



ZINTLE MPUPHA

FINDING PURPOSE IN GOD'S KINGDOM

Zintle Mpupha is a fly half and the captain for the South African women's national rugby sevens team. She excelled in both rugby and cricket for regional teams in South Africa before signing a professional contract with the national rugby team, the Springboks.

I grew up in a very athletic family. My mother was a sprinter, my father was a football player and my brothers and cousins played cricket, rugby and football. I fell in love with rugby.

In 2012, I was invited to be on the women's national rugby team that went to the UK for the under 20s tournament. That day I realized this is what I want to do. I realized I could make a living off of playing rugby; I could take care of my family by playing this sport.

I was invited to play with the women's national sevens team, made the team, and got my first cap in Amsterdam in 2013.

I scored my first try in my debut.

That was a highlight of my career.

From then on, I had a drive. I knew that this is what I wanted to do — I wanted to score more tries for my country.

I was offered a contract to play with the team but I had a decision to make: It was either university or playing rugby professionally. I decided to go to university first and play with my school team. In 2016, I returned to the South Africa rugby sevens team. The following year, I was offered a contract again, which I signed.



Being elected as captain of the women's Springboks was never in my plans. I never saw myself as a captain, especially a captain of the women's national team! When I was chosen to be captain, I wondered why God would put me in this position. If He created me to be the shy, quiet person that I am, why has He chosen me for this? After praying about it I realized, "If He wants me here, He's going to have to be by my side at every moment." So I prayed, "Jesus, let me just be the instrument You use to do the job; may You work through me."

With the relationship that I have with God now, I treat success and failure very differently than I once did. Before, I would feel useless and discouraged when I would lose. If we did win, I would be excited. But now, I treat a win or loss in the same way — I just pray and thank God. When we win I can get excited, and when we lose I just know that it wasn't our day that day. He knows when it will be our day so we can just work toward that and trust Him for that day.

A few years ago, I was having a hard time with the high expectations that were placed on me. I never got positive feedback from my coaches or teammates, and I came back from training each and every day crying. I didn't want to be there anymore.

But one day, everything changed. After another

day of crying, I thought to myself, "This is what you've always wanted. The fact that you keep telling yourself you don't want this, could be the reason why you've been so negative." At that moment I cried out to God, "God, help me. I can't do this anymore. There's no one to help me but You. Be with me when I go out there."

That day I surrendered my life to Christ and accepted Him as my Savior. Then I wiped my face off and told myself I wasn't going anywhere. This was my dream and this is where I am going to stay.

After that day, before I would run out onto the field, I would pray. And after each training, even when I made mistakes, I would thank God for being with me. As I started doing this faithfully, day after day, I soon started getting compliments from my coaches and teammates. Because I was praying, the way I was playing was changing. Now I feel like I am becoming the player God created me to be; I feel like I'm an asset to the team. I believe I am where I am today because of Jesus.

I hope that I can leave a shining light on South African women's rugby, but even more than that, I want to be remembered as an athlete who has a purpose of winning lost souls. Through my rugby career, I want to be recognized as a player who changed their career for the purpose of God's Kingdom. 🏉

Zintle's favorite verse:

"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

— Jeremiah 29:11



SOUTH AFRICA

