


Life
IS WHAT
YOU
MAKE
OF IT



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OF IT

IFEANYI ATUEYI
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WE ARE ALWAYS GRATEFUL TO GOD for His sufficient grace to produce another book this year. We believe that our books are life-changing to those who desire change.

In producing this book **Life is what you make of it** several persons were instrumental and courtesy demands that we acknowledge them here.

Abieye Kalu proof-read the materials while Elizabeth Amuneke provided the secretarial services. We are grateful to them.

Some references were made and we appreciate those sources, too numerous to mention here.

We acknowledge various individuals whose relationships and contacts contributed to our experiences in life.

Ifeanyi Atueyi

Olufemi Omotayo

Dozie David Atueyi

PREFACE

PUBLISHING A BOOK EVERY YEAR IS NOT ONLY A CHALLENGE but a test of persistence and perseverance. The goal of producing a book annually was set in 2004 and the determination to succeed has given me the strength to carry on despite some hindrances.

From last year, I sought the help of my son Dozie, the Executive Editor and Femi Omotayo, the Editor (Special Publications), not only to reduce the pressure on me, but also to develop them in the area of writing books. It worked very well last year. Consequently, we are adopting the same strategy this year.

The benefit of this teamwork is that we have the young and old minds writing from their own life experiences and perspectives. Our world views are different and blending of these views makes the book very interesting.

Our 2009 title was **Adding Life to Years** to reflect on my 70th birthday. This year, we have chosen the title **Life is what you make of it**. As usual, our books are generally reader-friendly and inspirational. Each chapter begins with PowerPoint and Insight to add some value.

This is a book that is designed to improve the quality of life.

Ifeanyi Atueyi
December, 2010

POWERPOINT



*“If we did all things we were capable of doing,
we would literally astound ourselves.”*

-Thomas Edison

*“Striving for success without hard work is like trying
to harvest where you haven’t planted.”*

-David Bly

*“Unless you try to do something beyond what you have
already mastered, you will never grow.”*

