

Evangelist Uche

Glory To Glory

A Devotional



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Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus

The winter was brutal with ice and freezing cold hovering all over the Indianapolis skyline. December 2007 is a month I will never forget. At this time, I owed 3 months of rent and utilities. There was no food in my refrigerator. Sadly enough, school was out of session and so I could not “sneak” into the cafeteria for a hot meal. My daughter Meyazo was not allowed to see me partly because I didn’t have a dime to my name. The last time she was with me, my good friend Loba Ogunmola had to drive us to the local Wal-Mart to purchase milk and diapers for her. Alphonse Kongolo, another friend and colleague said to me: “Uche, it is possible that you are going through trials and the Lord is testing your faith but what if this situation is of the devil? Doesn’t the Bible say that, “I have been young; and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread”. – Psalms 37:25.

That scripture resonated within the depths of my soul that night and I prayed violently like I had never prayed before using this scripture: “Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm” – Psalms 105:15. I resolved to leave the house I was staying in and pitch tent out in the frigid cold – Surely, if I perish, I perish. But God had other plans for me. He is a God who is in the business of answering prayers.

Tirzah Brown, a University of Indianapolis freshman at the time, invited me to join her family for a trip to the Creation Museum in Kentucky. She did not know this, but this trip coincided with the day I had chosen to strike out as a homeless man. I took her on the invitation thinking that I will move out as soon as I returned from the trip. God used that trip to change everything. Indeed, my life has never been the same again since that day. Things changed insomuch that in

June 2008, I found myself in Orlando, Florida rubbing shoulders with the best in Information Technology. My regret then was that my daughter Meyaozo couldn't be there to share the moment with me. But it gets better. I was privileged to visit Atlanta, Georgia in March 2010 to mingle with the Executives and policy makers of Health Information Technology. All touting their advanced degrees and qualifications – and I had one too. Meyaozo, my daughter, was in Atlanta with me to experience this as well. And yes, I was able to take Meyaozo with me to Orlando later on just to reminisce how good God has been to me.

This is a testimony of God's goodness. The timeless hymn by Louisa M.R. Stead suffices in my soul's expression of gratitude: "Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, Just to take Him at His Word; Just to rest upon His promise, And to know, Thus saith the Lord. Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him! How I've proved Him o'er and o'er; Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus! Oh, for grace to trust Him more".

Decision Yardstick

Settling down to write my School of Business exit exam; Lo and behold Petar Illic the illustrious Serbian and my best European friend, came to sit right beside me. I do not deem this to be mere coincidence because I am a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. Throughout our careers at The University of Indianapolis; I tried hard to sign Petar to a lucrative contract with a top European soccer club, say Manchester United? This effort was geared towards earning commission fees and free trips to England, Spain, Italy, Germany and France to watch live soccer games. This contract-signing scenario is a hypothetical situation as Petar has inadequate soccer skills to accord him such honors as to done the Jersey of any professional team. What Petar lacked in terms of soccer; he more than made up for in academics. Petar is one of the most studios people I have ever met. He is, in my opinion, one of the rare people who has the ability to match a great sense of humor with an always “down to business” personality. I believe his cumulative GPA was a 3.9 and he went for perfection in every test or exam he attempted. The question to Petar wasn't “did you score 100% today?” but was “did you NOT score 100% today?”

Petar told me that he had just secured admission into Leeds University in the UK for his Master's. After that, he was going to serve with the Greek army for a year in order to validate his EU passport and then who knows? I thought it was interesting and spectacular that he had about five years of his life planned out. The exam ended; College is over; Woohoo! Now my troubles are over, all those classes, papers, tests and the like – Gone! Gone!! Oh forever Gone!!! Right? Leaving the room after that exam; I felt very different, as the reality kicked in that a myriad of life changing

decisions were to be made – and now. Who should be my attorney? (You heard that right), which job should I accept? Where do I live? What career path do I take? Where do we go from here? – Just to mention a few. Somehow, just sitting there besides Petar; I realized that this was not the end but the beginning. A beginning whose end would be determined by the choices I make now. In my last message to Uindy students titled “Don’t Buy Potential”, I made it clear that choice is a good thing. I encouraged students not to choose on the basis of opulence, ability and beauty alone but by character, spiritual leading and natural affinity. I’ve prayed fervently and gone long trips down memory lane – and still do. And I’ve also considered my gifts and calling. Just over a month since I gave that message, here is my shot to apply this biblical principle.

I do not seek fortune, fame or power. I do not need big houses, fast cars and/or many friends. King David said in Psalms 27:4: “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.” When Jesus Christ returns or I finally lay my head down to sleep in His eternal bosom; may the cloud of witnesses bear truth that I lived a life seeking His Kingdom and its righteousness. That’s what matters when it’s all been said and done. A life dedicated to inspiring and exhorting Christians around the world to lead lives worthy of the higher calling is all that I long for. For this reason, I was born.

In the long run

During a recent trip, I decided to join in (uninvited) on the conversation of two young men in the Historic city of Boston, Massachusetts. We chatted for a few minutes about struggles, triumphs, family and general life. Obi, one of the gentlemen said something that lingered in my head over the next few days. He said, “We don’t seem to be making rapid progress now but in the long run we will be better off for today’s efforts”.

How true! I immediately began thinking of all my dear friends making vast investments in their tomorrow. They could today, venture out on their own and start a business, launch a ministry, pursue a career – but have chosen to wait, to study, to prepare, to lay a solid, firm and strong foundation – for their life work tomorrow. I think of Julie, the medical student who calls a friend she graduated with 2 years ago only to find out he (friend) just purchased a Jaguar automobile, while she (student) is still piling on student loans. I think of Clive, the young man in seminary studying to show himself approved, who possibly looks at the newspaper and sees that an evangelist, younger and possibly less trained, is coming to town headlining a crusade.

If you, my friend, are in this phase of life - doing what is right today in the hopes for a better tomorrow, but encountering the daily frustrations of seeming stagnancy. If you are getting that eerie feeling that this might all be a waste of time. If you are feeling the debilitating depression that follows dry spells and long stretched-out valleys. I have four words for you “In the Long run ...” Consider the words of William James: “Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be if he keeps faithfully

busy each hour of the working day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can, with perfect certainty count on waking up some fine morning to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation.” President Barack Obama says of his experience: “If you’re walking down the right path and you’re willing, eventually you’ll make progress”. These sayings are all from fallible men and are easily dwarfed by the scripture found in Galatians 6:9: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” In the Long run, dear friends, in the long run!

What Really Matters

I stopped at a restaurant in Eudora, Arkansas for Lunch and to meet with the local residents. I sat close enough to listen in on the conversations of daily life. What fascinated me most was the fact that they knew every customer that walked into that restaurant by name. That sense of community and of family was very impressive.

As I finished my lunch, a gentleman noticed that I had been sitting in the back all by myself, and welcomed me to join in on the conversation. After about 3 minutes of introducing myself and saying how much I loved the community spirit that I had just witnessed there, The gentleman asked: “You are a college kid right?” I said yes, I had attended college. And then he asked, “You are not from around here correct?” Again, I said yes, that I was from Lagos, Nigeria. He looked very pleased with himself to have been able to decipher these 2 facts about me in less than 3 minutes. After a few more minutes of lively discussions, I bade a fond farewell and got back on the highway, on to my next destination.

As I drove back, past those vast Arkansas fields, to New Orleans, Louisiana; I could not help but think about the scriptures found in Acts 4:13: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus”. Here, I had just had a short conversation with residents of Eudora, and what was perceived of me was that I was a college kid and that I was from another country. Not that, like the disciples, I had been with Jesus. My work, I know, is cut out for me. What then really matters? That I have the highest education and have traveled the world or simply that I have been with Jesus?

Summer & Grace

In the summer of 2002, the city of Indianapolis was blessed with an abundance of sunshine. With the beauty, splendor and usefulness of this sunshine, it was no secret that rain was needed, and that, urgently. The fact that we had an abundance of sunshine and yet desired rain shows a type of how we had the LAW and yet craved GRACE. The law alone produced spiritual drought – spurring an avalanche of offenses. Grace alone, in itself, produces spiritual flooding – a nothing is wrong, anything goes disposition. Knowing God is full of mercy and grace and that He is also a consuming fire, attest that a measure of fear (sun) and love (rain) are needed to run the Christian life successfully.

The law is needed but grace is needed even more. It is not enough that there is the law, but that there be also, a greater measure of grace. The crops need the sun but they need the rain too. Humans needed the law to create order and civilization but now need grace to be saved. “Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But when sin abounded, grace did much more abound” – Romans 5:20. This simply is the reason Jesus Christ came to die, so that we do not die of drought. He came that our parched and thirsty souls are refreshed by the rain of His amazing grace. Yes, we still need the law, but more than that, we need grace.

Parenting

During the month of July 2012, my wife and I have had the privilege of hosting a 16-year-old student from Cali, Colombia. This student (we will call her Alliy) apparently came to the United States to party and not necessarily to learn English and the American culture as her school curriculum suggested. One could perhaps attribute this to her young age or to the propaganda that had been fed into her mind through movies but nonetheless, she hit the ground running. Just 3 days after her arrival, she was attending parties and staying out till 1am. Over time she started coming back to the house at 5am after partying. An imposed curfew did little or nothing to help. Alliy's parents were wealthy and so she came with a lot of resources to finance her partying lifestyle.

While this lifestyle was not the best experience for my family, we did learn a lot from it. We learnt that we had to step up our parenting game. We thought much of our 2 young daughters being 16 years old. That under no circumstance can they, at 16, leave the house for a party and come back at 2:00am. If this were the case, not just would their safety be breached, their morals questioned, but our success as parents will be up for debate. We have our work cut out, please pray for us.

Train up a child ... Our experience with Alliy, while not the best, reinforced in us a fervent zeal to cherish the time and opportunity we currently have with our 2 young daughters. To invest massively and aggressively in them not just with our resources but more importantly, with our time - to ensure they turn out to be God fearing Christians, that they turn out as champions. Not that this is all within our power to accomplish, but we are determined to do our very best. And

in so doing, comply with the scripture found in proverbs 22:6:
Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old,
he will not depart from it.

Winning Against Discouragement

I threw a quick glance at the alarm clock besides me. 5:00am glowed on it through the dark room. Why was I wide awake, I pondered, Why this feeling of discouragement pervading my body. I started praying to stave off the discouragement. As I prayed, a call came through my cell phone. It was a call from one of my brothers in the Lord (We will call him Frank). From the excitement in Frank's voice, I noticed that something wonderful had taken place. He was calling to let me know that he had just received a full scholarship to pursue his Master's in Seoul, South Korea. His flight was paid for and he was actually getting a salary to study. This was a wonderful testimony of God's goodness for I remember how we had struggled back in the day just to get him an admission, not to mention a scholarship. I was so glad that God opened up this door for Him. This call totally made my 'month' and quickly rolled back the tide of discouragement that had been waging war with my soul over the last few hours. Thank God that He always raises a standard when the enemy comes in like a flood (Isaiah 59:19).

Are you feeling discouraged? Do you feel down because you've lost something of value? Perhaps a prayer you've bombarded heaven with is yet to be fulfilled in the natural. It's not the end of the world. Yes, you may have had a bad day but at least you did have a day. The feeling of discouragement may pervade but you still have the capability to feel and with that, the disposition to influence feeling. Sure it did not turn out as expected, but lessons were learned. It's time to get back on your feet, dust off, roll up those sleeves and attempt again, that which seems evasive. William Hickson puts it this way:

'Tis a lesson you should heed:
Try, try, try again
If at first you don't succeed,
Try, try, try again

Go on, try again. You shall recover all you lost and more so, gain even more. I pray God sends along brothers and sisters like Frank to encourage you. And like David, may we learn how to win the war against discouragement. "And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.... And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all". – 1 Samuel 30:6, 8.

What Do You See?

In 2 Kings Chapter 6, we read of a time when Elijah and his servant were surrounded by an army. The servant 'freaked' out because of what he saw. Elijah looked at the same situation and saw instead, angels surrounding the perimeter and providing security. He Prayed that the servant's eyes be opened, so that he too may see the same.

What do you see when you look? You sit on acres of diamonds – look around you, there is so much opportunity. It may be called trash or problems by others but please ask God to help you see what He sees, what it truly is - OPPORTUNITY. Satan looked at man and thought man to be trash, worth controlling, servants to be oppressed. Jesus Christ looked at man and saw people worth dying for. You are special. Trash or Diamond - What do you see?

Trash is Big Business!

I was in my hometown Lagos Nigeria recently, and saw a huge billboard that read “Shit (Trash) is Big Business”. I quietly thought about this phrase for a few minutes but fell asleep as I sometimes do when in deep thought. Later that week, my brother in-law Nnabyko brought this phrase back to memory when he talked about a man who started a business hauling away excreta from private sewers. “He is now a multimillionaire”, he said. Surely, trash is big business, I thought. Isn’t there a maxim that “one man’s meat is another man’s poison?”

When I started my career in Healthcare technology, I was handed down a dilapidated system. People said it was a technology that was being phased out and was meaningless. Well, 3 years and 2500 happy users later, that same technology was hailed as a big cost saver to the organization and a big driver to a paperless healthcare system. Yes, it's called trash but you can turn it to big business. "And have ye not read this scripture; the stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:" - Mark 12:10

It's in The Mind

During my freshman year in college, Dr. Richard Neal, the History teacher, a man with very long beard once said something that “messed up my mind”. He said, "**College graduation is in the mind. If you think you can graduate, you will**". Boy that really got me going at a time I felt I could only complete one semester before dropping out. He spoke to the class but it felt as though he spoke directly to me. How could he have known that college graduation was the very thing I was fretting over at that season of life?"

The air around me felt damp as the steaming water flowed from my head to my toes. I had set the temperature at its highest and just allowed the water that emanated from the shower head, run for hours on end, it seemed like. Deep in thought, I asked myself how it was that God had allowed me come this far. What seemed like a dream was now an unfolding reality – yet with upcoming limitations. It's not the first time I've been in these situations before but it was becoming more and more apparent, I may have to drop out of school after only one semester. The reason being that I may not be able to come up with the \$9,000.00 needed to enroll for the upcoming semester at the University of Indianapolis. In that moment, the sense of anxiety gave way to a feeling of gratitude – I was in fact: “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” - Philippians 1:6. I remember praying and thanking God, that if it ends here, if it stops with just one semester, I will be forever grateful. I believe the God of the universe heard that little prayer because it didn't just stop with one semester; it went on the completion of a master's degree – debt free. See, in my life, God has proven o'er and o'er that He is: “... able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or

think, according to the power that worketh in us" –
Ephesians 3:20

God has been so good to me, but I know it's in gratitude for what He has done and what He is doing, that the future expectations are met and exceeded. Surely: I knew that day, without a cinch of doubt that I would graduate. It's in the mind, as the scriptures states: "For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass ; he shall have whatsoever he saith" - Mark 11:2. It's in the mind. Believe!

What is God Doing Now?

A few years ago, I was at home in Nigeria savoring the country and reminiscing on my childhood. Two days before I was to return to the United States, I lost my International passport along with other items of value. It quickly became apparent that I could not return to work on time. Pastor's came to pray for me saying the devil had struck. Many people felt sorry for me. For a moment, I was ruffled but then stopped and asked that age-old question "What is God doing now? That question made a supposedly tragic situation, intriguing - like a puzzle, almost.

People around me thought the end of the world had come and that the devil was hitting at me. I on the other hand thought God was working. I didn't know what He was doing at the time, but I sure could ask, and I did. God impressed upon my Spirit that He wanted me to stay in the Country a few more weeks and get a wife. This happened. Not just that but I was able to return to my work on time. Everything I lost was replaced - with extra. You see, what the devil meant for evil, God turned for good but I would have missed this if I didn't ask the question, what is God doing now?

Man is always looking at what God has done and what He will do in the future but often miss what He is doing today, this hour, NOW. In the midst of uncertainty, God is doing something. Ask Him sincerely, Lord what are you doing now? And that peace, oh that: "...peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus". Philippians 4:7. Happy Thanksgiving.

The 3G

During a very tough patch of my life several years ago when my family and finances were in shambles, I discovered what I call "The 3G" that helped me overcome very severe circumstances. I am happy to share these with you:

1. God: God is sovereign. He determines who will succeed and who will fail, as His word states:

"... I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion".

Romans 9:15." There is no questioning His authority or His grace, the wise path is to align yourself with His cause. That way, you are successful because He is and always will be successful. Bono puts it this way: "Stop asking God to bless what you're doing. Find out what God's doing. It's already blessed."

3. Game plan: We see that in sports, in war; in getting, in succeeding - there ought to be a game plan. Not that the game plan always pans out rightly or plays out correctly, but even a bad game plan is better than no game plan at all. Mostly, success is intentional. It takes visioning, planning and execution. The best game plan I've found is the Bible. It contains a blessed blueprint for your life. Read it, savor it and strategize with it. "Or what King, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" - Luke 14:31

So there you have it - The 3G that has helped me. I pray they be of help to you too.

Your Dream

As a boy or girl, you had long, long thoughts of what you might be. Have you now become so old and tired and cynical that you have forgotten those dreams of your youth; those high expectations of yourself? Never lose them, no matter what. Lose your stock certificates, lose your property, but don't lose your dreams. For this urge to be someone, to be something, was put into you by Almighty God. - Vincent Norman Peale

Where is he? I asked myself as I meandered through what looked like a maze. I was in a newly constructed shopping complex and I was here to find my good friend, Flo. I found him slumped in his chair, both hands on his face. What is wrong? I asked, entering the store and helping myself to a seat.

After a short discussion, I learned Flo's dream of playing soccer professionally in Europe had just been dealt another blow. A tournament he had signed up for just didn't work out and he was disappointed, contemplating if to abandon his dream. Here he was, working his 9am – 5pm day job, raising the cash needed to pay his bills, fulfill his responsibilities and save to fund his dream. Yet it seemed each time he made a head way, each time he gets tailwind, something happens and he comes crashing down to earth. Sounds familiar? With concern and from personal experience, I quoted the words of a song I had heard earlier. Here goes:

Joseph dreamed a dream that set him apart from men. A dream that gave him courage to overcome his every sin. Joseph dreamed a dream, that one day he would have honor and he would have power. And when they laughed at

what he said, he had the strength to raise his head. And through it all, the dream, it still survived. God gave me a dream that will not die. God cannot lie. God showed me a dream that will not die. The dream cannot die - Shirley Murdock (Story found in Genesis 37)

This encouraged Flo. So if you too have thought of giving up on a dream – Don't.

Patience - It's Not Just Waiting

I had my life all planned out. I was going to start University at the age of 16, graduate at 20 and do some other things, big things. Well, things didn't go exactly as planned. The University admission was not forthcoming, when it finally came, the financing was not lining up nicely. Then came headaches over the permission to travel. It was not an easy ordeal, but through it all, I knew it will happen but I just had to WAIT and hear my mom say frequently, "Uche, delay is not denial". While waiting, I had to continually praise God for who He is and that He can do what He says He can do. I had to be thankful. I had to keep a great attitude and I had to embrace the moment believing God when He says: "... I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward" - Genesis 15:1

Needless, to say, everything fell in place eventually and my goals and aspirations were surpassed. See, patience is not simply waiting..; everyone has to wait at some point/ juncture of their lives. Patience is what you do while waiting. It is your attitude while waiting. Abraham once had to wait on God's promise against all odds. Can Abraham's patience report be said of you?

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" - Romans 4:18

Distrust

dis·trust - the lack or absence of trust - Merriam Webster

Do you remember the instances where you were not trusted to take on something you knew very well you could take on? Instances where you've been told by someone in authority that you cannot achieve. That you cannot amount to much or that you cannot achieve, that you cannot become. One instance that stands out mostly in my mind occurred back in college. I was working hard to start under a new soccer coach. The first game under this coach, I came from the bench (in a game I clearly should have started based on ability), to score 2 goals and give our team the win. With such a strong performance, surely I will start the next game, I thought, but I ended up on the bench again. The coach, John, told me how unwise I was to use a year of my NCAA eligibility to play under the previous coach even after I explained the great length that coach went to get me on the team and in the Country.

The hammer came down right before the start of the season, I was invited into John's office and he announced that I was cut from the team. Cut? This was my dream, to play 4 years of soccer in college, to use my skills to gain a scholarship that will pay for my tuition. This is what I have worked hard on for years. How can this be? What do I do now? Where do I go from here? This blew a hole in my confidence, a hole that took years to heal and be fully restored. In retrospect, I am happy it happened the way it did because my confidence had to be rebuilt, not on my abilities or my work ethic, but on Jesus Christ the solid rock. "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me". Philippians 4:13

I reckon you've had people in authority who showed little trust in you. Perhaps it's a teacher that said you won't amount to anything, or a parent that said a sibling was more handsome/ beautiful than you are, that you too fat, lazy, incompetent, slow ...you name it. These actions, sometimes unwittingly, often breaks your confidence, and self-worth

Overwhelming Trust

In the last post, I talked about distrust mainly in the context of its adverse effect on confidence. Simply put, we've known people who have distrusted us and how that broke our confidence. In the same vein, we can tell stories of people who trusted us in daunting, high stake situations, and how we rose to the occasion. When I was about to leave my home in Lagos, Nigeria to study abroad, my dad wrote a letter to the consulate that I happened to read. In it, He said he trusted that I was going to do big things in, with and for technology. Wow! What a vote of confidence. Just thinking of that good old letter sends multiple bolts of confidence down my spine. If you've been placed in a position of authority, particularly as a parent, please use your words wisely – to exhort. They can have eternal consequence.

