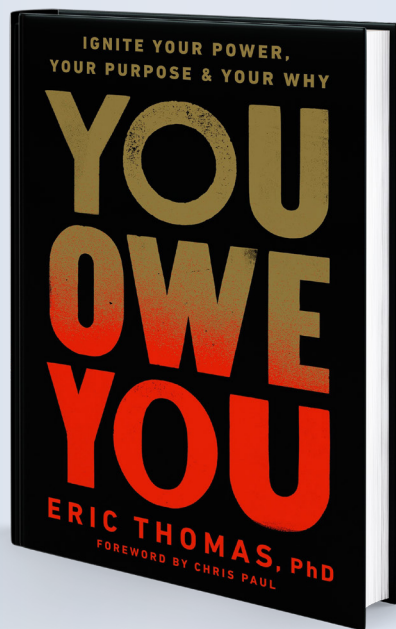


BOOK SNAPS™

Zooming In On Your Next Read



You Owe You

Ignite Your Power, Your Purpose, and Your Why

By Eric Thomas

Eric Thomas, part coach, part preacher, all grind, is one of the world's best known motivational speakers. In addition to reaching millions on YouTube, he works with many top businesses, the NFL, the NBA, the NCAA, and dozens of individual teams and players, as well as schools and prisons across the country. He has a PhD in education from Michigan State.

Become the CEO of Your Life

Eric Thomas worked his way from being a high school drop out with no clear path for what he wanted to do with his life to being a renowned, sought-after motivational speaker. He has spent his life preaching in his church and speaking to people all over the country. He first gained far-reaching notoriety when he had a Youtube video go viral. In this video he tells the story about a man who goes to visit a guru. The man asks the guru what the secret to success is. The guru tells the man to go to the beach the next morning. The man does just that, but when he arrives, the guru pushes the man's head under water and holds it there while the man flails about frantically. Eventually, the guru releases the pressure on the man's head, and the man comes up gasping for breath. The guru then asks the man what he wanted to do most of all when he was under water. The man replied that what he wanted most was to breathe. The guru says that the man will be successful when he wants something as much as he wanted to breathe.

This video was on the web for quite awhile before it gained fame. It was eventually included in motivational videos and set to music by others. Thomas shares this story as well as other secrets to success in his book, *You Owe You: Ignite Your Power, Your Purpose, and Your Way*.

Thomas makes his points and advances his tactics to success by telling his own life story and how he has used these principles successfully in his own life and in developing his own business as a motivational speaker. He starts out with the message "that you are the only one who can change your life. You are the person who determines your value. You are the only person who can truly choose your purpose and find your path to greatness." He explains that he spent time feeling like a victim. He turned his back on his family and made himself homeless. At one point, he did not even have a GED to fall back on. Eventually, he was able to own his power and propel him to where he is now as a successful speaker and Ph.D.

Thomas goes on to explain his childhood to illustrate just how important it is to take ownership of one's own life. His grandparents lived during the Jim Crow era where they were not even allowed to share many spaces with white people. His mother came from a place that was so impoverished that Thomas says that it "was basically slavery in all but name" as they had to

give up a good share of their crops to the landowner just in order to survive. His mother was very smart but got kicked out of high school for becoming pregnant although she was still able to earn her diploma. Thomas shares all of this to show how he came from a place of instability. Nothing was ever expected of his mother. All they could focus on was survival. His mother met Jesse Thomas and the two married.

One day, Eric Thomas was going through some paperwork and found his birth certificate. Through it, he realized that Jesse Thomas was not his biological father. This led the young Thomas to believe that he could not trust anybody. It made him feel like a victim, and he acted in such a manner. Despite talking to counselors and therapists, Thomas was not able to overcome his anger in the short term. Eventually one day Thomas broke, and he left home, staying in empty warehouses, homeless by choice.

The lesson Thomas derives from this story is that all people will find themselves in situations that are unfair or unsettling in life, and all people will have their feelings hurt. He insists throughout the book, however, that “feelings are not facts.” He wants people to know that they can have their feelings, but they need to avoid being victims. Getting rid of feelings of victimhood allows people to take ownership and responsibility and to claim control over their own lives.

Thomas then goes on to dispel the myth that anybody is ever really alone in life. He is adamant that the world is not conspiring against anybody. To explain this, he talks about how he started to spend time at a church run by Pastor P.C. Willis. The pastor’s family made Thomas feel like he had a chosen family, and this along with his freedom made him feel powerful. Thomas says that “where your focus goes your energy flows.” As such, he tells his reader not to focus on who failed them or who was not there because this inhibits a person’s ability to see the people who were there for them and who did not fail them.

Once a person has overcome victimhood, it is important for them to find their superpower. Thomas tells a story of going to camp when he was a child. He did not want to go away for the week, but his mother was sure it would be good for him, so she insisted. When he came back, the boy was ecstatic, and the people at camp loved him. His mother was told that he was one of the most connected kids they had ever had at the camp, and that he was the only one who could get the white kids and the Black kids to play together.

Thomas uses this story to show that he was always the hip-hop preacher. It is important, he maintains, to be able to harness your superpower to one’s advantage. He maintains that sometimes we do not even realize when we are gifted in an area because it comes so naturally to us. We have to be able to tune out the outside world in order to tune into our super power. The world can criticize superpower and misunderstand people. Thomas tells of a time when he gave up the violin because his friends did not approve in order to illustrate this. It is important to tap into oneself in order to tune out these opinions and distractions of the world.

