

your **TALENT**
and your
DESTINY

Isaac John Akagu

FORWARD

The Bible book of proverbs 18:16 says that **“a man’s gift maketh room for him and bringeth him before great men.”**

Talents or gifts, if you may, are those resources or skills which God has endowed man with and which man is expected to make use of in order to fulfill his destiny or purpose on earth; affecting his generation in the process. Everyone born on earth is born with a divine purpose or assignment in life as ordained by God. *Apostle Paul declared this in 1 Corinthians 7:7a (NIV) “I wish that everyone are like me, but each person has his own gift from God.”* God does not send anyone on a mission without equipping him for it. He deposited various skills in man to help him carry out and fulfill his ordained assignment. These skills or Talents are usually naturally possessed by us.

A story is told about a man in Matthew 25:14-30, who on the eve of his departure on a long journey equipped his servants with skills, with which they were to fend for themselves until his return. Verse 16 reads: *“and unto one he gave five talents, to another two and to another one; to everyman according to his several abilities and straightway took his journey.”* The implication of this statement is that everyone has a number of unique and peculiar talents bestowed by God. So do not think or conclude that you do not have any gift or talent; the problem is that you have not searched deep enough within you to unearth it.

Isaac John Akagu, in this wisdom-packed, thought-provoking and action-inciting book of his, tells us the source of all gifts and how these gifts can be of benefit to us. He mentions that God gives us talents to appreciate and to put to work in order to make profit of them to His Glory. He also examines in the second section, some crucial ingredients every talented person would need to fulfill destiny. As you read on, you will learn how to discover and stir up the talents you are endowed with and how to be empowered to maximize and maintain the flow of Grace throughout your journey.

Don’t forget that your talents are for profit making because *“...the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyman TO PROFIT withal”* (1 Corinthians 12:7). God bless you as you put your gifts to work in the Name of Jesus Christ!

Pastor David Popoola

Living Faith Church, Worldwide!

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my father; Lt. Deacon John A. Akagu. You left me spiritual legacies I'll do my best to pass on to generations after me.

INTRODUCTION

Is everybody on earth gifted? Does everyone have talents or are there “gift-less” people somewhere on the surface of the earth? Are some people more endowed than others? ...and are there some that aren’t endowed at all? Now here’s the big one ...Are you gifted or gift-less?

These questions bug the minds of many people all across the earth as they try to discover themselves and come to a point of self realization. Many have grown frustrated with their lives and are full of negativities in their minds.

If you are striving hard to have a fulfilled life and you’ve answered those questions correctly, then you are one step closer to making the most of your time on earth. Whether or not you were able to answer my questions however, you’ll definitely find my summations that will follow from this point thought-provoking.

Everyone on earth has potentials! There are no empty men on earth, but there are many people with wrong perceptions of who they are and what they carry. Also, there are no “gift-less” people on earth, but there are many people who don’t even know how gifted they are. Nothing devalues a man than having a sense of emptiness and incapacity. It is the understanding of who you are that determines what you become. How you see yourself consistently determines what you become perpetually.

It is often said that **“in every man, there is a seed of greatness.”** When this seed is nurtured, it can catapult him from where he is to where God

wants him to be. Every bird in the sky is gifted to fly. Every fish in the ocean is gifted to swim. Similarly, everyone on earth is gifted to do something special.

No purpose is ever accomplished without a discovered, developed and functional talent. You may have big dreams, but if you don't identify the talents that will make those dreams a reality and develop them, the dreams may end a mirage.

A talent is simply a '**Gift**' from God to a man. It is often referred to as "gifting"; that special endowment within you. It is unique to you and can turn you from a mediocre into an achiever. It is a rare ability and not by any means common. Finding it out becomes the turning point of your destiny.

I'm about to take you through a journey; you may never find this in any book. Not even the formal education you receive in your schools and institutions of learning would expose it to you. It's a journey of self discovery where you are going to learn what it takes to have a fulfilled life on earth.

By the time you're done reading this book, you'll be flying on the wings of self-belief, motivated by self discovery and leading to inevitable accomplishments.

However, I've got Good News for you! You have everything it takes to become a star on the earth. Now join me as we unfold much more.

SECTION A

MAXIMIZING YOUR TALENT

CHAPTER ONE

EVERYONE HAS TALENTS

"Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."(Ephesians 4:8)

In the verse above, the Apostle emphatically states that everyone has been given gifts or talents from God. Why? For the establishment of a God-predetermined agenda! God has plans, but He uses human vessels. Everyone matters to God. You are central to a divine plan. No farmer goes to his farm without his implements. Similarly, God couldn't have sent you down here on missions He hasn't equipped you for. Therefore, you cannot be without gifting, endowments and special abilities.

You did not determine where, when and why you were born. God determined all that before your parents even met each other (Jeremiah 1:5). You are born at an appointed time, in an appointed place, with specific gifts to solve well defined problems. Everyone's assignment differs.

When I was young, I used to wish I was an American or a European, living in London, New York, etc. Growing up however and discovering more about myself, I can say with every sense of audacity that I'm proud to be a Nigerian, born in Nigeria and Gifted to solve specific problems.

I've studied a bit about Nations. In every Nation, there is a natural resource. In Nigeria for example, there is Crude Oil, in Ghana, there is Gold. In England, there is Coal. In Germany, there is Uranium, etc. Each

Nation draws from its natural resources to produce wealth for its citizenry. Nations differ in wealth depending on the level of utilization of their resources.

Similarly, every human being has a gift, a potential, a natural endowment and a special ability. The level of your success depends on the level of your utilization of that talent.

In every discipline and area of Endeavour, there are specialists. In sports, there are talented athletes. If you don't have the gift, don't try to be an athlete by all means. Look out for your own potential. Some people have the voice to sing, some have the personality to encourage, some; the hands to write, some; craft, some; drawing, some; talking, and so on.

Know also that it's possible to be endowed with two or three or even as many talents as possible. Some people can do several things perfectly, you almost wonder if they are from another planet. The Bible said "*God is able to make all grace **abound** to you...*" (2 Corinthians 9:8). That means you can have abundance of gifts.

'Benjamin Franklin' was an author, printer, inventor, scientist and politician. **'Leonardo Da Vinci'** was not only the best artist of his time; he also came up with ideas for the helicopter tank, solar power, calculator and the theory of plate tectonics. **'Paul Robeson'** did not only have a beautiful bass-baritone voice, he was also a great athlete, writer, multi-lingual orator, scholar and lawyer. **'Isaac Newton'** was a mathematician, physicist, theologian, astronomer, alchemist and philosopher. **'Albert Schweitzer'**

was a musician, peace activist, physician, philosopher and theologian. **‘Aristotle’s’** writings covered poetry, metaphysics, logic, physics, music, theatre, politics, biology, ethics and zoology. **‘Thomas Jefferson’**, former president of the United States was an inventor, architect, politician, writer and wine maker. **‘Isaac Asimov’**, having written 500 books and 9000 letters and post cards, said, **“Never think that you’re not good enough yourself. People will take you at your own reckoning.”**

I can go on and on. The summary of what I’m saying is that you have a talent and there is a possibility that you have multiple talents that are yet to be discovered. But it’s absolutely impossible for anyone to exist without a talent because everyone has a purpose and there’s a resource deposited in you for the fulfillment of your purpose; and that resource is called ‘Talent.’

CHAPTER TWO

YOUR TALENT IS A POINTER TO YOUR ASSIGNMENT

“For I would, that all men were even as myself. But everyman hath his special gift of God; one after this manner and another after that” (1 Corinthians 7:7)

You have an assignment. You are not an accidental creature. You are not on earth because your dad met your mum. You were born because an agenda was created and God ordained you to spearhead the accomplishment of that agenda.

The talent you have is a resource that God has deposited in you to equip you for the agenda. Cherish your talents, nurture them and deploy them. **Lt. Dr Myles Munroe** said in one of his books and I paraphrase; **“the cemetery is the richest place on earth.”** Why? In my opinion, it’s because many people died without discovering, developing and deploying their talents.

Apostle Paul in the text above said everyone has his own gift *“one after this manner and another after that.”* That means we all have different talents. My talent differs from yours; because we have different assignments. There’s no point trying to copy someone else because your reason for existence differs from everyone else.

That’s why when students talk, you hear one person say *“I hate Maths”*; and then another one says *“I love it but I hate Biology.”* A third person comes in and says *“you’ve got to be kidding, because Geography is my favourite.”*

Everyone has a different ability because everyone has a different destiny; simple!

God Works With Varieties

Imagine if everybody on earth were musicians; no doctors, no lawyers, no pastors, no teachers, nothing else; just musicians. There would be chaos. When people have a headache, they would die, because no doctor. If everybody was a sportsman, there would be no spectator. If everybody was a preacher, there would be no members. **God created several gifts because there are several needs.** There are varieties of gifting. Your own talent is an answer to someone else's need!

I Need Yours and You Need Mine

Recently I watched a documentary of how the "Burj al Arab" (world tallest hotel) was built in Dubai. Hundreds of millions of dollars went into the project. But there was a variety of skills on display and a lot of professionals in different areas of construction had to come together to make the project work.

First, an architect was needed to design the iconic structure, and then engineers in land reclamation were called upon to create an artificial island because the edifice was built a few meters into the ocean. When the building commenced, brick layers were needed, then electricians, then plumbers, interior decorators, painters, carpenters, and so on.

Everyone had a different assignment based on their several abilities. However, they all worked together to make the building stand. Without the brick layer, there would be no structure for the electrician to work on; and without the architect, there would be no idea for the brick layer to implement. It's simple!

We all have different abilities, but we need each other. When a teacher is sick, he or she needs a doctor. When a doctor has a child, he needs the teacher to educate the child. **Talents are given to service other people's needs to the glory of God.**

Copy No One!

Many people fail because they try to copy others. I said earlier that you need not copy anyone because you have a unique assignment. It was tagged on your life before you were born. No one else has it. Therefore you don't have to try to be someone else. It's ok to admire endowments you see in others; but focus on developing yours.

In the mid 2000's, a number of popular Nigerian actors were banned for a year because they were charging outrageous sums of money to do movies. That year, more than half of them decided to go into music –just to show that they weren't moved by the ban. However, majority of them flopped. They were fantastic actors but woeful singers. Some of them sang so terribly I felt for them. I heard one of them sing and I actually thought she was coughing. They were trying to copy other talents they never had.

CHAPTER THREE

EVERY GOOD GIFT COMES FROM GOD

*“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down **from the father** of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”*

(James 1:17)

“Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above who created all heaven's lights; unlike them, He never changes or casts shifting shadows.”

(James 1:17, NLT)

There are good gifts and there are bad gifts. But every good gift comes from God. In fact, everything God deposited in man was good. However, through satanic influences, some people acquire bad gifts from the devil.

Jesus explains this better in John 8:44. *“Ye are of your father **the devil**, and the **lusts** of your father ye will do. He was **a murderer** from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh **a lie**, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it”*

Jesus says the devil is father to certain individuals who will replicate his characteristics –a murderer and a liar. Also, the devil is called *the thief* and *the destroyer* in John 10:10.

There are people who are gifted liars; but God couldn't have gifted anyone to lie. It must have come from the devil. It's a bad gift. There are people who are talented thieves; they just pick up anything they see. They got that from *their father* –the devil. There are many murderers, destroyers

adulterers and so on. God never gives such gifts to anyone. They're all from the devil, no doubt.

Those under the influence of Satan are gifted with bad talents, but those under God's influence exhibit good gifts. It's simple! In 1 John 3:9-10, John the Beloved said *"whosoever is born of God does not commit sin...In this, the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God..."*The Apostle clearly states that there are *Children of God* and there are *children of the devil*. Everyone exhibits the gifting of whom he belongs.

With Whom is No Variableness!

God is never partial. He gave gifts to *all men* (Ephesians 4:8); and there is no *variableness* with his gifts (James 1:17). He doesn't give powerful gifting to some and less important ones to others. Your talent is just as important as anyone else's own. God has no respect for persons (2 Chronicles 19:7b). He's given *good gifts* to everyone.

