

THE LION'S TRIBE

NEWSLETTER

MERCY, MERCY ME

For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy – Romans 9:15-16

Dear...

Welcome to the month of March. As we proceed swiftly into the year, hitting some of the goals we have set for ourselves, falling short of others, and coming up against the inevitable obstacles of life, one thing is constant for all of us - we are out here doing our best, trying to try as they say, and trusting God for favorable outcomes. I have not known a generation of people as diligent and as determined as we are.

The world as we know it is set up to reward effort. We are governed by systems, laws, rules, and principles of life that affirm us when we comply and penalize us when we don't. Our progress is often a direct result of our ability to navigate these structures. But the truth is, no matter how sufficiently qualified, prepared, resourced, or gifted we are, we sometimes fall short. And it is here, in the gap between our limitations and our aspirations, that God's mercy intervenes. This is our month of Uncommon Mercy, an urgent reminder as we strive for all that we strive for, that our shortcomings do not define our destiny, God's mercy does.

It is comforting to be reminded that God's mercy is not limited by our human condition. That it covers us, lifts us, and propels us forward, even when we are least deserving and feel most unworthy.

A story is told about Fiorello LaGuardia, who, when he was mayor of New York City during the worst days of the Great Depression and all of WWII, was called by adoring New Yorkers 'the Little Flower' because he was only five foot four and always wore a carnation in his lapel. One bitterly cold night in January of 1935, the mayor turned up at a night court that served the poorest ward of the city. LaGuardia dismissed the judge for the evening and took over the bench himself.

Within a few minutes, a tattered old woman was brought before him, charged with stealing a loaf of bread. She told LaGuardia that her daughter's husband had deserted her, her daughter was sick, and her two grandchildren were starving. But the shopkeeper, from whom the bread was stolen, refused to drop the charges.

"It's a real bad neighborhood, your Honor." the man told the mayor. "She's got to be punished to teach other people around here a lesson." LaGuardia sighed. He turned to the woman and said "I've got to punish you. The law makes no exceptions--ten dollars or ten days in jail." But even as he pronounced the sentence, the mayor was already reaching into his pocket. He extracted a bill and tossed it into his famous sombrero saying: "Here is the ten dollars fine which I now remit; and furthermore, I am going to fine everyone in this courtroom fifty cents for living in a town where a person has to steal bread so that her grandchildren can eat. Mr. Baliff, collect the fines and give them to the defendant."



