

10

BUILDING A BUSINESS

ESSENTIAL

THAT OUTLAST ANY CRISIS

KEYS

WRITTEN BY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to dedicate this book to my wife, Rochelle Wilson. She has pushed me and supported me through this time. I want to thank God for my mother who instilled in me the principles of saving money, and taking care of my family. I want to thank God for my kids. They are the real passion behind my grind. I work hard so they can have a jumpstart in life. Finally, I want to thank God for you because I wrote this with you in mind.

Let's Go!

Ishmael



OPENING

OPENING

I never thought in a million years that I would be writing a book, while in a global crisis known to all as the Covid-19 pandemic. This pandemic has impacted millions of people. There has not be an individual or entity that has been able to escape the horrific moments created by this pandemic. As an entrepreneur, I have taken a blow that I could have never prepared for. There was not a textbook, college course, webinar, business influencer or coaching session that could have prepared me for this.

I have been an entrepreneur for over 17 years and a full-time entrepreneur for 10 years. Trust me, I have had my ups, and downs. What I have experienced during this pandemic has been gut-wrenching, but I am hopeful. I can't tell you the amount of sleep I have lost stressing over how I would meet payroll, because my desire during this pandemic was to maintain my team. Furloughing my staff was not an option that I was willing to exercise.

During this process, I have not been concerned about myself, but I have been concerned about my staff, and their families, along with the other small business owners. Although, our reality is that this is not just a small business issue, this is a "business" issue. Fortune 500 companies have been impacted as well. They have had to furlough staff, and some even close their doors. All of this continues to cause me to be deeply concerned and consumed with the thought of the viability of the small business.

For those who don't know, I am the Owner and Operator of Fresh Dry Cleaners, a eco-friendly dry cleaning chain with 4 locations throughout the Washington, DC Metropolitan area and expanding. For me, this pandemic not only impacted me as a small business owner, it impacted the families that I am responsible for by way of my staff. Prior to Covid-19, I had the overwhelming responsibility of managing 5 physical locations to include payroll, utilities, the day to day operations, and rent.

These expenses do not include the expenses associated with maintaining our plant to include the equipment on a weekly basis. As I was trying to navigate through the clouds of disbelief, I was also one of the million plus business owners who were trying to find their way with little or no help. While I am a man of faith, and I know deep down inside that things will get better, I also had days where I felt like I was sinking. The thought of what I had built over a decade now crumbling in 10 minutes or 10 days was frightening for me. I began to see a light at the end of the tunnel once I gathered myself, and gave my cares to God.

I want to encourage every business owner reading this. It is ok for you to have a moment. But, a moment is all you get. After you release the negative emotion of what you are currently feeling, you can embrace the reality of God's promise to you. Your hard-work didn't lead you to this end. Your hard-work will pay off.

Pandemics, Shutdowns, and World Crisis' doesn't equal the payoff that was intended for your business. Maximum success is your pay. That's what I had to tell myself. I remember one of the most frightening days I had during this pandemic so vivid. The day the Governor of the State of Maryland announced that all non-essential businesses had to close by 5pm indefinitely. The panic that I felt was unreal. It felt like everything came tumbling down on me like a ton of bricks.

My staff...their families...rent for all sites, and many other thoughts that cover my scope of responsibility flooded me. While I watched small, medium and large businesses lay people off, I didn't want that to be the narrative for Fresh. If I could just get an extra week or even a extra day to figure it out, that would help. Then it hit me all of sudden, I wonder if I am considered "essential." I thought to myself, my business could help flatten the curve. We have the ability to clean and kill 99.9% of viruses & bacteria. I looked at the list that the local news outlets posted and I didn't see dry cleaners.

Suddenly, one of my employees sent me a text, and in the text was the official governmental listing for essential business. There it was on page 47, listed under special services. I saw the words "dry cleaners." The excitement that I felt knowing that we were essential was awesome. Although, it was just the beginning of a global pandemic, I was hopeful that being an essential business gave me the opportunity I needed. The opportunity I needed that would allow me to keep my staff on payroll as long as I could. This was my number one goal. I had families counting on me and I didn't want to let them down.