Your success depends on how you are able to utilize yours. Romans 9:12 says *"...the same lord over all is rich unto all..."* Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:4: *"Now there are diversities (different types) of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are different administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all"* (Emphasis mine).

Also, *"There is One body and One Spirit, even as ye are called in One hope of your calling: One Lord, One faith, One baptism, One God and One Father of all,*

*who is above all and through all and in you all. But **unto every one** of us is given grace according to **the measure of the gift** of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:4-7).*

There is a measure of the gift of Christ in everyone; and it is a pointer to each one's destiny. We're in the same Body of Christ but we're given diversities of gifts to function in different areas. These gifts come from God –the Father of lights; *with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.*

CHAPTER FOUR

YOU ARE EXPECTED TO MAKE PROFIT WITH YOUR TALENT

*"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man **to profit withal**"
(1 Corinthians 12:7)*

Talents are for profit making. They're not mere decorations. In Matthew chapter 25, Jesus told a parable of the master who gave out different amounts of talents to three of his servants prior to his journey. On his return, he rewarded the first two servants who made profits with theirs and punished the third for not making any profit.

Remember that talents are given by God to us so we can accomplish certain God-predetermined tasks or assignments (John 15:2). Failure to maximize our talents means we are not making any profits with what he's given us. You are expected to produce results with what you've been given.

You are gifted to affect both yourself and humanity positively.

A few years back, a Russian billionaire bought two pieces of artwork from an American painter for 200 million dollars. My jaws dropped when the news broke out. I began to wonder whether there was a piece of diamond hiding somewhere in the painting; but there was none. It was just an outstanding artwork that cost so much. The truth is; there are many other talented painters who are not deploying their gifting; hence, there's no profit whatsoever for them.

Recently, a popular soccer player in England said *"what we in this profession earn is crazy compared to what obtains in normal life."* He was talking about the huge sums they get paid just to play football. The spectators that pay to watch them are earning very little in their own places of work. Eventually, the big time earners are the ones that deploy their talents. The truth is; when you put your talent to work, people will pay just to see what you have to offer.

Titanic, a film that cost \$200 million to produce generated \$1.2billion from Video and DVD sales and rentals in addition to \$2.2billion it grossed in theatres. Huge profit! What's so special about the film? ...there is a story writer; then a producer, then directors, actors, make-up artists, and other talented people... and that's all. It's a whole bag of talents, but talents when deployed, generate huge profit.

Michael Dell purchased his first calculator at age 7, and while still at junior high, he often disassembled his computer just to see how it works. He had a gift in that area. Today he owns Dell Inc. which produces PC's and has a net worth of around \$20 billion as of August 2016.

You Are God's Business Empire

God is business minded. That's why Jesus said "...I must be about my Father's Business." In every business empire, there is a business owner as well as an investment.

Your life's assignment is the business; God is the business owner, you are the business manager and your talent is God's investment in the business.

Just as capital yields profit, talents, when put to use, yield profits to the glory of God. It's Simple!

CHAPTER FIVE

NEGLECT NOT THE GIFT IN YOU

“Neglect not the gift that is in thee...” (1Timothy 4:14)

There are many dormant or if you like, inactive talents at the moment. Many people, like the third servant in Matthew 25, have abandoned their talents. Some have buried their giftings while they’re alive.

Paul in his first letter to Timothy, warns him never to neglect *the gift that is in thee*. It’s an instruction. To despise your talent is to despise your destiny. To ignore your gifting is to ignore your future.

Many Don’t Appreciate Who They Are

Many people hate themselves. They don’t appreciate who they are; hence, they try to be someone else. Some people don’t even know who they really are. In Jesus’ parable, the master distributed talents based on the several abilities of the servants. The third servant was probably angry at the size of his own talent; so he buried it. At the end, he got punished.

There are many ordained to preach who want to enter into politics. There are many called to teach who want to preach instead. There are many created to be doctors who want to be lawyers. Indeed, there are many neglecting their potentials, in pursuit of other things.

There’s a day of reckoning I believe. When the master returned, it was reckoning day. Some were rewarded, one was punished. Today, many

people live fulfilled lives, but many others are frustrated. In the end, it all depends on what you've done with your talent.

On Manipulated Giftings

The devil is crafty and deceitful. He has deceived many God-gifted people to use their talents for the wrong things. For example, there are many musicians singing for the devil today. But the gift of singing in the first place was given by God. In fact, singing started in heaven. The devil has however manipulated some to use their talents for him instead.

There are many authors writing to glorify demonic activities. Some write to arouse immoral interests in their prospective readers. They have a good initial gifting in writing, but it's been manipulated by the devil.

Saul was persecuting the church, he was an orator. When God arrested him, he became a preacher, and his name became Paul. He was originally designed to preach, but the devil manipulated his talent for a while.

You have a gifting which is based on your design! Don't ignore it and don't be manipulated to use it for the wrong purposes.

You Don't Have Forever

One of the most important verses in the Bible is Ecclesiastes 3:1: *"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven."* Every God-given assignment is timed. *There is a timeframe.* Remember you have an assignment plus a talent to help you fulfill that assignment. But every assignment has an appointed time.

In the physical, there is rainy season and there is dry season. When it's dry season, rain stops. Similarly, we are all here on earth for a season. In fact, life itself is timed. No one was designed to live in the flesh forever.

Therefore you must maximize all your potentials while you have the time. Jesus said in John 9:4, "*I must work the works of him that sent me **while it is day, the night cometh** when no man can work.*" There is a night time coming.

I've heard some people say "I wish I had a second chance." Most times they never get it. Do all you need to do now so that you won't be found at 70 trying to do what you should have done at 30.

Quench Not the Spirit

1 Thessalonians 5:29 says "*Quench not the spirit.*" When you neglect your potential, you will quench it! It will become inactive and unproductive. Don't let your passion go down. I started writing even when I wasn't thinking of publishing any. I was just a teenager. The passion was there, it never quenched. I always knew that some day, I would get published.

If you discover a potential, and you do nothing about it; in three months, it will die. The passion will die. The spirit will be quenched.

CHAPTER SIX

STIR UP THE GIFT IN YOU

*"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou **stir up the gift** of God, which is in thee..." (2 Timothy 1:6)*

Gifts are meant to be stirred up. There's a common illustration that says "tea only becomes sweet when it is stirred." If it's not stirred up, the sugar will lay dormant at the bottom of the cup.

Similarly, your talent must be stirred up –or put to work, if your life is ever going to be sweet. In the previous chapter, I talked about not neglecting your talent. Now you must know what it means to, and how to stir up your God-given potential.

The New Living Translation of the verse above tells us to "*fan into flames*" our talents. This reminds me of what we normally do when using firewood. In order to keep the fire burning, we have to fan the hot coal *into flames* again whenever the fire was going down.

Every star that must shine in the kingdom has to be stirred up. You need to fan your giftings *into flames*. You need to start taking bold steps toward your life's assignment. You need to break out of your *comfort zone*.

Discover Your Passion

The first step toward stirring up your gift is discovery. You need to discover your passion. Michael Dell discovered a passion for disassembling and re-assembling computer parts. The result today is Dell computers. The

secret to your future is in what you enjoy. Do you enjoy the company of children a lot? You should think about starting an impactful orphanage or a school. Do you enjoy writing everything you see? Then an author or storyteller might be laying dormant in you.

What do you love? What do you hate? What turns you on or off? They are all pointers to your passion; and your passion, when stirred up, energizes your potential for accomplishment. Passion is the fuel of destiny. Nothing lasts in your hand that you don't have passion for.

Believe in Your Potentials

It is what you believe that determines what you become. Clear every doubt! I said earlier that no one is empty. Success is not an exclusive reserve for some people. Everyone can succeed. Do not underrate or underestimate yourself. You are capable of unbelievable achievements.

The third servant in Matthew 25 never believed in his own talent. He felt it was too small and insignificant. No talent is insignificant, no matter how small it may appear. Your gifting is more valuable than diamond; once developed, it can buy anything.

Develop Yourself

Self development is a lifelong process. Every potential must be consistently developed; if it's ever going to bring success. Many don't have the courage to push themselves further.

Fear to me, is the enemy of self development. Many people as children, were full of excellent ideas because they were open minded and felt they could achieve anything. Growing up however, fear set in. They began to feel that some things are not possible, given certain circumstances around them. But you can thrive in spite of any circumstances.

Put your talent to work, even when you make mistakes. Mistakes teach us, they don't break us. Be committed and determined. Set goals that will stretch your potentials. I as an author, normally give myself targets. I'm a goal setter. I set goals as to what I want to write about and when I'm going to finish writing a particular book. I don't let the set time pass by before I complete each project.

If you need to study, then study! A popular preacher once told a story about his little beginning. He knew he had a calling into ministry, but he was a bad communicator. In fact; he had bad grammar. In order to conquer this limitation, he gathered 39 literature books and read all of them diligently. After doing that, his grammar improved. He started communicating better.

At times you need to read about people who have succeeded in areas of interest to you. Learn about the challenges they faced and the bold steps they took. It will help you.

Paul said in Colossians 1:29 "*whereunto I also labour.*" God will only prosper the potentials you labour to develop (Ephesians 3:20).

Mind Your Company

Your company can either help stir up the gift in you or quench the spirit in you. Proverbs 27:17 says *“Iron sharpeneth Iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”* Friendship either makes or breaks; it either helps build or it destroys. There are no neutral friends. A friend can either make you better or leave you worse.

Don't share your goals with everyone. Some people wish they had the potential you have. Some might discourage you from taking bold steps only because they wish they were you. Be mindful! There are people that are capable of affecting your mindset negatively; detach yourself from such.

Role Models and Mentors

There are two most important people in your life; your role model and your mentor. Interestingly, you can choose them, depending on who you want to be. They both inspire you toward success!

A **role model** is someone you look up to; one whose life and accomplishment is an inspiration to you. He or she is someone you dream to be like some day. You don't need a direct contact with him or her before they inspire you. You can learn from role models just by observation.

A **mentor** on the other hand is someone who deliberately coaches you. They put you through conscious training that will help stir up your potential. Unlike role models, you need direct contact with mentors either

by reading their books or constantly having one-on-one coaching sessions with them. A role model is simply *an example* but a mentor is essentially *a trainer*. Either way, they both inspire you for accomplishment.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GOD'S BLESSINGS ARE CONFINED IN YOUR TALENTS

"Now to him that is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." (Ephesians 3:20)

There's nothing God is going to do for you outside what He has put in you. You are already blessed; you only need to activate the blessing by maximizing your giftings. The verse above, God can do even more than we fantasize, but He's only going to do that *according to his power that is at work within us*. That power within talks about your talent.

Let's analyze Ephesians 3:20.

▣ Talents Produce Unquantifiable Success

Based on the power within, God can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine. What talent can produce is immeasurable. There are many super-rich athletes, inventors, musicians, artists, and so on.

Tiger Woods is said to be worth over \$600 million, Michael Jordan; over \$1 billion, Paul McCartney; \$1.2 billion, and many more. These are people like every other. Anyone who would put his or her potential to work could achieve even more.

▣ God cannot build a life for you outside what He's put in you

Many people pray for blessing and breakthrough, but it doesn't seem forthcoming. Many expect God to pour money down from heaven.

Everything required for you to be successful is already within you. You can accomplish mind-blowing, record setting and outstanding feats with your talents. God is not going to build a life for you except you maximize the potentials He's placed in you. You can achieve through your potentials what you may never achieve through your bloodline.

❏ You Must Put the Power to Work

The latter part of our text says "...according to his power *that is at work within us.*" The power has to be at work. It mustn't remain dormant. You need to deploy your giftings before you can see any results. This talks about training. It is the gift you train that will make you reign in life.

In physics, power is related to work. In fact, power is the rate at which work is done. The Bible refers to your gifting as '*power*'; therefore, you must put it to work. Slothfulness births poverty. (Proverbs 10:4).