Distrust does not affect me adversely now because I've been trusted with a grace that overrides distrust. Imagine a police officer being pulled over for going above the speed limit. This cannot be because the police officer is trusted to go above the speed limit. This trust comes with the expectation that it will be used for the public good. God trusted me so much; He gave an abundance of grace that cannot be exhausted. He has forgiven my past, present, and yes, my future sins - if I ask. I am under grace now. His grace puts me above the law. I can be charged with sin any more than the police officer can be charged for going over the speed limit. And since God is going to take all the glory, I am happy to allow Him do all the work. Yes, I just rest in His grace, I rest in His trust.

“I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another...” Isaiah 42:8

This trust humbles me. Like Paul, I've come to realize that:

“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any”. 1 Corinthians 6:12

You've being trusted so strongly that you want to live up to the expectations of this trust. You know you can do anything wrong now or in the future and get away with it but yet choose to always do right because you've been entrusted. You can't fail him, His watching, He will be hurt if you do, and He trusts that you won't fail. Wow! Let's call this: overwhelming trust.

And so your confidence soars because it's placed in someone who has shown you much trust. How dare anyone distrust you? How dare anyone try to undermine your confidence - do they who has placed overwhelming confidence in you? Yes, the God of the universe, the maker of heaven and earth, the King of glory has placed His confidence on you. Jesus Christ is His name. Say to yourself:

I can never have low self-esteem; I can never be brought down by any spoken word or executed deed of man. No demon under torment can oppress my mind or depress my spirit.

If you don't personally know Jesus Christ yet, I only pray that you experience and accept this confidence, this same trust He places on you as well.

Buy As IS

I heard an interesting story a while ago about a certain old man renowned for his Cattle rearing. This man, on his way to purchase some new stock, was approached by a young teenager who wanted to come along and learn the trade. The elder man agreed to the young man's proposition. The teenager observed that the older man, when selecting cattle, looked closely into its eyes, shook his head and more often than not, moved on to the next Cow. The teenager decided to ask why the elder man was ignoring the plump, fine cattle that abounded in the ranch. You have a lot to learn young man, said the older man, answering the question. If you see that wild stare in the Cow's eyes, you better not buy them boy. With that wild stare, they will never be a mother to their young ones, you give them an inch and they will take a mile, running themselves to death. The young man pondered this a while and said, you know sir, I think this applies to women as well, "If you see that wild stare in their eyes, you had better not chose to marry".

The moral of the story is that you ought to choose "AS IS". If your choice gets better over time, that will be amazing, you will take that. But if the chosen remains the way it was when you chose – that is fine as well. It's mostly useless trying to change someone - only the Holy Spirit can do that. If they were doing something wrong when you chose them, why are you complaining now when they still do the same thing? I've had several experiences in my life (too many to mention in this post), when I've not heeded this principle – and boy did I pay the price. One time, I purchased 2 cars that were cheap but were not working. I felt I could easily fix them up and use them. Well, as you can guess, I ended up paying a towing company to tow them out of the space they were occupying

in our yard. This of course was after spending heavily to fix them – and failing. Be wise my friend, buy AS IS.

“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised” - Proverbs 31:30

Balm in Gilead

Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? - Jeremiah 8:22

In second Kings Chapter one, we are presented with a story of how King Ahaziah fell down from a height and became sick. Ahaziah then sent messengers to inquire of Beelzebub in Ekron, if he would be healed. As the messengers went on their journey, Prophet Elijah, the Tishbite, accosted them. Elijah delivered a message from God asking why they were going to Ekron to inquire of Beelzebub. Was it because there was no God in Israel? No Balm in Gilead?

The same question that is posed to you today: why do you go on smoking, getting drunk, indulging in immoral pleasures, you name it. Is it because there is no pleasure in Jesus Christ? Why do you take vengeance so rapidly into your own hands? Is it because He is asleep who said: "...Vengeance is mine", I will repay – Romans 12:19

See, you were created to thirst after God. When you reject God, you tend to try and satisfy that thirst with alcohol, wild parties, love of money, pride, lust and the like. But these things do not satisfy. Only God does. Yes, there is joy unspeakable in Christ:

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable". – 1 Peter 1:8

Yes, there is peace that passeth all human understanding in Christ. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus". – Philippians 4:7.

Yes, There is love against such there is no law - in Christ.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law”. – Galatians 5:22

It's time you start drinking freely of that river flowing from the throne of God. It's time you plunge into that fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins. Where sinners plunge and lose all their guilty stains. Yes, there is Fun and pleasure in our Savior Jesus Christ. Yes, there is a balm in Gilead.

The Way Up is Down

I heard a story of a preacher who was invited to preach amongst peasants. The preacher came up the podium with much pomp and proceeded to serenade the audience with high-sounding rhetoric. He lambasted them with theology and riddled them with metaphoric axioms. The poor folks could not understand a word of what he said but nodded politely in response. Seeing that he had lost his audience, the preacher shut his bible and came down the podium in shame. An old wise woman sitting at the back of the building shook her head in pity and said:
If only he had gone up the way he came down, he would have come down the way he went up.

As a young child, I remember one day, sitting in our yard with my dad, watching neighboring children play. A man who was courting my sister at the time came to visit. He came in a flashy Mercedes, and with a lot of pomp, garnering the eyes, envy and admiration of the neighbors. He walked past my dad and I on his way to see my sister, without a simple greeting. My dad tapped me on the shoulder and said “Look who is trying to get a wife?” Needless to say, my sister is married today, but not to that guy.

God is so big because He makes Himself so little, in so much that the simple can understand Him. The King of Kings chose to make His entrance through a manger, not a red carpet sky appearance. There was no rock star attitude to him.

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death. Wherefore God has exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” – Philippians 2:8-9

The way up is down. “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted”. Matthew 23:12

Don't carry yourself so big; just come down a little bit. –
humble yourself.

Leap & Glide

The grasshopper is a small insect, not known to jump or move long distances at a time. However, the grasshopper is “On top of its game” when it comes to transporting itself from one place to another. This is because the grasshopper is a glider. The grasshopper listens for the wind, discerns its direction, leaps into the wind, and glides easily across long distances.

Flying is the closest thing to gliding in that it is also a fast method of transportation. However flying requires a lot of effort on the part of the flyer, (ask the pigeon who has to rigorously flap its wings or the airplane engineer who has to fuel and maintain the jet engine). Gliding on the other hand requires little effort on the part of the glider (the Eagle can testify).

You can achieve much more by working with the Holy Spirit, rather than working on your own, or worse still, working against Him. Rather than struggle on your own, Leap into the wind of God's will today, hold steady and glide. Hoist your sail of faith and ride the wind of His spirit across great distances. It is so much easier. It is so much faster. It is so much better. “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” - Matthew 11:30

24 Hours

Happy New Year! You say this at the start of every year don't you? You are grateful to God for allowing you see yet another year. You treat each day God has given to you as a gift and a blessing. You are yet alive, so there is yet work to be done, as the saying goes:

“While there's life, there's hope” - Marcus Tullius Cicero

Several years ago, 2003 to be precise, I wrote, on a Diary, some big dreams that I wanted God to accomplish on my behalf– the first time I ever did that. Soon afterwards, I lost the diary. Five years later, my brother found and brought this diary to me. I was pleased and pleasantly surprised when I looked in it and saw that all the dreams written were accomplished. The shocker came when I realized they were all accomplished within a span of 24 hours. A prime example that: “When it rains, it pours” - Joan Marques

In the Bible, we learn that Joseph was serving life imprisonment one day and the next day, he was prime minister over Egypt. What was the difference? 24 hours. The Israelites were slaves to the Egyptians one day and in 24 hours; they were on their way to the promise land – free and rich. Again, 24 hours was the difference. The apostle Peter was a professional fish catcher, and then He met the master, and in 24 hours, was transformed from a man of fish to a fisher of men.

At the start of each year, many witness differing degrees of hardship, be it financial hardship, relationship hardship or even spiritual hardship. In hard times, always remember that it only takes God 24 hours to turn your situation around. So has it been a little rough lately? Leap on to God's will, have faith in Him for He can do a lot in 24 hours.

God's Call

There is the story of an Eagle that laid her eggs and went out in search of food. Upon her return, she found out that one of her eggs had gone missing. The egg was stolen by a farmer and stored with Chicken eggs. The Chicken eggs and the Eagle egg hatched at about the same time. As the little eaglet grew, it realized it was different from the other chicks. It didn't have the zeal to play the kind of games they played, it didn't like their food. The chicks in return, ridiculed the eaglet, that it looked ugly and that it acted weird.

One day, the mother Eagle spotted the eaglet while on a routine search flight and screeched. The screech echoed through the bowels of the young eaglet and it responded by looking up to the sky. The Mother Eagle encouraged the eaglet to flap its wings implying that it was a bird built for the skies and not for hanging out on the ground with chickens. The eaglet tried to flap and after much struggle, was able to get to a modest height. The Eagle then swooped low and whisked the Eaglet to the skies - into the Azure.

This story illustrates how many who were born for the skies, end of staying on the ground with chickens. These are people born to be sons and daughters of God but find themselves hanging out in and with sin. But when that screech, that call, God's call, through His word, hits the Eaglet in them, they respond - leaving behind a life of sin. And reaching out to the sky of righteousness -where they belong. As it is written:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” - John 10:27

“...that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day”. - John 6:39

I know this to be true because this is how I became a Christian. Even though I had always gone to church, Christianity became real to me when I came in contact with someone who exemplified it for me. I remember looking at my example and saying: "This is who I should be; I've been living a lie, this right here, is who I am". At that point I no longer had a hold on Christianity; it had a hold on me. That Eagle screech, God's Call, struck a seed resident in me. A seed I suspected existed but was not sure if it did. There was no more doubt, it was evident, I and His and He is mine.

If you know someone whom you've always prayed for, but it seems the more you pray the worse they get. Don't give up hope. Be faithful in prayer and in the word. When God's call strikes the seed in them, they will come running home for they were Eagles, not chickens, to begin with. And like the Eagle, God is always on the lookout for his lost children. God's call cannot be resisted.

Temperance

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things ...”
1 Corinthians 9:24-25

Consider for a moment, a championship caliber athlete registered to run on lane three at the Olympics. This athlete, we will call Mike, is the top seed and has expended much energy and time in training. As the race begins, Mike, not conscious of his lane and not temperate enough to stay in it, powers on to the end, winning with 43.89 seconds on the clock - only to be disqualified. Mike had crossed into his opponent's lane several times during the race. The second placed athlete with a 45.21 seconds finish took home the gold medal - because he was temperate enough to stay in his lane.

This story shows us that speed without temperance is worthless. That talent without discipline is tragic, and that knowledge without wisdom is utterly dangerous. The temperate man who runs his race faithfully will always come out ahead. As is written:

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. - 1 Corinthians 9:27

Are We Selling Our Birthright For Pottage?

In the Bible, we read of a man named Esau, who while hungry, approached his younger brother for a meal. The younger brother, Jacob, offered a plate of pottage in exchange for his older brother's birthright. The Older brother Esau's erratic thought process went something like this: I will die if I don't get this bowl of pottage, so what good is my birthright to me? He obliged and sold his birthright.

“Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.” - Genesis 24:35

Reading further into the passage, we find out that Jacob also received his dad's blessings and went on to birth the twelve tribes of Israel. It's easy to consider this an isolated situation or out-rightly denounce Esau's flawed decision making, but the point is, we also make this decision every day. In many ways we choose to sell our birthright, our exalted position as sons and daughters of God, our heavenly passport - for money, sex and popularity.

When I first got to college many years ago, I did not establish my identity as a Christian but instead decided to look around, emulate everyone else and "go with the flow". I sold out for acceptance and popularity. Boy did I pay the price. Our number one purpose of being on earth is to be Sons and Daughters of the King and to represent Him in that capacity. May we never sell out for the passing pleasures of sin that this world has to offer. May we never sell our birthright for pottage.

Over The Bar

“Throw your heart over the bar, and your body will follow” -
Trapeze artist

As an 18 year old many years ago, I was in dire need of basic transportation. I also was sleeping on my friend's couch at the time, because I didn't have a place of my own. In lieu of these harsh circumstances, I decided to follow the advice quoted above and throw my heart over the bar of these obstacles. In God's providential mercies, I was able to purchase a car within 3 months of this decision, and within seven months, I was living in a nice three-bedroom house.

People “On top of their game” have learned to always throw their hearts over 'bars', in order that their bodies may follow. 'Bars' are what we regard to as obstacles. Obstacles according to Henry Ford, are those frightful things we see when we take our eyes off our goal. Being on top is 70% heart related, and only 30% ability related. A man that wins the heart battle has made it more than halfway to his/ her goal. “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” - Mark 9:23

It is difficult to achieve that which you can't see or that to which you have not yet given your heart to. If you want to be the head and not the tail in whatever field of life you've chosen, you must be able to consistently see an end and then throw your heart over the 'bars' of life, to that desired end. Of much more importance than worldly achievement, is the fact that, as Christians, we are called to throw our hearts over the bar of this fleeting life. In doing this, are we able to live daily, a life, worthy of that noble and high end (heaven).

Testing Precedes Triumph

I like the story of Paul, the non-believer who was hanging out with his friends at the bar. A friend purposed that they take the party on to Paul's house and perhaps his wife, Adele could join in the fun. Paul informed his friends that he didn't think that was a great idea because his wife Adele, you see, was a Christian. The friends retorted that they were all Christians as well, that everyone in the world was a Christian. And that if they would just visit Paul's house, they will prove that Adele was just like everyone else. After much resistance, Paul gave in.

The men on reaching Paul's house, pretended to be drunk. Adele being hospitable served them food. The men threw the food on the floor and launched into a cursing tirade. Paul's wife instead of reacting negatively, started singing a hymn "He bore all my shame ..." After trying for several minutes, the men gave up. Several days later they all became Christians. They just had never seen anything or anyone like that before. Adele triumphed, only because she was tested.

Many years ago, a man approached me to build him a website offering a lot of money. After researching, I found out it was scam. I turned the offer down even though I was in dire need of a financial breakthrough at the time. In God's providential mercies, I was rewarded handsomely two weeks later with much more than I needed. This was triumph to me but it came only after I had been tested.

If you are reading this, you perhaps know more about tests than I do. You perhaps, are a student and so you take tests/ quizzes/ exams on a frequent basis. I'm sure you agree that your certifications, your promotions, your affirmations and

your attestations come mostly after you've been tested. The rest of us are tested in other ways, be it a nagging health issue, trying to find that right somebody, seeking direction for the future, hoping to have your blog, business, idea take off this year. May I say this all could just be tests, and the triumph is just around the corner. Evaluate, re-evaluate but do not give up. Hold on to God, believe in Him and like Job you will come up higher than you are now. You will triumph.

Patience - The Triple Threat

Consider a man, named Brian who is looking for a good job? Since Brian has asked God about it, and since it is God's will, then it is as certain as certain can be that a good job will be Brian's for the taking. The question then is, when? This is where patience comes into the equation. Patience has three main duties to accomplish. I call it "The Triple Threat". It is to:

1. Prove
2. To Humble
3. And to Prepare

“And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove to thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no”. - Deuteronomy. 8:2.

If Brian gives up after a year's wait, it shows that his strength is little. If He stops waiting and instead settles for a bad job, it shows his faith level is deficient.

“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small”. Proverbs 24:10

Because Brian waited for the job, he will appreciate it when it is secured. He will also be very humble about it. This would be proof that patience has completed its work of perfecting Brian. If patience doesn't complete its work, then Brian's job will most likely ruin and ruin him. His gift (job) will most likely turn him away from the Giver (God) who gave him the ability to become.

Consider the man Noah, who went ahead and built an ark, at

God's command, irrespective of the fact that there was no scientific evidence that it would rain. It wasn't conceived of in the heart of man, at the time, that mere water could destroy the entire earth. Amidst the mockery, Noah had heard God, and that was all that mattered. God said it, which settled it. It took a while, but it happened. Water destroyed the earth but Noah and his family were saved.

Patience is acknowledging that God's timing is the best. Even when you know you can implement and impose your own timing, rather you yield to the timing of God. Patience is not giving up after a try didn't succeed. It is getting back up, dusting YOU and trying again. Patience does not mean sit still, fold your arms and sing Que sera sera - "If it will be, it will be". No, there is always going to be work to be done on your part, but don't interfere with the work patience is accomplishing in proving you, in humbling you, and in preparing you for all God has in store for you.

"But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" - James 1:4

Transition

I recently had a meeting with an old colleague of mine. I visited Connie (not her real name) and her husband David at their home. Connie had lost her job as an executive recently and was depressed. She went from all the activity that came with having an 80 hour a week job to being home by herself. What do I do asked Connie? The advice I gave Connie and her husband is what I am about to share today.

Connie, like many people today, is simply going through a transition. Transitions are not bad but must be handled with the right perspective with a biblical perspective. Three steps to take when passing through a transition are:

1. **Be thankful to God:** For life and for the opportunity He has provided for you to experience what you have so experienced so far. As scriptures declare: "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name" - Psalm 100:4
2. **Reflect:** On how far you've come and what has brought you to this point - Try as much as you can to connect the dots. This step often reveals what is the next thing to do and shows where you are transitioning.
3. **Ask, What is God doing now?** - This is a vital question to ask in prayer and if done with sincerity and humility, will open doors. God will begin to reveal, through his word, through friends, through dreams, through personal reading - what it is that you are to do and how you are to do it. Where it is that you are transitioning to. This must be done with faith in the scripture that:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” - Romans 8:28

Transitions, while uncertain and sometimes painful, can provide a time of respite, a time of recharge and the great opportunity for realignment. Realignment to your true calling in life. If you are currently going through a transition, be it a job loss, the loss of a dear family member, a geographical move or relationship loss - remember, all is not lost. You are transitioning to something greater. Determine to take advantage of this situation in launching to the future God has prepared for you.

So You Feel Inadequate?

Do you sometimes feel inadequate to preach the gospel? To step up into leadership and to assume positions of authority? The Bible has plenty of advice to help stem this. If you are feeling inadequate at this time, remember that the prophet Jeremiah felt the same way as a young man. In fact these are the exact words he used when he received the call to perform his life work:

“Then said I: Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth” - Jeremiah 1:6

Be rest assured, you are not alone in your feeling of inadequacy. But rather than squander the opportunities God is placing along your path, or shutting the door on your divine call, I will like you to consider the words God said to Jeremiah in response:

“ ... Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you," says the Lord” - Jeremiah 1:7-8

Through it all, Jeremiah fulfilled his call and is one of the most revered prophets of old. When you begin to feel that you cannot express yourself grammatically, theoretically or intellectually, remember that Simeon Peter was an illiterate yet GOD used him. Moses stammered and yet he was still able to do the work of GOD efficiently. Consider Timothy who started his ministry at a young age and the advice he heeded:

“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” - 1 Timothy 4:12

You've got what it takes. The anointing breaks the yoke. The anointing precedes the mission. God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called. He anoints the called. God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Don't say I need more experience, God is eager to teach you on the job. Don't say the older folks will not listen to me, they are neither as old nor as wise as the God who called you is. Don't feel inadequate because He is adequate. GO!

God Settles You

A wealthy merchant, Isaac, was once approached by a young man who asked, "How is it that you have so many stores and are so wealthy". After thinking for a while, the wealthy man responded, "My boss settled me". He went on to explain that as a little boy, he lived in an impoverished rural area with little opportunity and no plans for his future. A man from the big city visited his village one day and asked if he would like to serve him in business. That if he served long and well enough, he will be SETTLED.

Isaac, having nothing else to do and with no objections from his parents decided to travel with the city man. He served for five years, scrubbing floors, keeping the shop, marketing, selling and keeping the books. His boss's business began to prosper, and he opened new stores. It became apparent that Isaac was grossly underpaid compared to his peers but Isaac did not complain and just kept on serving - bearing the suffering in silence. After about five years, Isaac received the settlement of a store. Applying everything he learned from his years of underpaid service, Isaac quickly grew his store to two and then to four, and then to eight. Every store he opened prospered and he had not stopped expanding since.

In the Bible, Peter prays:

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you" - 1 Peter 5:10

After you have suffered a while, God perfects, then He establishes, He strengthens and yes, He settles you.

1) God can use suffering to perfect you. To establish character in you and to build resilience. But He does not just

stop there.

2) He goes ahead and offers you a platform (establishes you), so that when you speak, people listen.

3) He goes further to strengthen you because people will criticize you when you move ahead. When your head is lifted above the crowd, you become a target. It's not that you may be hit but you will be hit. You will need God's strength to withstand, absorb or deflect the hits – and keep moving forward.

4) Finally, God will settle you.

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” Galatians 6:9

You Are Unique

Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated, thus, everyone's task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it. - Viktor Frankl

The French soccer team touted as the best in the world, and considered favorites to retain their world cup title, lost all their games at the 2002 soccer world cup because they lost sight of their uniqueness. The team would sit and watch games of their opponents, and propose ways by which they could break down defenses, and curb attacking play. There is nothing wrong with this tactic except that they just kept looking at other teams, and lost sight of themselves, and their wonderful abilities.

The Brazilian team, on the other hand were crowned champions of that tournament, even without a good seeding coming into the tournament. A player in the Brazilian squad came out to say that they didn't have to do all that the French did in order to win. He said that the Brazilian team knew who they were, they were confident in whom they were. They were BRAZIL, and so while it was possible that they could be beat, it was going to be very difficult for any team to beat them. This is not being proud; it is simply being confident, knowing who you are and being that person. Always improving, yet being YOU. They appreciated the fact that they were unique and that there was no other team that played the same way they did.

God reiterates in the Bible on several occasions: "There is none like me". This is uniqueness. You could search throughout the entire earth, one thing is sure; there is

none like the Lord Jesus Christ. Rather than look at the giants out there and fret, look at the giant in you and be bold. Amongst the almost 7 billion people on earth, there is none other exactly like you. No two people have the same fingerprints. The psalmist said:

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.- Psalms 139:14

I believe he was talking about his uniqueness. Stop and think about that a while, there is no one on earth that is made exactly like you. You are unique. You are an original and not a counterfeit. There is something you can do on earth that no other person can do exactly like you did it. Any one, who runs in a track he is not registered to run in, does not get the prize. Run in your track, and not in the track of others. Run your race. You are allowed to look at how others are running, and seek to better your running skills, but in to wise must you change tracks.

