has nothing to do with your physiological creation. You should know enough about science to know that. The "how" is the complex web of your life's experiences and choices that created the journey up to where you are right now. What

have been some of the pivotal decisions you made or opportunities granted to you that changed the trajectory of your life?

How you got here is unique to you, and as such, it has created a life that is uniquely you. Take moment to look at the list below. Do any of these experiences resonate with you?

- Raised by a single parent or grandparent
- Attended college
- Have divorced parents
- Bought your first house
- Experienced physical or emotional abuse
- Accepted your dream job
- Experienced physical or emotional trauma
- Grew up in the city or in a small town
- Experienced the loss of a loved one
- Followed a dream that didn't go as expected
- Live with a physical or intellectual disability
- Got married and/or divorced
- Struggle with personal or family addiction
- Took a vacation and experienced a new culture or scenery
- Belong to an underserved or oppressed population
- Moved away from your hometown or home state
- Raised or are raising children (parenting)
- Struggle with depression or anxiety
- Self-employed
- Experienced rejection or embarrassment

These are just a few factors that we may experience in life that shape and impact our journey. If you look at the list, though, chances are that you can

relate to more than one.

When you saw the ones on the list that are part of your story, how did it make you feel? Take a moment to reread and reflect on this list, then think about the pieces of your life that are missing from the list that have shaped who you are. Some of these factors may bring thoughts of sadness, while others bring joy. They shape our thinking, self-esteem, opportunities, personality, and sense of fulfillment.

WHY you're here is a larger question of purpose that requires a higher level of emotional intelligence and spiritual connectedness. It may seem easier to look back at your life and understand how you got where you are to this point, but many people don't know their purpose, or their "why."

On one hand, it's oftentimes a struggle to understand one's purpose because it seems shrouded in a complex wormhole of mystery.

On the other hand, purpose is hiding in plain sight, right there in front of you the whole time. It's kind of like the *Where's Waldo* picture books, in that Waldo is in every scene. He's looking at you the whole time, but you can't see him until you take time to really seek and discover him. In other words, discovering your purpose takes work that opens up your self-awareness.

Your purpose is waiting to be **discovered** then *activated*. These are two very distinct phases of maximizing your purpose. Both require time and effort. When you discover your purpose, you are now accountable to your purpose and this gift you possess.

To be aware of your purpose and do nothing with it is like letting food rot that can be used to provide life to others. This is why it is so important to not just know your purpose, but to activate it. Activation of purpose internally

provides confidence, opportunities, fulfillment, and a sense of self-worth. Externally, purpose provides positive impact that can help improve an environment, save a life, or shape generations.

For example, a client of mine is a beloved pizzeria in Connecticut. The original owner immigrated from Italy, speaking little to no English. The business he ran with his wife is still in operation today and beloved by the community, almost 100 years later. What may have started as a business idea to serve the community turned into something much bigger that penetrates the intangible. Though he may not have known it at the time, his pizza would bring joy to so many lives. His purpose was activated and shaped a legacy that is connected to friendships, memories, and community bonds.

There's a quote from Confucius that says, "We have two lives, and the second begins when we realize we only have one." My way to interpret this is that you have two lives, and the second one begins when you recognize your purpose. This second life is one of clarity and intent when purpose is activated. It's a life when saying yes or no to opportunities is measured against whether or not those opportunities are on the distinguished path of your purpose.

Unfortunately, many do not believe they have a purpose. I was well into my thirties before I watched the classic movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*. It always seemed like a movie that only "old people" enjoyed. In reflection, maybe I was becoming that "old person" and finally had lived enough life to really appreciate it.

At any rate (spoiler alert), the main character George always had dreams of what he wanted his life to be. He had a family, ran a business, and was well-respected in his town. Yet, he carried a sadness of unfulfilled dreams and the

pressure of his business collapsing, when it got to a point where he decided to end his life. At this point, an angel intervened and was able to show him what the world would be like if he never existed. Ultimately, George was able to see that his existence *did* matter and that the things he took for granted were actually part of his purpose. It was there the whole time, yet he never saw it. He was *passionate* about traveling and seeing the world, but his *purpose* was to provide stability and hope to people in his community.