It's Open Doors Galore

"A man's gift maketh room for him and bringeth him before great men."
(Proverbs 18:16)

Some preachers use this verse out of context. *A man's gift* refers to his talent; -it's not talking about offering, as erroneously taught. It talks about your potential. It makes room for you once utilized.

Doors give you access to rooms. Similarly, a man's gift *maketh room* for him. That also means your talents will open doors for you. They put you side by side with great mean. They usher you into places where blessings await.

You can find yourself before presidents, and kings; and top leaders just by maximizing your potentials. Talents pitch you with important people.

Another version says “*a man’s gift works wonders.*” In the third chapter, I talked about an artist that sold two of his paintings for \$200 million; and that’s not even the most expensive. Gifts work wonders!

Talents, when utilized, create connections. Stop looking for connections elsewhere, work on your potentials; they’ll create the connections. One time, a king named Saul was under the torture of evil spirits. One day he gave permission to his servants to go get him a man who is “*a cunning player of the harp,*” who is also filled with the Spirit of God. Then they found David, who had both the skill required and the spirit of the Lord; and he was taken from the bush to the palace (1 Samuel 16:14-23).

Proverbs 17:8 says: “*A Gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: withersoever it turneth, it prospereth.*” Talents are more valuable than precious stones. You can re-write history making the most of them. The gifts of God cannot be purchased with money, but they can produce money (Acts 8:20). Great men don’t give you talents; rather, talents bring you before great men.

According to Proverbs 22:29, if you are *diligent in your business*, you will *stand before kings* and not *mean men*. You’ve got to be committed. Maximized talents put you before people that matter.

Many young Africans have the “get rich quick syndrome.” A lot of people invest very little or no time at all in training themselves let alone

developing skills. Lack of commitment produces negligence. Negligence leads to failure. Failure generates annoyance. Annoyance generates frustration. Frustration leads to hatred -of self and others. So, get committed!

CHAPTER EIGHT

TALENT AND CHARACTER

*“So he fed them according to the **integrity of his heart**; and guided them by the **skillfulness of his hands**.” (Psalms 78:72)*

It is character that sustains whatever capacity has built. Integrity maintains whatever talent delivers. Many people have the *skillfulness of the hands* but lack the *integrity of the heart*. Your potentials are pointers to your destiny but your character determines whether you will ever get there.

On October 5, 2007, **Marion Jones** –renowned American athlete, publicly admitted at a press conference, with tears rolling down her eyes, that she had been using performance enhancement drugs prior to a major Olympics games. All her previous medals, results, points and prizes during the period were taken away from her. Not only that, she ended up in jail for a while.

Without doubt she had great talent. She was the fastest woman in the world. She did unbelievable things; but she lacked integrity. That tells me that it is character that determines your fate, no matter how talented you are.

In the 1994 World Cup, **Diego Maradona**; who was regarded by some as the greatest footballer ever, was suspended from the games because it was discovered that he failed a drug test. This effectively signaled the end of his

career. He had great talent, but like Marion, he lacked integrity and was publicly shamed.

Many governments and organizations are being ruined everyday because they are more focused on recruiting people with capacity; paying little attention to their character. That's why you give money to some drivers to fuel the company car. They keep part of the money to themselves, returning with just half a tank; and when questioned, they respond "maybe the tank is leaking." They have the capacity, but lack character.

One coach in England had this to say about one of his players: "**Mario** has incredible talents, but if he doesn't work on his character, I'm afraid he will never go far." Truly, that young guy has gone missing. Character is simply the sustainer.

Many Nigerians abroad are now in jail. A lot of our young guys and girls out there are either defrauding people on the internet, or doing drugs, or selling sex. Some of them are very talented, but they lack character. They should be doing something better with their lives -really.

3 Types of Character

There are three main types of character:

Bad Moral Character

This is very common. This is the type of character Marion, Diego and Mario -whom I talked about earlier, displayed. They had great talent but were brought down by their lack of integrity.

Many of our youths have lost their sense of morals. A lot of people can do anything to get rich –they could kidnap, do drugs, defraud, kill, steal, etc. Many young stars are on the news, not for the talents they have but for the trouble they cause. So many terrorist attacks around the world today are carried out by youths. They should be doing better things with their talents. Bad moral character turns fame into shame!

Fearful Character

So many people have gifted hands but weak hearts. Fear is the only real limitation that can withstand your advancement. The difference between a common man and an uncommon man is the strides they take. Uncommon people take bold steps. They take giant strides. Common people are afraid to take any steps at all. They both have the required talent, but different hearts.

There was in a house an aquarium that had two chambers separated by a glass partition. In the one chamber, there was Piranha –a fish that swallows other fishes. In the other chamber, there were the other fishes. Every time Mr. Piranha tried to go eat up the other fishes, he hits his head against the glass partition and then turned back. It happened consistently until Piranha became afraid of approaching the other fishes. He made up his mind that he would never move an inch from where he was any more.

One day, the owner of the aquarium removed the glass partition between the two chambers. The other fishes began to swim around the piranha; but piranha wouldn't move an inch because he thought to himself "if I move

from here, I will hit my head on the glass.” He remained hungry until he died.

Many people are like Mr. Piranha. They are so scared of their limitations that they fail to take any step forward. The only price for failure is doing nothing. Don’t be like the fellows in Numbers 13:31 who said “*we be not able...*” Overcome your fears because you are able.

Strong Character

This is the winning character. It puts you ahead of others. People with strong character are able to dare things, situations, circumstances and challenges. They never turn back. They stretch their potentials to the limit. They maximize their talents.

Strong character doesn’t see limitations, it sees only possibilities. One time, nobody thought it was possible to fly. Only the Wright brothers saw a possibility to develop vehicles that would move in the air. They were mocked by everyone for sure, but they weren’t moved. It takes a strong character to overcome limitations. They had it, and because of them, airplanes fly across the world today.

There is a winning attitude. It says “*be strong and of good courage.*” (Joshua 1:5, 10:25, Deuteronomy 31:6). Mental strength is superior to physical strength. Caleb was strong in his mind –he had a bold heart. He said “*let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it*” (Numbers 13:30).

There were four lepers at the Gates of Samaria. They were physically disabled, but mentally strong. Under normal circumstances, they should have died of hunger. But they had a strong heart. They said “we will not sit here until we die.” They moved by whatever means into the city; their opposition gave way and they returned with plenty.

Your mind is the only limitation you have; but you can change your mentality and your mindset. You can achieve anything. **If you can think it, you can do it.** If you think right, you will maximize your potential and come out victorious.

CHAPTER NINE

TALENT AND COMPANY

“Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”

(Proverbs 27:17)

Just as magnet attracts metals, gifted people attract company –everybody wants to associate with them. However, every friend has a different motive. Not everybody comes to you for the same purpose.

There are two categories of people that want to associate with every gifted person. You should be aware of them so you can make the right choice of friendship.

Category 1:

The Company that Kills Dreams

Anyone that reminds you of your limitations is not worth your time and energy. Everyone has limitations, but good company energizes you to overcome those limitations, and not otherwise.

Apostle Paul said “...a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6b). One bad friend can make you despise your true potentials. When people come around you, listen to them for the first 5 minutes. If all they inject into you is negativity, **run!**

Anyone that does not appreciate the gift of God in you shouldn't be in your life. Never marry a woman that doesn't believe in you. Don't marry a man that makes you feel like trash. You have great potentials and you need only

those who can see it. One cube of sugar can change the taste of a cup of tea. Similarly, one friend can make you either bitter or sweet. The choice is in your hands.

Category 2:

The Company that Stirs Up Your Potentials

In chapter 6, I talked much about stirring up the gift in you. Friends are instrumental to how well you are able to maximize your talents. There are people that believe in you, look for them and keep them close.

There are people with great potential who always think positive. They always strive toward success. Those are the ones you should hang around. People who aren't serious with their pursuit of vision should never remain your pals.

Passion is contagious. I love hanging around people who are passionate about their own dreams. Their passion inspires me to remain passionate about mine; so I always look out for them; -I love them for a company.

I used to have a roommate in the university by the name Roberts. Roberts is an exciting young man to be with. He's a dreamer and he loves the company of dreamers. He's also a goal setter who is relentless in creating strategies for his goals. He hates the company of people who act otherwise.

During our time together, we robbed minds a lot. You could see in the both of us, fearless young guys who were ready to dare anything. We were unstoppable. We didn't believe in impossibilities. To us, everything was possible. We inspired each other and it really helped.

The Test of Company

What They Say: Good Company speaks right. They discuss ideas. They discuss goals. Bad Company discusses people –they gossip. Someone said: **“great minds discuss ideas, average minds discuss events and small minds discuss people.”**

Also, many people are complainers. Complainers never achieve anything; they give every reason why nothing is appropriate. They’re never satisfied. Such people will only make you a mediocre. A man’s words are expressions of his thoughts. The mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart. I can tell how you think in 5 seconds when I hear you talk.

What They Do: As the popular saying; “actions speak louder than words.” You can tell when a company is right or wrong by their actions. By their fruits you shall know them (Matthew 7:20).

Find people who are always taking bold steps; not those who are doing nothing. Jesus needed disciples; but He went after people who were already engaged in something meaningful. One time He went after some fishermen. Another time He called on a tax collector. He never sought after idle men. An idle man will always remain the devils workshop.

The easiest way to fail is doing nothing and making no effort. If you don’t want to fail, ignore idle company. It simple!

CHAPTER TEN

THE TEST OF TALENT

"They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness..."

(Psalms 82:5)

Like I said in the introduction, many people don't even know they're gifted. Some are in the dark as far as talents and potentials are concerned. There are various ways to know how gifted you are and what you are talented with.

It's in What You Love

Someone said to me one day; "try your hands on so many things until you find the one you love." The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 9:10; *"whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might..."* Sometimes you find out that you have good feet to run, a nice tone to encourage others, a good voice to sing, excellent thoughts to express in writing, and perhaps many others. If you are not sure which one of them is your talent, keep doing everyone of them until you find the one you are madly in love with.

Note also that you can be multi-talented. The bottom line is; you must be in love with whatsoever you are doing. If you hate it, then you're by no means gifted in that area.

Be Guided!

Remember that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. He doesn't lie; but tells the truth. And according to Jesus, He guides us: *"howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth..."* (John 16:13). He knows everything about you; and that includes things about your potentials.

It's therefore important to partner with the Holy Spirit so you can be guided to find out what your potentials are. John 14:17 tells us that he dwells in us. That also means he knows us more than we know ourselves.

Human Confirmations Matter

People's opinion may not always count, but at times, they serve as valuable confirmations to what you were probably confused about. In truth, there's hardly anything God tells you through the Holy Spirit that He doesn't try to repeat through someone around you. The Holy Spirit tells you the truth, but the people around often confirm it so you can be sure.

Whenever people start telling you about a particular endowment they have noticed in you, you have to think about it. But the Holy Spirit must first impress it into your heart. If He hasn't told you, then forget it. For example, many times people tell me "you are tall, you should be good at basketball." But I hate balls, especially basketball; and the Holy Spirit has never told me anything about basketball. I can say therefore that those people are only carried away by my height.

However, whenever people around begin to tell you something relating to some endowments that you already have an inner intuition about, then you've got human confirmations to think about.

SECTION B

FULFILLING DESTINY

CHAPTER ELEVEN

YOU NEED A VISION

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." (Proverbs 29:18)

No matter how talented you are, if you lack vision, you will never go far. Vision is what defines the essence of your talents. Vision tells you what to do with your giftings. Vision is the link between talent and destiny.

In literal terms, vision means *sight*. When a person can't see well, they say he is impaired in his vision. So also, in the school of accomplishment, vision is the eye of destiny. When you lack it, you are heading nowhere really. *Vision is a mental insight into your purpose.*

Purpose is what God had in mind when He created you. When you become conscious of that purpose, it is called vision. Therefore, everybody has purpose, because God has a plan for everybody. But not everybody has vision because not everybody has discovered those plans God has for them. They are not conscious of purpose; therefore, we say they lack vision.