After I realized the blessing that I was given by making the essential list, I remember this is what I wanted in business. We will talk about that soon. Once we confirmed our essential status, we notified our customers and informed them that we would not be closing. Of course, with the change in the economy we had to make some adjustments to our times and days open. Since we had this essential status, we remained open during this world crisis.

In addition to those changes, there was a list of adjustments that needed to be made based on the Governor of Maryland and the Mayor of DC regulations for essential businesses. I want to pause right here, and acknowledge Mayor Muriel Bowser for her swift and phenomenal work in DC. I also want to thank Governor Hogan for his stellar leadership for the State of Maryland.

As an entrepreneur, it is important that you select businesses that you love and are passionate about. I believe that passion pays. But, if your passion does not fall under the category of an essential business then I would suggest, saving 4-6 months of financial resources so you can navigate thru a global pandemic. Pick a business that has the ability to be quickly versatile. It is versatility that will give you the longevity that is needed. So let's get into what I call 10 Essential Keys to Building a Business that Outlast an Crisis.



KEY # 1

INQUIRE

KEY #1 - INQUIRE

I remember in 2010, I started asking God to give me a recession proof business. As a man of faith, it is important for me that I seek God in all that I do. I was working as a paralegal to the General Counsel at a government agency at the time, and I knew that after 18 years I was no longer happy with the career that I had built. I was an entrepreneur at heart. I had been involved in several multi level marketing companies. I had success in most of them, but it didn't seem like the right fit. I knew as an entrepreneur that I needed longevity and growth. I knew that was only going to come with having my own business that would become my new career. But not just any business, a recession proof business. I knew I needed to build something that would last the test of time.

After inquiring of God, I got up off my knees in prayer and I heard God speak to my heart and he said, "dry cleaners." My first thought was I don't know anything about a dry cleaners. During this time, I had other businesses which I still have that were making money, but not enough to switch careers.

KEY #1 - INQUIRE

That is one of the points I want to make to you in this book. You must make sure that when you ask God to give you a business, being as specific as possible with Him is vitally important. If you are not specific He will give you business ideas, but will your business last during pandemics, world crisis and national disasters. If you don't get anything else from this key this is very important:

WHAT YOU BUILD AND HOW YOU BUILD IT
DEPENDS SOLELY ON WHAT REQUEST
YOU'VE MADE OF GOD.

He will honor your request, so being as detailed and specific as possible is important.

To inquire means to ask of someone. Another definition is to investigate. Whenever someone is investigating something or someone they are gathering pertinent information so that they can make a conclusion that is favorable to their case.

KEY #1 - INQUIRE

Your inquiry has to be so detailed that you walk away from that conversation with God confident that you've dumped every desire for the business into your prayer. I am confident that because this worked for me it will surely work for you. Start journaling your thoughts now, and take that into prayer. Watch our God deliver into your hands what you have inquired of Him.



KEY # 2

INTERCESSION

KEY #2 - INTERCESSION

Intercession is DIFFERENT from inquiring. As I stated in key 1, to inquire means I am asking a question. After the question has been asked, now I intercede for it. Intercession is the action of praying on behalf of another person or something. After God told me to pursue the dry cleaning industry I immediately began to pray about that industry, and the role I would play in adding to that industry. It was important for me to be clear about how I would fit in the bigger picture.

I know that whenever I commit to something, I go into it and give 120% of my effort and resources. So with that said, praying about my contribution to the industry was just as important to me as His desire for me to commit to it.

I want every entrepreneur, and potential entrepreneur to understand exactly what I am saying. Prayer is an essential element for every entrepreneur. Prayer gives you an advantage that those who don't pray, don't possess.

KEY #2 - INTERCESSION

Prayer gives you inside information on anything that you are involved in. Intercession for your business gives you the assurance that you will be guided thru properly, and have a foundation that cannot be shaken. After God has spoken, don't stop your inquiry until He has guided you through the process before execution. I am reminded of a scripture that says, the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. God only orders the steps of those who are in communication with Him.

