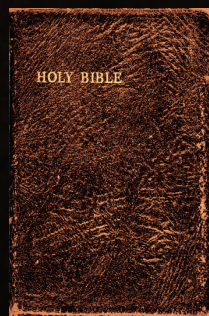


*“A gift—a skill, an ability—  
isn’t a gift until  
you give it away.”*



Michael Jr. was born in **Grand Rapids, Michigan** which is headquarters of **Zondervan Press**, the originator of the NIV version of the Bible.

# THE PARTS WE PLAY YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING TO DO

**Imagine your youth group is going to take a bus to travel to national youth convention.** For most of you that will not be a stretch. Some of you are Fine Arts participants, others are signed up for the AIM outreach, while still others are just eager to find out what God wants to show you through the youth services. Whatever your reason for packing your bags to make the trip to the convention, your first goal is to get there. Now imagine that shortly after you start down the road, the bus decides to call it quits. OK, so inanimate objects like buses can't make choices. Something under the hood went wrong for some unknown reason, causing the bus to stop working. But what if the various parts of the bus could choose whether or not to do their appointed job—and to what level? These choices could significantly affect your trip and your plans.

## WE MOVE TOGETHER

In his children's book, *The Parts We Play*, comedian Michael Jr. humorously depicts what would happen if different automotive parts refused to do their jobs to the best of their ability. In fact, they abandon their own jobs to try to take the jobs of each other, each claiming that they can do better. The result is a car that won't start at all. Then, after listening to the radiator—the voice of reason—the parts realize their mistakes, reclaim their individual roles and resolve to play them to the best of their abilities.

Ephesians 4:16, the reference of which is pictured on the car license plate at the end of the book, says: "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (NIV).

"The scripture became revelation to me after I finished the book. That's when God, as I was listening to my pastor speak, showed me what my book was really about. The license plate had my initials on it, and we had to call the printers to stop the presses and change it," Michael Jr. says.

Michael Jr. believes it is important for each person to find the part that God has created him or her to be because "it's the body of Christ, not

the foot of Christ. The hand has to play a role as well," he says. "Everyone can't be a hand or an ear or a mouth. Everyone has a specific gift in a certain area, and when [each part] is placed properly within the body, the body grows stronger." He says some things may work even when all the parts aren't in place, but they won't work as long or as well, much like a car that begins to make funny noises and run poorly when one or more of the essential parts quits.

## WHAT FUELS YOUR SOUL?

If Michael Jr. could speak directly to you right now, he would encourage you to use the ministry gifts God gave you to the best of your ability. Whether your presenting your fine art, doing street evangelism, working in the nursery or as a greeter at church or even just flipping burgers with a willing and joyful attitude—whatever it is—as long as you are sensitive to God's voice and doing your best, you are playing an important role in the body of Christ.

Maybe you are a student not quite sure of what your God-given gifts are, or maybe you play several parts but you don't know if they are the ones God has truly appointed for you. If this is you, Michael Jr. challenges you to ask yourself some questions:

- If you had the time, what would you most want to practice or research?
- What activities do you engage in that make you lose track of time?
- What skills or abilities do you have for which people have complemented you?
- If money was no object, what work would you be willing to do for free?

If you answer these questions honestly from the heart, you will most likely find that God is shaping within you the desire to pursue your passion—the skills and abilities that He has planted within you and wants you to use them to share Jesus with others.

## MY ROAD...MY STEPS

Michael Jr. uses his film "Comedy: The Road Less Traveled" as an example of the powerful results that can come of your willingness to play your part. The documentary follows Michael Jr. as he

tours far from the comedy clubs, theatres and late night talk shows, to homeless shelters, youth centers, prisons and other unlikely places to do comedy. Michael Jr., who accepted Jesus at age 27, got the idea for the tour after he sensed God prompting him to change his approach to comedy from trying to get laughter to "giving people the opportunity to laugh."

"A gift—a skill, an ability—isn't a gift until you give it away," Michael Jr. says. "It's not measured by how many people like it but by how much one person needs it. Someone that you have access to who absolutely, unquestionably needs what you do. You just have to be willing to look."

Michael Jr. knows that looking for someone who needs your gift is the most rewarding thing you can ever do with your gift. It's what the body of Christ is meant to do—fulfilling the needs of others and giving all the glory, honor and praise to God in return.

"I have been on 'The Tonight Show' and Comedy Central and all that great stuff, but the best show is the one for these abused kids, homeless men and those in prison, because they really needed to laugh. I eliminated the get and looked for the give, and I have been blown away by the process."

## Michael Jr.'s: The Parts We Play Activity Center

### Activity 1:

To get you thinking about how much God wants you to accept and play your part in the body of Christ, Michael Jr. suggests you do this activity:

**Step One:** Pick a day, and write down one you plan to do that day. It could be as simple as going out for a hamburger.

**Step Two:** Make a list of every person who may have played a role in allowing you to eat that hamburger—from the beef farmer to the employee who handed it to you at the counter and everyone in between. Don't forget to list people who may not seem obvious, such as the people who built the car you drove to get to the restaurant.

Even if you don't think of every single person, you will be amazed at how long the list will be and at how many people play a part in even the seemingly small stuff. Consider how either the omission or addition of even one person can make a difference in the outcome.

### Activity 2:

Here's an activity Michael Jr. suggests if you are wondering how to play the role God has planted in you:

**Step One:** Write down what you think your God-given gift(s) are.

**Step Two:** Make a list of the types of people who really need what you have to offer.

**Example:** If you excel in auto shop, think about who really needs their car fixed. Some people who want their car fixed may have the money to get the repairs done. But there is a family not far from you that needs their car fixed who don't have money to pay a mechanic. If you fix the car for that family because you love doing it you will probably do the best job you have ever done simply because you are fulfilling a real need. No amount of money or earthly reward can match a fulfilled heart.

**Step Three:** Removing worldly rewards from the equation. Think about who you would best share your gifts and abilities with. When you figure out who that person is, go do it.



Check out Amber's OCTV video interview with Michael Jr. by following the links at <a href="http://oncourse.ag.org">oncourse.ag.org</a>. Visit <a href="http://michaeljr.com">michaeljr.com</a> and <a href="http://comedytheroadlesstraveled.com">comedytheroadlesstraveled.com</a> for more info on Michael Jr.: the man, the movie and the mission.

HEATHER VAN ALLEN plays a huge part in the body of OC as Amber's right hand.