The problem with most people is not lack of purpose, its lack of vision. Vision is discovering your assignment in life. **Vision is the consciousness of your assignment.** Vision is looking into purpose. Vision is being purpose minded. Vision is being mentally obsessed with purpose. Vision is being driven by purpose.

The journey toward a fulfilled life starts with discovering purpose, being conscious of it, driven by it, obsessed with it, looking into it and working toward it.

*“Yahweh answered me, write the vision **and make it plain** upon tablets, that he who reads may run”* (Habakkuk 2:2 –W.E.B).

From this verse, we can conclude that vision means “**making plain** your purpose for life and running with it.” Vision is defining your life’s assignment based on Gods divine intention. **Vision is identifying the essence of your existence and stating it clearly so that deliberate actions can be taken toward accomplishing it.**

Purpose is God’s responsibility. Vision is man’s responsibility. Purpose is God generated. Vision is man generated. God has given man the ability to connect with purpose through insight. This connectivity is what I call vision -the first and primary step toward accomplishment.

Discovering Purpose

▣ Self-Examination

Self examination is the genesis of discovery. If you want to know what your assignment is, then you have to start by knowing yourself. You must know all the things that are packaged within you. There are several things to look out for.

First you must look out for your talents because they are tools placed in you by God to help you accomplish His assignment for you. Therefore,

talent is a clue into purpose. If you are confused about your purpose, check your talent. Talent has a direct connection with purpose. Talent is God's investment in you and He expects you to capitalize on it to fulfill the task He has created you for.

Secondly, you must look out for your passion. What are the things you develop natural passion for? What are the things that stir you up? What are the things that make your heart to jump? What are the things you have developed obsession for? Is it children, broken homes, depressed people, eradicating ignorance, making life better for others? etc. Whatever area you have a natural obsession for, is an indication of purpose. Start working toward influencing lives positively in those areas.

Keeping Your Vision Alive

☐ Believe it:

No one can give a voice to your vision like you. So, you must believe in your vision. You cannot become what you don't believe. You don't need other people's endorsement before you pursue your vision. ***It is only when you believe in your vision that you gather the mental energy to pursue it.***

There was a young man called Joseph. His story was recorded in the Bible book of Genesis 37. He had a vision that he was going to be a big star and that the stars of his siblings as well as those of his parent were going to bow to him. This angered his siblings so bad that they sold him into slavery. But the young man Joseph believed in what he had seen, pursued it

earnestly and he soon became a great ruler; one that his siblings would later bow to.

I want to repeat; what you don't believe, you can't become. When you have discovered your purpose, you must have faith in it and in yourself as that's the only way to get accomplished.

▣ Behave it:

Actions they say speak louder than words. Talk is cheap. If you are vision obsessed, you've got to show it; you must behave it. That is, live and act it. They work with it. If vision must become reality, you must channel all your efforts toward its fulfillment. I have a vision of challenging people to wake up and take their destinies in their hands and to accomplish that, people must receive enough motivation to arise. As a result of that, I write motivational books. I don't write novels, fiction and other books that kill the spirit. I write purely motivational books that lift the spirit. By so doing, I'm behaving my vision. My actions are geared toward fulfilling this vision.

Two brothers invented the first aircraft. They had a vision of easing the problem of movement by creating a vehicle that will move in the air and get people to their destinations very fast. Of course, this vision attracted a lot of mockery from observers. But they believed in their vision, pursued it tirelessly and today, we all fly across the earth so easily.

Until you take steps, you don't go steps ahead of others and be sure you are taking steps that connect with your vision. While doing this, you've got to ignore the possible mockery you are likely to get from other people.

Mockery is not always bad; when it comes, it is a sign that you are doing something unique and different from others.

It is what you behave that empowers what you believe and determines what you become. You are a lawyer today because you went to law school yesterday. Similarly, what you become is a function of what you do routinely. Someone said *the secret to your success is tied to your daily routine*. What you do habitually determines what you become eventually.

❏ Ignore the thought of failure:

What you think of yourself influences what you become at the end of the day. Many people see themselves as inferior, not adequate enough, not capable of doing anything big, not capable of succeeding, only capable of failing. That's the kind of mindset that kills the potentials in any person.

Some people would say "well, only educated fellows can make an impression and you know I never got pass grade six". So they belittle themselves and consequently, they fail. Some have concluded in their minds that they have failed in that business already, and in no time, failure begins to manifest in the physical.

Whatever you want to venture into, you must think possibilities. Don't think failure before you think success. Success is possible as long as you accept it in your mind. If you can think it, you can do it. Failure is only a pathway to success, so you need not be afraid of it. Therefore, cultivating the mindset of success is what empowers your vision for fulfillment.

❏ Decline wrong association:

I mentioned a bit of this in section A. We also looked at one of the most remarkable verses of scripture as found in Proverbs 27:17. It says “*Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend*”. Let me tell you what this means. You are constantly influenced in your mind by the kind of company you keep. It is often said “*show me your friend and I will tell you who you are*”. You don’t grow any higher than your association and you don’t get any better than your company.

Why? The reason is simple. Your association “*sharpens your countenance*”; that is, influences your vision either positively or negatively. So if you want to be great, mingle with people that think great. If you associate with mediocre people, you’ll die small.

If you want to keep your big vision alive, you’ve got to blend into associations that believe in your vision. Stop hanging around negative people. Start hanging around positive thinking people.

The truth is this, mindsets are contagious. The longer you stay around people, who believe “it can’t be done”, the more vulnerable you are to failure. Look out for associations that will stir up the potential in you and provoke you to take positive strides toward accomplishment. That’s how to keep your vision alive.

CHAPTER TWELVE

PASSION: THE DRIVING FORCE

*“But when He saw the multitude, **He was moved with compassion** on them...”*

(Matthew 9:36)

Passion is the fuel of destiny. It is often said that where there is no vision, the people perish; but then **where there is no passion, the vision perishes**. Without passion, destiny is left to mere chances. Passion is the propeller of destiny. Passion is what drives an individual for fulfillment. Passion is the fire that burns within you for accomplishment.

To lack passion is to be a walking-dead man. No matter how colourful your destiny is by potential, when passion is absent, frustration becomes the result. What you don't love cannot last in your hands. Similarly, if you are not driven toward your vision through passion, it can never come into fruition. You can't change what you are comfortable with; therefore, you cannot break out of where you are into where you should be until you are driven by something on your inside.

There was a woman called **Mary Slessor**. She's popular in Nigeria as the missionary that put a stop to the infanticide of twin babies. It was a common practice in many rural areas decades ago. She however had this vision, but was also driven by passion. She wanted to put an end to that cruel tradition even if it would cost her life.

One day on her way into one of those remote villages, she was warned to turn back otherwise she would get herself killed. But she responded **“Onward, I dare not look back!”** She was ready to die for what she believed in.

Passion is not finding something to live for; passion is finding something to die for. Passion is pursuing your vision with everything inside you. Slessor eventually died in Nigeria, but she died fulfilled. Today, she’s a song on the lips of every Nigerian generation as the woman who did not only live for something, but died for it. The good thing is that she died accomplished.

Passion means refusing to look back in spite of the potential horrors you may face trying to fulfill your purpose. Passion is moving **“Onward”** like Slessor said, despising your fears and aggressively approaching your destiny. Passion is indeed the fuel of destiny.

There was a man called **John Knox**. He is renowned as the reformer that brought the great and unending revival to the nation of Scotland. It was however a task that took a lot from him. But he was driven by passion and his passion for this vision reflected in one of his popular prayers. He prayed in those days saying **“O Lord, Give me Scotland or I die”**.

Wow! That was all he craved for. That was all he lived for and that was what he was ready to die for. In fact, I believe by that prayer, he meant **“God, you are either giving me this nation or you’re killing me! There’s no other reason for me to be alive. I want to bring revival to this land and if**

you're not going to make this happen for me, then kill me!" God heard this desperate cry from a passionate man and granted his desires. He's not going to be forgotten in a hurry. **Passionate people live on. They never really die.**

Mother Theresa had so much passion for the weak, especially children. She was ready to accommodate all of them. She would often tell those who were carrying unwanted pregnancies not to abort the babies; but asked them to go ahead and give birth, then bring the babies to her. That was her passion. She was ready to die for this cause. She can never be forgotten in a hurry.

Try to find what burns in your heart, what moves you, what stirs you up, what makes your heart to jump. That's probably passion and is the key that will unlock your destiny. When you have found it, pursue it tirelessly, vigorously, earnestly and relentlessly.

How to Fuel Your Passion

❑ Keep an eye on your goals:

The truth is, the more you keep an eye on your goals for life; the more you develop the zest to accomplish them. If you take your eyes off your aspirations, you'll lose the passion for pursuit.

Maintaining **focus** is the key to increasing your passion. When you start trying to be like other people, you will get distracted and lose the zeal to pursue your own vision.

We are told in the Bible that the only reason why Jesus Christ could endure the sufferings he went through was because he kept focusing on the future (Hebrews 12:2, 1 Peter 2:11). According to those verses, it was “*the joy that was set before Him*” that made Him to “*endure the cross*” and “*despise the shame*” He was subjected to. Through focus, He was able to gather the passion He needed to fulfill His destiny; in spite of the persecutions He faced.

Friend, it doesn't matter what your aspirations are; you need to get zealous about them if you want to accomplish any of them. It's not enough to have a vision. You also need an inner drive to bring your vision into reality. It is pursuit that makes vision real and it is passion that provides the energy for pursuit.

❏ Avoid Competition

One remarkable truth I discovered is that there's no need competing with anyone since we all have different assignments. All we need do is focus on our unique goals and aspirations to get them fulfilled. I'm not trying to be a musician, so I need not be envious of any of them nor create enmity between me and them.

At the root of enmity is envy and at the root of envy is unhealthy competition. Why get jealous over someone else who is not heading your way? Everybody's future is unique to him or her. We may share ideas but we are heading different directions so we must get rid of envy and focus on achieving our own goals.

Growing up many years back, we were told the story about a dog 'X' with a bone in his mouth who ran to a pond in search of water. On getting to the pond, he saw another dog 'Y' inside the water with a bone in his mouth too. Dog 'X' became envious of dog 'Y' in the water and tried to snatch the bone dog 'Y's' mouth. When he opened his mouth to bark at dog 'Y', his own bone fell into the water and then he realized that dog 'Y' in the water was just a reflection of himself. That's what envy can do. You lose everything you have when you become envious of others.

Envy is an enemy of passion. Envy only promotes strife, but focus fuels passion and passion fuels pursuit and pursuit fuels accomplishment. So, instead of getting bothered over other people's progress, fix your eyes on your own dreams and channel all your energy towards them. You can fuel your own passion through focus.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WISDOM: THE PRINCIPAL THING

*“Wisdom is **the principal thing**; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding.” (Proverbs 4:7)*

Nothing sets a man back than ignorance. It keeps one under. It makes mediocre out of many people. Indeed it is the sting of all setbacks. **So many are gifted but foolish**; so, they know not the right manner to utilize their giftings or the yields of them.

In Proverbs 4:7, we are told that *“wisdom is the **principal thing**...”* That is, wisdom is the main thing. The word *principal* means *the first in rank, the chief factor or the leading thing*. So wisdom is the leading weapon you will need to carry along with you if you want to fulfill purpose. To despise wisdom is to despise destiny. To embrace wisdom is to embrace fulfillment.

Wisdom is what gives you an edge over others in the journey of life. Wisdom is what puts you ahead. Wise men are never found beneath. You can work your way to the top through wisdom. Folly, which is the opposite of wisdom, is the sting of failure; for *“...a companion of fools shall be destroyed”* (Proverbs 13:20). To lack wisdom is to leave your future to mere fate and without any assurances.

You may not have connections and you’re probably not from a rich family. ***But you can acquire through wisdom what you haven’t been able to***

acquire through your bloodline or connections. Most of the well-established and accomplished fellows around the world today had to work their way right from zero level to the very top; and the last time I checked, wisdom was a vital tool for many of them.