- How often do you communicate with God?

This book is not about prayer, but I cannot skip this key in order to appease a larger audience. Having an audience with people is not more important than having an audience with God. When you have God's attention it doesn't get any greater than that.

- Ask yourself, what is He saying to you?
- What are you saying to Him?

KEY #2 - INTERCESSION

This two way partnership will be the greatest asset to your recession proof business. It will be the ONLY thing that will matter when you are faced with a world crisis, and need to navigate thru that at a moments notice. I know for me when this Covid-19 pandemic hit, I was not prepared for it. I was prepared in terms of my infrastructure, but I was not prepared to transition into what we now face without some kind of notice.

Unfortunately, for many of us we were given so many mixed messages from the government that we thought initially we would be fine, but daily it was changing.

Regardless of the ever changing information that was coming thru several media outlets, I knew for sure that this did not catch God off-guard. So, because I could rest in that, I knew that I could get thru this because my intercession was in place. I want you to take a moment, pray for your business, and get some guidance on your next steps.

Intercession will pull you through any crisis that you are facing in your business and life.



KEY # 3

INSIGHT

KEY #3 - INSIGHT

KEY #2 is the perfect segway to Key #3 (Insight). During my time of prayer about my specific direction, God gave me the necessary insight I needed. Remember, I told you that God will be your partner. He doesn't just partner with you in prayer, but He gives you direction that no mentor, and textbook could ever give you. For me, the insight I was given was invaluable. The wisdom the Lord shared with me was so invaluable that I still depend on some, if not all of it 10 years later.

YOU MUST BECOME AN INSIGHTFUL BUSINESS OWNER.

Your ability to be insightful as an entrepreneur will give you an advantage especially during times of crisis. When you think about the effects that COVID-19 has had on the world, and how we all have been impacted by this one pandemic, boy do we need a little insight. Insight is God's way of partnering with you on the success of your business or idea. It helps us navigate, and understand what we need to do. Insight will give you information that most entrepreneurs may not be privvy too.

KEY #3 - INSIGHT

I remember back in December 2019, I did a live on one of the social media platforms warning people about a recession that was coming to America. I warned them because I knew God wanted to get His people in position to prosper during the recession. That is the kind of information that I would not have had if I was not in constant intercession for my business. I want you to think about one of the biggest obstacles that you are facing in business. Think about how that obstacle has stopped you, and even blocked you from achieving some of the biggest breakthroughs that you needed in order to move that business forward.

Now I want you to imagine how you could've climbed over those mountains if you would have simply gotten insight thru the intercession phase of your business foundation. Think about how you would've been able to outsmart the enemy that is assigned to your business, and wants it to fail.

KEY #3 - INSIGHT

In a nutshell, what I am trying to convey to you is that you win!

YOU WIN!

You win because you have the advantage. You have heaven backing what God has already deposited in you. Think about this, How can you not win when God is on your side?

Romans 8:31 NIV, *"What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"*

Take a quick pause, and get some insight for your business. You will win. Now find out how.



KEY # 4

INFORMATION

KEY #4 - INFORMATION

After I Inquired, Interceded and obtained Insight, I began to gather information. The information gathering process is a critical step in the process of solidifying yourself in any industry. This process included a significant amount of research. Whenever I am asked how did I break into an industry that is dominated by another race, and culture I always say, "Research, Research, Research."

This research was critical because I had no experience in the dry cleaning industry. Not only did I not have experience, but this industry only has about 5% of minority owners and today I am one of the top minority owned multi-site owners in the US. I didn't have a father or mother who I could glean from in this industry. No one was leaving me a building already set, and ready for me to take over.

KEY #4 - INFORMATION

I had to do my own research so that I could dominate in an industry where I am already the minority and not the majority. I spent many days studying the industry, and my competition. I divided the greats in the industry from the not so greats. I took this approach because any great business is a business who cares about their customer, and the quality of the product or services they provide. Offering a quality product must be your number 1 goal, but in order to do that you must first be a student of your industry.