While *It's a Wonderful Life* is a movie and we don't necessarily have angels intervening in our lives to show us our purpose (or do we?), the meaning of the movie rings true. It showcases that the greatest gift that we have is our life. The impact of our existence extends beyond our own body. We impact our friends, families, co-workers, strangers, and our community in ways in which we have no awareness. It's worth taking the time to discover your gifts and how to use them. But we'll get to that part later in the book.

I believe that some people may be intimidated to discover their purpose. What if their calling feels like too much to bear or seems like it will require too much of that individual? People find comfort in complacency, and what if their purpose shook up their everyday life, taking them into an unknown journey? They can ignore that calling to uncover their purpose in exchange for a life of perceived security, which is really a life of insecurity and unrealized impact.

For example, there's a person whose purpose is to design t-shirts with positive messages on them. It might be you. This person dreams about the designs, the messages, and has even made some prototypes for friends and family members. They bring smiles and hope to the wearer and readers of the shirt. But this person also has a corporate job that pays a decent wage, allowing them to live comfortably. They feel secure financially. But corporations have

layoffs, and working for the same company one's entire career is extremely rare. Meanwhile, their gift and impact of producing t-shirts lies dormant along with its positive impact.

There is also this notion that everyone's purpose is supposed to be grandiose. The truth is that everyone was not put on this earth to be a leader who changes the world. The under-the-radar, uncelebrated heroes are the ones who make a difference to people they come in contact with every day. As small as it seems, bringing a smile or kindness to the grocery store clerk makes a purposeful impact on that individual and that day. There are more of those everyday heroes on this earth, whose purpose is on a smaller scale than the people who were put here to shake up a generation of people. When doing this purpose-seeking work, give yourself permission to be open to whatever magnitude your purpose will be, large or small. Either way, it still matters.

I'll tell you a little bit about how I got here, then tell you why I believe I'm here. Since my childhood, I've been a bit of an explorer and adventurer. I grew up in Oklahoma, and as a product of divorce, I spent time back and forth between the town of Guthrie and Oklahoma City.

My mother lived in a suburban neighborhood in Oklahoma City. That was where I spent summers and weekends with my brothers. We'd play with other kids in the neighborhood, calling ourselves the "Canyon North Crew," after our neighborhood's name. We were just a group of kids that played football in streets, basketball in the driveway, or videogames at one of our houses.

At my dad and stepmother's house in Guthrie, I lived on a farm in my childhood. While we didn't have crops, we did have acres of fields that occasionally had cows and horses. When I was younger, my brothers and I

would explore the pasture, while my younger sister stayed in the house with my stepmother. My brothers and I would leave the house for an afternoon, equipped with a backpack and CB radios, and just wander around the land until dinnertime.

Fast-forward to my junior year in college at the University of Oklahoma. I was in a music group with my good friend Dan, who I grew up with in Oklahoma City. Adventure was calling again. I felt a calling with the music, and Oklahoma just wasn't a hotbed for the music industry (unless we did country music).

I decided that I needed to move and truly see if I could pursue my dream of making it in the music industry. I told Dan that I was moving to Atlanta, and that I'd like him to come with me so we could keep the group together and see if we could make our dream happen. He was in.

That summer, we moved to Atlanta. I was only twenty years old, but on fire with a passion that couldn't be contained. Over the next few years, we went on to gain some successes as an independent group, scoring a Top 100 Pop radio hit that nobody outside of Oklahoma would even know. I worked a full-time job, attended school full-time, and wrote, recorded, mixed, performed, and marketed our music. It was a hustle with no breaks, and I was only sleeping about four hours a night.

It got to a point with music where I felt like all the clichés I'd heard about the industry were happening all around me. I had a lot of support from music industry insiders when my music career was gaining a local buzz, then people stopped returning phone calls and holding meetings with me when that buzz began to fade. I felt used at times, exchanging my soul, which I poured into my craft, for empty promises and access to my industry contacts.

I saw other local recording artists around me emerge from being just another face in the crowd, to having international success in the music industry. One artist in particular attended the same college I did, at the same time. I would see him several times a week on campus hanging out in front of the classroom buildings with his friends. It was really cool to observe his career take off and achieve an international level of success, becoming one of the most popular artists in his genre at the time. This provided motivation and pushed me to work even harder. After all, if it happened to him, it could happen to my group. We also knew some of the same people, so our degree of separation was slim. This experience reinforced that obtaining a successful career in the music industry was not a dream that only happens in a faraway land—it was happening right here, right now. I knew it with certainty because I saw it!