The fact that no one looks just like you means no one is more handsome or more beautiful than you are. This is not being boastful, neither is it consolatory - it is confidence. Nobody should be compared to you; neither should you compare yourself to others. No matter how much you look up to your mentor, you should never lose sight of your uniqueness and your originality. In order to be on top of your game, you must realize that there can't be any one just like yourself. Uniqueness is a gift from God. Use it to your advantage.

3 Tips That Will Help You Persevere

The brick walls are there for a reason. The brick walls are not there to keep us out. The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something. Because the brick walls are there to stop the people who don't want it badly enough. They're there to stop the other people." — Randy Pausch

I once had a manager who, it felt, was out to make my life miserable. Ever had one of those? You see, he was a micro-manager who needed to know all you were doing, how you were doing it and why you were doing it. He operated a system that always took and gave back nothing in return. Over time, I started learning how to counter his system and make life miserable for him as well. He got a hard time from me once I learned his insecurities. Well, two miserable people at a job seldom make for a good work environment. Over time, I felt weary and determined to quit, however I had a milestone that was fast approaching and so I thought, if I could only wait till this milestone arrives, if only I could wait this out. It was a very difficult time but I determined to wait it out. Several people promised me employment of which I was ready to take but I had to wait a month or two for this to pan out. This promise of new work also helped me persevere.

I arrived at my milestone and prepared to put in my 2 weeks' notice. Before I walked in to put in this notice, I called a colleague of mine whom I revered and was advised to wait it out some more - to persevere. It so happened that as I persevered, God opened up a new door for me. Another manager came (not knowing the ordeal I was dealing with), and asked me to join his team – a team I had once tried to join with my own strength, but couldn't at the time. Literally, someone from another department offered me my dream

work and implored me earnestly to take it. Wow! This testimony taught me that God isn't lying when He says:

For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. - Habakkuk 2:3

Here are the three tips that will help you persevere:

1. **Look to the future:** The fact that I had a milestone approaching helped me persevere. It also helped that other people promised me employment and so I kept looking forward to them.

2. **Seek wise counsel:** I was determined to quit and the last thing I wanted to hear was someone telling me to stick it out. I knew there was a chance my wise colleague would ask me to wait a while, and so I didn't want to call at first. I succumbed when I remembered that I needed to hear the truth even when it is hard.

3. **Trust in God:** Believe with all your heart the scripture:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

As long as you are in the game, you have a chance. Persevere my dear friends. Persevere. Your God will come and save you.

Use The "IF" Factor When You Plan

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But "IF" not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up - Daniel 3:18

Wow! What a statement. Let me rephrase: "We are 100% persuaded in God's ability to save and rescue us from the fiery furnace because we serve him. But "IF" not, we will rather choose His will than yours. There is something important to catch here, and that is the use of the word, "IF". What these three brave young men said had no cinch of doubt in it. They believed and had tremendous faith that God was going to deliver them from the burning fiery furnace - which He did. Here are two things we can deduce from this situation, things we can practically use when planning.

1. Believe:

It is important that you have faith in God. Have faith that He will bring your plans to fruition, especially if you have handed them over to Him in prayer.

2. Use the "IF" Factor:

This is interpreted by a lot of people as a plan B, but the IF factor is not a plan B. It is believing that God's ways are higher than yours and that His will, not yours - be done. Many today are admitted into mental asylums, and/ or commit suicide, because they fail to use the "IF" factor. They scheme, make plans, believe in these plans, and get their homework done. But when these plans don't work out for some reason, they collapse mentally. Some give up faith in God, citing Him as a fake, simply because their plans did not work out. How pathetic.

God is sovereign, and what He has willed will happen. It always pays to align yourself to His will. Don't put God in a box the size of your brain, giving Him orders as to what you want - my way or the high way kind of a deal. It is best you allow His will some latitude in your life.

Are You a Genuine Christian?

There is the beautiful story of a man, Justin who went Antelope hunting with his friend Aki. Aki was a born again Christian was not ashamed of his faith. Aki constantly talked to Justin about giving his life to Christ. Justin on the other hand was a very good marksman. Justin and Aki took their positions hiding behind a bush close to a herd of Antelopes.

The Antelopes knew the hunters were there and so did not come out to the open field. "Let me show you a trick," said Justin to Aki. He then proceeded to bring out a peculiar looking flute and started to play it. This flute sounded a lot like a baby Antelope crying out for its mother. Aki started protesting, "No, you can't do that, you can't trick that mother Antelope to coming out in the open looking for its baby - that's not fair". Justin turned a deaf ear to his friend's plea and kept playing the flute. Just then the mother Antelope, knowing that the hunters were there, got up and came into the open, looking for its baby. Justin took aim, being a marksman; there was no way he could miss. The Mother Antelope looked Justin directly into the eye knowing it will be shot but did not retreat. It had to find its baby.

The Antelope was a genuine mother - it didn't fake it. It didn't try to be it, it was born a mother and there was something in it that longed for its baby - even in the face of death. Aki turned his back and wept as he waited for the shot to ring out. After a while, Justin put down his gun and started crying too. He could not shoot that mother Antelope. He said to his friend Aki, "lead me to this Christ you keep talking about". I want something real, something genuine like this Mother Antelope who would yearn for her baby even if it cost her life. I want something genuine". Aki lead his friend Justin to Christ right there in the hunting field.

The Antelope was a genuine mother and so the challenge is, "Are you a genuine Christian, or are you playing make belief? Are you a Christian when it is convenient to be so, and then in the face of shame, peer pressure, adversity or perhaps death, act like it's not cool to be a Christian any more. It's Ok to pray to God when you need something from Him, but when your stomach is full, do you deny his existence? Do you subtly deny your Christianity when you are at work or hanging out with your friends?"

Be Appreciative!

I would rather be able to appreciate things I cannot have than to have things I am not able to appreciate - Elbert Hubbard

There is the story of a boy who complained about not having shoes. While most children his age had lots of shoes, he couldn't even own one. This complaining continued until he saw another boy his age, go past without legs - using crutches. He considered the situation, and obtained wisdom. He knew that it was not the boy's fault that he was born lame. He began to appreciate the fact that he had legs, and made sure he washed his legs daily from the dust he picked up while walking.

The moment you stop to appreciate, you start to depreciate. Complaining will never get any problem genuinely solved nor will it win you God's favor. Anyone with a thankful countenance cannot be kept down. No one can make a complainer out of you when you appreciate everything from the blooming of young flowers to the growing of weeds - from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.

Don't forget the babies born with HIV at no choice or doing of theirs. Don't forget the people dying because they can't afford meals. Oh, don't forget people suffering from various forms of diseases, again of no choosing of theirs, while you wake up each day, and go to bed without serious ailments. Pause for a moment now to consider this. While you live, breath and think - be appreciative.

Ain't Nobody Got Time For That

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. - Ephesians 6:12

There is a story about a lady named Sweet Brown, an Internet sensation, whose apartment was ravaged by fire. When interviewed, she explained how that she had Bronchitis, and "Ain't nobody got time for that". People raved at how funny the interview was. I too, think the interview was funny. But I also think it has a message. I think of it in terms of people that seem to want to steal your joy. I think of it in terms of the difficult people at your job, the neighbor that seems irritable, that family member whom it seems was sent on earth to make your life miserable. I think of it in terms of your bitter rival, the thorn in your flesh, the person that brings out the worst in you, time and time again. Well, "Ain't nobody got time for that".

Ain't nobody got time for strife, malice, hatred and all that. For the scriptures reveal that our battle is not physical. It's not against Him or Her. It's not against any specific human being. Our battle is against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world. Our struggle, our fight, is against spiritual wickedness in high places. May we be constantly fighting this battle, not with our fists, but on our knees. May we continually claim the victory Christ won for us on the cross, Who crushed the serpents head. May we continually plead the blood of Jesus Christ over our loved ones. May we continually call upon that name that is given above every other name, that at its mention, every knee

shall bow. Be it in heaven, on earth, or under the earth -
JESUS CHRIST.

The next time someone tries to get on your nerves, tries to kick dirt in your eyes, tries to pour sand in your cereal, tries to be water in your blood, tries to start a quarrel or a fight - Just remind them that: "Ain't nobody got time for that."

Will You Be Made Whole?

There is the story found in John chapter 5, of an impotent man who had suffered a physical ailment for 38 years. Jesus Christ met this man at the pool of Bethesda and asked the man a simple question: Will you be made whole?

In other words, the Answer asked a question. The all-knowing and infinite God asked a finite man a question, "Will you be made whole?" The man's reply gives a hint as to why the question was asked in the first place. Instead of saying Yes, or perhaps No, the man began to make excuses. He said: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. - John 5:7

Jesus went ahead and healed him but we can learn from this. We can learn that it is not any man, it is not our education or lack thereof, it is not our connections, it is not the witch in the village, and it is not any demon under torment - that keeps us from being all that God wants us to be. It is our failure to provide a yes or no to this simple question: "Will you be made whole?"

Through this question, God is telling us that the game has changed. It is no longer who you know, but who knows you. Jesus Christ, the God of heaven and earth knows you and He is asking today. Will you be made whole? I hope your answer is to the affirmative.

Follow Thou Me

Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. - John 21:21-22

Are you looking at how big the other person's ministry is? How many monthly visitors they attract to their blog or how many twitter followers they have? You know, the apostle Peter did that one time. He observed how the other disciple that Jesus loved was tagging along without an invitation. To which Jesus replied that it was not Peter's business what He chooses to do with the other disciple but you, Peter, Follow me. Stop looking at how much success the other person has and instead, you, start following.

Following Jesus Christ is not analogous to following Justin Bieber on twitter. A situation where you passively observe his tweets, respond on occasion and hope you get re-tweeted. Jesus Christ, the God of the universe, the creator of heaven and earth re-tweets, both privately and publicly, your every tweet. Yes, He follows you. He knows your name, He knows where you live, He knows your struggles and in it all, He calls you friend. He cheers you on, He laughs when you laugh and He cries when you cry. Is it too much then for Him to ask you, "Follow thou me?"

Whom Say Ye That I am?

He asked his disciples, saying , Whom do men say that I the Son of man am. And they said , Some say that thou art John the Baptist : some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? - Matthew 16:13-15

People have different perspectives on who God is. To some He is the Savior, He is exactly whom He says He is as revealed by His word. To others, He is Beelzebub (a devil), a scam, a self-indulgent bigot, a nobody. All of these perspectives do not really matter in the grand scheme of things. The perspective that matters emanates from your answer to this question today:
But whom say ye that I am?

Who do you think Jesus Christ is? What is your perception of Him? What does He mean to you? To me: He is my healer, my best friend, my savior, My Lord, my sufficiency, my ever present help, My confidant, ... in fact, He is my everything, my all in all. Your answer to this question, whatever that may be, will determine your future standing with God, as it did with Peter. So the question to you once again is:

Whom say ye that I am?

Servants Upon Horses?

I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth - Ecclesiastes 10:7

Listening to the University of Indianapolis President, Dr. Robert Manuel speak recently at his inauguration, I came out with the incredible insight that an education (learning) and credentialing are not the same thing. Any organization can credential. The gatekeeper's can, the kingmakers can. But can everyone educate? On the other hand, Parents can educate, Teachers can educate, heck, you can self-educate, but can you, parents and/ or teachers credential? Possibly not!

Little wonder some institutions are taking advantage of the internet's reach to credential at will - for a few hundred dollars. Minting a generation of credentialed but uneducated "professionals". Servants upon horses? Dr. Manuel puts it this way: "A nation that is concerned about its competitiveness can't afford to simply credential its populace; it must ensure that they are educated to be creative, to be innovative, and to be engines of discovery". I think this also applies to us Christians. May you strive to acquire knowledge (know how), that you be not a prince/ princess walking as servants upon the earth. Proverbs 19:1 says: "Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good ..." May you seek to know and not just be decorated . After all, Knowledge is education and education is knowledge.

I Will Stand For You

There is the story of a renowned evangelist who died and subsequently appeared before the pearly gates of heaven. A voice sounded from inside the gates: "You are not qualified to be here, however you can appeal your case before the judgment throne".

The evangelist made his way to the judgment throne to plead his case. He was asked the question: "Did you ever lie while you were on earth?" He thought he had lived a pretty good life, but in the midst of a bright light that beamed on him, he remembered all the white lies he had told and replied, "Yes, I did".

The voice came again, "Did you ever steal while you were on earth?" Again, he thought he was pretty good at telling the truth but with that light on him, his reply was, "Yes, a couple of times". The questions kept coming: idolatry, adultery, coveted, extorted? - Each time the answer came back, yes! The evangelist felt exposed in the midst of that bright light. Every wrong thing he did on earth came to the surface and he started confessing in tears.

The voice said, "well then, you do not deserve to be here. You may leave now. This place is only for the righteous, for the spotless". As the evangelist turned to leave with his head bowed, he heard another voice - a still, small voice. The voice of Jesus Christ saying, "Yes, this my servant was not perfect while he was on earth, but this one thing he did, he stood up for me. I will now stand up for him and take his place, that he may enter".

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, I will confess also before my Father which is in heaven. -

Matthew 10:32

If You Suck It Up, You will Get It Done

...O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done . - Matthew 26:42

Back in College many years ago, I had a near breakdown moment in the office of my Academic Advisor, Camille Flora. I was explaining, or rather complaining to her, that I was taking 18 credit hours that semester (6 classes), just so I could graduate sooner and save money. In addition to that, I had a job that was over 40 hours a week, in fact, I had to work from 6pm to 6am, a 12 hour non-stop shift of back breaking labor that left me tired and exhausted.

Many times, I had to leave work at 6am and rush to school for an exam starting in 2 hours. And to top it all up, I was also involved with the cross-country team in an attempt to gain a scholarship. I felt I could not do it anymore, I could not take it anymore. Camille listened intently with empathy strewn all over her face and then responded with words I have never forgotten. She said: "Suck it up Uche, and get it done".

Camille went further to explain that I would come out of this stronger, farther and further than my peers. I did not fully understand it at the time but looking back at it now, she was right.

You see, Jesus Christ was faced with a worse ordeal more than 2000 years ago. He's lot was that of death by crucifixion, betrayal by a disciple and immense suffering. He was privy that these horrifying events were about to begin and he was weary of the anxiety, the anguish, and the crushing weight he bore. He cried out to his Father:
...O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:

nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. - Matthew 26:39
Thankfully, He understood that it was His Father's will and chose to suck it up and get it done. Because He did, you and I have access to the Father today; we are adopted into his family. He calls us son/ daughter, heirs, and we call Him Abba Father. Because He did, He was given a name above all names. He rose to seat at His Father's right hand, far above principalities and powers of darkness.

I know you sometimes feel overwhelmed by your lot in life. You feel you have been dealt a wrong card. You have so much in your plate and there is only so much you can juggle. If what you have was given to you by God, then be rest assured that He will not give you more than you can handle. I know it's hard but if you will suck it up, you will go farther and further, you will without doubt be triumphant. If you suck it up, you will get it done.

The 3 Invaluable Ways To Handle Grief

Grief - keen mental suffering or distress over affliction or loss; sharp sorrow; painful regret. - Dictionary.com

Many years ago, I was informed through a phone call that there had been a death in the family. This produced the greatest grief I had yet experienced. I was in so much pain and didn't know how to handle the emotions. I had just turned 22 at the time and thus entered into a state of denial. I numbed the pain by putting it into a mental box and setting it aside. Not to be thought of - not to be dealt with.

Delving into scripture, I see now, how I could have used the example Jesus set to handle my grief. And how you can better handle grief. In Luke chapter 9, John the Baptist, a friend of Jesus, the one who baptized him, had just been beheaded by Herod. Jesus, being 100% man, was grieved and felt the sharp pain of this loss. The way He handled his grief, serves as a pointer for you to handle your own disappointments, setbacks and painful situations. Jesus was not in denial of his loss nor did He display attitudes of indifference. In that moment, he did these 3 things:

1. GIVE of himself to others: The keyword here is give. Jesus sent his disciples out to preach and to serve others. He poured Himself into his disciples by according them the opportunity to learn while doing. He GAVE them power to heal, authority over devils, helpful advice and a commission to fulfill. At a time he could have been getting comfort, flowers etc. from others (there is nothing wrong in getting these), Jesus chose instead to give in abundant ways.

More so, as he tried to get away for a while, a multitude of people kept finding and coming to him. In this, he was not

grouchy nor did he send them away empty handed. Instead He healed their sick, preached the gospel to them and even fed them physically. Jesus was constantly giving to others at this difficult time. Giving to others takes the focus off yourself and reminds you that you have plenty left to be thankful for. Plenty, that others will kill to have. There is so much left in you to add value to humanity.

2. Come apart, rest a while and rejuvenate: On more than one occasion, Jesus went aside to a private place in the desert to pray and be encouraged by his Father. This is an important part of grieving. Setting aside a time and a place to be alone. In this alone time, get on your knees and pray to the Father to help you with your pain. Scripture tells us: The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. - Psalm 34:18
In solitude, read the scriptures, meditate on it. Reflect on the situation. Look forward to the future. Plan the future. Enter the future - don't stop!

3. Repeat: In Luke chapter 10, Jesus iterated the first 2 points. He sent his disciples out AGAIN to preach and serve. He gave to the multitude AGAIN. He was transfigured on a mountain while he prayed.

So should you as well my friend - iterate. Give some more, come apart some more to rest and rejuvenate. With your strength building, rejoice in your spirit. Now go out in full measure and accomplish all that God has called you to. Don't stop!

When They Put You Out, Then Will He Find You

When I started becoming public about my faith, one of the first changes I noticed was that I wasn't as popular as I used to be. I felt somewhat put out of the circle, excommunicated from the clique if you will. Perhaps I had lost the cool factor, or had become plain weird - I still can't put a finger on it. You will agree that one of the drawbacks of following Christ is the sense of excommunication you feel from your friends. All of a sudden, people that used to come around before don't come any more. Familiar faces become distant. The calls and correspondence don't come in the frequency that you are accustomed to. If you have ever felt that way, then to you I have come to preach.

The Bible tells a story of a man born blind but was healed by Jesus Christ. The haters condemned this healing, arguing that a heretic, Jesus, could do no such thing. The blind man, perhaps a non-educated peasant, proceeded to preach a powerful sermon to the professional preachers, the so called experts of everything God. He said:

“Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing”. John 9:30-33

The Pharisees would have none of such preaching and so they put him out of the congregation. As soon as Jesus heard that the former blind man had been put out, He searched for him and FOUND him. He offered him salvation in addition to his healing. The man accepted, believed and

worshiped. In that one day, he was healed, saved and had the privilege of preaching the gospel to the world, for all ages (for we still hear of his deed today).

In my case, Jesus Christ found me by miraculously sending people, that inspired the life out of me - and still do. Family that inspired me to stretch and to be all that God has called me to be. In short, when I was put out, he found me. Are you feeling somewhat lonely because you profess Christ? Do you feel as though opportunities are not coming your way due to your faith or are you being shunned by others whom in times past have answered your every beck and call? Take heart, don't be dismayed for when they put you out, then will he find you.

Pray For Boston

On Monday April 15th 2013, at about 2:50pm, a bomb was detonated near the finish line of the Boston marathon. 12 seconds later, another bomb exploded. In all, these tragic and devastating events left in its wake, 3 people dead, 180 people injured, and a nation in shock. President Obama addressed the nation 3 hours later: "American people will say a prayer for Boston tonight", he said, prompting the harsh tag #PrayForBoston

My Facebook and Twitter feeds were filled immediately with words of encouragement and prayers for Boston punctuated with harsh tag #PrayForBoston. Yes, I agree we should pray for Boston. I am praying for this historic city, and I am sure you are praying too. I do not condone this evil act of placing bombs in a crowded area knowing someone will die from its effect. But I also know we should be praying for Boston not just in the bad times but also in the good times. In fact, we should #PrayForBostonInAllTimes

We should pray for Boston when it achieves its breakthroughs like having the first public school and subway system in America, when it achieves military victories like the Siege of Boston, and also, we should pray for Boston when it goes through daunting times like the Boston Massacre or the recent Marathon bombings. We should be praying for America, not just when its economy is stuttering but also, when it is booming. When America's morality is at its highest, we should pray and when its morality is at its lowest, we should also pray. We should be praying for the world during nightmarish eras of war and also during protracted periods of peace. In essence, we should be praying, not just in the bad times as we are oft to do, but also in the good

times. As scripture reminds us:

Pray without ceasing - 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Where Is God In All This?

In the year 2013, we witnessed people die as a result of a bomb at the Boston Marathon. An earthquake in Iran killed about 34 people in nearby Pakistan. 26 people died in a Baghdad cafe blast and coordinated bombings in the country of Iraq has claimed over 40 lives. A fertilizer plant in West, Texas blew up taking about 35 lives with it. In all these, many were left wounded and maimed.

Where is God in all this? Many people ask. Some Christians rush to defend God. A defense is that man is on free moral agency, he calls 100% of his shots, and there are consequences to his evil deeds - rightly so. For example, if I make a decision of my volition, to drive while drunk and someone gets killed as a consequence, why do I blame God? But God does not need to be defended any more than a Lion does, He needs to be unleashed. He does not need our defense, He needs our witness.

The disciples tried once to place blame on man's free will solely as the cause of evil, they asked if the sins of a blind man's parents were responsible for his blindness. Jesus answered: "...Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." - John 9:3

Can this thick darkness around us show that there is a light?
Can all the evil happenings this week remind us that we are depraved and in need of a Savior?

Bragging Rights - 100% Man, 100% God

Why do you always brag on Jesus Christ?