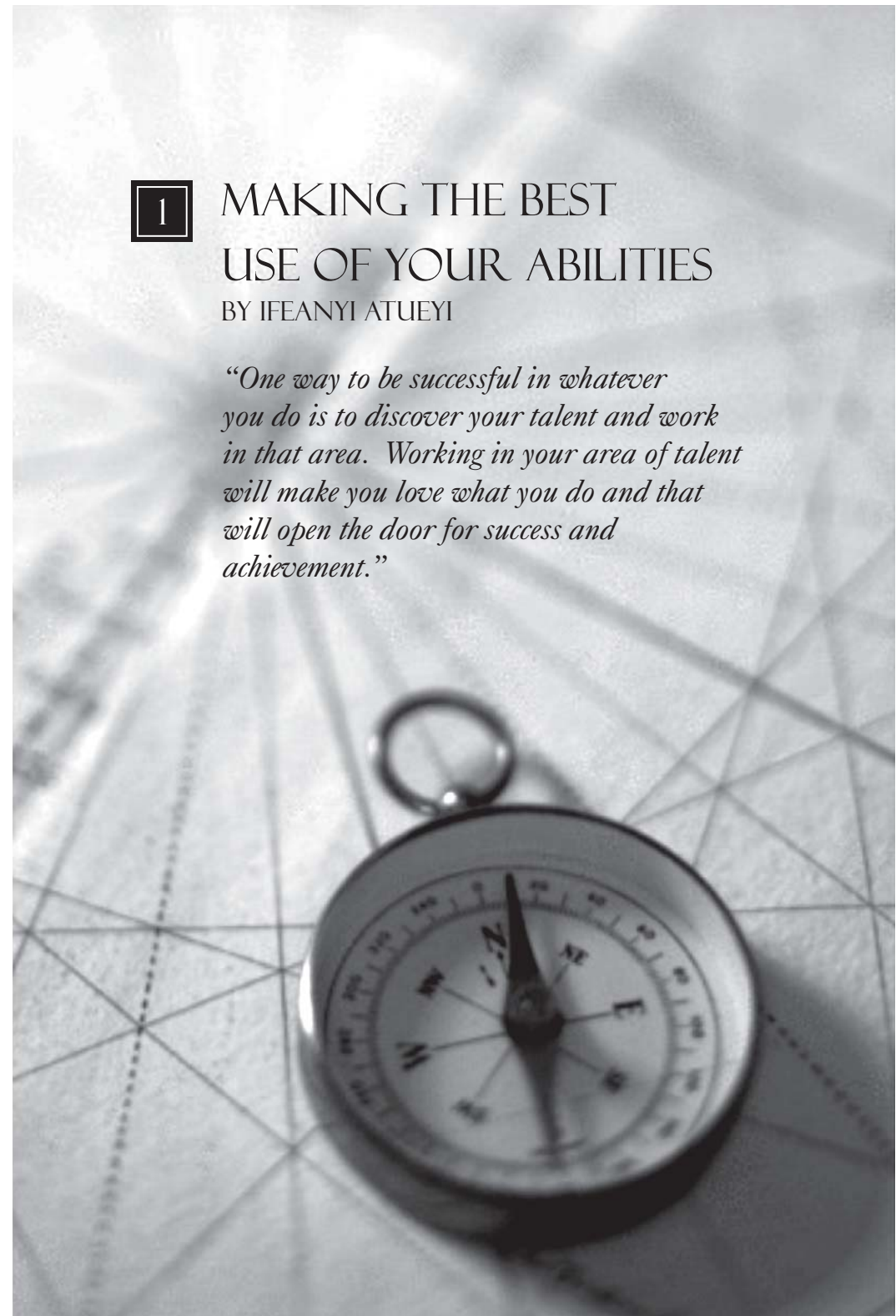
-Emerson



MAKING THE BEST USE OF YOUR ABILITIES

BY IFEANYI ATUEYI

*“One way to be successful in whatever
you do is to discover your talent and work
in that area. Working in your area of talent
will make you love what you do and that
will open the door for success and
achievement.”*



MAKING THE BEST USE OF YOUR ABILITIES



IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR, I visited Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, on the invitation of the Pharmaceutical Association of Nigerian Students (PANS). I was invited to deliver the keynote address at their Pharmacy Week. It was another opportunity to visit my alma mater and meet both the students and lecturers.

When I asked for the topic, I was told to speak on any subject of my choice. What an open cheque! I thought over it and crystallised the topic – Life After The Four Walls – Why some succeed and others fail. I believed that sharing my ideas with the students on this theme would help them appreciate some factors that contribute to successful life. I wanted to expose them to real life experience after the university and impress on them that success is a life-long process.

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I emphasised the fact that university education is good and should be acquired but real success in life depends on a number of other factors which must be blended neatly. We need vision to know the direction in which we should move. We need to set goals and make plans. Without these elements we just drift and end somewhere. I pointed out that we all have God-given talents and abilities to enable us make a unique contribution to the society. Talent is one of life's greatest gifts. A university cannot put talent into any one. It cannot teach talent. It can only help to develop the talents and improve intellectual ability in the students. Really, each person is responsible for activating their talents. Talents must be developed through polishing, training and experience.

One way to be successful in whatever you do is to discover your talent and work in that area. Working in your area of talent will make you love what you do and that will open the door for success and achievement. Your work will become fun and make you happy and healthy. One reason for stress and burn-out among workers is that they are operating in an area outside their talent. You cannot expect superior performance from such workers. The secret of success is to find engagement where your talent can be applied. Most people work for money and not for the love of what they do. They eventually may get the money but miss the joy and fulfilment that good life offers.

One of the greatest mistakes people make is to invest their energy in copying the talents of others. They envy and covet what other people have. This is self-destructive and leads to low self-esteem. They will never excel or achieve much. They will only end in mediocrity. This is why the world is full of mediocre people who cannot make meaningful contribution anywhere. They prefer to be copies of other people instead of being the original which God created them to be.

Get busy stirring your own gifts knowing full well that you will account for them to the Giver. You will not be expected to account for the talents God has given to other people but you will be held responsible for your own talents. The story of The Talents in Matthew chapter 25: 14-30 illustrates clearly the point I am trying to make here. Jesus narrated that story, not for our reading enjoyment, but for application to our lives. Of course, the first thing is to discover your own talent. If you have not yet discovered it, earnestly ask God to reveal your own talent to you. God wants everyone to discover and serve Him in their area of talents. Jeremiah 33:3 says **“Call on me, and I will answer you, and show you the great and mighty things which you do not know.”** Your own talent is one of the greatest things about your life God wants you to know. I love 1 John 5:14 which says **“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”** Any prayer

of faith that is in the will of God is answered. This is our confidence.