INFORMATION IS KING.

I went on to become a certified dry cleaning owner from The Dry Cleaning and Laundry Institute having successfully passed the Introduction to Dry Cleaning and the Advance Dry Cleaning Course.

KEY #4 - INFORMATION

I want you to take a look at the industry you are in and ask yourself a few questions:

- What are the latest trends?
- What do you not know that you should know?
- What can you add to your business that would separate you from your competitors?

Remember, it does not matter how many people are in the same space as you. What matters most is what is your unique quality that your competitor does not possess? Gather your information, so that you can grow your business into a business that you can no longer keep to yourself. Grow and Scale is the name of the game.

You can't get to this level without being **WELL INFORMED.**



KEY # 5

INTERACT

KEY #5 - INTERACT

One of the benefits of research is the opportunities for interaction, and engagement that are presented. The best discovery I made was when I identified a potential mentor in the industry that I was embarking upon. I want to remind you that I knew nothing about this industry when God spoke to me about it. So, I knew that mentorship was going to be an important factor if I wanted success here. Selecting a mentor in the industry you are in or would like to pursue is critically important if you want to give your business the steam it needs to move at a steady pace. As I vetted my competition, I found a successful minority owned dry cleaner owner with multiple locations.

Like I told you in Key #1, I don't do anything without giving it 120%. I knew that I would want multiple locations one day. So with that said, if I was going to make an impact in the dry cleaning industry, then I would need to find out how to navigate thru the industry as a minority.

KEY #5 - INTERACT

Some of you may be saying why does he keep stressing the minority point? This is a major point because anytime you are going into an industry that is dominated by one ethnicity then you have to find a mentor that you can identify with, and they can identify with you. My mentor had 3 locations, and he knew how to expand even though he was in the 5% of minority ownership amongst dryclean owners. When I connected with this owner and we established a mentor/mentee relationship, it was such a great fit for me that I ended up interning at one his locations.

Why was this internship important? It was important because it gave me an opportunity to engage in my new profession before I had officially started. I worked there free of charge, and learned the systems, structures and mechanics around how to properly run an effective dry cleaning business. It is added value to get engrossed in your industry long before you start. It will give you the type of insight that will somewhat ease your transition into your business endeavor.

KEY #5 - INTERACT

I started my mentorship there, and once I opened I kept an ongoing relationship with him to ease the growing pains that come with building a business that you don't have longevity in.

After I had become successful in the singular location, I knew that I wanted to start entertaining contract work. Before I did that, I found a mentor that had multiple contracts around the city. This time not only did I intern there, but I brought my entire staff of 3 to intern there 2 hours a week for 4 weeks. We learned how to tag and organize multiple contracts, and stores in one location.

Again, this was another game changer for me because when we got our first contract we already knew how to ensure that the contract clothes would not be confused with the store clothes. I believe that you should have a mentor on every level of business. You should have one at the starting line, mid point and finish line. This ensures success on every level. Start interacting with people in your industry.



KEY # 6

INTEGRATE

KEY #6 - INTEGRATE

This key was so very crucial for me because it essentially became my jumpstart. Remember, I discussed in Key #5 the importance of mentorship. Because I was properly mentored, I was able to merge what I had learned about the dry cleaning industry with what I had learned by way of on the job training. This was a game changer because not only did it make me feel more prepared, but it built my confidence. Confidence that I would not have had if I had not been mentored.

Being afforded the opportunity to have on the job training gave me the start-up playbook that was used in opening my first location. I learned the technical aspects to properly run a dry cleaning business even if I had to do it alone. The aforementioned combined with my research, gave me an advantage. Never did I think that I would have to work the business alone because I knew that starting it was my purpose. So I was assured that I would be equipped with the personnel to help execute the vision that God had given me.