Wise people are never stranded. Doors never close on them. There's always a way out because wisdom is **creative** in its nature. Therefore, those that possess wisdom are very creative and can always make something out of nothing. *The cause of confusion is the lack of wisdom.* Wise people always know what to do. They know when to take a major step, when to hold back, when to walk away, when to act, etc. *Wisdom empowers your discretion for sound decisions that will launch you into an enviable future.*

Wisdom is the difference between the successful and the failure. With wisdom, success is guaranteed. But give success to a foolish man and watch how he will soon run it down. Wisdom is what sustains destiny. Take it out and destiny is in shambles.

GET WISDOM!

The Bible instructs in Proverbs 4:5; to *get Wisdom!* That means you can consciously go get it. You can deliberately crave to acquire wisdom. It is something you can work toward and below are some ways to acquire wisdom.

Generated by Information

The difference between the wise and the foolish is information. My mentor said “Information is the genesis of transformation and the escape from deformation”.

Wisdom is the acquisition and correct application of information.

Knowledge is the blanket of wise men. Take out knowledge and what you have left is foolishness. Wisdom is the right use of acquired knowledge.

If wisdom works by information, then you can deliberately go get it. That’s why the Bible instructs; Get Wisdom! That means you can deliberately crave to possess wisdom by consistent search, acquisition and application of information.

Ignorance is the snare of a failure. If you want to fulfill your dreams in certain areas of life, then you must get informed about what to do, what steps to take, who to meet, who not to meet, where to go, where not to go, when to start, when to stop, etc. You must learn about where you are going before you take off. That’s the only way to escape being a casualty of destiny.

You can increase in wisdom by expanding your bank of knowledge (Luke 2:52). Wisdom is a product of *finding* (Proverbs 8:25), that is, your desire to know more. Those who don’t read can never increase in wisdom. Similarly, those who don’t learn can never achieve any form of transformation.

Ask For It

A very remarkable verse of scripture is found in James 1:5. It says “*if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask...*” That means you can ask for wisdom. And who are you going to ask from? “*...let him ask **of God** who gives to all men liberally...*” So God is the possessor of all wisdom and we are instructed by the Bible to ask from God who according to that verse is a liberal giver.

Therefore, it goes beyond your quest for knowledge, you must also acknowledge the source of all wisdom which is God. Salvation gives you access to the place where all wisdom is found but it is only through asking that you can possess it.

Scientists have tried to find out how God created the world including everything in it. They have also studied the entire universe. The truth however is that science has not been able to give a detailed explanation as to the ultimate source of all creation, and this is the reason; the wisdom of God which initiated creation is **unsearchable!** (Romans 11:33). That is, it is unexplainable. Therefore, when you ask God for wisdom, He gives you a mental endowment that becomes too much for other people to explain. You become a star as a result of that.

Money cannot generate wisdom but wisdom can generate money. Wisdom is not a product of gold but can produce gold. The Bible says “*the merchandise of wisdom is better than that of silver, and its gain than that of gold*” (Proverbs 3:14). Therefore, wisdom is more valuable than silver and gold

and you can access the wealth and riches lying in posterity only through wisdom.

It Comes by Inspiration

You can be intelligent and fail, but you cannot be inspired and fail. The reason is this; inspiration is the source of understanding. Inspiration births understanding and understanding empowers your efforts in your quest to achieve greatness.

Job 32:8 tells us “*but there is a spirit in man, and **the inspiration** of the Almighty gives them understanding*”. The inspiration we are talking about here comes from God, -the Almighty. I’m not talking about being motivated. I’m talking about being inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Inspiration is when the Holy Spirit takes over your mortal mind and transforms it into a super machine that can dissect issues, analyze situations, proffer solutions to life’s problems and make a star out of any man. Inspiration is the movement of the Holy Spirit in the mental faculty of man. Inspiration is cooperating with the Holy Spirit to make major decisions in your life. Therefore, inspired men are men of great understanding.

The Holy Spirit is the source of real understanding. When He comes into your life, He makes you *of quick understanding* (Isaiah 11:3). That is, He quickens, sharpens and empowers your mind for exploits.

Many people seek inspiration from friends, relatives, colleagues, events, etc. but real inspiration can only come to us from the Holy Spirit. It's much better to be spirited than just being motivated. Motivated people may fail when the source of motivation stops. But inspired people never fail because the source of inspiration, which is the Holy Spirit, never stops. Hallelujah!

In summary, wisdom is the principal thing, therefore, get wisdom! And above all, crave to have understanding because it is what empowers your bank of knowledge to produce results for you when applied. Also, seek earnestly for inspiration; not from friends, not from families, but from the prime source of it, the Holy Spirit.

It Works by Understanding

While wisdom means knowing what to do, understanding means knowing how to do it. Another incredible verse of scripture is found in Proverbs 14:33. It says "*Wisdom rests in the heart of him that has understanding*". That is, understanding is what helps you to process the knowledge or information you have acquired in your quest for wisdom. If wisdom rests in the hearts of those that have understanding, then understanding is what determines the level of your wisdom. Understanding is the processor of wisdom.

Wisdom like I said is the correct application of acquired knowledge, but then understanding is crucial because it is what helps you to grasp thoroughly and put into proper use the information you have gathered. Therefore, wise men are defined according to Proverbs 14:33, by the level of their understanding.

The Bible says in Proverbs 8:5, "*O ye simple, understand wisdom*". Therefore, wisdom is meant to be understood. In Proverbs 4:7 which is our prime text for this chapter, the Bible says in the second part of it; "*in all your getting, get understanding*". That is, you must pant after understanding as one choking and searching for air.

Jesus states clearly in Matthew 13:23 that anyone who lacks understanding cannot amount to anything in life. In His words however, those that have understanding will bear fruits; *some hindered fold, some sixty and some thirty*.

Many people are frustrated in life because they don't know how to approach the issues that confront them in different stages of their lives. Some know what to do but they don't know how to do it. Wisdom means knowing *what*. Understanding means knowing *how*.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PLANNING: THE STRATEGY OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

“Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom”

(Psalms 90:12, NIV)

It is strategy that helps you prevent tragedy. If big goals will ever be achieved, then they must be properly planned for. Fulfillment is not a product of prayer; it's a product of wise planning. Someone said **prayer without planning is playing without knowing**. If you ever find a man that dares to sit down to strategize, you have found a man who is bound to live a fulfilled life.

In one of Jesus' most remarkable teachings, He asked a very important question: *“for which of you, desiring to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and count the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it?”* (Luke 14:28-WEB).

Here, Jesus creates a crystal clear picture of the *nature* of our journey through life. He likens man's purpose –whatever it is, to a tower; one that can never be built except deliberate plans are drawn out.

The summary of what He's saying is that; if you want to fulfill your destiny, then like a builder, you must plan every stage of your life properly. You never succeed at anything you are not prepared for.

It's not enough to have an intention. Even the poorest person on earth has intentions. It's not enough to have a desire. Even the most unaccomplished

people on earth have big desires. Jesus warns; if your intentions and desires for life must see the light of the day, then you must sit and plan.

Purpose tells you where you're going but planning tells you how to get there. Purpose defines your destiny, planning defines the process you must go through to fulfill it. The key to proper planning lies in strategy. Planning means "*strategizing your way through*". Planning means knowing what it will cost you and deliberately formulating the proper process to accomplish it.

Another key to proper planning is methodology. Planning means "*defining and refining your methods in order to achieve your dreams*". Every purpose has a method and until you follow the method you can't fulfill it. And that's what planning helps you to do.

Planning involves making detailed arrangements, putting every phase in order, not mixing things up incorrectly and knowing exactly when to take specific steps. Planning comes before pleasure. Your everyday life is worthless without wise planning. Simply put; planning gives worth and value to living.

Jesus in that verse meant to say that if you are a big dreamer, you must be a big planner too. If you have big dreams, you must create big plans and that must reflect in your everyday life.

However, a man's capacity to plan for his future can be checked by how he organizes every single day that passes.

Paying the Price

Every prize is attracted by a price. Jesus clearly stated in our text that you must *count the cost* before your tower can be built. There is therefore a cost for every great achievement. There is no room for watchers in the mansion of life. Only those who count the cost have a room in it.

The process toward having a great life may not always be a comfortable one. You may require some difficult and painful training. However, it is the pain that makes the gain glorious. It is often said "*No Pain, No Gain*". You must endure the pain of the process which includes discipline, hard work, training, prayers, patience, sacrifice and lots more.

The process toward accomplishment is like a furnace. The furnace is what refines your future but there's a lot of pain in there, that's why only those who have endurance can ever succeed. "*And blessed is the man **that endures** temptations, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life*" (James 1:12). Sometimes, you may need to make certain sacrifices, abandon some things you enjoy and forget about some of the pleasure you are accustomed to. In fact, you may need to go through some pressure.

Take a clue from athletes. They deprive themselves of certain food, endure vigorous training schedules, and avoid some common habits. That's the only way to be a star athlete. The race of life is just like that. If you want to get fulfilled, you may need to go through some temporary discomfort.

For every landmark there is a definite cost and until you pay the price relentlessly, you don't stand the chance of obtaining the prize.

Prayer Does not Erase Planning

It is wonderful to be a vibrant praying Christian. As a matter of fact, prayer holds an essential part in ensuring spiritual growth and fulfilling destiny. Furthermore, Paul the apostle tells us to pray without ceasing, that is, we must pray continually.

It's crucial for us to know however that prayer does not erase planning. In fact, planning time is not prayer time. It's ok to pray about your plans but you must plan. Prayer can never take the place of planning.

David in Psalms 1:3 states clearly that God only prospers you when you are doing something about your goals. God does not answer prayers about things you have no plans for. He doesn't want you to waste His blessings, therefore, only those who through strategy have drawn out their goals can attract help from God.

It is true that *landmarks* require *knee marks* (prayers), but knee marks also require *plan marks* (deliberate planning). You don't go to sleep after praying. If anything will ever work, you must work it out.

The Bible says in Proverbs 25:2; "*It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter*". God has in His unsearchable wisdom defined your purpose, but your duty is to properly dissect every stage and phase toward fulfillment through wise planning.

Talk To Yourself

You must have read about the lost son, popularly known as the prodigal son. His account is recorded in Luke chapter 15. His turning point was when he began to talk to himself. *“And when he came to himself, he said; how many hired servants of my father’s house have bread enough to eat and to spare and I perish with hunger?”* Luke 15:17.

If you are not making headway in your life, you need to start talking to yourself like the lost son did. That is the genesis of wise planning. Until you know what your problem is, and where you should be, you can’t sit down to strategize your way forward.

Like the prodigal son, there comes a stage in your life where there’s really no one else to talk to but yourself. You may not have squandered anything like he did; however, you’re probably desperate for a turning point and the way forward is to analyze yourself, know what problems there are around you and decide wisely how to scale through them.

It Requires Patience

Too many people never get to accomplish purpose because they have a problem with impatience. They rush to fix things up. Anything done in haste is almost never done well. Proper planning requires taking your time. In our main text for the chapter, Jesus tells us that if you want to build a tower, you must *sit down* and count the cost. That is, you must take your time.

If planning involves logical, rational and analytical reasoning toward achieving set goals, then you must give it the required amount of time. Competing with others will only get you into unnecessary haste and consequently ruin your plans doing that.

You must settle down mentally and position your mind to think properly, applying every life principle adequately in your pursuit of purpose.

Recently I was in a meeting where the minister who is a very reputable and well established man of God told the story of how he had made a very daft decision. In fact he lamented that he couldn't believe that at that stage of his life, with all the experiences he had gathered, he could still make such a silly mistake.

That tells us that as humans, it's in our nature to err and make certain mistakes as we drive toward fulfillment of purpose. That's why it's important to always know how to refine your plans in order to ensure proper execution of your goals.