Oftentimes, we talk ourselves out of our dreams because we only see people on TV or the internet accomplish the goals we are going after. It's almost like a parallel world that doesn't really exist, because you don't see it happening firsthand. For me, though, this was Atlanta in the late '90s and early 2000s, and soon Atlanta would become the hip-hop mecca for the world. I would literally be at parties and events with access to artists like OutKast, Ludacris, P-Diddy, and many more. To witness the early stages of this growth was pretty amazing. But somebody had to do it first in Atlanta.

All that to say, if you're not in an environment where you can literally see others achieving success with a similar goal, then you can either be the first one to do it (why not?), or move to an environment where you can live and experience it firsthand. This is why many aspiring actors and actresses move to Los Angeles, and fashion models and designers move to New York. They put themselves in proximity to the scene to improve their chances of success. But there's more than just location that goes into fulfilling your goals.

My experience with the music industry was observing it as “feast or famine,” and after several years, I still wasn’t feasting. I had reached a level of frustration with the music industry where it became like a job that I hated. It was the artist’s dilemma: I could 1) “sell out” and make music to try and get radio play, sacrificing the integrity of my art but possibly achieve money and fame, or 2) create songs that reflected my authentic experiences and musical palate, but be unable to make a living that would support a family.

I chose the latter with a caveat. I was to make one last authentic album, then move on to find a passion I could pour my talents into. So that’s what I did. A football coach would call it “leaving everything you have on the field.” It took me four years to complete the album after spending hundreds of hours writing, recording, mixing, then rewriting, rerecording, and remixing until it came out how I envisioned. I knew this album would likely be my last.

Times were really hard, and when times are hard, so are your choices. I was fortunate enough to have a house, but I was also unemployed during the Great Recession. This continued for months, and my unemployment benefits had run out. I literally went through my couches and my house looking for enough change to put together twenty dollars so I could get some groceries. Just seeing those words on paper, I still get emotional.

I would apply for jobs every day, but it just seemed like my resume would go into a black hole, never to be seen or responded to. Or when I would hear back from companies, they would thank me for applying and say that they’ve decided to “move in another direction.” This was code for *I’m not what they’re looking for*. It got to a point where I expected the rejection. On one hand, it was a defense mechanism to keep from breaking down each time it happened. On the other hand, it tethered my expectations and pushed me to be even more focused.

I was grateful to get some help from my family, but it wasn't enough. Bills were piling up and I had no foreseeable options of ever coming out of it. To keep some sort of sanity, I would start my mornings by watching a couple of episodes of *The Office*, then submit on jobs for the next several hours. This was my routine every day. I kept waiting for good news or hope on a new job, but none came.

You might be able to guess what happened next. I wish I could say I landed a job, but that's not how my story goes. Instead, I made the tough decision to go through bankruptcy. I felt like a failure. I was embarrassed and ashamed to even tell my family and the few close friends I did share it with. I felt like I let myself down, and this was not the model I wanted to give to my son. I took a risk and moved from Oklahoma to Atlanta to pursue my dreams of music, and this was where I ended up.

I always took great pride in being able to handle my business, keep my bills paid, and find a way to somehow stay afloat. I also took that for granted. This experience showed me empathy in areas of life that I didn't know I needed. How many people were like me who, through no fault of their own, fell into difficult times? It wasn't because of a bad choice, it was circumstances beyond one's control.

I finally did land a job, but it wasn't one that I wanted. A friend and former co-worker of mine knew I needed a job and told me the company he worked for was hiring. The job would entail outbound sales calls to businesses, selling print and digital advertising. Basically, it was telemarketing, and the job was about an hour commute from my home. The base pay was low and the commission structure wasn't that great. But I had no other prospects, so I took it.

Though I really despised the work, calling 100+ businesses a day and trying to convince business owners that were complete strangers to buy advertising, I really enjoyed my co-workers. We made it as much fun as we could. Looking back, I could probably write a sitcom based on that job, and make it like a telemarketing version of *The Office*. I was working here when I put the finishing touches on my last album, *Hip-Hop for the Soul*. Shortly after I released the album, it was time for me to close this music chapter of my life and embark upon a new self-discovery journey, graduate school.

I had essentially divorced my first love of music and was searching to find that new passion. I thought music was my purpose, but now I had no clue what to do. I loved marketing and I loved business, so my goal was to obtain an Executive MBA (EMBA). I believed it would open more doors for me professionally and help get my life on track.