Find your own niche and determine to make a contribution to humanity. Don't engage in a rat race. Identify the service you can render in your own area of talent and concentrate on it. Remain focused and avoid distractions. This is the way to become important and successful. You need to think of your work and the impact it makes on the community or society, in general. John Maxwell says, **“Your life today is a result of your thinking yesterday. Your life tomorrow will be determined by what you think today.”** That means you need to control what you think about. Ralph Waldo Emerson says, **“Life consists of what a man is thinking about all day.”**

When you do what you love to do, acquire knowledge and skill in that area through training and development, you are sure to excel and make a mark in your world. **“Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men”** Proverbs 22:29.

Some people have more talents than others but all of us have something that we can do well. Every person is capable of doing something better than other people. This is called the strength zone. Everyone must find this area and

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make the most of it. Develop and work around it and the sky will be your limit.

POWERPOINT



“God gives every bird a worm, but he does not throw it into the nest.”

-Swedish proverb

“Great lives are the culmination of great thoughts followed by great actions.”

-Peter Sinclair

“I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity an obligation; every possession, a duty.”

-John D. Rockefeller

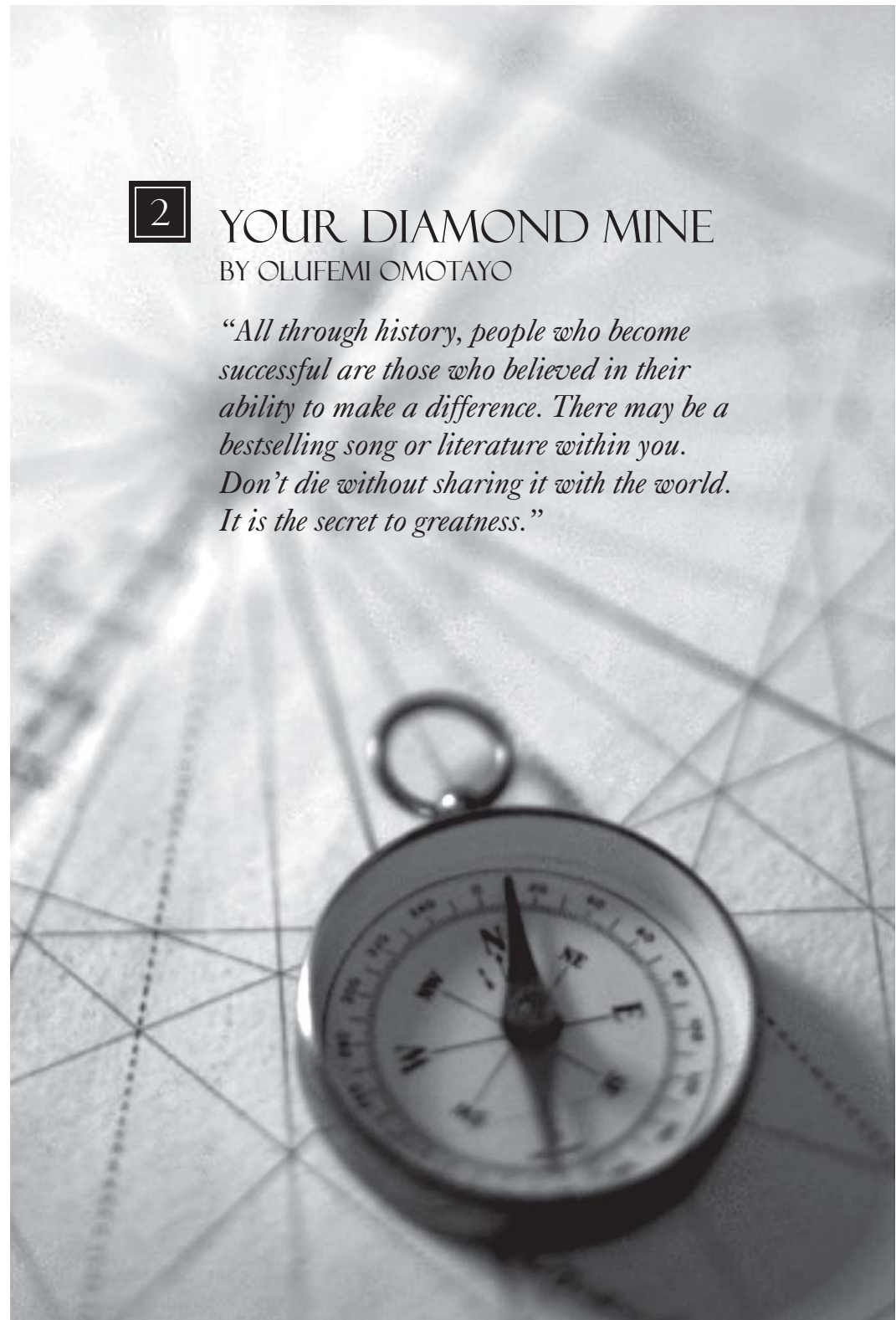


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YOUR DIAMOND MINE

BY OLUFEMI OMOTAYO

“All through history, people who become successful are those who believed in their ability to make a difference. There may be a bestselling song or literature within you. Don’t die without sharing it with the world. It is the secret to greatness.”



YOUR DIAMOND MINE



THERE ARE DIFFERENT VERSIONS TO THIS STORY but they all carry a similar message. In the early 1900s, Dr Russell Conwell, founder of Temple University, gave a popular speech called "Acres of Diamonds." In it, he said: "**Your diamonds are not in far distant mountains or in yonder seas. They are in your own backyard if you but dig for them.**"

It was about a historic Persian farmer named Ali Hafed who had orchards, grain fields and gardens; had money at interest, and was a wealthy and contented man. He was contented because he was wealthy and wealthy because he was contented. But the day he heard all about diamonds, how much they were worth, he went to bed that night a poor man. He had not lost anything, but he was poor because he was discontented, and discontented because he feared he was poor.

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The story continues with the version that radio commentator, Earl Nightingale, made famous back in the 1950s. This had its roots in a true story about an African farmer who had become quite bored with his life and the rocky soil he had chosen to till. He had read that diamonds were being discovered in abundance and the idea of finding millions of dollars worth of diamonds got him so excited that he sold his farm and headed out. He wandered all over the African continent; the years slipped by as he searched for the diamonds and wealth that he never found. Eventually he went completely broke and threw himself into a river and drowned.