Sometimes you may need to re-think. In some other cases you may need to have alternative plans for achieving particular goals. You may need a 'plan B' or 'plan C' for certain set goals. You don't pour out all your eggs into one basket; similarly, you don't depend on just one plan to achieve certain goals. If you are not sure of your strategy, get a *plan B*.

Mind Who You Discuss Your Plans With

Lastly, it's important for you to know when to talk and who to talk to. There are certain kinds of persons referred to as *enemies of progress*. They may pretend to be your friends, however, deep within, they're only interested in your downfall. You don't reveal your plans to such persons. That's why you need to pray for wisdom and sound discretion in choosing your friends.

Joseph thought that he'd be safe telling his dream to his brothers. But it proved otherwise. He got himself into slavery for not shutting his mouth. That means, not even everybody in your family can be trusted. In fact, the greatest enemies in most cases come from within the family.

Some people think little and they expect you to think little too. So when you walk up to them to tell them about a big goal that you want to achieve, they become uncomfortable. They'll try to discourage you immediately, because their minds cannot handle big things.

You don't need people who are always uncertain about progress. You need people who believe in possibilities. **You need people who believe that little men can do big things.** Mingle with such people and you'll generate *mutual motivation* for advancement.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CHOICES: THE RUDDERS OF DESTINY

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few”

(Matthew 7:13-14, ESV)

You are a product of your choices. In fact, you are where you are today because of the choices you made yesterday. Therefore, your ultimate destiny would be determined by a collection of choices you are going to make from now.

There are two kinds of destinations. We have *pre-destination* and we have *actual destination*. *Pre-destination* is where God has created you to be. It's not where you are, it's where you want to be in line with God's purpose for your life. It means divine plan, that is, God's intention for you. *Actual destination* on the other hand refers to where you eventually end up in life. And this part is largely influenced by your choices.

Many people have failed to fulfill God's purpose (pre-destination) for their lives because they have made a lot of wrong choices along the line. So their actual destination becomes different from their pre-destination because their choices have moved them away from God's plans and purpose.

Your behavior, actions and inactions are based on the kind of choices you have resolved in your heart to make. Although God intends for everyone to

have a great life, many people have their own ways of influencing their actual destinies through their choices.

One of the most important choices you will ever make is the choice to follow after God's purpose for your life. It's not always about your instincts, it's about His leading. Too many people depend on their instincts to guide their decisions. It's rather important to make your choices at different stages of your life based on purpose and divine plan, not instincts.

Many people want to decide their own destinies. This is very wrong. Just as the manufacturer of every pen has designed it to write and no one can change that, so also God has designed you for a purpose and you cannot choose to change it and be successful at it. If you attempt to use a pen in the place of a microphone, you will be frustrated. So also, if you choose to walk in a different line of assignment order than the one you were created to walk in, you will be frustrated.

The choice to walk in line with God's assignment for your life is the best choice you can ever make. Other choices thereafter should only compliment that principal choice. When you have decided to walk in line with divine assignment, then every other decision such as your choice of friends, mentors, places, spouse, etc. will be channeled toward fulfilling that your assignment.

Never choose to copy other people. Never try to be someone else. We all have different destinies; therefore we must make our choices based on our

individual purposes. No matter how much you try to be someone else, you can never be that person.

The Bible writes something very interesting about choices in Deuteronomy 30:19. *"This day, I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you, life and death, blessings and curses. NOW CHOOSE life that you and your family may live"*

From this verse, we can conclude that:

☒ Choices are made on a daily basis.

The phrase *this day* means there is no day that passes where you don't make a major choice that can influence your destiny positively or negatively.

☒ You are totally responsible for your choices.

That's why the scripture said *"...I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you"*. So you really have no one to blame when you take the wrong step. If you fail, blame it on your choices. If you succeed, blame it on your choices.

☒ Everyone is given equal opportunities to choose right.

God said *"...I have set before you"*. So God, who is not partial, has given every one on earth equal chances to choose right and make their way to the top.

❏ Your choices will affect your generations after you.

The latter part of the verse says “...*now choose life **that you and your family may live***”. Therefore, if you make the right choices in life, you secure blessings for your generation. If you make the wrong choices, you put them in trouble.

Choosing Right

Consider this verse.

*“And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled over many things; **but one thing is needful**; and **Mary has chosen that good part**, which shall not be taken away from her”* (Luke 10:41-42).

Too many people have big problems with choosing right. As you get to certain crossroads in your life, you need divine inspiration to make the right turn. Many have blown up their careers, businesses, families, jobs, organizations, etc. because of their inability to make the right choices.

In this verse, Jesus highlights *focus* as the key to choosing right. He said to Martha, “*You are worried about too many things, and that’s why you fail to make the right choices*”. Then He went on to say “*but one thing is needful*”. What Martha lacked was focus and clear cut direction. Jesus wanted her to identify those things that really matter to her.

Focus is the key to choosing right. At times you may need to quit some friends and choose those that matter to your destiny. You may need to quit going to certain places, reading certain books, quit some relationships and

so on. You need to know what is *truly needful* as far as your destiny is concerned and that's why you need to be focused.

Jesus then went on to commend Mary, Martha's sister, for making the right choices. He said "*and Mary has chosen **that good part**, which shall not be taken away from her*". So you need to get focused in order to know what's good for you at every point of your life and then, make your choices wisely. There is always a good part and there is always a bad part. Like Mary, choose the *good part* and when you do that, nothing will take it away from you.

You don't jump at everything that looks like an opportunity. You need to fix your mind on your purpose and let it guide you to decide what opportunities to dive into. Look out carefully for the things that are needful and relevant. You are not created to do everything. You are created to do something. When you focus on that thing, you'll never be a victim of wrong choices.

So here is the question for you; where are you going? And how relevant are your daily choices to your desired future?

Let your purpose determine your choices. You don't train to be a musician on a basketball court. When you do that, you would be betraying your design. Don Moen did not attend some soccer school somewhere, expecting to become a musician. If he had done that, it would have been the wrong choice. He must have trained himself in line with music to become the global star he has become today.

Your choice is to your destiny what a rudder is to a ship. A rudder is a device on a ship that helps steer and stabilize the ship on the sea. Choices are the rudders of your destiny. They steer and stabilize you on the sea of life. They decide which direction you head and hence, your ultimate destiny.

Be Aware of Your Choices

Life is like a sea, your mind is the ship in which you sail through the sea of life and your choices represent the rudder on that ship; they give you stability and direction on the sea.

But you have to be aware of your choices. Don't let your mind run on autopilot. An autopilot ship doesn't need a rudder; it just runs on its own. While that may be cool for natural ships, it's not ok for your mind. You've got to use your rudder and you've got to be aware of it.

People whose minds run on autopilot make choices without refining them. They're driven by instincts rather than conscious choices. They make decisions before they think about them, regretting in the end.

On the other hand, when you are aware of your choices, you consider all your options before you choose. That's the only way to make the best choice. Don't let your mind be out of control. Stop rushing to fix things up. Take your time and know what you're doing always.

Don't let things choose you, choose things! Don't let events choose you, choose events! Don't let friends choose you, choose your friends! Be totally

aware and conscious of your choices. Take time to analyze your decisions before you let them off.

Every Choice Has a Consequence

Emerson Fosdick said **“He who chooses the beginning of a road chooses the place it leads to”**. Every choice leads to a destination. When you make a choice in life, you have chosen the start of a road and the consequence is that you’ll end up in the destination where the road leads.

If you are in Abuja for example and you move toward the road that leads to Lokoja, you have automatically chosen Lokoja as a destination even though you’re still in Abuja. That’s how it is with life. If you start attending a music school today, the consequence in that sooner or later you’ll end up a musician. Similarly, if you register for a law program today, the consequence is that you’ll end up a lawyer. Every choice has a consequence and you have to be aware of that.

If you choose a particular way of life, you’ll soon find yourself at the tail end of it. For example, if you choose to be a drug addict today, you’ll soon end up in jail or even a rehab center. The jail is the destination for those who have chosen to be drug dealers and addicts. If as a lady, you choose to live a wayward life, you might soon start nursing children that don’t know their fathers.

If you choose the beginning of a road, you have chosen the end of it. So it’s necessary to find out the consequences of every decision before you take it.

Remember, like I mentioned earlier, you cannot blame anyone except yourself for your choices and the resultant consequences.

Choose Only What Is Required

Next, you must learn to choose what you need, not what you want. Every assignment has specified needs. There are specific things you need to fulfill purpose, and you must go for need rather than want. Choices must be need based not want based.

Every stage of your life has its own requirements and you must be aware of the requirement for each stage in order to make the right choices. Stop trying to get by all means what you need for the next stage when you haven't put in place all you need for the stage you are in right now.

Why is an 18 year old boy in 200 Level looking for a wife? He doesn't need a wife at that particular stage of his life. What he needs is to focus on his education and come out with the best grades he possibly can. You have to know what you need and when you need it.

It's just like the story I told earlier about Mary and Martha. Martha was concerned about what she wanted but Mary was concerned about what she needed. Jesus was however quick to draw Martha's attention to the importance of focusing on what she needed, rather than what she wanted.

Action Validates Choices

When you have made a choice and you don't act on it, you reduce its value. Choices are worthless without relentless actions. Arnold Glasow

said **“ideas not coupled with action can never become bigger than the brain cells they occupy”**. When you take steps, your choices become reality. When you hesitate, they remain mere ideas in your head. We can therefore conclude that the value of your choices is defined by the steps you have taken to bring them into fruition.

Although you have chosen to enroll into a law program, you don't become a lawyer by sitting on the couch all day, growing fat. You have to attend lectures, do your assignments, write a series of test and exams and scale through several huddles. It is action that validates choices.

You cannot fulfill destiny without taking giant strides. If you wanna be a giant, you must dare many things. If you don't dare it, you can't have it. Remember it is not enough to have an intention. It's not even enough to make a decision. You must get up and make it happen.

Biblical Examples

1. **Adam and Eve:** they chose to disobey God. The consequence? They were banished from the Garden of Eden.
2. **Esau:** he chose to exchange his birth right for food. The consequence? He lost his place and stripped everyone in his lineage after him of their place too.
3. **Samson:** he chose Delilah over destiny. The consequence? He failed to be the true savior of Israel he was pre-destined to be.
4. **Gehazi:** he chose to get rich quick, using dubious means. The consequence? He was struck with leprosy.

5. **Ananias and Sapphira:** they chose to lie. The consequence? They died.
6. **Jonah:** he chose the wrong route. The consequence? He ended up in the belly of a fish.
7. **Judas Iscariot:** he chose to betray his master. The consequence? He got hanged.
8. **David:** he chose to train himself in the bush while others were showing off. The consequence? He was enthroned as king.
9. **Daniel:** he chose not to defile himself with the king's meat. The consequence? He became a ruler.
10. **Jesus:** He chose not to give up, despite all His suffering. The consequence? He now sits at the right hand of God, given the name that is highly exalted above every other name

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

RESPONSIBILITY: THE OBLIGATION OF CHAMPIONS

*“But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. **For each one will have to bear his own load**”*

(Galatians 6:4-5)

The difference between maturity and immaturity is responsibility. Also, the difference between an achiever and a failure is responsibility. Responsibility is the obligation that makes you a champion. It is obligation well fulfilled that changes your level. Do you want to go far in life? Then you’ve got to grow up in your mind and take responsibility for your future.

Apostle Paul wrote: *“when I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: **but when I became a man, I put away childish things**”* (1 Corinthians 13:11). According to Paul, there are two types of people. There are mature people and there are immature people. There are children and there are men, according to him. And the difference between the two is responsibility.

Paul is saying here that if you want to achieve anything in life, you must grow up. He said that when he grew up, he had to put away *childish things*. So there are people that still approach life with childish methods, hence, they get little results. There are those who feed their minds with immature things, hence, they produce poor results.

I mentioned earlier that by potential, there are no inadequate people. However, many have rendered themselves inadequate because they are not willing to take full responsibility for their lives. If you fail, you are the cause and if you succeed, you are the cause. If you're waiting for someone somewhere to come help you fulfill destiny, you may wait for eternity.