People ask this question from time to time. He was just a good man, they say, perhaps a prophet as some Muslims assert. Well, I agree he was 100% man, but I brag on Him because he also was 100% God. Let me explain:

Jesus Christ was 100% man when he was sleeping in a boat, exhausted from the hard day's work. But when he stood up and rebuked the wind, saying 'Peace be still', and that violent storm ceased immediately at his word - That was 100% God. He was 100% man when he wept over the death of his beloved friend Lazarus, but when he stood up and said: "Lazarus, come forth"; and a man who had been dead 3 days came out of the grave alive - That had to be 100% God.

He was 100% man who felt the pangs of hunger on several occasions, but when he, with 2 loaves of bread and 2 fishes, fed 5,000 people - That was 100% God. He was 100% man when he was strewn out on a cross, bleeding and left to die. He died like a man, he died in so much that the sun hid itself. He died till the veil in the temple was torn in two. He died till they embalmed him and laid him out in a tomb. But 3 days later, He rose from the dead as he promised- that was 100% God.

The intriguing part, the catchy part if you will, is that He, 100% God, lives in you. Think about it, rejoice, and go a-bragging! "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ", - Galatians 6:14

Give And Then Give Some More

This week, the Lord has been speaking to me about giving above and beyond, about giving some more. I am reminded of biblical Rebecca who chose not just to give to the servant of Abraham alone, but also to give some more to all his Camels - without any thought of gain. I am reminded of Jesus who felt compassion for the multitudes. Sheep without shepherds, he thought them as, and then proceeded to teach them many words of wisdom - tuition free.

I think of the disciples, who expressed empathy towards the multitudes, and implored on Jesus to send them away to the towns and villages, that they may find something to eat, and not faint. Jesus appreciated the empathy and compassion of his disciples, but decided to give some more. He took it up a notch when he said:

“Give ye them to eat” - Mark 6:27

In other words, He said, let's not just spell out directions at them and ask them to go it all on their own, to do it all by themselves. Let us give some more by taking their hands and showing them the way. Let us not just feed their minds and souls. Let us give some more by feeding their bodies as well. Yes, we've given them that which is adequate, but let us give them some more. Rebecca got a big reward for going above and beyond in her giving. Jesus Christ got a big reward for giving some more. You already know the benefits of giving selflessly, but try giving some more. Go on, step it up a notch - Give some more.

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give” - Winston Churchill

How to Preach The Gospel

It was 3:00am in the morning. The disciples of Jesus Christ were gathered in the upper room, continuing in prayer and fasting as they had been commanded. Suddenly, the room began to shake. Tongues of fire fell on their head. They all began to speak with a different tongue. They spoke so loud, it awakened the entire neighborhood. The neighbors began to assemble outside the upper room to see what all the fuss was about. They automatically assumed that these men had partied so hard through the night, they were now drunk. I mean how else will you explain this strange, erratic and mysterious behavior of unlearned men speaking in other languages.

Peter came out and defended the group. He explained that they were not drunk as assumed but an act of God had just happened. God has just done something he promised in scripture when he said: "...I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" - Acts 2:17

Peter proceeded to tell them what God had done. His story elicited the response. "What shall we do to be saved". Peter led them to Christ by asking that they believe in Jesus Christ and be baptized for the remission of sins. The gift of the Holy Spirit will be received for this gift is not just for them but also for all generations as many as will be called. That was the first sermon preached since the ascension of Christ under the auction of the Holy Spirit. That my friends, is how to preach. The Holy Spirit enables us to preach.

In John chapter 9, we read about a blind man was healed by Jesus. This was an act of God in his life. This healing was so

obvious that people came to ask him what and why his healing had taken place. The former blind man with no formal training or former preaching opportunity proceeded to tell them what had happened. The professional preachers of his day assailed him with contemptuous, opprobrious and abusive language. They reminded him of how he was not just a sinner but also, an uneducated sinner. It's always powerful when the unlearned, who through one act of God on their lives, attempt to preach the gospel. They confound the wise. They are effective.

So what is stopping you? Are people putting limitations on you or are you putting limitation on yourself - that you cannot preach? Is it that your past is so bad, your conscience prohibits you from preaching, or is it that you are currently living in sin and that is a preaching dis-qualifier? Is it that you aren't of the "correct" racial makeup, that you never completed formal schooling, that you haven't read through the Bible? Why should God use you when there are many others out there, why shouldn't He go and use them? Is it your lack of financial resources that is keeping you from preaching? Whatever it is that is holding you back, you need to understand that none of this matters. Nothing disqualifies you from preaching. Preaching is not that complicated. It does not require complex training, or even an educational degree. Matter of fact, the men God has used historically to preach the gospel, are mostly unlearned men. Preaching is simply telling someone (or many people at the same time) an act of God in your life and then letting them know God can do it in their lives too, if they only believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A One Man Invasion!

Moses, for 40 years had studied under the best tutors money could provide. He had enrolled in the current equivalent of West Point and came out with the highest military honors. He was well mannered, versed in history and cultured to the core. Moses was second to none.

According to the Bible, Moses was also the most humble on earth. It took Moses 40 years to perfect his strategy of rescuing his brothers and sisters - the children of Israel. But he failed miserably when he began to execute. He didn't just fail; he also became a coward and fled to the desert. Exiling in the desert, he met with God who, within a 40-year period knocked out every military education Moses had acquired. God then armed him with new tools of divine warfare: a Stick, a belief that He is, and a word "Let my people Go".

As Moses marched towards Egypt to rescue the Israelites, I imagine he was met by fellow desert dwellers that asked: "Bro Mo, where are you headed"? I imagine Moses replying, "I am heading to Egypt to take over". Think of it, Moses going to defy Pharaoh and the finest military on earth. I call this, A one man invasion.

Look, you may be by yourself today and feel you can't achieve much, but God does not work in crowds, He works with individuals. You may feel lonely right now but you are not alone. He says: "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee". Hebrews 13:5. Don't think you can't make a difference - you can. Continually submit yourself to God and keep trusting in Him. He has all it takes to turn you from someone in recluse to a one-man invasion.

You Have Overcome

Napoleon Bonaparte, arguably the greatest military genius to live, having conquered the known world by age 33, yet being human, he died a drunkard. It is said that prostitutes were found amongst his army. Napoleon could conquer the world but himself he could not conquer. And he certainly could not conquer death. Napoleon went the way of all men

Jesus Christ, at age 33, being human, conquered the world "...I have overcome the world" – John 16:33. But He did not stop there; He conquered self by being without sin. "...but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are -yet was without sin" – Hebrews 4:15. He ultimately laid down his life, so that others, through Him might live. Better yet, Jesus Christ conquered death. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? - 1 Corinthians 15:55

Though you enjoy many of life's successes, and yes, its many troubles, you are yet human. You will go the way of all men. "Man born of woman is of a few days and full of trouble" – Job 14:1. But if you accept the sacrifice Jesus made, if you willingly accept the exchange of His life for your death. Then you will receive the gift of eternal life. There will be no need for anxiety over tomorrow. For you would have overcome with Him. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" – John 16:33

Scandalous Redemption - Musings of a Pharisee

“Scandal - a disgraceful or discreditable action, circumstance, etc.” - Dictionary.com

This man is doing some pretty amazing things, like healing the sick and raising the dead. He is preaching the gospel with authority and his meetings are drawing record-breaking crowds.

Crowds we have not seen in our lifetime. Both rich and poor, they come to hear him speak. Some are starting to believe that he is the messiah we have long awaited. That this man Jesus could save us, as a people, from Roman Colonization. We've worked very hard over the years studying and striving to be where we are, yet just a few people come to our churches, and that out of compulsion. And yet this man, this carpenter's son, with no formal training or schooling gets the prestige that comes with expounding God's word to the multitude. You know, this man brings out the worst in us - resentment, jealousy, animosity; you name it - where did he come from and who does he think he is?

We've seen this play out before, haven't we? We must resort to our political playbook and somehow besmirch his stellar reputation. We must halt his wave of popularity by sowing doubts in the people's mind as to his sincerity. And we know just how to do it - scandal. But how do we get this man embroiled in scandal? A man we know, has never cheated on his wife, heck he is not even married. A man who is not aloof but shows empathy to all in likeness we have never before seen. A man who has few worldly possessions and earnings, we can hardly get him on taxes. How do we take down this man?

Well, we'll arrest him anyway and subject him to a

congressional hearing. Hours of grilling questions will bring something out. After all, He never did deny the allegations that he was equal with God. We'll get him on that one. We will allege that if He is one with God, then surely he wants to overthrow the Roman government. The Roman's will sign his death warrant on that basis. Oh, but we won't just execute him with lethal injection, we must kill his name using the instrument of shame. We will publicly disgrace him by hanging him on a cross. Didn't scripture say "...anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse"? - Deuteronomy 21:23

Look at him now, hanging in shame. He saved others, yet himself he cannot save. If he says he is the Son of God, then why doesn't he prove it to us here and now by coming down that tree? His disciples are on the run. His followers can't renounce him fast enough. We've got our dignity back; we've got our congregants back.

But wait ...didn't scripture say that a man born of a virgin will suffer many things to save his people. Didn't scripture show us that the patriarch Joseph's suffering in times past, paved the way for our people to be saved, and shouldn't the messiah's life model the same? Could this be that we've just played into God's plan by crucifying this innocent man based on our jealousy and biases. That through his death, life will come to our people. Did this unbeliever, this Roman centurion standing next to me, just say. "...surely he was the son of God"? - Matthew 27:54. Now it's not just our people that believe in Him, but gentiles too? Unbeliever's calling him the Son of God? uh...oh. But I must confess, no man can do the things this man does unless God be with him. Perhaps, He really is the Son of God. Perhaps...

Pray for Oklahoma

It's 7:00am in the morning; 9-year-old Annalisa is dressed and ready for school. Daddy had left the house at about 5:00am for an early shift at the factory. He is working a 12-hour shift today from 6am-6pm. The commute to the factory only takes about 30 minutes, but being a supervisor, daddy has to be there earlier. Oh..how hard Daddy has worked over the years to get us to where we are now. He has worked long hours to provide us with a beautiful home, 2 cars, clothes in our wardrobe, food on our table and the countless perks of middle class living.

This all changed on Monday May 20th 2013, a day that is forever burnt into my memory. As I drop Annalisa in school, she kisses me goodbye and advises me not to get into too much trouble, silly little girl. I get in the car and drive to the nearby shopping center to buy some supplies for the house. A few minutes into my shopping experience, I hear the city sirens go off. I start to rush back to my car but was restrained by one of the store guard. "Get into the basement ma'am" he demanded, pointing to the direction all the shoppers present were going. I obliged, praying under my breath for the safety of all - especially for Annalisa.

It seemed like ages but we were finally asked to come out of the basement. Words can't describe what we saw. Destruction like we have never seen before. The store and its merchandize were completely gone. My heart began to race as I thought of Annalisa. The parking lot was full of debris, and I could not find my car amidst the carnage. Unfettered, I began the 3-mile trek to the Elementary school to find my Annalisa. I became even more worried as I saw teachers, many of them bloodied, walking out with the students. It wasn't long until I spotted Annalisa with her

favorite teacher. I ran to her, picked her up and cried. We were both shaking.

"Mommy, I'm scarred" she said, and I held her even tighter. A neighbor offered to give us a ride home, I accepted. Seeing the devastation meted to our neighborhood as we got closer made me realize our little house may not make it. Reaching home, my worst fears were confirmed. Our little home had been smothered by the tornado. Years of toiling to save up for the down payment, pictures, priceless documents, memories too numerous to count, were all GONE. I cried as the scripture I had just read last night came to full focus:

Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. - Proverbs 23:5

My momma used to say, "Where there is life there is hope". My husband is alive, my daughter is alive, and I am alive. That is much to be thankful for. We miss our little home, all the things we've toiled to build over the years. But we are thankful for each other, we are thankful for this community, for this country. Our rebuilding efforts start now. It won't be easy but we are thankful we can at least start. Pray for us as we rebuild. #PrayForOklahoma

The Greatest Job Offer!

A kind and prosperous man once approached Jesus and asked, "Master, what can I do to get eternal life. Jesus told him to keep the law: Love your neighbor as yourself, don't steal, don't lie... all the shebang.

The rich man acknowledged that he had kept the law all his life. Jesus looking at the man and loved him, and then proceeded to offer him the greatest job on earth. He said, go and sell all your possessions and come and FOLLOW ME. This was too much for the rich man for he had too many possessions. Because he already had a good job, he missed out on a great job.

In Luke 9, Jesus offered someone else the greatest job offer, but the man gave a good excuse for why he could not accept the offer at that point. He said he had to go bury his father to which Jesus replied. "Let the dead bury their dead"... but you, take this offer. Another man who received the job offer said, "I will take it but let me go explain it to my family at home first", to which Jesus replied: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" - Luke 9:62.

Not everyone declined this job offer though. Jesus saw 2 brothers, Simon and Andrew, and issued them a job opportunity of a lifetime. He said, FOLLOW ME, and I will make you fishers of men. They accepted this job on the spot. What is your excuse for not taking the greatest job offer - FOLLOW ME? Is it that you are very busy at the office trying to climb the corporate ladder? Is it that you are trying to earn enough to meet your financial goals or is it simply that you want to be the best at your workplace? Today, the Lord Jesus Christ is offering you the greatest job offer. If you

decline it, you will realize soon enough that you've been simply working to die. If you accept it, you start working to live. #EternalLife

Growing in Your Infirmity

Abraham Lincoln needs little or no introduction. Of all his great traits, two that stand out most to me are his humility and reliance on God.

You may already know this but what you probably don't know is that they were formed out of an infirmity. Lincoln had an excessive compulsion to please everyone, a major weakness and flaw in leadership. This led to his slowness to act in firing an inept general, George McClellan, which in turn cost hundreds of lives. This infirmity however, made him very reliant on God for wisdom, and gave him the humility to seek the advice of those around him. Which in turn helped, in no small measure, win the civil war and save the union.

The Apostle Paul was given revelations; many have not received before or after him. In fact, we are still trying to fathom some of his revelations today. A huge part of the New Testament was written off the revelation given to Paul. You may already know this but what you may not know is that Paul also had an infirmity. 2 Corinthians 12: 7 tells me that his infirmity kept him humble and reliant on God. Paul says:

“And he (God) said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” - 2 Corinthians 9.

It's easy for me to ask that you fight your infirmity and bring it to subjection. That you win a major victory over your infirmity, and I pray you do. But the truth is that God sometimes allows this infirmity to humble you and keep you reliant on him. It's easy to get prideful when your God given

gifts begin to draw attention and acclaim. Your infirmity can keep you humble. Humility is growth. Total reliance on God is growth. Growing in your infirmity is being reminded that without Him you can do nothing. But with him you can do all things.

You Have Nothing to Lose

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:32 "...what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die". Paul says earlier in the same chapter that if Christ did not rise from the dead, then our hope should not be in the future but in the now, and if so, then Christians are of all men most miserable.

You are most miserable because you will be missing out on the thrills of covetousness, missing out on getting the upper hand over your adversaries through cheating. If it is that there is no God, then you will be missing out on living ostentatiously, missing out on indulging your sexuality in promiscuous ways. Yet, you believe Christ rose from the dead and that He has gone to prepare a place for you, that where He is, you may be also. And if this is not so, not only are you most miserable but also think of it this way, what have you to lose?

Would you consider all the times you tried to live right, a waste? All the times you loved your neighbor as yourself, all the times you did not steal, lie, hate, murder, covet - even when it was convenient - a rip off? All the countless hours you spent in church worshiping the one who asked all to be meek and wise - would that all be in vain? Dear one, you have nothing to lose if there isn't a heaven, and everything to lose if there is.

To Know God is To Do Exploits - My Testimony

Exploits - a striking or notable deed; feat; spirited or heroic act. - dictionary.com

Year 2001, I had been invited to an all-night prayer and praise meeting by a close friend, Henry Oji. We danced through the night to swaying gospel music - for our King.

And then we prayed like we had never prayed before. The minister, Pastor E.A Adeboye said He felt the presence of the Holy Spirit so strongly and that we should ask what we may, it will be given. I thought about what to ask. Do I ask for riches or fame? Being young, I also thought of asking for success in my forthcoming exams. But then I recalled a scripture I once read "that they that know their God shall be STRONG, and then do EXPLOITS". I asked the Lord that I should know Him, so that I could be strong and do exploits. After praying, I turned to my seat and saw a pamphlet advertising a Christian center close to my school many miles away. I put it away and forgot about it.

Several weeks later, as I was about to wash a shirt, I found the pamphlet in my pocket. I noticed the Christian center was within walking distance of my school. I visited and as soon as I entered the library, I heard a voice that I had never heard before. It said, "You asked to know me, here I'm I - know me". I picked up a book with the title "If you want God's best, don't settle for less", and read it from cover to cover in one seating - a feat I had never accomplished in my life. Talk about doing exploits. I came back to that library over and over again, reading and reading and knowing God more. I was in the midst of writing my University entrance examinations, yet I kept coming to the Library. I experience spiritual growth in that season like I had never done prior to that time.

Anything that has gone right in my life, I owe to that encounter with God because before then, I was roaming the earth. After the encounter, I became consumed with purpose. I give this testimony just so you are inspired to get to know God better. "...but the people that do know their God shall be strong , and do exploits. - Daniel 11:32

Understanding Your Time and Season!

"...ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" - Matthew 16:3

Are you watching your timing? This is a question I often ask people who seem to be lost and discouraged. Watching your timing means understanding what time and season you currently are in. The Bible says: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:" - Ecclesiastes 3:7. Wisdom is what tells you what time and season you are in at any given point.

I've said before that man is always looking forward to what God is going to do, and looking backwards to what He has done but often misses what He is doing right now. What season of life are you in right now? What opportunities are in front of you waiting to be seized? At what phase of life are you currently in and what should you be doing today to get to the next phase? These are wisdom questions and if you do not know the answers to these questions, it is helpful that you to ask wisdom from the father who gives freely to all men. I find myself asking for wisdom of the father all the time.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. - James 1:5

No Expense Spared

Several years ago, a friend of mine lost his dad and mom within a short period of time. While attempting to console him, he instead cheered me up and gave me encouragement. He introduced me to the scripture I have never forgotten: “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up” - Psalm 27:10

You see, I have a dad who taught me about the spirit of abundance and how to live humbly. My dad will spare no effort or expense to ensure that his children get a quality education. For he believes that if you can do anything to perfection, the world will beat a path to your doorstep. As the Dad to two beautiful girls, I spare no effort or expense to ensure they have all the opportunities they need to be all that God has called them to be.

Your Father has spared no effort or expense (his son included) to ensure you enjoy all the opportunities you need to be all that He has called you to be. Rather than continually striving to create your own opportunities and failing time and time again, don't you think it's time to lean in to the opportunities he has already created for you.

Principles That Have Inspired Me Thus Far ...

My high school Sports teacher told me the story of Hannibal. A story I have not yet forgotten. Hannibal was a Roman general who ordered the boats of his soldiers burnt after they had crossed into enemy territory. Thus ensuring that retreat was impossible. Either the army sank or swam, be victorious or be vanquished. The army eventually was victorious. While this story was used to motivate us to win a soccer game, I have since employed this strategy in many aspects of my life.

For example, I refused to take the University entrance exam in my hometown, ensuring that I either studied internationally or became destitute. I've been blessed to do ministry internationally partly as a result of that decision. In my experience with life, I've found that as long as you are in the game, you have a chance to win - but you must be in the game and not sitting on the bench. I know that as long as there is life there is hope. I know that: "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take - Wayne Gretzky"

I know there are 99 reasons why you can't get something done but really, all you need is 1 reason why you can. I know that the money to support your dreams is available, but you have to demonstrate a reason why it should be given to you. That if there is anything standing in your way of being all that you can be, it should not be fear or money.

This Too Shall Pass

You are feeling badly - 'And this, too, shall pass away'.
Never fear - Abraham Lincoln

This was the upbeat message from Abraham Lincoln after losing a grueling senate election to Stephen Douglas. Lincoln had canvassed the state of Illinois giving about 130 elaborate speeches in 100 days. Yet he lost the election. To add injury to insult, he was hit with a large bill from his party that he had to pay, even though he had little money at the time. Instead of being irritable, crawling into his shell in recluse, or being grumpy; he agreed to pay the bill in full, overtime. He further encouraged his party that just billed him, that this too shall pass.

In many instances, the Bible uses the phrase, "And it came to pass", meaning that something happened, but whatever happened also came and went. Good comes and goes, Bad comes and goes. All things come and go. This principle, if accepted will help you keep things in perspective. It is a double-edged sword in that while unwanted circumstance will pass, desirable circumstances will also pass.

Don't get too carried away by the seeming direness of your current situation. Don't blow the circumstance out of proportion in so much that you lose sight of the big picture, lose sight of the future, and lose sight of perspective. Do you love God? Are you called according to His purpose? If yes, then all things are working together for your good. Abraham Lincoln lost that senate race but didn't allow himself get ruined by the circumstance surrounding the loss. He may have been a lifetime senator had it not been for that loss. Lincoln rose above it and instead became one of the best

presidents in history.

...weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. - Psalm 30:5

It is said an Eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him the words: 'And this, too, shall pass away.' How much it expresses! How chastening in the hour of pride! How consoling in the depths of affliction! - Abraham Lincoln

3 To Do's that will help you get A's in Life

There was a season in my life many years ago when, as an international student, I struggled with my academic performance. Granted, I had a lot of things I was dealing with which I don't believe someone my age should have dealt with at the time, but it was what it was.

My grades slipped nonetheless. Enter Libby Davis, Assistant Director of Career services at the University of Indianapolis. Quick background on Libby, she and her husband Dick took me to my first church service in the United States, helped me out with laundry on occasion and basically adopted me as one of their own.