Meanwhile, the new owner of his farm picked up an unusual looking rock about the size of a country egg and put it on his mantle, out of curiosity. A visitor stopped by and told the new owner of the farm that the funny looking rock on his mantle was just about the biggest diamond that had ever been found. The owner of the property told him: "The whole farm is covered with them. I've been kicking them out from under my mule!"

That homestead turned out to be the Kimberly Diamond Mine – the richest the world has ever known. The original farmer had been literally standing on "Acres of Diamonds" until he sold his farm in pursuit of something else entirely. Where are your acres of diamonds?

The good news is that everyone has “acres of diamonds.” And everyone can prosper by discovering those acres. Rupert said: **“A buried talent is never a buried treasure. Talents become treasures only through use.”** Thankfully, no one can begrudge God because He gives to every man “according to his several ability” (Matthew 25:15).

So what do you know about diamonds? The mineral form of the element carbon, diamonds are valued as precious stones. The diamond is the hardest natural mineral and has many other exceptional properties that collectively make it an important industrial and scientific material. Typically used as a gem, abrasive or cutting tool, it is worn by royalties like the Queen of England, wealthy individuals and superstars.

Diamond is one of the costliest materials ever. It is a scarce commodity that requires much digging and unearthing because it is found in deep underground. Scientists believe that diamonds form at depths greater than 150 km, and there is evidence that some diamonds formed as deep as 670 km beneath the earth's surface. Such depth! Everything good – crude oil, gold, precious gems – it appears, is usually found beneath the surface. Remember how the world watched in horror and amazement as 33 miners were rescued from a mine in Chile recently? It is the perfect reason “nothing good comes easy.”

You need to discover your own diamond mine. What are you made to do? What are you good at? Don't ever say you have nothing because no one is destitute. The Holy Spirit gives to every man severally as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11). You may feel incompetent in your ability. Perhaps you think you are not capable in many things. You feel “making it” means doing something else or going somewhere else. This is normal. However, understand still that you have something to offer that others do not. Why not start to use it now, no matter how insignificant?

So, what should you do? Roman poet, Virgil, said: **“They are able because they think they are able.”** Believe in yourself and you will turn more of yourself into practical use. All through history, people who become successful are those who believed in their ability to make a difference. There may be a bestselling song or literature within you. Don't die without sharing it with the world. It is the secret to greatness.

There are many people, like that fabled farmer, who have heard about the “riches” being seen by others in the form of stock options at start-up companies. Others hear about how great it is working in that big company down the street. But it is just a case of the “grass is always greener” syndrome.