KEY #6 - INTEGRATE

Now, those beginning stages of everything I learned are being put into play during this pandemic. The effects of Covid-19 has caused me to furlough some of my staff. So, I went from having fully staffed stores, and a plant to just myself and one other staff member. I've had to clean, press, handle customers, pick up/deliver clothes, and prepare invoices. So as you can see integration paid off. Let me ask you a few thought provoking questions:

- How are you integrating what you've learned?
- How are you integrating what your mentor has taught you?

I want to encourage you to pull those notes out and pull your business together. You have everything you need inside of you, and now you have to integrate that information into your business. Don't allow any crisis to cause you to lose your confidence. You got this. Integrate Now!



KEY # 7

INFRASTRUCTURE

KEY #7 - INFRASTRUCTURE

Part of the integration phase led me into infrastructure development. I had to take a significant amount of time determining the type of structure I needed for my start-up that would eventually lead me to a scalable business. I didn't start in 2011 and say I want only one dry cleaners. I knew in 2010 when I opened the doors for the very first cleaners, that I would have multiple locations across the globe. Now, this is no easy task, but my point is, you must start thinking about where you want to end up. I understand everyone won't initially know, but you must at least have a futuristic goal for your business. Study the following: What is the smartest business entity to legally file under? Do I want to offer stock in my company? If so, you cannot establish your business entity as a Sole Proprietorship. You need to establish it as a S Corporation or C Corporation. Proper Infrastructure is the most important part of launching your business into success.

KEY #7 - INFRASTRUCTURE

Your business infrastructure development phase should not be rushed, but should be handled with care and intention. The infrastructure of any business is the the foundation of the business. I am still gleaning from the infrastructure that I put in place. Over the years, I have had to make some tweaks to my operational infrastructure which is to be expected. I couldn't imagine what things would be like during a global pandemic like Covid-19 if I hadn't invested in developing a solid infrastructure.

I want you to pause for a minute and I want you to think about your current infrastructure. Will it grow with you or will it grow away from you? If you can't definitively, answer yes to it growing with you, then you must reassess. Your business will only grow at the pace you grow.

KEY #7 - INFRASTRUCTURE

Because your personal growth as a business owner will be the forerunner for the growth of your business.

- What are you reading?
- Who are you listening too?
- What classes have you taken?

If you don't get anything else from this key, I want you to understand that a solid infrastructure is the key to growth. Start right, grow steady, and become your own success story.



KEY # 8

INSTITUTIONALIZE

KEY #8- INSTITUTIONALIZE

The process of institutionalizing a company is ever evolving. I opened my first dry cleaners and added all of the needed systems that I hoped would set us apart from other cleaners. The key business, financial, and operational systems that were needed to grow and properly scale. From the aesthetics to the integration of cutting edge technology. The components we put in place are the pillars for our brand and it keeps us grounded. As I stated, this is a process that evolves over time, but this process will keep the foundation of any business secure.

Our ability to institutionalize some critical elements I believe has given us the stamina that we are leaning on during a global pandemic. When you are able to institutionalize things, you are able to have a consistent structure in place that your employees can take their lead from and it makes things a little easier when you have to make structural changes.

KEY #8- INSTITUTIONALIZE

For example, when the Covid-19 crisis hit the country and businesses large and small were closing, we were still considered essential. We were essential in structure and also in our practices. Not all dry cleaners are "created equally." Let me explain. There are 2 types of cleaning solutions that dry cleaners use to clean your clothes. Both are effective in cleaning, but one is harmful for the environment and one is eco-friendly. I decided when I started my company in 2011, that I wanted to start a company that would go into the future and survive. I knew in 2011 that the future was green. The mistake I made was placing a green cleaners in an environment that didn't support green.

Our first location was next to a window tinting company and car repair place. BIG MISTAKE! This is one of the reasons why I wanted to put these 10 keys in a book. These keys will help you not make some of the mistakes I've made.

KEY #8- INSTITUTIONALIZE

What I've learned, is that green companies thrive in environments where green is promoted. We had the infrastructure and the institutional elements, but didn't establish our cleaners in an environment that would foster the success that we were bound to have.

