

Hortense **KARAMBIRI**

Serving
after God's
own heart

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Unless otherwise stated, the biblical passages quoted in this book are taken from the American King James Version (AKJV) of the Bible, 1999.

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Dedication

To the Holy Spirit, **the excellent Parakletos**, who has inspired the writing of this book by revolutionizing my mindset and my life in relation to the service of God.

To **Dr Mamadou Philippe KARAMBIRI** who is not only my excellent husband and spiritual father, but also my role model in life and ministry in Christ.

To **all my fellow workers** in the Lord's work.

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I would also like to express my deep gratitude to Pastor Amos KABORÉ for translating this book into English.

May the Lord remember your service and reward you beyond all hope, in the name of Christ Jesus!

Foreword

God has granted me the grace to occupy high positions in the public administration of my country. I certainly carried out my responsibilities with conscience and excellence, but I knew deep down that I was out of place. I was rather interested in spiritual things. Those who knew how to observe could perceive the malaise in me, because daily life weighed on me.

In the meantime, I went to Mali as an international civil servant. My pastor at the time, Pastor Mamadou Karambiri, prayed for my stay and my professional career before I left. On that occasion, he told me that in addition to my work, I was going as a missionary to Mali. So, he gave me instructions about working with a certain church in that country.

Again, by his grace, God allowed me to set up a prayer group that met in my house, and which quickly became a church. I had thus become a pastor without being prepared for it, but everything was working well. Serving God gave me great joy, and it was clear to those around me that I was thriving in it. On the other hand, when I got to my workplace, I no longer had the same enthusiasm, and that was also noticeable.

A few years later, when I was finishing my mission in the organization that employed me and had to return to Burkina Faso, the church under whose tutelage I had served the Lord issued me with a certificate recognizing me as a missionary in Mali, and I gave thanks to God for that.

As soon as I returned home, I went to present the certificate of recognition to my pastor, and I explained to him that I was convinced that I should stop my work and be in full-time ministry.

He looked at me, then remained silent for about five minutes. I had the impression that he was looking for an answer. Finally, he said to me: "It is not time yet. You must continue to work and serve the Lord at the same time". This answer made me sad because it was not at all what I was expecting. I had reached my limits in the dual vocation.

It was in this context that I took up my post in Niger as Director of a large Christian NGO. In this NGO, the position of Director meant that I had to take on not only my administrative responsibilities, but also those of a pastor for the

whole team, which numbered over 400 people. So, I was caught between two responsibilities, with obviously the same dichotomies and frustrations as in Mali. After a while, I felt that after this job, I had to stop everything and devote myself entirely to God's work. I was looking for ways to position myself in the corridor of my destiny that I had discovered. However, there was another equation that I had to resolve: how could I put an end to my professional activities, especially at a time when I had just been appointed to a regional position within the same NGO?

I struggled with God for eight months, but in the end, I had to agree to stop everything. Immediately after this decision, I was positioned as senior pastor of the Church of the Nations – Tabernacle Bethel Israel, the headquarters church of the International Center for Evangelism. And from that moment on, I began to blossom like a flower in spring. This change was so tangible that a colleague who was passing through Burkina said to me: “Now you're in your element”. He had actually watched me going into prisons and hospitals to bring the gospel, and speak in church. He was right: I really enjoy serving in the corridor of my destiny, and have been doing so since December 2010.

I have served God to the best of my ability, relying on his grace. I have seen lives being transformed by the teachings and advice I give, and sometimes miraculous healings and many other results for which I am grateful to the Lord.

Nevertheless, in the first quarter of 2020, I fell ill and was hospitalized for eleven days. Very quickly, in my mind, I transformed this hospitalization into a spiritual retreat, and I meditated a lot on the Word of God. In the meantime, I was faced with a serious concern. It was not about my health, because I had been assured that I would get better, but about the quality of the service I had rendered to God. Indeed, the question that kept coming back to me was: “If everything stopped now, what would I have to say to the Lord? If my life ended in this hospital, what kind of account would I give to God of the service I had conducted in his name?”

This led me to reconsider my paths in ministry and thoroughly scrutinize myself.

One of the risks for any servant of God is undoubtedly getting used to sacred matters. If you are wondering what is wrong with that, then know that habit is the mother of levity and the lack of fear of God in the priesthood to which we are called.

The fear of God in the way we serve God is precisely what I want to address in this book, using my experience with the Lord while I was in hospital. Serving

the Lord and being a channel through which his power and glory are manifested are not enough. We must give God a service that is entirely acceptable to him, a quality service based on a certain number of attitudes and behaviors towards the Lord.

I pray that this book will change your mindset and your approach to serving God, so that you may serve him after his own heart.

Dr Hortense KARAMBIRI

PART ONE:
SERVING GOD WITH WHAT I AM
AND WHAT I CAN