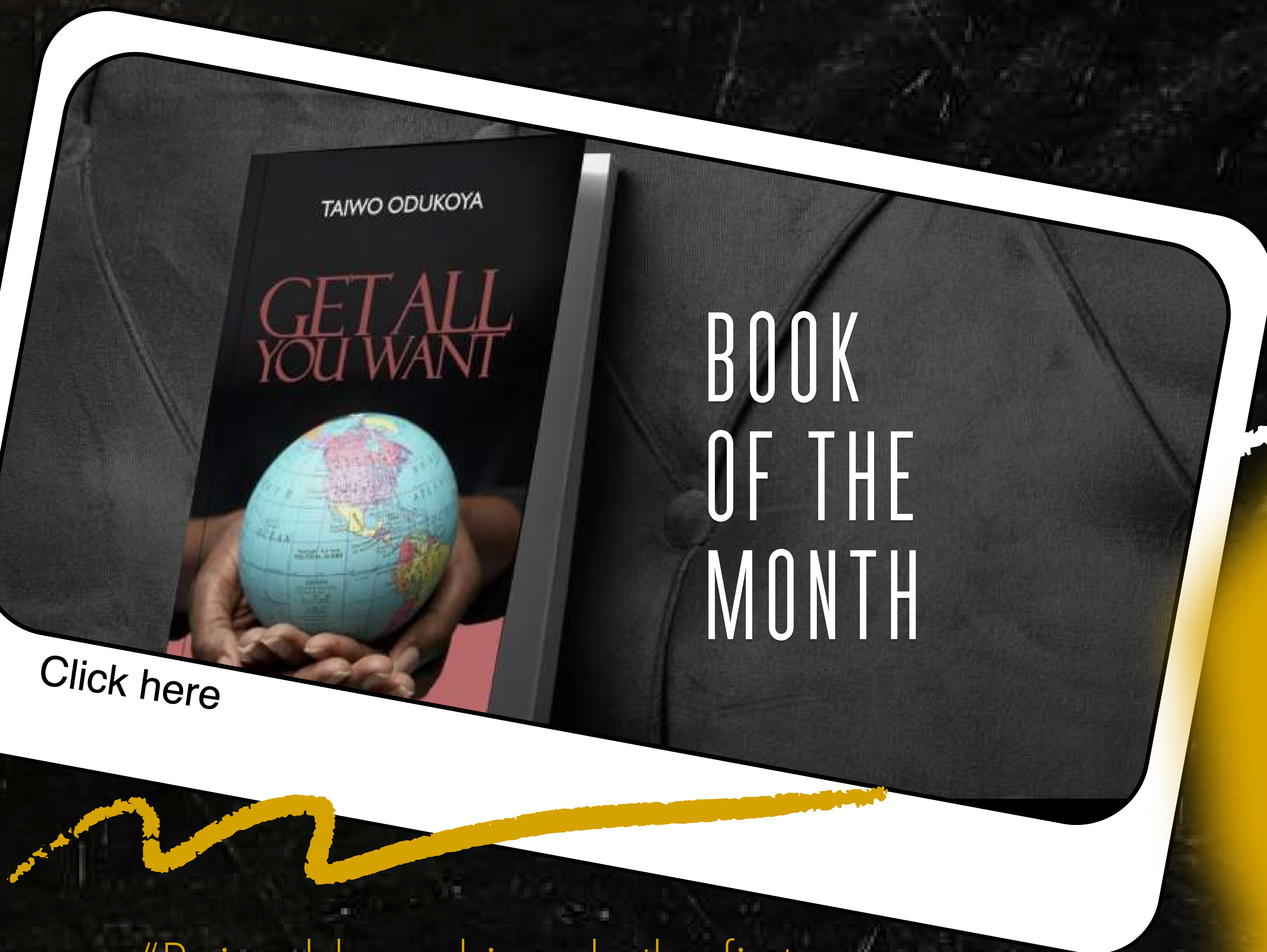
For some of us there are moral failings that get in our way, gaps in our character that set off a chain of consequences seen and unseen. But God's mercy does not shy away from our imperfections. It meets us right there and offers us not just forgiveness but transformation. And even in those moments when we seem to have come to the limits of our efforts, when our careers, businesses, or relationships seem stagnated because our mental, social, and emotional resources can no longer carry us forward, God's mercy steps in to remind us that our potential is not limited by our current circumstances or past mistakes.

It is important as we think on God's mercy throughout this month, embracing its boundless generosity in Christ, that we remember to extend mercy to ourselves as well. We are often our own toughest critics. No one knows our shortcomings as intimately as we do. And while it is important for us to be accountable and to strive to improve on every level, we must learn to do this in an environment of radical personal grace. Be gentle with yourself. Do not allow undue self-judgement weigh you down and stop you from moving toward your dreams with boldness. God's mercy allows us space to grow, learn, and thrive beyond our mistakes.

So, keep yourself unfettered by the anxieties of what you have or do not have, of what you've done or haven't done, and embrace the mercy of God. As Paul urges us, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Let this confidence in God's mercy lead you throughout this year, opening doors you thought were closed, and healing those parts of your life you thought were irreparable. I am also confident that no matter how far you think you have fallen or how unqualified you think you are for where you are trying to go, God's mercy will avail for you. I look forward to hearing your testimonies.

This month we are reading *Get All You Want* by Pastor Taiwo Odukoya, a profound meditation on accessing the life of abundance God has promised us by positioning ourselves as conduits of His blessings. Get a copy, if you don't have one, read along with us, and share your thoughts with us. I'll be happy to read your takes on what the book says, including personal experiences on applying its principles on Pstjimmysocials@tfolc.org. I'll be selecting the reviews and comments that resonates the most and giving a prize.

Talk soon.



"Being blessed is only the first step towards fulfilling God's purpose for our lives; there is always the ultimate for anyone who is located in God's will to attain – becoming a blessing.

What many do not know however is that striving to be a blessing, whatever one's level in life, will always open the floodgates of God's blessing over one's life. It is a divine principle: the more you give, the more you get. The reverse also holds true: the less you give, the less you get."