I want you to take a good look at your business.

- Have you built a business that is institutionalized?
- Have you established something that will take you into the future and establish you as a household name in your industry?

We'll talk more about that in Key #10.



KEY # 9

INTEGRITY

KEY #9- INTEGRITY

As an entrepreneur, everything starts with integrity and it ends with integrity. I am a CEO who takes pride in operating with the upmost integrity in business. I lead my company with integrity and I demand it from those who work for me. Integrity is one of our bedrock principles and it is embedded into our day to day operations.

Integrity matters internally and it matters externally. For an example, we have had customers leave jewelry, over \$1000 in cash, and credit cards in their clothes, but they have always been returned to the customer. Why? Because at Fresh Dry Cleaners, integrity matters! We have had customers give enormous tips to the staff because of our integrity. I hear people talking a lot about branding. What I know about branding is this; your brand is the perception of a company, its product or services. I believe that integrity should be apart of your brand. When a customer leaves something in their clothes do you return it? If we accidentally damage a garment do we lie about it or accept fault?

KEY #9- INTEGRITY

We've accepted fault everytime we have damaged or missed the mark on quality or even in customer service. I believe this is why hundreds of people patronize us on a weekly basis because they know that we may not be perfect, but we stand by our bedrock principles: Integrity, Quality, and Exceptional Customer Service. Your customers need to know that they can trust you. They must be able to rely on you, your company and you must be willing to deliver always. Your staff must understand that all they do must be rooted in integrity, and that standard must be exhibited by you and your leaders.

Right now, I am leaning on the integrity of my company as I connect with my customers during a pandemic. They must trust that even in hard times that our bedrock principles will not be compromised. We have had to abbreviate our hours, but a change of schedule should never shift the foundation. We have had to furlough staff, but limited staff doesn't mean poor quality. Because of this change, I have had to work in the production facility.

KEY #9- INTEGRITY

I could've allowed one of the other staff members with limited technical skill to do the job. However, integrity says, don't just get the job done, but do it according to the company's standards.

- What are your company's standards or principles?
- How do you access integrity at various levels in your company?
- Is it ever ok for you to compromise your company's integrity?

I am asking you these important questions because your answer to them will determine whether or not you will be trusted with more. I want to encourage every entrepreneur reading this to value integrity. Value it more than the money you want to make. If your integrity is questionable, then the longevity of your company will be as well.



KEY # 10

INFLUENCE

KEY #10- INFLUENCE

I know we all hate to admit it, but influence matters, and it just doesn't matter on social. I have learned that influence is developed and nurtured over time. The integrity that you operate with will serve as the catalyst for your influence. I know we just spent a lot of time on integrity, but again, integrity matters. When God allows you to have influence, then you have proven yourself to be a person who values Integrity. There will be times where you will need influence in order to maximize certain opportunities, so you must guard it with all that you have.

I scaled my business from 1 location to 4 locations over a 2 year period of time because of our massive growth. This was not a easy task, but I can recall many instances by which my influence helped my company. If over the years I had not proven myself to be trusted in my industry, then this growth would not have taken place. When I think about what I have accomplished over the last ten years, I am astounded at our success.

KEY #10- INFLUENCE

I have worked hard to maintain a brand that would be respected in the dry cleaning industry. I went into this industry knowing that there aren't many minorities on the frontline. Being one of a few minority owned dry cleaners in the country with multiple sites has had its challenges and advantages. Challenges because there is not enough minority representation at the decision making level. I've also noticed that there are not enough minority led support groups for owners outside of the dominate ethnicity. Although there are challenges, there are advantages as well. Being a minority owner with multiple sites solidifies my creditability and allows me to leverage relationships across all ethnicities.

Having influence as a business owner is not about popularity, but it is more about being an industry expert. When you become an industry expert, you can segway to being a thought leader. This type of influence will extend far beyond your brick and mortar. This influence will give you the stamina to remain, the longevity to produce, and ultimately a legacy that will last beyond you.