While changing jobs has been the best career choice for

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some people, others in hindsight realised they should have stayed where they were. The advice is that you should not to listen to a colleague or a recruiter, for that matter. Sit down and listen to your inner voice. Develop a plan. Ask yourself some very serious career review and planning questions before taking a decision.

You also need to love your environment. Tim Akano, the CEO of New Horizons in Nigeria, believes so much in this principle that he is ready to mentor any ambitious Nigerian to stardom. He said no one has any right to expect anything good from a place they do not believe in. According to him, Nigerian billionaires like Aliko Dangote, Mike Adenuga and Jimoh Ibrahim are people who would do anything to promote their fatherland. They do this deliberately because anything contrary would have adverse effect on their businesses.

You also should not waste opportunities. You've heard it said over and again that opportunity usually comes dressed in a working garb. Be sure you do not send it away. Whether you are a business owner, marketing professional, or other entrepreneur, it is crucial to remember your backyard diamonds are your past and present satisfied customers. Your real diamond mine is in the continuing stream of sales that can be realised over the lifetime of your existing and past customers.

POWERPOINT



“It’s not hard to make a decision when you know what your values are.”

-Roy Disney

“Personal leadership is the process of keeping your vision and values before you and aligning your life to be congruent with them.”

-Stephen Covey

“I conceive that the greatest part of the miseries of mankind is brought upon them by false estimates they have made of the value of things.”