The reason why there is much failure in so many nations today is because there are too many irresponsible people leading the affairs of those nations. Similarly, the reason why there are so many unaccomplished people on earth today is because very few are willing to fulfill obligations. You are to blame for wherever you find yourself. **You might have been influenced, but you are to blame for your success or failure.**

The New Living Translation of the Bible paints us a very interesting picture in Galatians 4:1. *"Think of it this way. If a man dies and leaves great wealth for his young children, **those children are not much better than slaves, until they grow up**, even though they actually own everything their father had"*. Paul points out here that immaturity and irresponsibility equals slavery. Until you grow up in your mind and start taking full responsibility for your life, you're going to live like a slave all your life.

Work: Hallmark of the Responsible

The most noticeable watchword of a responsible man is work. The more you work, the more responsible you are. The less work you do, the less responsible you are. Laziness is synonymous with irresponsibility. When God created Adam, He placed him in the Garden of Eden and instructed

him *to dress it and keep it*; that is, to work. Those who don't work die in poverty. Don't blame anyone for how miserable you are; start working your way out of mediocrity.

Don't die wishing for things to happen for you. Wishes never guarantee accomplishment. You have to work real hard. It takes relentless effort to bring your ideas into fruition. It takes tireless drive to make your purpose a reality. Somebody said; **"hard work is the single greatest competitive advantage"**. It puts you ahead of others. Many have gone ahead of others simply because they put in more effort than every other.

Ideas don't just happen because they're great. It takes the 99% perspiration to bring them to pass and also to amount to anything in life. There is no shortcut to lasting success. Hard work is the baseline of great achievements. The level of your productivity is a reflection of the extent of your hard work. The more hard-working you are, the more productive you become and vice versa.

Jesus told a parable about a man who owned a vineyard and had hired labourers to work there one the morning. Then as he passed by in the afternoon, he saw some men that were idle and he questioned them; "why are you all idle? Get yourselves something to do!" and then he asked them to go into his vineyard and work. In the evening, he passed by again and saw other idle men and did likewise (Matthew 20:1-16).

It is often said that there is no food for any lazy man. Similarly, there is no hope of fulfillment for lazy people. Hard work is the symbol of

responsibility and responsibility is the price for greatness. You must get yourself actively and diligently engaged in pursuing your plans and aspirations.

Be Accountable; Don't Push Blames

One of the symbols of responsibility is accountability. God expects you to be accountable for all the resources and endowments He has placed in you to fulfill destiny. You are a custodian of remarkable giftings from God and He expects you to harness them properly and channel them toward the accomplishment of your purpose for life.

Adam was equipped with everything he needed for life and fulfillment, but he lacked accountability. So when God; the Boss, came down one evening to inspect what was going on in the Garden, Adam, the custodian of the garden ran away. He knew he had messed up. Then he began to blame Eve for his mistake. He was shifting blames on another person. The head was accusing his subordinate for being the cause of his error. Many leaders just like Adam accuse all but themselves for their failure.

You are supposed to be in control, not out of control. One day, you'll have to look back at your life and assess whether or not you have made the right use of your giftings, your time, your resources, your energy and everything God has given you to have a great life.

You can't blame anyone for where you are. Life may not have treated you fairly, but you can pick yourself up and move on. You didn't decide the conditions surrounding your birth; good or bad, rich or poor. But you can

decide how you'll live afterward. You can decide to create a new beginning by working your way into greatness or you can sit there and complain. The choice is all yours. **Remember, if you fail, you caused it and if you succeed, you caused it.**

Note These

1. **You don't ask for relevance, you earn it.** Therefore you must take responsibility for your greatness as it is the only way to become relevant to your world.
2. **Self-discipline** is the genesis of responsibility and you must consciously despise every form of exuberance that will divert your focus from achieving your goals in life.
3. **Time waits for nobody.** You therefore need to invest time, not wasting it. Responsible people learn to manage tight schedules, meeting deadlines and achieving every set-goal in time.
4. **Commitment gives you an edge.** You cannot accomplish goals you are not committed to. And commitment is one of the virtues of responsibility. If you want to go far in life, you must give it your all.
5. **Learn to manage resources prudently.** The truth is; you've got all it takes to fulfill destiny. You have the talent, the required time and every other resource at your disposal. Responsibility is your ability to use those resources to your advantage, not wasting them.
6. **Instructions are the highway to life.** You must learn to learn. You must follow precepts from those that have gone ahead of you. You must be ready to be rebuked and corrected.

7. **Start from where you are, no matter how small.** Nowhere is too small to start from. Don't hesitate to take strides toward the fulfillment of your goals just because you are still waiting for money to come. That's a mark of irresponsibility.
8. **Don't celebrate an achievement for too long.** Many people still talk about something big they achieved twenty years ago. The question is; what else have you achieved since that time? If your answer is "nothing really", then you are getting outdated. People are already overtaking you. Nobody waits for anybody in this era where we live. You need to get over your past success and start moving on.
9. **Change is constant in this era.** Therefore, learn to refine your approach and methods in order to be relevant to the generation after you.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

SEPERATION: THE ATTITUDE OF CHAMPIONS

*"Therefore, come out from their midst **and be separate** says the Lord..."*

(2 Corinthians 6:17)

The most important discovery you will ever make is the discovery of what makes you different from others. You cannot make a difference until you are different. Some people call it self-discovery. And it is this discovery that births an attitude in you; the attitude of separating yourself from the crowd. We have said that by God's divine plan and arrangement, every individual has a unique place in destiny; differing from that of others and peculiar to him or her (Romans 12:6). Therefore, it is dangerous to be lost in the crowd all the time because, you just might lose your identity and hence, your destiny.

Having this mentality, it is therefore important to understand the principle of separation. Jesus displayed this one day in the aftermath of one of the yearly Passover feasts in Jerusalem. After the feast, a large crowd including His parent was returning home, and the Bible says Jesus tarried in Jerusalem. In other words, He withdrew himself from the crowd.

Why? He knew exactly what He came to earth for and he knew that he was on a different assignment from the others and that He needed to separate himself in order to fulfill His destiny. Getting lost in the crowd will rub you of your identity and make you lose focus of your assignment, hence, living

an unfulfilled life. You must understand your difference from others and walk in the uniqueness of your purpose (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

The world today is full of problems of all sorts. However, the solution to all those problems lies with God appointed people! The Good news is; there is a problem you were created to solve. **Your purpose is the solution to a problem.** But you cannot solve any problem you help to enhance. You have to withdraw yourself from those nurturing the problems and start creating invaluable ways of bringing lasting solutions to those problems.

Our world is full of chaos today because the people whom God have ordained to be problem solvers have made themselves problem incubators and enhancers. You cannot solve a problem you are part of. That's why you must retain your identity. You're not created for the crowd; therefore, work on yourself, your giftings and potentials in order to enhance your delivery to the world.

A Different Approach

Every problem in mathematics has a different method for solving it. The approach to solving the problem depends on the nature of the problem. You don't use one approach to solve all mathematical problems. Why do we have different approaches? It's simple; because we have different problems. The problems are not the same; therefore the approaches to solving them cannot be the same.

That's how it is with life. Everyone is created to solve a different problem; **therefore everyone must have a different approach to his or her purpose.**

You cannot use someone else's approach for your life's assignment. You both are not heading the same direction; therefore, your methods don't have to be the same. You need to separate yourself in terms of your methods and approach to life.

Someone said; *"you were not born with the crowd, so why die in the crowd?"* You are not destined to finish your race in the crowd. Therefore you mustn't adopt the methods of the crowd. **There is no general approach to fulfilling destiny. You need your own approach.**

You don't have to try to be like someone else and it would be wrong for anyone to try to be you. We are all different people with differing destinations and hence, different routes to getting to our various destinations.

King David understood this secret. See what the Bible writes about him;

*"And Samuel said to Jesse, are these all thy children? And he said, **there remaineth yet the younger, and behold he keepeth the sheep.** And Samuel said unto Jesse, send for him: for we will not sit down till he come hither". (1 Samuel 16:11)*

In this account, Samuel the priest was sent by God to anoint a prospective King from the household of Jesse that heaven had already chosen. Now, David as at that time who was *the younger* of the men in the house of Jesse already knew where he was going. So he often withdrew himself from the crowd. The other big brothers were showing off their chests. David was however keeping his father's sheep; in effect, learning how to lead God's

sheep (i.e. God's people). He was purpose conscious, that's why he was careful not to be lost in the crowd. In the end, he was sent for and anointed.

We all need to approach life like David did; separating yourself from others in your mind, actions, decisions, thoughts, behavior, etc. **You cannot make a difference if you are not different.** You cannot be outstanding if you don't "stand out".

A Different Mindset

A different approach is not possible without a different mindset. If you want to do things differently from the crowd, you need to think differently from them. Not only did David separate himself physically, he also separated himself mentally. He wasn't thinking like others were thinking. He wasn't afraid of the same things that scared them off. He wasn't moved by what moved them.

When everybody in Israel was afraid of Goliath, he stood tall and said *"since I could kill a lion and a bear in the bush, I can bring down Goliath"* (1 Samuel 17: 34-36). That was a totally different mentality. It wasn't David's physique that killed Goliath, it was his mindset. He was probably the smallest physically, but was obviously strongest mentally. He first won the battle in his mind before he won in physically.

When late president **Umoru Musa Yar'Adua** stepped into power in 2007, he announced that he came with a seven point's agenda that was supposed to transform Nigeria. And make no mistake, these agenda were good and

in fact, if properly implemented, they would have helped the development of Nigeria a great deal.

However, something crucial was missing in that agenda. There was no program in place to transform the mindsets of the citizens that will ultimately culminate into generational transformation.

The average Nigerian already has a negative mindset. He believes that due to the fact that the government is corrupt and that money is hard to come by, prosperity is also not possible unless one has to get involved in bad practices. He believes that nothing can work well in any sector of the country's economy anymore. And he has also conditioned his mind to believe that if he will ever be prosperous, then luck will really need to be on his side. This is bad for personal development.

What am I saying? If there must be a positive transformation in our lives, societies, states, nations, regions and even the world at large, then there must first be a reasonable transformation going on in our minds and in the minds of all people across the nations of the world.

A Different Spirit

God said about Caleb;

*"But my servant Caleb, because he had **ANOTHER SPIRIT** with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land..."* (Numbers 14:24)

Not only do you need a different mindset, you also need a different spirit in order to climb to the heights. People with weak spirits are not able to

dare things that seem impossible. Caleb in Numbers, we are told, was able to motivate the Israelites to go conquer the supposed “Giants” that were meant to consume them. And God dubbed him a man with a different spirit from the others.

It’s important to be intelligent in your journey through life, but it’s much more important to be **spirited**. Spirited people don’t fear challenges, they move toward challenges. Spirited people don’t run away from their fears, they move toward their fears. They are able to dare. David was so spirited and that’s why he was able to look Goliath in the eye without shivering.

I told us about **Mary Slessor** in a previous chapter. Among other things, she was so spirited. On one of her mission assignments in Nigeria, she was threatened with death, but she said *“what’s worse than death, Onward, I dare not look back”*. She was not afraid of dying. She moved toward her purpose fearlessly. Spirited people are fearless people.

Don’t Fear Criticisms

When you are doing things differently from other people, there is an assurance that you’ll get criticized by them. **Criticism is not always bad; in most cases, it’s an indication that you are doing something different.**

Most people get angry when someone around them proves to be different in approach, in character, in personality, in wisdom and in disposition. When they sense the presence of this kind of person, they get uncomfortable; because they feel his presence exposes their own inadequacy. So they react in unpleasant ways toward that person.

It is therefore important to note that when you get criticized because of what you do and how you do it, it's not always that you are wrong; in most cases, it's because you are better. So embrace your difference, keep your head up and move ahead.

In Luke 2:49, Jesus asked His parent; *"why are you looking for me"*. In other words, He wasn't afraid of being alone. He was neither afraid nor ashamed to be the only one doing something different. If you understand that your purpose is different from that of others, then you'll not be ashamed to approach things differently from others.

