

## **“One Leader’s Journey of Leadership and Faith” featuring Jenny Pruitt, Founder & CEO of Atlanta Fine Homes Sotheby’s International Realty**

Speaking at Turknett’s 162<sup>nd</sup> monthly seminar, Jenny Pruitt clearly demonstrated that she’s one of the most inspiring speakers we’ve ever had. This highly respected and successful businesswoman, community leader and benefactor shared multiple insights and learning experiences from both her personal and professional lives.

Jenny is a third generation Atlantan with a 48 year career in real estate, a 50 year marriage and 2 children. Reflecting on her young life, she said, “It wasn’t a fairy tale. My two siblings and I lost our father at an early age and mother was in poor health.” These childhood experiences and hardships served to build Jenny’s resolve to create a more secure life for herself when she grew up.

In time, Jenny developed her own definition of success, i.e., “having a positive impact on others.” At first, she thought she should serve in the mission field in Africa. But, with guidance from her pastor who knew Jenny’s unique set of strengths, she came to realize that her mission field, her “ministry” could actually be in business, in the marketplace.

With that epiphany, Jenny moved forward in her professional journey of leadership and business ownership in the world of real estate - but always living her Christian faith. Along the way there were many challenges: building a business from the ground up, attracting and retaining the right people; selling a business and starting over yet again in the midst of the housing bust and recession; enduring a high profile law suit, etc.

There were also many rewards and accomplishment e.g., induction into the GSU’s Business Hall of Fame; sales near \$1Billion; author of a popular and well-endorsed book, *Beneath His Wings*; 2016 honoree at the Four Pillars Tribute and more.

As part of her remarks, Jenny shared the following 7 GIFTS – all based on her own beliefs and experiences, both personally and professionally:

1. **The Gift of a Servant Spirit** – In her own business, there’s an inverted pyramid structure where she, as the CEO, is at the bottom. She believes it’s her responsibility to serve and to positively impact her employees, her clients and others she with whom she comes in contact. She learned a lot about servant leadership from Jim Blanchard, the former CEO of Synovus, a well-known servant leader.
2. **The Gift of Encouragement** – She told the story of young Thomas Edison who had many failures but because of his mother’s encouragement, he became a famous inventor.
3. **The Gift of Prayer** – “Everyone has something to be prayerful about and for every day,” Jenny said.

4. **The Gift of Forgiveness** – Jenny shared a message from Ruth Graham – a message about “keeping your accounts short.”
5. **The Gift of the Overflowing Cup** – Jenny practices her belief that “to whom much is given, much is expected.” She believes in sharing her success with others. In her business, she’s created “FFC” – which stands for Family – Friends – and Community. All employees get 4 days a year – over and above vacation, holidays, etc – to spend time with their FFCs. Many of them serve in their communities by giving back.
6. **The Gift of Faith** – Though she’s now 20 years cancer free, Jenny’s personal bout with the disease taught her humility and reinforced the power of faith. She believes in being transparent about her faith in her whole life. It’s how she believes we all can handle our struggles.
7. **The Gift of Joy** – Joy comes not from what you have but from being grateful for everything you have. Jenny said, “Be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.”

As a final reflection of the kind of person Jenny Pruitt truly is, she gifted every attendee with an autographed copy of her book. She also gave away one of her beautiful acrylic angel paintings. She said to the young woman who received it (who had a birthday the week of WIL), “I always name my angel paintings. So you can name yours.” To which the recipient replied, “My name is Hope, so I’m naming my angel HOPE.”