Libby found out about my academic struggles and said words to me that I have not forgotten since. In fact, I still use her tenets of wisdom in my daily life. She said:

Uche, if you will just go to class, that is a C. Now, if you will go to class and then do your assignment - that is a B. If you go to class, do your assignment and then read your text - that is an A. Basically she is saying that if I show up, if I get my work done, and if I read, I should not just be passing, but be hitting A's with consistency. She served me with those words and predictably, my grades turned around for the better.

I have found this simple, down to earth message to be universally true for life in general. That If you will just show up (be it at your job, your relationships your responsibilities, your calling), if you will get your work done, (whatever that maybe) and if you will read, (yes read, as in read books); you will hit A's with a consistency that will make the Sun jealous. I pray you are encouraged to always:

**Show Up,
Get it done and
Read.**

Your Education is For Service

For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. - Mark 10:45

One of the things that I learned in my undergraduate season is that Education is for Service. Heck, my Alma matter's slogan is "Education for Service". As undergrads, we had to do service projects as a requirement and one such project I undertook stands out to me. I, along with a team traveled to Alabama to help folks build houses, stock pantries and generally help out wherever help was needed. I met some of the "realest" (if there is a word like that) people there. Sure they were in need but they taught me much more than all the knowledge I acquired during my time in University. I learned wisdom and empathy from those folks.

Your education is not just to enrich yourself, it is not just that you take care of your family's needs alone but that you reach out to others less fortunate. For in so doing, you find the most joy. Strive to become, that you may serve. Education is not just a degree from an institution of higher learning. An education, to me, is know-how. Are you a video director, a handy man, a mechanic, a schoolteacher, a rocket scientist, whatever, you are educated because you possess know how. Use this know how to be of service to the living for scripture reminds us: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another". - Galatians 5:13

Do Your Part - Help The Team

You are no doubt, part of a team, be it a sports team, a family team, a job's team, a school team, a church team - whatever. If yours is a good (does not have to be perfect) and functioning team, then you owe it to yourself and to your team mates to do all that is in your power to help the team. Pull your weight, and then pull some more. Don't slack, give it your all. Help the team.

Helping the team means you have to do some introspection. Take a long and hard look at yourself, to determine what it is you bring to the table. There is something you can do, that no one else in the team can do as well. Lock in on that and help the team. Sometimes sitting out and allowing someone better at a task, do it, is the best way you can help the team, in the moment. Your goal should be simple, help the team.

Ask yourself this question when you wake up in the morning. "What can I do today to help the team"? I know I'm injured, I'm of limited capacity at the moment, I don't have a lot of resources, I don't have a lot of time and my training is not up to par with the rest of the team members, yet what is it that I can do to help the team? Surely there is one thing you can do, if you can do two - fine, five things? - Even better. Just Do It. Contribute. Whatever it takes. Help the team
As we say out West, "if a man can't skin, he must hold a leg while someone else does".

What is My Calling in Life?

In Exodus 31 we read how it is that God Calls, Gifts, and anoints each individual for their usefulness in His Kingdom - For their life work.

The Lord said to Moses, “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft ...

God has called, gifted and anointed you for your life work. You may ask, how do I know what it is, I am gifted at? How do I know what my calling is? Here is your answer. It is in filling the blank.

When I _____, I feel God's pleasure.

Eric Liddell, an Olympic gold medalist, while being quizzed by his sister about his seeming dilemma of continuing to run professionally or moving to the mission's field, filled in this blank. He said: “God made me fast, and when I **RUN**, I feel His pleasure”. God gifted Eric with athletic capabilities. Running not just paid his bills, but also gave him a platform to make the most of God. He was also, much effective in missions. There is a call of God on your life. God has gifted you to fulfill that call. Use His gift to serve Him. For not only will your needs be met in this life, but also, in the one to come.

Hit Profiling Hard With Jaw Dropping Goodness

There is a strong University campus police presence where I live, and while I appreciate the increased security this brings for our neighborhood, I notice, as I take my long walks, that there sometimes is, a police vehicle following me. Normally I just look the policeman straight in the face and smile. I'm not bothered by this a bit. My mindset in this situation is that perhaps, I am a Very Important Person (VIP), and so I'm being offered an added layer of protection. But I sure can understand the frustration, the angst, the anxiety someone else in this situation may feel. The questions may arise, why are they always following me? What is it about me? What have I done wrong?

I wonder if Jesus Christ will still be profiled if he walked the earth today. For in the Bible, Nathaniel was called to come see the Messiah, and he literally profiled Jesus Christ. He said:

... Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? - John 1:46

Literally, he said, can anything good come out of that country or that section of town? Can any good thing come out of Africa, Asia, North America, South America etc.? Can any good thing come out of Gary, Indiana or the East side of Indianapolis? Can anything good come out of the black people, the white people, the red people, the purple people, the rainbow people; can anything good come out of the male or female genders? Can anything good come out of Church folks?

Being profiled or underestimated gives you a unique

opportunity to do exceedingly well, to exceed every set expectation. What have you to lose? If you fail, nobody expected you to do well any way, nobody expected you to become, and so what difference does it make? Yet if you succeed, and you succeed big, you will see jaws dropping. If you are ever so fortunate to be profiled for any reason, be it your race, your gender, or your relationship with Christ. Follow the example of Jesus who did not resent his profiler, but instead used his love, his gift of discernment and his anointing to drop Nathaniel's jaw in amazement. Nathaniel became an instant believer of the man he had negatively profiled. Go ahead, hit profilers hard with love, with brilliance, with empathy, with gift, with anointing, with grace, and with understanding. Hit them with every good thing the good Lord has put in you.

Come And See

Many years ago, at a leadership camp in Lagos, Nigeria, I met Endurance Igbinosun, who exemplified Christianity for me. He was, in my opinion, effortlessly flawless in exuding grace and goodness.

A natural leader who sang often, "If Your presence doesn't go with us, we don't want to leave this place". I remember thinking; this is who I should be. I have been living a lie, trying to fit in, trying to be popular, trying to be a 'Gee'. I had heard so many sermons in times past, and walked up to the altar on numerous occasions to give my life to Christ but this right here was the real deal. Endurance didn't spend time preaching the word to me, he simply showed the way through his example, he implied - Come and See.

In John 1, Jesus had just been vindicated as the messiah. John had baptized him and the Spirit of God, like a dove, descended on him and remained. Philip believed him to be the messiah and went to call Nathaniel to come join this new "Holy Spirit Movement". Nathaniel expressed doubt saying, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? ..." - John 1:46. Philip did not argue with him nor did he try to get religious on him. He simply said "Come and See".

That is the best message you can ever give to anyone. Come and see. Don't just sit there and criticize, Come and see. Don't just insinuate, assume, or disclaim someone you have not yet experienced. Come and See. Come and See what the Lord has done. Come and see that the Lord is good. He is too big to be tested, but deserves to be trusted. Yet, if testing is what it will take, then He gladly invites you saying: "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him". - Psalm 34:8. "Prove all things;

hold fast that which is good". 1 Thessalonians 5:21

Come and see. Taste, Test, Prove; heck, even feel his nail pierced hands. Come and see.

The Audacity to Reach Higher

As a soon to be high school graduate, I was inclined to apply to the Universities available to me at the time. One thing I noticed was that the press for admission was quite much. People it appeared would cheat, lie, bribe, whatever it took, just to be admitted into the University.

The fact was that for every 1 student that was admitted, 300 eligible students were turned away. Instead of going with the flow, I decided to do something different. I decided to ask for more. I started applying to Yale, Harvard, UCLA and other big name schools, just to name a few. Eventually, the University of Indianapolis picked me up.

In Mark 2, we read of 4 men who could not get their client, a man stricken with palsy, to Jesus. The multitude that came to see and hear Jesus Christ was overwhelming. There was a long line of sick and broken people waiting to be prayed for. These 4 brave men could easily have given up, blaming providence for their fate. Nobody could have faulted them for failing, for theirs was a seeming impregnable situation. But they instead did something different. They figured that if everybody is at the bottom, why don't we reach higher? Why don't we reach for the top? So they climbed to the roof and lowered the sick man to Jesus. Jesus was astonished by their faith and not just healed the man but also forgave him his sins. This happened because four men decided to ask for more, to reach a little bit higher.

Reach higher. Allow yourself the audacity to ask for more. Allow yourself the courage to get up to the door, knock and ask. What have you to lose? The worst scenario is that you would be told 'No'. But when did 'No' become defeat? Defeat is if you did not try. Success is not in the getting but is in the

trying. Whoever says 'No' is saying in essence, "I want to k'NO'w more". After a few No's, you will definitely get your Yes. It is crowded at the bottom. The competition is too stiff at the bottom. Mediocrity is established at the bottom. Dare to ask for more. Dare to go higher. Dare to be like Elisha who said: "... I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me". 2 Kings 2:9

3 Steps To Empty Nesting Heaven

My wife and I still have little children in our nest, but it feels as though we already are empty nesters. Over the last couple of years, we have willingly opened our home to family and friends. Recently, it's just been our 2 little girls and us.

An advantage is that this creates opportunities for us to focus on ourselves as a unit (which we have not been able to do since we got married), further forge our identity as a family, and invest more in the children. Truly, you cannot give what you don't have and it makes sense to fill up before emptying out again. A disadvantage is we don't have all the people to do life with. All the bustling activity, the going out and coming in and yes, the conflict that sometimes emerges. We miss all of this and more.

This Empty Nesting experience gives us insight into God's longing to call earth's sons and daughters home. As though He lives by himself now but can't wait to be joined by his sons and daughters. Yes, He is omnipotent and omnipresent but I can now slightly imagine the emotion He feels when He utters these words: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."- John 14:3

Perhaps, you are planning/ looking forward to your Empty Nesting days, or maybe you are there right now. 3 steps that will help you make the most of this are:

1. Understanding and accepting that a parent's work is never done: Of course you can't meddle in your children's affairs but there still is a lot you can do to make their lives better. For example, you can leverage the authority you have with God as parents, to pray for them. You can give advice and

yes, you can still give resources if needed.

2. Reacquaint yourselves to yourselves: Perhaps it's been all about the children since they came to the world, but now it's about you. If you've wrongly put your children first over your spouse, you will sadly discover, now that they are off and about, that you are stuck with that man or woman whom you placed second. Make amends, treat him/ her well.

3. Use this time to propagate God's kingdom on earth by giving according to the measure God has given to you: You've always wanted to build God's kingdom in some way, but you've been busy. This is the best time to enjoy the benefits that come from giving and from giving alone. Giving is not just about money. Your time, prayers, company, wisdom and insight are invaluable to building God's kingdom.

In all, use this time to remember that there is he who has gone to prepare a place for you and can't wait to spend eternity with you. Isn't that beautiful? Even so, come Lord!

Don't Leave Your Family Behind

“Jobs come and jobs go, in the end, family is all you've got”.

This is the wise counsel I received from my manager as I was starting my Information Technology career many years ago. This was particularly meaningful because at the time, I applied myself 120% into my career, wanting to rise very fast to the top of my profession. While this is good and recommended, I found out soon enough that money itself provides its own set of temptations, and without being grounded in family, it is possible to lose, in one day, all the money, renown, and accolades you've taken years to accumulate.

God reminded the Israelites through Joshua that He had been good to them, even when they did not deserve it. And now they had to choose whom they would serve. Either they choose Him, the true God or choose the other god's their fathers served. Here was Joshua's resolve: “...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” - Joshua 24:15 Notice, "me AND MY HOUSE", not me alone. Joshua certainly was not about to leave his family behind.

Family is important. Do not leave your family behind in vain pursuit of worldly wealth or social recognition. Take your family out to the movies; take a road trip with your family to cities far away. The jobs will come and they will go, the trials will come and they will go. Yes, the success will come and it too shall pass. On your deathbed, all you will have surrounding you, is not your Mercedes Benz S-class, nor your 2.4 million dollar mansion in Miami, Florida. It's neither your awards nor your record sales. All you will have, or hope to have around you at that solemn moment, will be family. Treat your family right. Don't leave your family behind.

The 3G's of Evangelism

Evangelism - the preaching or promulgation of the gospel; the work of an evangelist. - Dictionary.com

Are you sensing a call to evangelize; yet you do not know how to start? Below are 3 steps to evangelizing. I call them the 3G's of evangelism.

1. Grow: There is a reason you are asked, in an aircraft, to put on your Oxygen mask first before helping your child. You cannot give what you don't have. If you don't have Oxygen, you can't give Oxygen to your child. If you are not filled with the Holy Spirit, you cannot give the Holy Spirit to others. So the first step towards evangelizing then is to GROW in your relationship with Christ. How do you do this? By reading the Bible daily and meditating on it. By praying to God with sincerity. And by studying the life of others who have a good relationship with Christ, through books or in person

2. Go: The next step will be to go. This may mean going to a foreign country or simply going to the neighbor across the street to witness. Jesus said: "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature". - Mark 16:15
You are prayed up, you are well studied. Now go. If you don't have anything to say, just say how the Lord has touched you and changed your life. And how the Lord can change their lives too. If they doubt, then offer an easy suggestion: "Come and See'. Invite them to your bible study, to your faith gatherings, that they may see for themselves, how good the Lord is

3. Give: God does not need anything from you to survive, He says: "...The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my

footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me?...” -
Isaiah 66:1

Yet he gives you the opportunity to give. Give of the time you have been given. Give of your resources to those who are able to Go, locally or internationally. Open up your homes to those of faith who have come. By helping each other, we further God's kingdom on earth.

The Art of Waiting

Someone contacted me via Twitter, telling me how he had gone to school and graduated. He had researched opportunities and found the right business to pursue; however he did not have the finances to make his proposed business happen.

He was waiting on financing to come through, and this wait was causing his faith to stumble. He asked, what he should do? It appeared to me that he had done all he could and should. What is missing is that he should STAND (wait with patience). You see scripture tells us: "...and having done all, to stand". - Ephesians 6:13

There are many moments in our lives where we just have to stand. Stand in this instance means wait. Most of life moments are lived in the In-between. We wait for breakthroughs, we wait for graduation, for when we get married, for when the baby will be born, for when we get the job. Because there is a lot of waiting to be done in this life, there is no need for waiting to be agonizing or antagonizing, instead, waiting ought to be treated as a gift.

Waiting is a beautiful thing because we learn patience; we learn to appreciate that which was sought, when we do get it. We take inventory, we reminisce, we hope, we pray, we plan. These beautiful elements of life, we hardly will partake in if we got everything the same instant we sought them. As such, embrace waiting as a beautiful part of life. Whether you like it or not, you will wait. How you come out of waiting and what you get out of it, can be influenced by your attitude. So back to the question, what should he do? What should you do? Here goes: You should be patient and don't stop trying. The darkest night is usually just before the dawn.

Don't give up - your breakthrough is on the way.

What Did He Die For, When He Died For You?

I received recently, via Twitter, a question from one of my disciples who said: "Today I read in Matthew 27, that Jesus could save himself but didn't, why? In my opinion before it (crucifixion) happened, Jesus told it to Judas, who in turn betrayed Jesus. Jesus knew before he crucified himself. He could run away from that awful situation".

The above statements were my friend's words. My answer to him was quite simple: Yes, Jesus could save Himself. But if He did, you and I will not be saved today. He chose to die so we could live. There is sin on earth and: "...the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." - Romans 6:23. He didn't run from that awful situation, though he could, so you and I can today, be called Christians. Sons and daughters of the most high. We can have the Holy Spirit in-dwelling us and outpouring through us. We can look forward, in refreshing hope to heaven.

The question then is: What did He die for, when He died for you? Did He die, that you may live a life of bondage to the besetting sin, or did He die to set you free? Did He die in vain? Did He die so that you can be a failure, or did he die that you may live daily, abundantly, in resounding and glorious victory. Did He die that you may live in timidity, ashamed of the one who espoused you? Or did He die that you may be bold, powerful beyond measure, of sound mind, and that your love overflows? Take a moment now and reflect. What did He die for, when He died for you?

2017 - What An Opportunity For You

Dust was in the air that early 2012 evening as the Sun crept slowly into the horizon, dodging and side stepping behind the Ogun State clouds. The anticipation in the atmosphere could be felt by all and sundry as a sea of humanity descended to the auditorium for the beginning of a meeting called the 'Holy Ghost Convention'.

I could not help but notice the vast presence of cell phone towers delivering efficient 3G internet speeds. These towers were not available the last time I was here, about 8 years ago. I further observed that less than 1% of the congregants had regular access to the Internet via mobile devices. I thought, what if all these people could plug in and participate in the mobile (iPhone, Android, Blackberry) Internet as we know it today? What if they could all tap into a daily dose of God's presence through their smart phones as we do? I reckon that this is not a matter of if; it is a matter of when. The infrastructure is readily available and the price of technology continues to fall. The question then is, are you ready?

According to Internet Giant Cisco, today, 32% (2.3 billion people) of the world is connected to the Internet. By 2017, that number will grow to 48% (3.6 billion people). Mobile devices will generate 68% of Internet traffic by 2017. Do you see the opportunity? Do you further understand what Jesus Christ meant when he said:

"...The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest" - Luke 10:2

What exciting days we live in. What an opportunity for God's laborers to fill the earth with the presence of the Lord, as the

waters cover the sea. All over the globe, hearts are hungry for that which Christians alone, can offer. The technology is becoming more and more available to offer God's presence. This delightful convergence is happening right under our noses. I encourage you, to embrace this challenge wholeheartedly. Lean in, seize this moment and become everything God has called you to be.

When in Doubt, Look Around

Everyone in the room looked bored. The air conditioning worked at one end of the room, while the heater blasted hot air out the other end. Many in the class fought sleep incessantly. The lighting was minimal and that purposely done, by an instructor projecting slides to the board.

The subject being taught was of a rather dull Information Technology concern that had to do with numbers and concepts. Realizing the declining energy of the class, the instructor decided to take a risk. He said, "When in doubt, look around". The whole class erupted into spasms of laughter as it dawned on them that the instructor had just encouraged them to illegally look at their neighbors work, should they not understand the test questions. Of course, they understood it was a joke, but the manner in which the instructor said it, and the context to which it was referred, turned a boring class into a lively theater.

I tell this story here not just because it's funny but also because I earlier, had received a message on twitter that said: "I struggle with doubt, especially when faced with challenges. My faith fails me when the going gets tough".

My advice is: "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider..." - Ecclesiastes 7:14

As you already know, not every day is rosy or easy. There are some really hard days when you even question your faith. When you doubt, when you are seemingly tempted beyond what you can bear. Days when you just can't make ends meet. Through these fleeting waves of doubt, my advice would be that you look around. Look around you and

see the blue skies, the FREE air you are breathing, and the green grass growing without your permission. See the lovely trees and the birds that grace them with their angelic voices. Look around you and recall what God has done to bring you to this point. Look around and trust that He is working on your behalf NOW even though you don't seem to feel or see it. Look around and see that He has gone to prepare a place for you, that where He is, you will be also. Like the instructor aforementioned said: When in doubt, look around - and HOPE!

Fake it Till You Make It

An Information Technology professor recently told a story of how, as a consultant, he was asked if he could fix a security issue for a firm. He replied to the affirmative, and then proceeded to purchase a book on network security. He applied himself, learned all he could, and resolved the problem easily - Earning keep for himself and his family. Fake it till you make it he said.

Abraham Lincoln did not know much about warfare strategies at the onset of his presidency but by the end of the civil war, he had read enough to execute and to win a war. Christopher Gardner is candid about his ideology, "I may not know it now, but give me 2 days and I will get you the answer". Scripture too, is candid about this with the statement: "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say , I AM STRONG".
- Joel 3:10

Throw your mind to the state you will to attain, and you will attain. If you see it and believe it, you will achieve it. Begin to call those things that are not as though they are. The future should be regarded in the past, as though it already, has occurred. Your outside circumstance may currently not reflect your inside vision. But don't allow your inside vision be dictated, in success or failure, by your outside circumstance. Don't be discouraged, neither be dismayed. Don't say you can't make it work. Fake it till you make it.

How To Show Christ Like Love to Others

There is the story of an old man named Sam, who lived with his daughter. Sam became a Christian in his later years and became the joke of his friends who could not help but tease that: "Old Sam had got the religion". Sam upon his conversion studied the Bible day in and day out, bursting out in intermittent shouts of joy as he read through random passages.

One day, his daughter approached him and asked him to keep his shouting on the "down-low" because she was having some friends over. In fact, she was going to put him in the attic, confiscate his Bible (which makes him shout for joy), and instead give him some geography books, so he could be quiet.

Old Sam sat up in the attic reading about Oceans, while his daughter entertained her guests downstairs. Suddenly, ground shaking stomps and shouting began to emanate from the attic. The daughter, looking quite purple with embarrassment, excused herself and climbed up to accost her dad. "Dad why are you shouting she asked, aren't you reading Geography books?" Her dad replied, you know honey, I read in scripture the other day that: "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." - Micah 7:19. Well, honey, I was just reading in this geography book that there are certain Oceans where the bottom cannot be found. Think of it? My sins, our sins have been buried so deep they cannot be found. Oh GLORY HALLELUJAH he shouted even more with tears rolling down his eyes. I am loved! I am loved!! I am loved!!!

Are you struggling to show Christ like love to others? Then you only need to introspect. How many times have you sinned and transgressed the ways of the Lord? How many times have you known the right thing and still did not do it, understanding: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. - James 4:17” Yet you are loved so ravishingly and so graciously that by one prayer of faith for forgiveness - your sins are cast into the sea of forgetfulness. God's work on the cross and his daily forgiveness is the framework, the standard, the mindset, if you will, for showing Christ like love to others. Now go and extend this same grace, this same love, and this same forgiveness - to others.

What Every College Freshman Should Know!