The beginning of grad school was a foreign land to me. As classes began, I felt somewhat inadequate and out of place, yet I knew without a doubt, it was exactly where I was supposed to be. I felt a little bit like a fraud because everyone in the class had some kind of a white-collar professional job—many were managers, and some were c-suite level. I was just a telemarketer who somehow sold my way into being accepted into the EMBA program. I was uncomfortable, but I loved it because I knew growth was about to occur within me. And did it ever!

I was assigned a personal coach named Dave, provided as part of the grad school program experience. His goal was to bring the best out of me and help discover what the heck I wanted to do with my life. I felt somewhat confused about what to do now, because I pretty much had my whole life planned out in the music industry since I was fifteen years old. I was going to go hard in my twenties and see the world with my music. In my thirties, I was going to fall

back into label ownership and sign other recording artists, and focus on my family. Then, I figured I'd retire in my forties or fifties, depending on how life and business were going.

But something happened along the way. I became a father, and priorities shift in life when you're responsible for another being. I needed to be there for my son. His future was now depending on my present and the decisions I made.

I met with Dave about once a month over the course of eighteen months. He would challenge me and ask questions that would help me discover how to use the talents I had acquired over the years in music and bring them to the business world and entrepreneurship.

I discovered that as much as I loved music, my real passion was positively impacting people and empowering them to move out of their current state of being. For example, a song could move someone to tears, motivate people to change their lives or make a decision, or simply just escape their world and have fun. These are all the things that I enjoyed about music and got to witness at different times while people experienced my music. It was exhilarating! Seeing this reaction from people, in turn, inspired and encouraged me to create even more! It was a cycle where I impacted the audience, and they impacted me.

I had to really put myself through a process to rediscover myself and uncover a new passion to channel my talent into. Grad school allowed me the time and space to focus and eliminate distractions. Though I was working and in a relationship at the time with an amazing woman who would become my wife, I didn't allow myself to get distracted and defer my goals. I can admit that my focus would not have been as sharp if I didn't have the support and encouragement of my fiancée (and future wife). Focus takes sacrifice, and we

both had to compromise for a period of time while I was going after this goal that would help enhance both of our lives. It was really difficult, but we knew there would be an end date. “It’ll be over soon,” was a phrase I’d repeat in my head to get me through.

During this time, there was also a lot of self-discovery. I took a number of assessments that helped me acquire greater emotional intelligence and become a more effective communicator. I’ll get into some of these assessments later in the book. The more assessments I took, the more I was able to learn about my personality and strengths that I knew existed, but never before recognized their impact on my potential and purpose. Self-discovery helped bring me closer to where I was supposed to be in life and to discovering my purpose.

I was no longer just a human being with skills and no self-awareness of how to best use these skills. I was beginning to evolve into an individual with force, learning how to harness my talents and live out my purpose. In a sense, it was like discovering my superpower.

It also made me realize that if I have this superpower lying dormant inside me, then what would the world be like if everyone were to discover this power within themselves that has been quietly sleeping, waiting to be awakened?

I felt like a new man who was able to see for the first time in a long time. It’s like this self-awareness was a pair of life glasses that gave me a clearer vision where my future used to look blurry. Where I once could only see blurry objects in the distance, I was now able to see details of how I wanted my future to look. I generated goals that were clear and specific.

I was going to use my education and experience to work at a marketing agency in a leadership role and affect change for its clients. I set this as a

professional goal, then accomplished it months after, so I was finally able to leave my sales job. It was amazing to proclaim in exact detail what I wanted to do, then watch it happen.

I think that most people end up where they are because they don't take the time to generate specific goals. Even if they have the time, they don't know how. This was certainly the case with me.

Once I set my professional goal of working at a marketing agency, I couldn't just stand around. I had to enact discipline, structuring my time to research different areas of digital marketing and applying for lots of jobs at marketing agencies. Since I was working during the day, I would do my job search in the evening and on weekends, while also attending grad school. I set goals for how many companies I would contact in a week, and what types of jobs I'd go after. Then, I didn't stop until I got interviews, and eventually a job.

I still have the Excel spreadsheet on my computer from this time period. Looking back, I applied to 582 jobs, which led to thirty-one initial interviews by phone or in-person, and 134 rejections. Doing the math, this means 448 companies didn't even bother to respond back. Not a peep. It was like I never even existed to these companies.