People who abuse you for being different are simply not purpose-conscious people. But you are! Therefore, be proud of your difference and do your thing confidently not minding who likes it or who doesn't like it. Stop doing things you are not comfortable doing, trying to impress people. You don't have to impress anybody, impress yourself first.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

NEGLECT YOUR NEGATIVE PAST

“And Jesus said unto them, no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62)

You cannot look forward and backward at the same time. Give it a try and see. It's also risky to drive a vehicle looking backward. You'll crash in no time doing that. Also, the steering of our vehicles today are always in front of the vehicles, not at the rear; because the focus of the driver must be *forward*. Similarly, you cannot reach out for the future holding on to your negative past. **You cannot build toward posterity when you allow memories of your past to weigh you down.**

God said in Isaiah 43:18-19 (NIV); *“forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing...”* God instructs us to forget the *former things* (the past) and focus on *the new thing* that He's about to do. That means you cannot grab the *new thing* holding on to the *old thing*. You can take lessons from past events but don't dwell on the past.

You can choose to be weighed down by your negative past and miss out on your purpose or you can choose to neglect the past and enter into your rest. You cannot have the both at the same time. You cannot possess the past and the future at the same time.

Paul said; *“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I*

press on toward the goal..." (Philippians 3:13-14, NIV). There's much more to be accomplished as long as you are still alive. But there is a way to accomplish it. Paul said it is by forgetting what's behind and straining toward what is ahead. You've got to force your way out of the past and dive into purpose with great focus.

You might have fumbled in the past, but you don't have to let the guilt get a hold on you. You were probably abused in the past, but now you must pick up yourself and move on. Maybe things didn't work out because of the kind of family you were born into; it's time to redefine your future through an unbroken focus.

Some of the things you called failure in your past, were not actually failure; God calls them 'stumbling'. *"Though they **stumble**, they will not fall, for the Lord will hold them by the hand"* (Psalms 37:24, NLT). That you stumbled doesn't mean you have fallen. It only means you need to be more focused. When you stumble, you can get up by yourself again and forge ahead.

Also, if you keep celebrating past success to the neglect of the future, your past success becomes a negative influence on your mind and hence, retards your progress. It becomes a negative past. No matter how far you have gone in life, there is still a place called *forward*. You need to focus on the future more than you do your past accomplishments.

There is always something ahead, so don't dwell on what's on ground, start charging toward other goals you haven't accomplished. Your

mistakes and fumbling in the past are now irrelevant. You can write a new script right now. Forgive yourself and start a fresh chapter.

God Is Committed to Your Future

God's focus is never on your past, He's always committed to your future, if only you will open up the way He wants. God is determined to make things happen for you if you will not keep dwelling on the past. The Bible said;

*"And he that sat upon the throne said; **Behold, I make all things new**, and he said unto me, write, for these words are true and faithful" (Revelations 21:15).*

God's interest is always the future, not the past. Men are always worried about how their past is going to catch up with them. God's saying on the other hand "oh I wish this my child can just understand that I've erased her past and I'm focused on what she can achieve in the future".

Psalms 45:10-11 tells us that God always seeks to beautify those who will dare to ignore their negative past and move on. It says in the latter part *"...so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty"*.

Jesus makes an interesting statement:

"And Jesus said unto him, no man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the race" (Luke 9:62).

Jesus meant to say you cannot put one hand on the past and reach out for what's ahead of you successfully. You cannot hold on to yesterday and accomplish anything tomorrow. You might have laid some solid

foundations yesterday, but you don't keep getting depressed by things that didn't turn out well and expect to go far.

Many people are more concerned about their lost years than they are about the future. Many keep bemoaning the money they have lost in the past, the time they lost, the energy, the people, the enjoyments and so on. You mustn't fix the lost past first. The past is gone. Fix the present to secure the future. You cannot do anything about yesterday anymore. You can only do something about today in order to secure tomorrow.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

YOU'VE GOT TO BE EMPOWERED

*"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, **yet the inward man is renewed day by day**" (2 Corinthians 4:16)*

No appliance, no matter how beautiful, ever works without a source of power. Also, if you unplug the fuse of your meter, all the electronics in your house will become inactive. They'll become mere decorations.

Similarly, no matter how gifted you are, you need access to divine empowerment in order to shine. No bulb shines without electricity. In the same vein, no one's destiny becomes colourful unless he receives enough spiritual empowerment to function in his the place of divine calling.

What then is the source of this power? It is called **Grace**. Your talent is a spiritual gift from God, but it needs to be powered in order to deliver -and Grace is what lights up your destiny. Grace is to your talent what electricity is to your electronics. Just as they can't function without electricity, your giftings cannot deliver their full potentials unless they are connected to God's grace.

The Bible text above summarizes it all. If you don't want to fail, your inner deposits must be constantly energized by Grace. Grace is the life wire of destiny. There's nothing really great except by grace. My mentor said; *"there are really no great mean; it's the backing of the great God that makes them*

appear great." Until you are divinely backed by God's grace, you never amount to anything –however gifted you are.

Ephesians 4:7 says *"but unto everyone is given **Grace** according to the measure of the **gift** of Christ."* It is grace that makes gifts to work. For every measure of gift in you, there is a measure of grace also. Gifts remain dormant until grace is at work.

Many have taken God's grace in vain. Many have despised the place of God in their life's adventure. Many have become very high minded. That's why there are so many casualties of destiny today. Indeed, many have crash-landed.

Experts fail; expertise is not enough. Connections fail; humans could betray you. Education doesn't deliver it all; stop depending on your certificate. Even prophecies fail; don't be carried away by every one of them. The only thing that never fails is the Grace of God. There's nowhere in scriptures where it is recorded that grace failed. The greatest men are the most en-graced ones.

Grace according to one preacher means "God in the race." When God is in the race on your behalf, you can fold your arms and enjoy your success. With grace, you can put in little effort and achieve great results –because God is involved. Grace puts you on higher grounds.

Grace gives you a voice; indeed it makes the Voiceless an Orator of destiny. Grace picks up an insignificant person and puts the spotlight on him. Grace

turns your weaknesses into strength. Grace hides your many errors and colours your little efforts.

Have you ever read this from scriptures? –*“but by the Grace of God, I am what I am...”* (1 Corinthians 15:10). That was Paul –the Apostle of Jesus speaking. You never amount to anything worth anyone’s admiration except by Grace. Grace by my definition is simply “God’s divine power that takes you to the heights.”

In Ezra 7:9, we are told about how Ezra the priest found favour before king Artaxerxes because *“the Good Hand of his God was upon Him.”* Grace therefore attracts favour. It puts an aura around you that makes everyone to love you relentlessly.

Bishop David Oyedepo leads one of the most impactful, influential and wealthy Christian organizations in the world today; but I’ve heard him say often; *“this is nothing but the finger of God.”* Until God is involved, destiny is in shambles.

How to Attract God’s Grace

1. It Takes Humility

The Bible clearly states; *“God resist the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.”* (James 4:6). Nothing derails you from the path of destiny than pride. God gives his grace only to the humble. You must recognize that you are nothing on your own. Pride takes you to a height where your crash-landing would be great.

Pride simply means taking God's place in your life. It means despising God. It also means taking God's glory. God is an ocean of Grace, but only the humble can drink of it.

Galatians 6:3 says *"for if a man thinks of himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."* In truth, you are nothing without grace.

2. It Multiplies by Knowledge

I love second Peter 1:2: *"Grace and Peace be multiplied unto you **through the knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord."* Any area of your life where you have noticed a deficiency of Grace, go for knowledge. Knowledge of what? Knowledge of God.

God is all-knowing. Therefore, if you must advance in destiny, you must seek God's opinion about every phase of your life. Never take any step unless it is commanded by God. And how do you know what's commanded? It is by knowing God –learning from His word, hearing from him in your spirit man and following every instruction.

The truth is; Grace precedes peace. But Grace and Peace multiplies by knowledge. Therefore your knowledge of God will en-grace you and that will in turn guarantee peace. It's simple!

3. It Takes Sanctification

No one drinks water with a dirty cup. It's a cup; and meant for drinking, but it's dirty; therefore unusable. Similarly, you cannot attract God's grace

unless you are clean. Talking about God, Habakkuk 1:3 says *"thou art of a purer eye than to behold evil..."* Talent does not give you liberty to misbehave.

Back in my university days, we used to have one very young and extraordinarily talented assistant drama director in our fellowship. She was so good the whole campus knew her. One Sunday morning, my sister appeared in church full of tears in her eyes. When I asked her what had gone wrong, she told me that our assistant drama director was dead.

She had died the previous night after having an unsuccessful abortion. The whole campus was in shock. She was gifted no doubt, but *"the sting of death is sin"* (1 Corinthians 15:56) -irrespective of your talent. Sin rubs you of God's presence. We are saved by grace so as not to walk in that old sinful nature anymore. Therefore, acts of iniquity only expose us to the dangers the old man faced.

Remember, God knows those that are his (2 Timothy 2:19), and His Grace can only be made available to them.

CHAPTER TWENTY

UNLEASH YOURSELF

By God's special design, you are loaded with so much stuff that you can't afford to hide in one corner all your life. You are too gifted to remain under the bushel. You are meant for the mountain top. You are meant to be seen. The spotlight should be on you.

You are designed to make global impact; don't die in your village. Your voice has to be heard. No one should talk you down; you are too loaded to be intimidated. Don't remain a mediocre. The world has to feel you. God created you to impose positive impact; therefore you must unleash yourself.

Adjust Your Mentality

It is mentality that determines destiny. Your imagination is what sets the pace for your destination. Stop thinking small. Good thinking births good products. Ben Carson wrote a popular book titled *"Think Big."* The title says everything. Right from when I first saw that title as a teenager, my thinking changed even before opening it.

Many people dream small dreams. You cannot make global impact unless you think big. Start exercising your potentials and expect to touch everybody on earth with them. Aim very high in whatever you do. There's no limit to any height. I hear people say "the sky is the limit." But the sky is not a wall, and there are places far beyond it. Therefore aim beyond the

sky; it shouldn't be your limit. Many people can't see themselves anywhere outside that little job they are managing. There's really no limit around your life except in your mind.

Be Courageous!

Life is full of challenges, but also of opportunities; and only those with a lion's heart can have the lion's share. You need to take bold steps. It is giant strides that make giants. Every big corporation, every great individual, every great institution...they are all products of great hearts.

Don't be afraid to leave that job especially when you know it would take that to move to your next level. Many are afraid for job security. Those are people with small hearts. There is an institution inside of you. You can never be sacked when you are fulfilling your own potential. You are afraid for your job because you are not operating in your potential. It's time to unleash your real self.

You need to start challenging yourself. Go out! Meet people! Introduce yourself and sell your potentials. The world is waiting for your manifestation. Someone said "a life without challenge and risk is not worth living."

Take daily steps. **Lao-Tzu** said "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." But you must have the courage to take every step. Don't let any day pass without doing a new thing and taking a new step that will add to the previous ones you have taken. That's how to eventually become successful.

Conclusion

I conclude with the following thought;

Your birth is not accidental.

You were born to accomplish a well defined assignment.

You need to discover this assignment in order to have a smooth adventure.

You have within you every resource required to accomplish this task. The resource is called 'talent.'

You must maximize this resource to the fullest.

Your blessing in life is tied to your potential.

In order not to waste your talent, you need a combination of vision, passion, wisdom, planning, adequate choices, separation, the right company, and responsibility.

You must connect to God; the source of grace in order to make the most of your time on earth.

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Isaac John Akagu is a teacher, preacher, motivator and speaker at meetings, groups and churches.

He is also a passionate writer of Christian inspirational and motivational books. He recently published "*How to Create Success*," a popular book in Nigeria; and also has other books like "*the Power of Mutual Faith*," "*The Leadership Qualities of Jesus*," and "*the Covenant of Protection*" written and coming soon.

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