Operating in the capacity of an Alum, I recently assisted freshmen at the University of Indianapolis move into their dorm rooms. Seeing the excited faces, the confused faces, and the crying mom who confessed she couldn't handle the emotion of leaving her "little" boy as she thought she could.

All of these reminded me of my own first day in college. You see my college opportunity was nothing short of a miracle. After sitting out 730 days at home with my parents, because I had not yet received an admission, things changed rapidly, and within 24 hours I was sitting in class, an enrolled college freshman. Looking back, it does not feel as though I spent 4 years in college, but rather, that I spent 10 long semester's in college. Each of those semesters' were quite grueling. I didn't know how I would pay the next semester's fees, how I could pass that hard class. How I could provide for my family.

I worked full time, went to school full time, and was a student athlete - all just to make ends meet. It was a very hard season of life but I got an important lesson from it all. One in which I am now sharing with College Freshmen around the world. My biggest take away from completing college is to see the end from the beginning. As scripture states: "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done ... - Isaiah 46:10". If I had looked ahead to the year I was to finish, I would have made even wiser decisions, and I could have maneuvered in such a manner, that I achieved my ends sooner.

And so my advice to the class of 2017, and to any college

freshman, is to see the end from the beginning. I understand 2017 is still far away. A lot will happen before then if God tarries but I want you to picture yourself in your graduation gown. What would you like to have accomplished when you put on that gown? Where in life would you like to be when graduation rolls around? Figure that out, and what it takes others 4 years to accomplish, you will accomplish in 3 years.

Ceteris Paribus - All Things Being Equal

My college degree is in Information Systems. I love computer systems. As an IT professional, I have found that my edge comes from my understanding of how systems work. Because I understand the system's processes end to end, I am easily able to decipher when something is wrong, and what the "culprit" is.

What it takes others 3 hours to fix, I can fix in 3 minutes, because I know how it should work - all things being equal. In order for me to know how things work, I have to spend time going through the manual and ensuring that I not just memorize what is going on, but that I also understand it end to end. My college professor, Jerry Flatto taught me to "play with the system", "Don't be afraid to break it", he said, "until you thoroughly understand it, until the system and you become friends".

John 4, brings us into an encounter with Jesus and a Samaritan woman who had issues. She seemed to be smart and witty. She understood that Jews did not interact with Samaritans; she also understood that Jacob built the well from which Jesus was asking her for a drink. But she did not understand the cause of her troubles, she did not understand the system - Ceteris Paribus. Jesus did. And so after chatting a while with her, contacting her spirit, he zeroed in to the cause of her problems. He said: "Go, call thy husband, and come hither". The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly - John 4:16-18. All things being equal, she ought to have one husband and dwell with that one man. That was the root cause of her problems. That did it.

Troubleshooting was over; the system could now function properly, as designed. The woman was not just saved that day, she also became an instant evangelist, speaking of what had happened, to her people, and winning many souls to Christ.

If you don't know how something works when it is working, how are you going to know how to fix it if it breaks? Read and understand the manual (Bible) because this makes life so much easier to navigate. By reading the word of God, you attain a sound mind, the mind of Christ. Decisions are filtered through this mind map and a course of action is plotted against it. Decisions that take people 2 weeks to come by, you can come to in 2 days, because you understand how the system works. You can know all men because you know the creator of all men. You can offer wise counsel to others in trouble because you understand how things should work - *Ceteris Paribus*.

Greatness

Greatness is achieved on the brink of destruction. It is getting through it, taking all the hits and saying, I am still alive. C'mon, hit me with your best shot. I'm still standing. As they say in Nigeria, "You no reach". Meaning nothing is big enough to bring you down. Simply put, greatness is indestructibility. Even in death you become more, than you were in life.

Greatness is also humility and compassion. It's the ability to stand in front of 80,000 awe inspired fans one day, and the next day, stand with only 10 people, at the funeral procession of a young man, whose widowed mother is enraptured in grief. Greatness is having a child like spirit. When people come in contact with you, they marvel that you are not anything like your renown suggests. You are simple. Yet by the mere incident of getting physically close to you, they too are inspired to be great. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." - Matthew 18:4

Greatness is finding your lane, your cause in life and sticking to it. It is being enthused by your calling. It is paying the price. It is sacrificing your own self on the altar of the greater cause. It is "not my will but yours be done". It is decreasing that He may increase. Welcome to self-destructed indestructibility. Welcome to humility. Welcome to greatness.

Meet The Resurrection

I was privileged to attend the Cisco Live event in Orlando Florida back in 2008. There I met a gentleman named Taiwo who wore a tag, identifying that he worked for a technology company whose software we corporately used. I told Taiwo that I was looking to talk with someone from his company so I could get help with some issues we were dealing with software wise.

Taiwo replied, "I am the software you are looking for". What he meant, I found out later, was that he owned and ran the company that developed the software of which I had traveled thousands of miles to seek help for. As you can conclude, I was able to turn the problematic software into a very useful tool for the organization because I now had access to Taiwo - who was the software.

We read in John 11 about Martha who expressed to Jesus her understanding that her dead brother Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. She was a scriptural woman; she understood how things worked all things being equal. She sought someone to console her with God's promise of the future resurrection. But Jesus countered with a profound statement, He said: "I am the resurrection, and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" - John 11:25. In other words, Jesus was saying that the resurrection is not just a far off event to come; it is not just a special day. It is not just a company or software. It is I. I am that resurrection you've read and heard about. I embody the entirety of resurrection. If you come in contact with me and believe in me, then you are not going to be resurrected, **YOU ARE ALREADY RESURRECTED.** Amen Halleluiah. I feel

religious right now.

What is that dead thing in your life that you desire to be resurrected? Have you met the resurrection and the life? It is a person you know, He is the Lord Jesus Christ. Even now, the resurrection can resurrect your dream, your business, your marriage, you name it. Those dry bones can live again. Those dry seasons can be restored with seasons of abundant rain. Just like Taiwo could unequivocally state that he was (embodied) the software I was seeking to get help on. Even more so, Jesus Christ is the resurrection you so desperately need TODAY!

Even Now ...

Jesus arrived in Bethany a few days later than Martha expected. She came crying to him, telling that if He had been there earlier, her brother Lazarus, would not have died. She had a point, but notice how she followed it up with these extraordinary words: "... Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that EVEN NOW, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." - John 11:21-22. In other words, Martha agreed that her brother was dead. That they had not heard of people rising up from the dead in that part of town. That there is finality to death but even now ...

Yes, if you had known the Lord 3 years ago or perhaps 30 years ago, you would not have made the mistakes you made, yet even now, God is able to make all things new. Lord, if you had showed up when my mom was dying, I would have believed you, yet even now, You are able to turn what the devil meant for evil into good. Lord, Even now. The case may have been closed, but it is not yet completed. The verdict, by the judge, may have been read, but the appeal has not yet been heard. The era may be over but the destiny is not yet complete. The grave may have been closed but it is not yet sealed. The body underneath can still come forth. The dream can still live. Your grades can still improve. Your career can still be rejuvenated. Even now, it is not over.

The Key To Kingdom Effectiveness is Abiding

It's always been my heart's desire to do the Lord's bidding since I was a little child, as far back as I can remember. Imagine then, how disappointed I, a go-getter was, to learn that ministry work cannot be willed. It's not like wanting to be an Accountant, a Physician or an Astronaut. A situation where you apply yourself whole heartedly to your craft and become the very best there is.

In ministry, you have to be called by God. He controls the timing, the message and yes, He controls the messenger. The harder you work to do God's work on your own, the farther away from God you get. The more determined you are to do His work, the more a deterrent you are to His work. You can't do God a favor without His will. Let me explain...

In 2nd Samuel 6, Uzziah, who was not called to be a priest, reached out to help the Ark, which had stumbled and was about to fall down. He was trying to help; he was trying to do God a favor. But it wasn't God's will that anyone, save the priests should touch the ark. And so God's anger was kindled against Uzziah and He struck him dead on the spot. In Luke 10, we read how Martha was cumbered with trying to do God a favor. She did it all, prayer meeting, choir practice, evangelizing, preaching, baptizing, healing ... whereas, her sister Mary was simply abiding. She, as a branch, was sitting at the feet of Jesus, the vine, listening to his word. When Martha complained that Mary was not helping with service, Jesus replied that Mary had chosen the good part and it won't be taken. Martha was willing her way to ministry, Mary was abiding and being much more effective. Do you get it? I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without

me ye can do nothing - John 15:5

You want to do much for Christ? The way to do that, the way to yield much fruit, is to ABIDE. It is to be still and know that He is God. It is to sit at the master's feet, engrossed daily in His word. The moment you release yourself to Him, confessing your weaknesses, acknowledging your incapacity. That broken moment is when you find Him very near you. That is when He releases you to do much for Him. Now it's no longer you, but the Christ that lives in you. You realize you can do nothing without Him, and yet you are mightily convinced that with Him, nothing is impossible to you - nothing.

Actualizing your Payment

As a young 18 year old, I remember being handed a large check by my dad for the payment of my school fees. As far as my dad was concerned, payment had already been made the moment he handed me the check. But I still had to make the long journey to the school, stop by the bursar's office, and hand in the check to actualize the payment. What if I had refused to go submit the check? The certainty exerted by my dad for payment, would not change the schools non-acceptance of me due to unpaid fees. My dad did do the paying, but I still had to actualize the payment by handing it over to the bursar.

In John 11, Jesus told his disciples that Lazarus was dead but He was going to raise Him up. Earlier in John 5, Jesus had said that He only did what He saw the father doing. In other words, his Father already showed him that Lazarus had risen. Like me journeying to school to actualize payment, Jesus only had to journey to Bethany to actualize what had already happened (the resurrection). Are you following? Stay with me. That is why Jesus prayed: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me and I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. - John 11:41-42"

Did you notice He spoke in the past tense? You are not about to hear me Father, You already did. You are not about to make this payment, you already did. You are not about to resurrect this man, it is already done. I made the trip up here just to actualize what you've done. Just so these people (these bursars), may have physical proof (check) of what you've already done (written and signed).

When Christ died for your sins more than 2000+ years ago, He traded your death for His resurrection. You stand resurrected today. The payment has been made. Now you only need to actualize that payment. You only need to be loosed and let go. Your miracle has already happened, your breakthrough has occurred, now you must break out of that failure mentality, out of that pity party. Out of that sin stricken lifestyle. I declare boldly to anything holding you back - Loose him/her and let him/ her go - Amen

Opportunity Mindedness

In 2013, I lost 2 contracts. It was a good thing overall since these contracts had deteriorated overtime into dead weights, but I still felt somewhat remorseful, somewhat disappointed at losing them.

I write this so you know that people like me, who seems to always be celebrating one new achievement after another, one new milestone, also go through the lows of losing out on a contract, of having results not go the way I expected. Of getting carnage when bliss was the expected. The difference though, is that I keep going, I keep pushing, and I keep seeking new opportunities. I adhere to the principle of the scripture that says: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper , either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." - Ecclesiastes 11:6

In a previous post, I wrote on how Jesus Christ handled the grief of losing John the Baptist and how that should serve as a pointer for us handling disappointments. While I mourned the loss of 2 contracts, I also celebrated the addition of 1 new contract. I did not seat at the closed doors wailing and shedding tears on what was. I thanked God for the opportunity I had had and immediately sprinted to the next open door - before anyone else got there.

There is opportunity all around you. I've said this before but allow me to reiterate, that you are standing on acres of diamonds. Perhaps your co-workers remind you of a sluggish economy and how that should translate to your not being able to get the things you need. Yet, a sluggish economy also presents an opportunity for you to acquire

goods and services at a fraction of their cost. It provides an opportunity for you to build and expand at steep discounts. Perhaps you have been reminded all too often how that we win some and loose some. Yet, if you learned valuable lessons from the situations where you "lost", then you have lost none and won all. All your business ventures till date may have failed yet start a new one. You may have not been promoted at your workplace commensurate to your new skills and abilities, yet continue to improve. Every day is a new opportunity, continue to seek out and pursue possibilities. Continue to be opportunity minded.

Lord, What Will You Have Me Do?

I grew up knowing that I was to be an Evangelist. That in some way, I was born to serve the Lord. But somewhere along the line, I decided to become this massive business guru who would export large amounts of Industrial enzymes from Los Angeles to the rest of the world - and make tons of money doing it.

I would become this magnate, impresario, entrepreneur and philanthropist who would also import to the western world, hand crafted shoes from Nigeria. This will help create much-needed jobs for the country, as well as provide incredible value for the West. I struck out to accomplish this dream, moving to the West coast. Accompanying me were credit cards awash with seemingly unlimited credit. 3 months later I found myself homeless, sleeping in a Wal-Mart parking lot - in my car. I had reached the end of my rope, and it was there I cried out. "Lord, I'm tired of doing things my own way. Lord, what will you have me do?"

Saul, a brilliant young scholar, pursued his own agenda and adhered to his own moral compass. A learned, cultured and sophisticated man, Paul did what was right according to his lofty education. Consenting to the death of Stephen the first Christian martyr, Saul was just getting started in his quest to rid the earth of the "heretics", the Jesus followers who had infested the country with their putrid message, "Believe in Jesus Christ and be saved". A bright light from Jesus Christ shone on Saul on his way to Damascus and there he reached the end of his rope. Without any ado, he exclaimed: "...Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" - Acts 9:6

The fact that Saul, a distinguished scholar, said "Lord" in his first statement meant he knew it was Jesus Christ. He recognized that light as the pillar of fire that guided his

ancestors, the children of Israel from Egypt to the promise land. He should know for it was a fact of history in which he was well versed. All his learning converged into that one moment of truth, that Jesus is Lord. And that he must do, not what he wants, but what the Lord will have him do.

It's a prayer you should say everyday "Lord what will you have me do today?" This prayer is about surrendering to a Lordship who is on your side, who has your best interest at heart, and who knows you better than you will ever know yourself. You will do very well as the creation, to humbly ask your creator, "Lord, What will you have me do?"

How Do You Know if God is With You?

My finances tanked in 2007. One way I can describe the suffering that ensued is that a friend, Christian Smeltzer, gave me \$20.00 one time and I felt very rich, I couldn't believe I was holding \$20.00 in my hands.

In all this, I thought God was surely with me, and that He was allowing me to be afflicted, just like Job, to build me up. Alphonse Kongolo, another friend of mine, challenged me by suggesting that, perhaps this is of the devil afflicting you also. Didn't scripture say: "I have been young, and now am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken , nor his seed begging bread". - Psalm 37:25. Well, that night, I prayed like I had never prayed before and through a series of events, God restored me to financial health.

There is the story in the Bible of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man had all that money could buy. He had cars, mansions, women, jewelry, fame..., you name it. I imagine he thought God was surely with him. Lazarus on the other hand was very poor, ill-treated and suffered with sores on his body. Even the dogs licked his wounds, yet God was with him. When he died, Lazarus was taken into Abraham's bosom to enjoy an eternity of bliss. The rich man (notice he has no name, just the rich man) also died but went to hell, where he was tormented and damned to eternity.

I do not subscribe to the prosperity gospel, yet I do not subscribe to the suffering gospel either. I simply subscribe to the gospel. I know Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon and Job were extremely wealthy individuals who enjoyed God's presence. And I also know that Lazarus, most of the disciples, and yes again, Job, were of little means, suffered, and yet God was with them also. Your material prosperity

does not mean God is with you and your physical suffering does not mean God is with you either. In fact, material blessings may be a sign that God is far away from you, and physical suffering may be "ICHABOD", meaning the glory has departed. God is with you not because of you but because of Him. Think about that for a while. God is with you because He chooses to be with you. You can't earn His presence, neither can you buy it. But this you can do. You can believe it. You can believe the good news that Jesus Christ died for your sins to save you. And if you do, you can be assured in sickness or health, in wealth or poverty, in success or failure - that GOD IS WITH YOU.

All Glory Must Be To The Lord

Many times, people ask me: Why do you ALWAYS have to include Christ in your statements? Why are you giving Him credit for your successes, did he do the work for you? Why does something spiritual jump out of every statement that emanates from your mouth? My answer is simple: "Because He is my all in all, He is my sufficiency. I can do nothing without Him". You see, scripture boldly declares: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths". - Proverbs 3:6

In ALL your ways it says, acknowledge (give Him the glory), that is why I always mention Jesus Christ in all I do. But there is more. In Acts 12, we are told of a King Herod who began to persecute the church. One day King Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, made a speech to his subjects. They began to praise him saying he was a god and not a man. King Herod savored this attention and did not re-direct the glory to God. Immediately, the angel of the Lord smothered him because he did not give the glory to God. This is serious stuff. Again scripture is clear about this: "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images". - Isaiah 42:8

All glory must be to the Lord. Someone once said, If God is going to get all the glory; He should do all the work. That's fair enough! You can even go a step further and say, He should get all the blame too. I don't believe the Lord would mind. Just give Him all the glory. In good or in bad, ascribe to Him all the glory He deserves. For He ALONE is worthy to receive all glory, honor, and praise. He would share many things with you, but not His glory. This again is serious stuff. If you want to be successful and effective as a Christian, then all glory must be to the Lord.

Turn Your Obstacles Into Breakthroughs

You may be able to relate with this situation, that when you are about to hit it big, someone/ something comes in and spoils the show. It's like a child walking in on his/ her parents in the midst of their passion. It's like the unexpected car break down that just sapped the savings you were so desperately counting on. It's like the phone call your prospect received just when you were about to close that big sale, which made him/ her postpone or cancel the transaction out rightly. Just when you were about to get ahead, something/ someone comes and sends you back to the starting line.

In Acts 13, at the onset of Paul's ministry, when invitations were not as forthcoming, a 'promoter' named Sergius Paulus invited Paul and Barnabas to come preach in his city. I imagine the anticipation Paul had for those who would hear the word and give their lives to Christ. You see, Paul was shifting from success to significance. He had had a wonderful career, but now he had a calling and boy, was he excited. But someone, Elymas the sorcerer, came along determined as an obstacle, to spoil it all. Paul could have waved the white flag and fled the city. But instead, he did something remarkable. He confronted the obstacle and turned it to a breakthrough. He pronounced blindness on Elymas and immediately, without even preaching a word, the promoter gave his life to Christ. Soon after, the whole city came out to hear the gospel and many were saved. What was meant to be an obstacle had turned out to be a breakthrough.

Obstacles can be turned into breakthroughs through divine confrontation. Every now and then, you ought to confront that obstacle, that devil that's standing in your way, which is

setting you back - in the name of Jesus Christ. Scriptures declare: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow , of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;" - Philippians 2:10.

By yourself, you will be defeated. But with the name of Jesus Christ, nothing and no one can stand in your way. Many times your breakthrough is veiled behind that obstacle that just came your way. Confront that obstacle today in the name of Jesus Christ, and turn it into a glorious breakthrough.

3 Reasons Why You Should Execute With Speed, Stealth And Succinctness

I tend to plan things out and run ideas through my mind for a very long time. I allow the idea "simmer". I know where I am headed and what direction I am likely to take but I purposely hesitate during the decision making process. I try very hard to change my mind. I delay, hoping the decision will go away. Yet if the decision stays, if it is tied to my purpose in life. If it runs concurrent with the Bible. If it embodies and emboldens me, then I decide to take action. From the time the decision is made to the time the decision is executed, little lag time is tolerated. Speed, Stealth and Succinctness become the actions words. This formula has proven successful for me, over and over again.

Succinctness simply means cutting through the chase, getting to the point, being concise, and doing the work in as little time as possible. Not one minute more than is required. Stealth in this instance means being very difficult to detect. It means only a select few, if any, team members are aware of the decision you are about to make. Others, especially competitors won't see it coming. This vastly increases your odds for success. In the Bible Jesus was known to act decisively and quickly. He healed people on the spot, He preached on the spot, be it the synagogue, mountaintop, or in a boat. He said, today, not tomorrow, is the day of salvation. In fact, when it was time for Him to be crucified, he wanted to get on with it in so much that he advised his betrayer, Judas: "...That thou doest , do quickly" - John 13:27

Here are 3 reasons why you should consider executing with speed:

1. Your execution will be hard to counter. It is very hard to counter speedy implementations. That is why a lot of thought and hard work should be done before you decide to execute. Once you implement with succinctness, speed and stealth - it is almost impossible to stop that which you have carefully planned.

2. You are energized to do other things when your execution is complete: the euphoria you feel from accomplishing a task, the high you get from completing an action is indescribable. In fact, you get so high, it's hard to come down. In this high, you can pick up other difficult tasks that have eluded you thus far, and complete them with relative ease.

3. Your odds for success are way higher: One of the things that kill success is procrastination. When you procrastinate, the odds of getting work done gets slimmer and slimmer by the day. And then life happens to you, and work does not get done.

Take the time today to plan. Bounce your idea, left, right and center. But when it is time to implement, when it's time to act, execute with speed, stealth and succinctness.

Is it worth it?

I went for a night run recently and found a few college students playing soccer. I decided to join them but my aching knees wouldn't let me. So I sat down and watched. I immediately took a liking to young man, whom I will call Farouk. Farouk played very well and seemed to shoulder all the responsibility for his team - scoring, defending play making. I waited to get his phone number and recruit him to play on my indoor soccer team. Towards the end of the game, Farouk hard fouled a member of the opposing team. This member, I will call Ali, stood up and accosted Farouk. A fight brewed as Ali's team members came in his support. Farouk backed down a bit, but only enough to call his supporters from their dorms to come fight.

With all the wisdom I could muster, I admonished Ali that he better go home with his team and that fighting will not lead to any successful outcome. It's either he hurts someone or someone hurts him in return. Either way, that will not be a big trophy to laud as a life achievement, at the end of the day. Ali would not bulge. He wanted to stay and see what will happen. Fight if he had to, but he would not allow his self-respect go down by "running". I turned my attention to Farouk, warning him that he could be arrested, and being an international student, be deported or robbed of future opportunities. Farouk was adamant, this had been going on too long, he said, and he must put a stop to it. Ali's group arrived at the scene and a fistfight ensued. I called the police. Someone got knocked down, almost unconscious, bleeding from ear to ear. Another was badly hurt. The police came and made an arrest.