KEY #10- INFLUENCE

Another benefit of influence is the ability to collaborate beyond your industry. You are now viewed as a leader amongst leaders. One of the most powerful moments you will experience is when your influence surpasses your industry. Your longevity in business gives you the expertise to not just speak to your industry, but to speak to business on a global scale. Your influence has now impacted other sectors of business. This is the type of influence that God wants for kingdom entrepreneurs. He desires for his children to be at the table, making decisions based on His influence in your life.

Influence in the world is not just for you. Influence has been given to us to make His influence known in government, private sector, business and non-profit sectors. We must understand that with influence comes responsibility. This is a responsibility that we can't overlook because we are chasing the bag and not chasing His will for our influence.

KEY #10- INFLUENCE

I often say, "People want to be famous but don't want the responsibility that comes with fame."

I wrote this book to push christian entrepreneurs out of the boat that has been limiting them and into the water that is vast and available for their enjoyment. I want you to know that God wants you to have influence.

God told Abraham in **Genesis 12:2**, *"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing."*

It's time for you to push pass all limitations and trust solely in God and in what he has deposited in you.



CLOSING

CLOSING

You no longer have an excuse as to why you can't get the business started. I just gave you 10 Keys to Start, Surge, Sustain and Scale your business no matter what industry you are in. What you do with this information will determine if you start and grow or if you wait and miss your turn. I know that you have what it takes to win in business.

Acts 10:34-35 NIV says, *"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."*

This scripture is true. He doesn't love me more than He loves you. I know today I am simply the conduit He is using to bring Him Glory and to impact my sphere of influence. I want you to walk away knowing first and foremost that prayer **MUST** be the foundation to build your business. If you put that first, the rest will align itself with God's will for your life.

I want you guys to kill it! Don't think small. Dream Big and Reach for it!

ABOUT ISHMAEL WILSON



Ishmael Wilson is a driven entrepreneur and pastor who is dedicated to empowering men and women. Ishmael Wilson often says, "DESTINY doesn't happen without your participation" and that's what he has demonstrated for the world to witness. Mr. Wilson is the founder and Lead Pastor of, Another Level Church (ALC) in Capital Heights, Maryland and has served in this capacity since March 2, 2008. The church has grown tremendously over the past 12 years with Administrative Offices, an Empowerment Center, and a Dry Cleaners. Ishmael spent 15 years as a paralegal at the Library of Congress where his work impacted thousands of government employees, congressional staff and constituents. Ishmael Wilson holds a Bachelor of Arts in Leadership Development from Faith Christian University and Schools. Ishmael's desire is to inspire all that he comes in contact with to live an abundant life; free from sickness, financial strain and any other plagues that people face

ABOUT ISHMAEL WILSON (cont.)

on a daily basis. As a Community Partner with Martha's Table, Mr. Wilson is focused on and passionate about Community Outreach and the Homeless. Ishmael collaborates with city officials to bring change to the community where he Pastors. Ishmael strongly believes that it is the churches job to change the community where it exists. Thus, the reason why Another Level Church has feed over 300 families, collected toys for more than 300 children, and has ministered to over 9000 people in less than 12 short years. In 2020, Ishmael hosted the Small Church Conference for it's 4th cohort. This conference is designed to empower "small church" pastors and leaders with tools and resources. Ishmael's belief is, "Just because you're small, doesn't mean you can't be effective." Ishmael currently serves as the Chief Operating Officer of the Donald Hilliard Ministries. Where he overseas all ministry business and philanthropic endeavors for the ministry. In 2019, Ishmael opened up his fourth dry cleaners location. Fresh Dry Cleaners is located in DC & MD. Ishmael is the proud co-founder of Success Geeks Inc, a brand that sets out to build the capacity of men and women in the areas of business, finance, career empowerment and personal development. Ishmael is also the proud author of the book entitled "Prescriptions for Your Situation" Daily Doses to a Better You. This books focuses on Family, Finance, Faith and Love.

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