Thomas then goes on to say that “Your why is what takes your superpower to the next level.” A person’s why is their reason for doing something. Thomas’s why is his wife, Dede. One day about a year into their dating relationship, Dede told Thomas that she had gotten into college and was going to leave for Alabama. Thomas decided to join her, and with the help of his pastor, he was able to earn his GED and gain admission to Oakwood College with Dede. Then and to this day, Dede is his why.

While at Oakwood, Thomas took advantage of multiple opportunities. He started to teach GED classes as well as to become a substitute teacher. He also started traveling with lobbyists and was doing speeches introducing the mayor. He was doing well in these capacities despite not doing well academically. Eventually Dede became pregnant with their oldest child, and Thomas was able to discern the reason behind his reason. In order to discern a person’s reason behind their reason, Thomas suggests asking why you want what it is you want. Once Thomas understood his reason behind his reason, he stopped playing in life and became serious.

He then goes on to discuss walking within your purpose. Oakwood College is an HBCU or historically Black college or university. Its campus is purposefully separated from the rest of the nearby community to keep the students safe from racially motivated violence. Thomas and his friends decided they wanted to set up a ministry they called Bell Tower. They had no assets, and yet they were able to stand by the bell tower in the middle of campus, and Thomas would preach to people as they walked by. Thomas does not believe in preaching to people who do not want to hear. At Oakwood, people could stop and listen or they could walk by. Many stopped to listen. Thomas realized that he was a powerful speaker, and he used this knowledge to walk in his purpose. He goes on to explain that purpose needs both structure and standards. These two are necessary if a person is to use their superpower and fulfill their why.

Also important, according to Thomas, is to put oneself in miracle territory. He says that “Miracles happen when you put yourself in the way of them.” He tells multiple stories of times when he took one opportunity and another greater one developed from it. One such time was when he was offered a position at Michigan State University. Neither his father nor his wife believed he should take it. They ended up deciding to go to MSU anyway, and the time there was tough at first. It ended up, however, being the jumping board for what he would later achieve in life. He ended up earning both a masters and PhD at the university.

Receiving miracles, he says, is not a passive act. He explains how people can become quite aggressive playing the lottery or gambling while not paying nearly attention to the areas in their life where they could actually succeed. He knew he wanted to be a speaker, and as such, he started trying to put himself in the venues where the people he wanted to emulate were. At first, this was not as a speaker, but he would work in whatever capacity they needed in order to get himself into miracle territory.

Thomas extols the importance of education. He explains that where he grew up, success meant finding a blue color job at a



Expression must go along with education and knowledge in order to truly thrive.”

factory. At MSU, he worked as an academic advisor. He saw many young Black students who faltered because the university, and academia in general, was not prepared to meet their needs or focus on their success. He realized that with many of these young Black students, the university could come up with a predictive GPA before they even started, and this often showed that they were unlikely to ever graduate. He was able to come up with a counseling program at MSU that could help these students succeed. Knowledge is not all about formal education, however. He encourages people to look into any avenue of learning or information available to them about topics they are passionate about because “When you embrace education, you begin to see opportunities that were seemingly not there before.” Knowledge, he says, can help give people control over their lives in spite of changing circumstances.

Expression, he says, must go along with education and knowledge in order to truly thrive. Thomas began to understand the importance of language and communication as he saw great famous speakers who came before him like Martin Luther King Jr. He then goes on to discuss code-switching which refers to the way in which people use different language and communication styles depending on their environment. He says that this is something everybody does everyday. He claims that the best people learn the languages of the environments they are in and incorporate them into their own communication. This allows them to thrive in their environment while staying true to who they are.

Thomas works with athletes, and he explains that sometimes players who are traded often excel. This is because they want to prove their worth. This adversity actually helps them to grow. He then goes on to discuss a church that he was the pastor of. The people there wanted him to change his style, but his church was successful, and he wanted to remain true to his principles. Ultimately, they had him removed from the church. This led Thomas and his wife to create their own ministry. He uses both of these examples to prove that sometimes we have to give up what is good to get something that is great.

In regards to business and seeing oneself as a business, he says that it is important to not only put oneself with people in the business but to also know one's own worth. To exemplify this, he talks about how his rates for speaking increased once someone told him that he could charge much more for his services. He simply had to believe in himself and his worth. He then goes on to say that it is important to keep perspective once dreams start coming true. He writes of professional athletes who feel lost once they make it to the NBA. They had been fighting for this for as long as they could remember and they sacrificed so much for it, and when they got there, they did not know what to do with themselves.

Thomas tells the story of a time when he turned down the best paying gig he had been offered because the company insisted he wear a suit and a tie. Thomas said that this was not who he was, and despite his partner's disagreement, they turned it down. Eventually he was offered a gig for the same amount of money where the company requested that he arrive in his regular clothes as that is what people know him for thanks to his Youtube videos.

In this book, Thomas tells the story of his success in an effort to help his readers find and develop their own success. Through his anecdotes, he makes his lessons clear and shows how they are applicable to life. Each chapter ends with both some questions for thought and a challenge to help the reader successfully put these principles into work. Always, he maintains, a person must be true to themselves and look inside to truly succeed.

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