As I walked back to my house from the scene, I thought ... is it worth it? Is it worth it, to sacrifice your future greatness on

the altar of getting respect from one person? Is that one person worth 87 years of your life filled with shame and failure? There are 6.5 billion people on earth today, is that one person disrespecting you today worth your throwing your tomorrow away? Is it really worth it? I wish Ali or/ and Farouk had taken my simple advice, Is it worth it? I hope you do too.

Become a Scripturenaire

I once was involved in an automobile accident as a teenager growing up in Indiana. It was my fault for quickly making a left turn while the streetlight was just about turning red. I struck a passenger's vehicle lightly on the side.

My car slanted a bit but continued to roll. I was forced to make a quick decision. Do I keep going or do I stop to address the situation. I was not entirely versed with the laws of Indiana, but thankfully, I was mightily versed with my dad's advice. In that moment, my dad's advice came into my head: "Don't run away from problems. Its either they kill you or you kill them". I heeded, stopped the vehicle and came out to face my problem. Eventually, I was acquitted of any wrongdoing and helped the owner of the car I struck to repair his vehicle. I found out later that according to Indiana law, I would have been arrested if I had kept on moving.

Apollos, an eloquent speaker, was heavily versed in scripture. This is what the Bible has to say of him: "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus." - Acts 18:24. Apollos could not be defeated in debate, in fact scriptures say he MIGHTILY convinced the Jews, in public, that Jesus was Christ. That was quite a feat for as you know, the Jews generally do not believe Jesus to be the Christ. The fact he was able to accomplish this is quite remarkable and noteworthy. But he was able to do it because he was versed in scripture. He was a man mighty in scripture. He was, allow me to coin a phrase, - a Scripturenaire.

It is good to aim to become a millionaire, a person of means, commanding vast amounts resources and allocating them to your heart's desire. But it is even better to become a

Scripturenaire. (These two terms are not necessarily mutually exclusive). A Scripturenaire is someone who commands a vast reservoir of God's word. Someone who calls those things that be not as though they were. Someone who remembers God's word when the moment calls for it. Someone who has a Bible verse for every occasion. Someone who is able to discern the will of God and apply its might in every situation. Someone who is rich in the word, in works, in faith, in love, in wisdom and in grace. In all your becoming, do become a Scripturenaire.

The Evangelist Manifesto - 3 Guidelines for Successful Ministry

Evangelist: - A Protestant minister or layperson who serves as an itinerant or special preacher, especially a revivalist.- Dictionary.com

God called me many years ago as a child to be an Evangelist. While I've never doubted this call, I must confess I've tried to run away from it on numerous occasions. But it always comes back, it haunts me - I can't get away from it. When I evangelize, I feel God's pleasure, I am on cloud 9, I am the happiest I can be, especially when someone responds positively to the message of Jesus Christ. Yet God did not leave me without guidelines to follow, without a manifesto of sorts of how to be successful at Evangelism. He used His servant Paul, one of the most successful Evangelists of all time to set a precedent for all the Evangelists that are to follow. I will here share with you, 3 guidelines of Evangelism which you can use if you have been so called, or share with others you know are called to this.

1). Evangelists ought to, as much as possible, provide for themselves and their families through their own labor. This is important. While there is nothing wrong with getting support from others, Paul showed us that to be truly effective, one ought to provide for his needs through his hands. That way, you do not have a reporting structure but God. Yes, you do have accountability partners, but you answer to no man but God.

Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me - Acts 20:34

2.) Evangelists ought to listen to the prompting of the Holy

Spirit as to where and when to go. The Holy Spirit controls entirely, the message, the location, and the timing. Listening and working closely with the Holy Spirit to discern where you should be, when you should be there, and what you should say is of utmost importance for success in Evangelism. Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia ... - Acts 16.6

3.) God unilaterally calls, anoints and establishes an Evangelist. The mantle of leadership, the mantle of ministry is from God and not from man. The Evangelist ought not seek the anointing, calling or approval of any gatekeeping man or organization. His anointing comes from the Most High. His anointing comes from God. God creates a platform for an Evangelist and establishes him in due time.

...So that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received OF THE LORD JESUS ... - Acts 20:24

Paul showed us most profoundly that God does not call perfect people, instead, he perfects called people. If you've been called of God to be an Evangelist, then what are you waiting for? Lean in, Reach out, take that leap and be all that God has called you to be.

As The Eagle Stirs The Nest ...

A little eaglet is fed, nurtured and warmed by its parent, the Eagle. It bonds with its parent through a process called "Imprinting", which basically means it imitates all it sees in its parent. As the eaglet grows bigger, its parent starts to challenge it to fend for itself.

Part of that fending for itself, is in learning how to fly. The eaglet is bonded with its nest; it is comfortable there and in many ways, has become complacent. The parent Eagle then stirs the nest. This it does by making the nest as uncomfortable as possible. The parent eagle stops bringing in the daily ration of meat. The parent eagle starts flapping near the nest to generate wind currents that lift the eaglet up slightly. The parent may even create sharp twigs in the nest to prick at the eaglet, causing it to be more and more uncomfortable. The hungrier, cold and restless eaglet, after a while, is left with no choice than to leave the nest and become what it was called to be, what it was born to be - an Eagle

Scriptures tell us:

“As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock;..” - Deuteronomy 11:13

That is how the good Lord takes care of His own. He allows no place for complacency. He ushers his own into a place of rest but not necessarily a place of comfort. He declares: you have dwelt on this mountain far too long...it's time to move

on. It's time to become all He has called you to be. As the Eagle stirs the nest to ensure the eaglet becomes an eagle, so your heavenly father occasionally stirs up your outward circumstance to challenge, encourage and push you towards your calling. Are you struggling between faith and fear simply because your outward circumstance has suddenly changed? It's easy to fear that the devil has hit you based on your past sins. Rather than take this course, I want you to take the path of faith - that there is no condemnation. I want you to have faith that the Father is stirring the nest. Never forget that change is nothing but opportunity.

How To Handle a Situation Where Your Best Advice Is Not Taken

I've been a Christian for as long as I can remember and one of things I struggled with earlier was how to handle a situation where someone out rightly rejects my best advice. I mean, I filtered the decision through God's word, prayer and my experience and I gave someone sound advice just to have it turned down?

That hurt the more when the person who did not take the advice was the one who asked for it. And it hurt even more when my advice turned out to be the best course of action that could have been taken under the circumstance. I felt slighted, and angry, refusing to offer any more advice. But overtime, God began to show me that I was not the one rejected, He was. If I had used His word to give the advice, the person who rejected the advice did not slight me, he/ she slighted the author of the word - the Holy Spirit.

In the Bible, Paul advised his fellow ship passengers that their trip was to end in catastrophe, and that they should hold out. The centurion over the ship scoffed at the advice and instead took the advice of someone else. A strong and terrible wind rocked the boat in so much that all the passengers feared for their lives. After many days, Paul spoke: "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but the ship". In spite of the fact that his advice was rejected the first time, Paul still found it in his heart to offer another advice. This time, it was adhered, and Paul literally became the leader of the ship. His every word was accepted and the passengers were at his beck and call. He led them to safety, and there was no loss of life.

Can you relate to this? Do you often give your best advice only to have someone throw it on the ground, spit and stomp on it before discarding? In 2 Samuel 17, Ahithophel, a wise man, gave Absalom some solid and wise advice. Absalom rejected it. Ahithophel went and hanged himself because of this rejection. Please don't imitate Ahithophel. The advice here is: Do not withhold your advice further just because the advice you gave earlier was rejected. Continue to give advice. Remember, you were not rejected; God was - for His word was the basis, the foundation of your advice. Also understand that your advice being rejected only creates an opportunity for you to lead.

You Don't Teach That, You Hire That!

Simon had enthusiasm. As a fisherman he was enthusiastic. As a disciple of Christ, he was the first to refuse the Lord's offer to wash his feet, though he later reneged asking that not just his feet but his whole body be washed. Simon was the one who asked that fire be called from heaven to consume some 'haters'.

Despite his flaws, the Lord loved Simon's enthusiasm. He changed his name from Simon to Peter, meaning a rock. He put Peter into a new system to operate in, that of leading the disciples. Notice here that, you don't teach enthusiasm, you hire it. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". - Matthew 16:18

Saul was a passionate executioner of that which he deemed to be right. He had studied under the famed Gamaliel and felt strongly that the new Christians were violating the ways of the Jews. And so he set out to extinguish them. He pursued them passionately to the ends of the earth. I will like to think God admired his passion, but detested the system to which it was put in use. And so God had to arrest Saul on the way to Damascus, change his name to Paul, and then put him in a new system. The system of building His kingdom on earth. Paul was so passionate about his new work that most of the new testament was written by him. He was to die for the sake of the gospel but his passion did not allow him falter nor retreat. Notice again that you don't teach Passion, You hire it.

I am a firm believer in hiring the best of the best for the best. They may be pricey but they will deliver value above their

cost. You don't hire a professional soccer player and then waste time and resources teaching him how to pass the ball. That is why you hired him in the first place. You hired him because he knows how to pass the ball exceptionally. You just have to change his jersey and show him the new system to which he is to operate in. You don't teach drive, you hire that. You don't teach initiative, you hire that. You don't teach good mannerisms, you hire that. You don't teach composure under pressure, you hire that! You don't teach passion, you hire that. Strive today then, to be the best that you can be because no one is eager to teach you, yet many are looking to hire you. Be Hire able!

The Faith Realm vs The Law Realm

Being a Christian has its perks. One of which is that your every sin has been forgiven, gone, tossed into the sea of forgetfulness. Even your future sin is vanquished as soon as you confess and repent. This perk, in its greatness, also possess one of the greatest stumbling blocks for believers. Some Christians begin to think they can sin whenever they want, and get away with it. Allow me to set this straight.

When you begin to live as a Christian, you begin to operate on a different realm. You soar above the law realm and enter into the faith realm. Your justification, your righteousness comes from your faith in Jesus Christ. Hence there is no boasting that I have gone 12 days without sin. There is just thanks that I am covered with the righteousness of God today and every day. The question, and subsequent answer then is: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law". - Romans 3:31

Your faith in Jesus Christ produces fruit of a righteous life that is far above what the law requires or measures. When you are asked to go a mile by the law realm, you go two, propelled by the faith realm. When you are slapped on one cheek, the law realm permits you to retaliate, but the faith realm goes above that and compels you to turn the other cheek. When someone takes your shirt without due permission, the law realm allows you to recover that which was taken. But the grace realm compels you not to seek recompense but instead to give your pants as well. You are saved by grace, yes; you are above the law. But don't get it twisted, your being above the law does not mean you break the law, it means you establish the law, it means you enhance it, it means you take it to a "whole nuther level". You take it to the grace realm.

What is in Your Hands?

Moses had tried of his accord to do something about the plight of his fellow Egyptians. He failed miserably. He migrated to the wilderness indefinitely. There he met God in a burning bush, Who sent Him back to Egypt to do the rescue he was called to do. Moses complained that nobody would listen. That they will think he hallucinated. To which God replies: "...What is that in thine hand?" Exodus 4:2

A very simply but profound question that applies to us today. In life, we have many legitimate reasons why we can't do what God has called us to do. It is ahead of its time we say, there is no market for it yet, we are laden with debt, we don't have the financing to make a difference, on and on and on. Yet, with all these excuses, God is simply asking you one question: "What is it in your hands?" Is it a capability to write novels, to sing songs, to volunteer at Church? Is it a capability to help, to lead, to be faithful? Surely, there is something you can do, there is something you have in your hands, and God wants to use that.

It may be just 2 talents you received from Him, but He wants you to be a good steward of those 2 talents and multiply them. You can make a difference; you can be all that God has called you to be. Many times, realizing this is as simple as answering the question God asks of us all: "What is in your hands?"

What Will You Have Learned From Tribulation When It's Over?

Tribulation: grievous trouble; severe trial or suffering.-
Dictionary.com

I do not like tribulation. In fact, I detest it, but God teaches that tribulation is a necessary ingredient of life to bring forth certain strengths, certain fruits in us, which make us ultimately better human beings and better Christians. In a previous post, I wrote on Growing in your infirmity. In it I explained how an infirmity could be the one thing that keeps you humble. I will like to expand on this briefly and write on tribulation and how it ultimately works hope in you. "...but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope":- Romans 5:3-4

We glory in tribulations because of its benefits. Tribulations bring about patience in us. Patience is not just waiting, it is an attitude, it is your attitude while waiting. Patience in turn works in us experience. Experience is: I've done this over and over before. I know what works and I know what does not work. I know the exact route to take in order to arrive at my destination quicker. Experience then builds in us hope. Hope is a desire and an expectation that tomorrow will be better than today. It is a belief that your best days are yet ahead. That greater things are yet to be done in and through your life. The default position when faced with tribulation is to fight back. It is to introspect and believe that you may have done something wrong to warrant the tribulation. While there are elements of truth to this, the fact is tribulation precedes glory.

My advice to you then is to rejoice in tribulation. There is no

doubt that this too shall pass, that this tribulation will end. The question then is, what will you learn from it when it's over? Will you learn patience, experience and hope as written in the Bible or will you glean despair, insecurity and bitterness? Do you want to come out of tribulation learning something new, gaining a deeper understanding of the scripture: "I will not leave nor forsake you", understanding to be of good cheer for "I have overcome the world"? Do you want to come out of it knowing once again, that you have proven Jesus Christ over and over again? Going through a season of tribulation means the times are a-changing for the better. Allow it then, give you the hope and the strengthened resolve that: God takes care of His own - He always does.

He Is Faithful

It was about 8PM on a warm Nigerian night. We had settled into the house for the day, waiting to say our prayers and go to sleep. I was fretting about the next day, not knowing how it will turn out. You see, my daughter and I had just lost our international passports as well as other personal valuables.

There was no way we could travel back to the States to resume schooling, work and our daily routines without the proper identification. Just then my then 3 year old daughter busted out singing with a mighty conviction: "You are Faithful! You are faithful!! You are Faithful!!! Your Joy is my Strength".

The tears almost streamed down my eyes hearing a little child sing about the faithfulness of God, while I, the adult, was shivering with fear of the unknown. She didn't seem to be moved by the gravity of the moment but was carefree in her trust of the Lord. That He will never leave nor forsake us, that He is very near those with broken hearts. That His faithfulness to us is not dependent on our faithfulness to Him. He is faithful because He is faithful. Didn't scripture say: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger" - Psalm 8:2

Faith rose in my spirit after hearing her sing, that God is faithful. It did not matter that the enemy had meant this moment for bad - God is still faithful. I will not curse Him nor detest Him because of my misfortune for He is Faithful. He is Faithful to accomplish all that concerns me today. He is faithful because He promised to be Faithful. He is Faithful because that is who He is. That is the fiber of His being. And He is deserving of my trust that no matter what, He will

remain faithful. Eventually, we did get brand new international passports, and we did not miss anything; instead we gained a lot. This is a testimony that God is faithful no matter what. Has He promised it? He will surely bring it to pass. There is no doubt about that. His faithfulness makes Him too big to be tested. His faithfulness makes Him deserving of our trust.

Above All, Know Thyself.

I heard a story set in the Antebellum era where a slave buyer asked a slave owner why he won't sell a particular slave despite lucrative offers that kept coming at him. The slave owner lit a tobacco pipe and said, you see that slave? His Father is a Chief back in his homeland of Africa. He knows he is a prince and he carries himself like a prince. He does not get drunk, get into cheap fights or lazy around. He keeps his head high, leads the entire plantation and acts with decorum because he knows whom he is. I will not sell him, no. This story illustrates how we would act if only we knew that our Father is the King of Kings. If only we know who we are.

In the Bible, the Jews sent priests and Levites to inquire from John the Baptist, as to who he was. They asked him "What sayest thou of thyself?" Without hesitation, without skipping a beat, John replied: "...I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias" - John 1:22. John knew exactly who he was. There was no doubt in his mind what his mission was. He did not overstep his boundaries and he did not live below his potential. He was all that God had called him to be because he knew who he was. How can a Cat function as a Cat without knowing it is a Cat? I heard a friend once say: "Ignorance is what makes the Mouse chase the Cat. The Cat does not know it is a Cat and is supposed to be the one chasing the Mouse. Similarly, the Mouse does not realize it is a mouse and is to be chased by the Cat. Many of our modern woes can be linked to this. Men do not know they are Men, and many times Women do not know they are Women. And they act out abominations because of this ignorance of who they are.

Let me ask, Do you really know yourself? If we know we are sons/ daughters of the king, then why do we act contrary? If you know you are highly valued by God who sent His son to die for you, then why are you devaluing yourself by settling for less? Just like the biblical prodigal son, it is time for us to come to our senses, to come into our own and realize that we are children of the Most High.

The title of this section is coined from famous words of William Shakespeare, "To thine ownself be true". Once you know who you are; your opportunities become limitless, your potential becomes clear and attainable. You stop beating around the bush and get to that which is truly important in life. You stop existing and start living. It's OK to know other people; in fact, one of the keys to your success is in knowing all men but above all, know thyself. Know your strengths and your weaknesses. Know who you are, know what you are capable of. Gain confidence in yourself. And above all, know whose you are.

1.) The single most important way of knowing who you are is knowing whose you are. If a puppy needs to know who it is, it doesn't need to look too far. It only needs to look at its parents to get an understanding, an insight if you will, as to who it is. Like they say, the fruit never falls too far from the tree. You were made in the image and likeness of God. That says it all. If you miss every other thing, don't miss this. There is a spirit component to you. There is a creative component to you. Your highest calling on earth is to be a son/ daughter of God. And so when people ask, who are you, you should start with. I am a son/ daughter of the most high. This status brings with it certain benefits and responsibility. An earthly prince or potentate has the perks of wealth, convenience, and authority that come with royalty but he/ she also has the sacred responsibility of upholding

the family name. So it is with the Christian, so it is with you.

2.) Another practical way to help you know yourself better is to: Read books - and lots of it too. Mostly, you should read Christian books; autobiographies of successful people, and authentic self-help books. Fiction is good in that it helps with your vocabulary and your imagination, but I wouldn't suggest novels that take your mind into lustful places. Pause to reflect on your life while reading - you will slowly but surely come to an understanding of yourself and your environment. You will understand where it is in life you currently are. What phase of life you are going through. Readers are Leaders but let me add to that, readers are leaders because they have a better understanding of who they are.

3.) Listen to inspirational music and messages. Again, reflect while listening. There is something eternal and ethereal about music. I'm yet to encounter anyone who does not like music. They may like differing genres of music, some may not like loud music but everyone loves music. Listening to a certain song can change your mood from sad to happy and vice versa. Certain songs you listen to can remind you about a major event in your life. And these unique qualities of music combine to make it the perfect elixir for helping you know yourself. What kind of music do you listen to? What genre of music do you like? The answer to this question is also reflective of who you are.

4.) Occasionally take long showers and long walks. Reflect while engaging in this exercise: - There is something about long walks that kicks your mind into high functioning gear. Something about it that helps you think clearly; awakens your imagination and helps you focus. Some people take

prayer walks, which mean you not just think, but you pray as well. As you take a long walk or shower, take stock of yourself, reflect - who are you? What/ who has brought you this far? What drives you? Have you accomplished goals you set previously? Are there any new goals? What have you enjoyed doing most, and what are some hard times you've been through? Answering these questions in deep thought will allow you paint a picture of yourself.

5.) Ask trusted friends and family members who they think you are: The key word here is trusted friends and family members. In other words, those who have close insight into your life based on their proximity to you. Even amongst this group, there are those who are always putting others down, marginalizing your gifts and potential - from these don't ask who you are irrespective of how close they are to you. This is one of the easiest ways to know who you are but should never stand alone in its conclusion. Ask someone close and sincere - who do you think I am? You may or may not be startled at the response but meditate on it anyway and evaluate how it ties in to the other ways you've used so far to discover who you are. Even Jesus asked His disciples: ... whom say ye that I am ? - Mathew 16:15

6.) What is it that when you do, you consistently get an applause for it?: - In High school, I realized that whenever I spoke in public, I always got an applause for it. It is true that most people get applause just for public speaking but as I matured and continued to speak, people would walk up to me and ask for my business card after a speech. Others will walk up to me with a plan of action based on the speech I just delivered minutes ago. This reactions made me understand a gift God has placed in me, that of public speaking. Let me ask you, what is it that when you do it,

people applaud? What is it that when you do it, people react in emotional ways to you? Quietly meditate on this for a few moments. It is an indication of not just what you do, but who you are.

7.) What is it that when you do it, you feel the Lord's pleasure? - God has called, gifted and anointed you for your life work. You may ask, how do I know what it is, I am gifted at? How do I know what my calling is? Here is your answer. It is in filling the blank:

When I _____, I feel God's pleasure. Ask yourself what it is that when you do it, you feel the Lord smiling down on you in approval. Is it athletics, studying, technology, art, helping others, resource creating. Whatever it is, this is a sure indicator of who you are. You may not currently have a job that uses this skill and ability, I understand, but know without a cinch of doubt that this is who you are.

As I wrote this series, someone asked me: "could you make public, some of the books you recommend?" I thought, why not! These 10 books have helped me know myself better and will help you too. Most of them are FREE on Amazon Kindle.