This job search took months. It sucked. I felt hopeless at times, but I didn't quit. It taught me a lot about staying the course, even if it took longer than what I thought it would take. Giving up was not an option. A snapshot of my life at this time would show a picture of financial insecurity, frustration, stress, and uncertainty.

You'll read anecdotes in this book that reveal the bridge from this time of uncertainty to a happier life and fulfilling career. In the meantime, I'll keep painting the picture so you can understand the general timeline.

Over the next several years, I worked at a few different marketing agencies in leadership roles, yet something was missing. I wanted to make a personal impact on larger groups of people. I didn't want to be in the business of making companies richer. Rather, I wanted to be in the business of enriching people. I felt a calling to help people reach their goals, which may in turn improve their companies or their personal lives and careers. I started thinking that if I can help improve the person, I can help create stronger leaders, happier homes, and more good in the world.

Eventually, I made it through the process of creating a vision for my life. This helped me clearly understand my personal and professional path. The next step was a literal leap of faith - courageously embarking upon the journey to accomplish the vision of working for myself. Today, I'm fulfilling this vision, which has resulted in peace and personal freedom for me. And though freedom still has its stressors, it also embodies power and the confidence to control one's destiny.

Conversely, I recognized that to have no freedom meant I would be controlled by something other than myself. This awareness gave me the ability to question myself in life. I would confront a situation by asking myself, "Am I in control or am I being controlled by X?" In this case, X could be a person, a situation, emotions, money, my calendar, a client, diet, etc. While factors will always exist that are beyond my control, putting myself in a position to sway the balance was clutch.

What are the things in your life that sometimes sneak in and control you?

The truth is, HOW I got here could probably be a book in itself, just as I'm sure your past can't be condensed into a few pages. However, the part that I'm sharing with you is what led to the pivotal point of my life that brought about

this book. It's a time where certainty became uncertain, hopefulness teetered on hopelessness, and a path that was once clear became unrecognizable. This is where I was in my life when the dream I followed became a life I despised. It was when I realized that my passion was not purpose, and something had to change.

I had reached the edge of something. But what, I had no idea. Have you ever been there?

Though I'm still evolving and my story continues to be written (as is yours), understanding one's journey is a critical step in personal growth. Honoring your past, with ALL of its highs and lows, positions you to achieve the maximum level of personal development. When you really take the time to look back through that corridor of how you got here and sit in it for a little bit, it points to WHY you're here.

Through the work that I've done on myself, using all of the tactics I share in this book, I've discovered WHY I'm here. My purpose is to motivate people to live life on the edge (more on that in a bit), tap into their gifts, and pursue a life where purpose can be lived out. Simply put, my purpose is to be a messenger of hope.

As you read through these pages, you will be challenged in ways you don't anticipate. You will reflect on experiences in your life that may trigger an array of feelings. This voyage will prepare and train you to maneuver in the world once you arrive at the destination of your evolved self.

It takes courage. It takes humility. It takes perseverance. It takes balance. Shift happens, but you're still in control. You've got this!



CHAPTER 1: REFLECTION AND JOURNAL PROMPTS

- **How You Got Here:** Take a moment to reread and reflect on life factors listed in the *"How Did I Get Here"* section of this chapter. Some of these factors may bring thoughts of sadness, while others bring joy.
 - What items on the list have you experienced?
 - How have they impacted you?
 - What do you feel when you reflect on them?
 - Is there anything missing from this list that impacted your life? If so, what? And how did it affect you?
- What are the things in your life that sometimes sneak in and control you?

ABOUT JEREMY

Jeremy Haselwood is a marketing and business expert with over 25 years of experience working with commercial brands like Coca-Cola and nonprofits like The Salvation Army. He holds a bachelor's degree in Marketing from Georgia State University and a MBA from Kennesaw State University. He has contributed articles to Forbes.com about personal development and digital fundraising.

Jeremy also runs Ampla Marketing & Business Consulting, based in Atlanta. His company provides digital marketing services along with training and leadership workshops.

In addition, Jeremy combined his years of research and life experience, and created a personal development program called "*E.D.G.E. Academy*," which this book is based upon. In this training, he teaches how to maximize your talent and purpose to achieve a more fulfilled life. He lives in Atlanta, Georgia with his wonderful wife, and they have three adult children.

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