- 1.) The Bible
- 2.) The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin - Benjamin Franklin
- 3.) My Life in Advertising - Claude Hopkins
- 4.) Acres of Diamonds - Russell Conwell
- 5.) Think and Grow Rich - Napoleon Hill
- 6.) The Richest Man in Babylon - George Clayson
- 7.) The Battlefield of the Mind - Joyce Meyer

- 8.) Deep Calleth Unto Deep - Enoch Adejare Adeboye
- 9.) Recreating Your World - Chris Onyakhilome
- 10.) Gifted Hands - Ben Carson

Ant World

Earlier, I wrote about the harrowing experience I had when I lost everything and was stranded with nowhere to go. God miraculously stepped in and restored much more than I had prior, but not without teaching me a valuable lesson. One I will share with you now. You see prior to my harrowing experience, I lived in what I call "Ant World". A place where you work non-stop, just like an ant, in order to avoid poverty and gain massive riches. God showed me through my experience that hard work was great, but I should also temper my work with appreciation. I should slow down once in a while to enjoy what I have. I should see the big picture. I should transition from my Ant World to His Heaven world.

The ants are always busy. In fact the Bible has positive things to say about these amazing creatures: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise : Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest". - Proverbs 6:6-8. We know that by hard work and dedication, we can provide food plenty not just for our families, but also for our villages. But is that all there is to life? To rise and shine, because another day calls for another dollar? To retire to bed early for tomorrow we return to do our hamster on a wheel thing? To stay busy yet not able to point out one or two achievements of eternal importance? I am in no way devaluing hard work. Even the scripture above is clear that through hard work, provision is made. I am only asking, is Ant world all there is to life? Do we miss the eternal simply because we are so engrossed in the temporal? Do we see the big picture or stay focused in the seeming urgency of now? There is a better way to live.

Your goal should be that you and yours live in Heaven. Heaven is not just something or somewhere we attain after death, Heaven can be experienced here right now, in this life, as well as in that to come. Heaven is a family that prays and stays together. A family that loves one other. Heaven is righteousness, peace, and Joy in the Holy Spirit. Heaven is contentment, appreciation and good will. Heaven is having the things we need and needing the things we have. Heaven is doing hard and fulfilling work on earth that provides. Heaven is making a difference in the lives of others and in that, extolling the King. Heaven is salvation, eternal life and eternal fellowship with the one who made us and died that we may live in a perpetual state of ... Heaven. Choose to live in Heaven today will you?

9 Principles It Takes To Build A Winning Team

The soccer team I put together, won the Indy South side indoor soccer championship. That meant a lot to me because this was the third time we tried for this championship after coming short the past 2 seasons. Let me tell you how we got here. My previous team was dissolved by the leader who decided to join another team in search of greener pastures. I tried playing in teams with lesser talent but as we lost game after game, I realized I needed to employ one of my life philosophies: that you need a good team around you to win. And so I set about to create this new team. I invited players I knew were talented, but it was a challenge to get them to play partly because my new team had no name recognition. Slowly, but surely, we started to build a core team. My vision of winning was embraced by all, in fact we had team members that wanted to win more than I did... but we failed. The first season, we got to the finals and fell short. The second season, we could not even play a single game as we were rocked with injuries from the first season. The third time, we won a resounding victory. Here are lessons I learned on what it takes to build a championship team.

1.) Winning takes Time: Winning a championship does not always happen overnight. Sometimes, you have to fail to succeed. Sometimes, you have to take a step backward to move forward. Sometimes, you have to wait your turn. In all remember that delay is not denial - stay the course.

2.) It takes Communication: Everyone in the team needs to understand that they have a right to speak up and that their opinion will be valued. It may not be adhered to but it will be valued. They need to be encouraged to air their views in a

respective and constructive fashion. We turned the corner from a bunch of losing talented individuals to a winning team when a member spoke up and said we were working too hard individually, that we needed to share responsibility as a team.

3.) It takes Failing: Mostly learning from the failures. We had to fail, get beat up physically in order to learn to succeed. Our failures reminded us of how badly we disliked failing. Our failing kindled the fire in us to succeed - and succeed we did!

4.) It takes Tenacity: This is somewhat different from persistence, in that it takes the ability to figure out new ways to solve the same old losing problem. It does not just mean to keep trying again season after season, it also means mining NEW strategies learned from mistakes and failure, and applying these to the next season or the next game.

5.) It takes Trust: We started winning when we started to trust each other. When we agreed that each member of the team is good at what he does and so we must trust him to carry the ball. We trust his judgment, that he will do something of value with the ball. We trust him not to waste the opportunities we create.

6.) It takes Shared Responsibility and Shared Credit: We learned to move the ball amongst ourselves. To share it. This strategy has multiple advantages. It helped us conserve energy. It depleted the energy of the opponent as they found themselves chasing the ball most of the game. It boosted our confidence and gave us the opportunity to dictate the terms of the game. At the end of the game, we shared the credit. Everyone got applauded for his or her effort. It was no individual genius that made winning possible, it was a team

effort.

7.) It takes Kindness to Opponents: I noticed that when we started befriending opponents and cheering them on in the games where they did not play against us, they started to open up to us and we started to do well. I don't know if it is a psychological thing but I know that we stopped playing them out of spite, anger or disdain. We played them competitively out of respect for them as individuals, knowing we will win.

8.) It takes Calling People Out (Accountability): One of the methods we imbibed, as hard as it is, was calling ourselves out publicly. We gave each other permission to call us out when we were irresponsible with the ball. I knew that if I was careless with the ball, I will get called out and so I made sure to make each possession count. This did not stifle my creativity or decision making, in that I was at liberty to do what I felt was best for the team at any particular moment - just not to be careless with the ball.

9.) It takes a Reserve Bench: The first 2 seasons, we played very thinly because we did not have enough staff. The starting team played every minute of the game, from start to finish. While we started games well, we started to get fatigued as the game wore on and got into tired stretches, which allowed opposing teams open big leads on us. In the 3rd season however, we had 2 players in our reserve bench and this made a huge difference. This allowed us take a breather, to rest, recover and come back more refreshed. It also accorded us the opportunity to us see the action from the outside, from another perspective, and then strategize real time how we could make a difference when we got back in.

I've shared with you, these 9 practical tips that helped me and will help you build a winning team in your organization, church, school or whatever endeavor of life you may find yourself. Now go and build your winning team!

Come Away A While - A Season Of Renewal

It is no secret that every now and then, Jesus retreated to the mountain to be alone and to pray. I believe Jesus understood the principle of renewal. When you are producing at a very high level or about to take your production to the next level, there is a need to come apart a while, to renew, and to rejuvenate. You are not a machine fueled by gasoline. Even that has to be taken offline every now and then for routine maintenance. You owe it to yourself to come away for a while so that you can be renewed.

When I speak about coming away for a while, I'm not talking about your daily sleep neither I'm I talking about the 1 week vacations you are oft to take. I am talking about taking 30+ days completely off your daily routine. I am talking about a complete unplugging from your daily production affairs. A time to come away a while and be still. A time to intentionally tank your production, to be silent, to learn, to pray, to grow. A time of respite, and a time for renewal. In the Bible Jesus came away for 40 days and 40 nights, fasting and praying just before He began the peak production season of His ministry: "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered" - Matthew 4:2

You should plan to renew yourself about every 5 years of intense production. The days scheduled for this season should not be less than 30 days. 3 months is ideal. If you can spend these days in a foreign country, that will be preferable. Your schedule during this season should be nothing but sightseeing, reading, praying and sleeping - perhaps writing. I'm not oblivious to the fact that not everyone can financially or vocationally afford to do this, but I do know that with proper planning, you may be able to take

a month sabbatical. It may not be this year or next year but it can happen if you intentionally look ahead. Before this season of renewal is over, you will notice a renewed strength rising in you, a renewed purpose, a renewed conviction for the execution of your life work. With these renewed elements, you will be able to come back to routine daily life ready to effectively execute the next 3-5 years of your life.

Just Start!

In the past, I waited for inspiration to come to me before I could produce. Without inspiration, I simply didn't produce. When I'm in a high state of inspiration, I produce at a very high level. When my inspiration drops, my production level drops as well. Yet I've found, as I grow older that most times, inspiration comes after I've started.

Take for instance, this blog post that you are reading, and many others I have written the past. The process most likely is this: I sit in front of the computer staring at a blank screen with nothing to write. Nothing forms in my mind - just blank. And then I begin to pray, "Dear Lord, please give me something to say to your people. Please give me something to say that will be a blessing to at least one person today.

And then I put my fingers on the keyboard and start a "dump". I start to type away as the Lord gives me utterance. As the dump continues, I get more excited about the content and inspiration shoots through my system allowing me go through the dump and make sense out of it. That is how I produce. Now I must advice here that I have complete and unwavering faith in God that he will show up, that He will give me something write - something to produce. Without this faith, I will not be able to start the "dump".

So there you have it, that's a way to summon inspiration. Just start! You will notice that successful people do things not just when they feel like it. They do things because they "have" to do it. Let's take it a step further; they do things because they "get" to do it. They Start! Jesus Christ, at the start of His journey to the cross, prayed to the Father to take the forthcoming ordeal away, but that ONLY the Father's will be done. In spite of this reluctance, this lack of inspiration,

irrespective of how He felt, He started the journey by saying to his disciples: “Rise, let us be going : behold, he is at hand that doth betray me”. - Matthew 26:46

Jesus started. I know you don't feel inspired to go to work occasionally but go anyway. I understand you don't feel like writing that book, or reading that textbook, but read it anyway. The inspiration many times comes after you have started. The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on. Just Start!

To You

As any mature person in a season of responsibility knows, there are times when things get rough and you begin to miss routine payments. There are tragedies that happen that seem to knock the very foundation off your feet. In these moments, you just want to lie in bed; put the covers over your head, go to sleep and wish this was all a dream. A dream that will vaporize as soon as you wake up with the rising sun. Yet, you wake up and yes ... it is really happening and it does not look good. It was in one such season that I learned to apply this scripture: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" - Psalm 55:22

I simply placed my issue on God's feet and allowed Him deal with it. I have covenanted to give God the glory for everything good that happens in my life. The responsibility that comes with that covenant is that He, not the devil, gets the blame for anything that goes wrong. I just give it to Him - "To You". And so now that things are so much easier, I reminisced and wrote this song. May it encourage you in your lifework. When life feels overwhelming, may you find the trust in you to cast your burdens to the Lord for He cares for you.

Greater

History is littered with men and women who accomplished mighty feats because someone believed in them. Things that seemed impossible for man to achieve 2 decades ago, have mostly been realized today, many times because someone believed in someone else. Perhaps a parent believed in a child or a teacher believed in her student. A family once believed in me and that made the difference in turning my under performance to dominance.

In John 14, Jesus believed in 70 men who went on to do the seemingly impossible. They healed sick people, preached the gospel to strangers, and put devils on the run. That same Jesus Christ believes in you today. He says of you: "...He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and GREATER works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" - John 14:12

There is GREATER in you than you realize there is. There is more capacity in you than you can imagine. In fact, your capacity for suffering is directly proportional to your being greater. I know sometimes, it appears as though you have reached your breaking point, as though you have reached your limit, as though you are simply gasping for air that will run out at any minute - but there is so much more in you. You can take that hit and still thrive. You can take the bad news and still smile. You can do the impossible. You can push through the limits. You, yes you, can break records. You can be so much more. You can serve more. You can give to a greater extent. If you believe in Christ, You can do greater. You can be greater.

Face The Music

Problem - anything, matter, person, etc., that is difficult to deal with, solve, or overcome - World English Dictionary

Earlier, I wrote about being involved in an accident, a problem if you will, and staying to "face the music". "Face the Music" is a term I use to describe confronting and tackling problems. The aftermath of the accident was nothing short of a blessing. It went well afterwards, but could have gone awry if I had run away from the problem - which I had a chance to. I heard my dad's voice in my head, "Uche don't run away from problems, It's either it kills you or you kill it - don't run away." This wise saying saved the day and has helped me many more times since then.

In Matthew, the disciples of Jesus had a problem. Their smooth voyage suddenly turned rocky. The waves crashed relentlessly on their boat, depositing squats of water into it. The men feared for their lives and refused to "face the music". They instead ran away to Jesus who was soundly sleeping. Jesus woke up and rebuked the disciples for not "facing the music". For running away from the problem instead of tackling it. He said: "...why are ye fearful o ye of little faith?" - Matthew 8:26. He then rebuked the winds for disturbing his sleep. Jesus Christ "faced the music", head on. He did not retreat nor back down, He did not run away, He faced the problem and overcame it.

Psychiatrist, Dr Scott Peck in his book *The Road Less Traveled*, says: "Problems do not go away. They must be worked through or else they remain, forever a barrier to the growth and development of the spirit." I couldn't agree more.

Problems are an opportunity for you to grow, if you will "face the music". Don't actively seek to cause problems but don't run away from them either, when they arise. I agree that "facing the music" can be very painful, and sometimes even traumatic, but the consequence of not facing the problem is even worse. By facing the music right away, you allow yourself the opportunity to enjoy the pleasures that will come after you overcome. Don't run away from problems, face them head on - "face the music".

The Thing You Fear Is Mightily Afraid Of You

I was privileged, many years ago, to attend a leadership training center with peers in Lagos, Nigeria. One night, I was appointed as the leader of the center. As I stood in front of those distinguished leaders to lead the night's agenda, I felt my knees knock against each other in repeated spasms. I was so afraid; I could not look up at the group. I asked the group to sing the National anthem and as they were at it, I mustered enough courage to lift up my head and scan the group. My eye caught that of a lady at the far right corner and she immediately dropped her eyes, unable to meet my gaze. I looked down, amazed at what had just happened. I decided to try again, and lifted my head, this time meeting the eyes of another lady down the middle. She too, dropped her eyes. Wowed by this, I started darting my eyes across the room and to my delight, each person, male or female could not hold my gaze. They dropped their eyes as soon as I looked at them. It was then I discovered a profound truth that changed my life. That what I am afraid of, is actually afraid of me.

Peter was once afraid of what people would think if he confessed to be a follower of Christ. In fact, he denied Jesus Christ 3 times. Yet that same Peter, after the ascension of Jesus, opened his mouth and proclaimed his follower-ship of Jesus boldly. 3,000 people became believers after one such speech, and another 2,000 a few days later. Peter discovered that what He was afraid of was actually afraid of him. By Peter and the apostle's hands; supernatural acts were wrought in so much that the Bible proclaims: "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things". - Acts 5:11

What are you afraid of? Are you aware that that same thing

is afraid of you? God has not given you the spirit of fear. He has given you the spirit of love, of power and of a sound mind. Are you afraid of death? Scripture declares: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" - 1 Corinthians 15:55. Are you afraid of not being able to pay the bills? Scriptures declare that your heavenly father owns the cattle on a thousand hills. If He can take care of the sparrow, He can definitely take care of you. What is it you fear? Fear not, for the thing you fear is mightily afraid of you.

Run Your Own Race!

It felt surreal when I won my first athletic meet years ago as a student athlete running the 400 meters dash. I felt like a champion. The problem was that with this win came increased expectation. I was immediately signed up for a conference meet in Missouri and that only a few days after my win. We got to the conference and I was settled in my lane ready to run and armed with my game plan. As the race began and I started off my block, I noticed a competitor zoom past me the way a police car will go past you on a highway. I immediately threw my game plan "into the air" and chased this competitor. I chased him until I tired out at the 200 meters mark. I then slowed down considerably. The competitor went on to win the race but I noticed he too slowed down dramatically with 100 meters left. This is usually the point where I am at my best - with 100 meters left to go - I had nothing left at this point, I lost.

My team mate, we call him "Superman", a champion in his own right, pulled me aside after the race and said to me quite candidly: "Uche, that is the dumbest race I've ever seen. You ran his race, you did not run your own race, that is why you lost". I thought about Superman's comment for a moment and quickly realized he was right. I had a strategy for running that had served me so well. Start out at 100%, increase to 105%, decrease to 85% and then finish at 110%. I disregarded this strategy and chased my opponent at 100% all the way. No wonder I got tired early. No wonder I lost. Had I run my race, I believe I would have had a better chance at winning. I learned something important in that moment that I have applied to my life since. I learned to run my own race.

Earlier, I mentioned how that Peter was complaining that the

other disciple Jesus loved was tagging along without an invitation, to which Jesus replied: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me". - John 21:22
In other words, Jesus was saying, let him run his race, it's not your business. You Peter, run your own race - follow me. What is it to you that the other person is flying at a fast pace or that someone else seems to be crawling at an efficient rate? You, run your own race. Be faithful to your calling and your life work. Stick to the strategy God has given you through His Word. You may not come out first place but you will come out victorious. You will overcome. You will have accomplished all that God called you to do.

Growing Strength Through Suffering

“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small” -
Proverbs 24:10

So far, I've failed each time I hit adversity. This proves my strength is small. And so like you, I want to grow my strength. The question then is how do you grow strength? The unfortunate answer is that growing in strength comes through suffering. Let me explain by telling you a personal story. I was once consumed with success, obsessed with climbing up the corporate ladder as soon as possible. Possessed with ambition, I wanted to make a lot of money in the quickest way possible. And I started doing just that. I worked so hard; I didn't have time to spend the money that came in. As a result, the money began to pile up and I could barely keep up with it. But then I noticed also that temptations that were once beyond my reach began to open up. It felt like I could go unhindered, anywhere. That I could buy unrestricted, anything. And indulge I did.

But then tragedy hit. In a minute, I lost everything. The knot I felt in my stomach the moment I learned all was lost is indescribable. I agonized over the adversity I suffered through the week, but allowed myself go through the pain. I did not take any short cuts like: drinking my sorrows away, or putting it into a "box" in my mind and refusing to open it. It was difficult yet it was the greatest inner growth I had yet encountered. I came out of that situation knowing once again, that God will always come through. Trusting that He will never leave nor forsake me. My faith in His ability and in His presence grew. My perspective of life grew from a mere arena for money making to an appreciation of life itself. I grew from a lust for having everything I wanted to an

appreciation of wanting the things I do have. I grew from competing and fighting with anyone I perceived to be an enemy of my progress, to living peaceably with all men as much as is in my power.

You see, I still don't like to suffer, but I am more tolerant of pain now because I know it is an opportunity, a catalyst if you will, to grow strength. But you have to allow yourself go through the pain. Are you currently going through a divorce? Have you lost a loved one? Have you lost your job? Have you been betrayed? Don't deny yourself the painful emotions you feel. Don't drink your pain away. Don't numb your pain with denial. Allow yourself go through the full measure of pain. You will come through it. This too shall pass. Jesus Christ will be with you all the way growing your strength. You will not be the same shallow person you were when adversity started. Instead, you will grow deep roots. Your strength will no longer be small, it will be enlarged greatly.

Improve Your Attitude, Improve Your Life

In my professional experience, I've seen many pretend to have a great attitude, when in fact; they are exhibiting the highest levels of passive aggression. I've seen people smile when you are around, seem agreeable and pretend to get along with your ideas and disposition. Yet the minute you turn your back, the vitriol emanates full force. This is not good attitude. This keeps people afloat for a while but sooner or later, their sins find them out. I've noticed that people like this find it very difficult to progress steadily. They seem to be on a never-ending roller coaster of starting over. I hope this is not you, if so, good news is that attitude can be improved. Let's look at a biblical example of someone who needed to improve his attitude.

Judas was the treasurer of #TeamJesus. He seemed to get along very well with the disciples, and was perhaps, fun to be around. Yet he had a bad attitude all along. His attitude showed itself often. For example, when Mary came to wash the feet of Jesus with her hair and expensive perfume, it was Judas who found fault with this gesture of love. He mentioned that the perfume could have been sold, and the money given to the poor. But Jesus knowing better, confronted him: "Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always" - John 12:7. Judas's attitude, towards making money above all things got a hold of him. But there is much we can learn from Judas. We can learn to improve our attitude. We can learn to operate with integrity, to pull out of a group if we are not "feeling" the group, and not just get along for getting along sake.

Not everybody is talented at singing but everybody has an

attitude, which they can control. There is only so much you can grow skill wise, but there is no limit to your growth attitude wise. I agree your attitude is not everything but it is important. I concede there is a place for competency, for confidence, for integrity, for kindness. Yet don't underestimate the power of your attitude. Your attitude, many times, is the difference maker. Your attitude is the part of the deal completely under your control. It is the last freedom that can be taken from you only if you give it. Make the most of the attitude God has given you. Improve your attitude and improve your life.

Study To Show Thyself Approved

On my last day at one of my old jobs, I approached one of the veteran engineers on the team whom I will call Peter. Allow me give some background, Peter has little "people skills", and a poor command of grammar, but Peter is really adept at what he does. He is amongst the top in his profession nationwide, and the go to guy in difficult situations. When nobody can solve a problem, they go to Peter - who miraculously, always ends up solving the problem. When I first met Peter, he was on his way to his honeymoon. For his trip, he packed a bevy of technical manuals of which I and some other teammates chided him for. I will never forget his reply. He said simply, "Knowledge is Power". That shut us up for good.

I thanked Peter for all that I had learned from him. Peter, without warning or prompt, proceeded to tell me something that I didn't know about him beforehand. He said that he didn't graduate from high school but by applying himself to studying, he had climbed to great heights professionally. He had become one of the elites in his field. Across the nation, people call him for assistance on their issues. Peter was right, even those on our team with Master's degrees could not match Peter's skill. I left that meeting full of reflection and insight. What can and what will happen to anyone who would apply himself or herself to studying is yet to be determined. The growth you will experience if you apply yourself to studying cannot easily be measured.

The Apostle Paul, in exhorting young Timothy, had this, amongst others to say to him: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be

ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” - 2 Timothy 2:15
The moment you stop studying, you start declining. In life, you will face situations in which you do not have the personal experience to help you overcome. But if you have "borrowed" experience from someone else, dead or alive, through a book you have read - you will be in prime shape to effectively deal with it. Apply yourself. Study, read voraciously in and out of your circle of competence. Devour books with unashamed gluttony. It is the best advice I can give you other than surrendering your life to Jesus Christ - Read. Don't stop - read, study. Your future depends on it; your family depends on it. God through His word is telling you today, study to show thyself approved.