-Benjamin Franklin

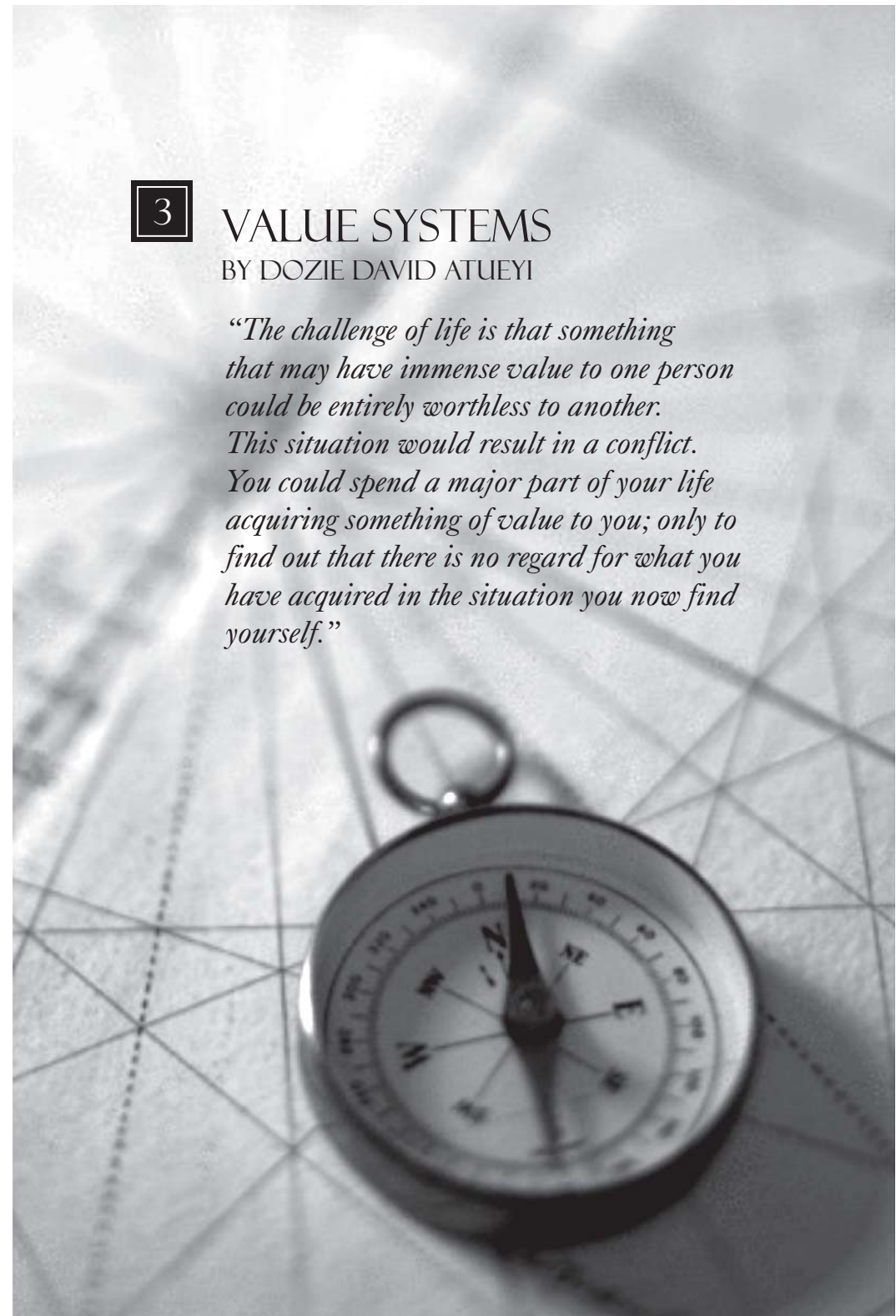


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VALUE SYSTEMS

BY DOZIE DAVID ATUEYI

“The challenge of life is that something that may have immense value to one person could be entirely worthless to another. This situation would result in a conflict. You could spend a major part of your life acquiring something of value to you; only to find out that there is no regard for what you have acquired in the situation you now find yourself.”



VALUE SYSTEMS



TWO YEARS AGO, I WAS TRAVELLING TO LAGOS from Johannesburg on a Kenya Airways flight. In line with the flight itinerary, I had a stopover in Nairobi. Unfortunately for me, the transit schedule required that I spend a major part of the day at the airport. I arrived in the morning and had to wait till the evening to board my connecting flight. I was not familiar with East Africa and I had no intention of entering the city of Nairobi.

After a few hours of exploring the airport, I decided to look for something to eat. There were restaurants and coffee shops with a variety of meals. The challenge I had was how to pay for anything I might order. I had some money with me but not in the local currency. It just occurred to me, I did not even know what the local currency of Kenya was. In all of my transit journeys, I had never purchased anything at this airport, and so I had never been faced with this

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predicament.

Encouraged by the adage that says, “No venture, no gain,” I put on a bold face and strutted into a restaurant. I calmly took a seat, scanned the menu and selected an item that would make a hearty breakfast. The waiter took my order and was about to head for the kitchen when I stopped him to ask a question. I explained to him that I only had South African Rand with me and would have to pay with that currency. To my surprise, he accepted my money and even gave me change in the same currency. I gratefully enjoyed my meal and continued my airport exploration with newfound confidence. The fact that I could make purchases with the currency I had made all the difference.

Recently, I was travelling again from Johannesburg to Lagos. This time, my flight was on Ethiopian Airlines. According to the itinerary, I had to transit through Addis Ababa, where I would spend a few hours at the airport. I love Ethiopia. I have found it to be quite different from what I had previously read. I like the sceneries; the people are beautiful and very friendly. I usually look forward to travelling through East Africa.

Considering that I was going to be at the airport for some hours, I had planned to have a meal during the stopover. I recalled the situation in Nairobi and felt assured that I

would easily be able to make payments at the restaurants and maybe even purchase some items at the duty-free shops. I was travelling with sufficient funds, and so I joyfully anticipated my transit journey through Ethiopia.

I arrived at the Addis Ababa airport about an hour after midnight. I had four hours to wait for my connecting flight. Without wasting any time, I headed straight for a restaurant to get a light meal before embarking on an exploration of the airport. After going through the menu, I selected an item and confidently announced that I would be paying with South African Rand. To my shock, the waiter declined, explaining that he would only accept US Dollars or the local currency. I did not even know what local currency was in use in Ethiopia!

However, the waiter was kind enough to explain that I could go to a Bureau De Change and sell some of my foreign currency. I immediately proceeded to the only one that was open at that time. As soon as I got there, the lady at the office asked what currency I wanted to change (as if she suspected I might have some undesirable currency). I informed her that I had South African Rand and she turned me down, declaring that she would only accept Dollars, Pounds or Euros. I left her office and went to several other restaurants, looking for one that would accept my currency for payment. Not one restaurant, coffee shop or store

agreed to take my money. I was stuck at that airport for several hours with a lot of money in a currency that had no value.

That experience taught me a major lesson in life. I have learnt that we each have different sets of values that may carry a lot of weight or be totally worthless, depending on where we find ourselves. A value system is described as a set of principles or ideals that guide our behaviours. A person's value system gives structure and purpose by helping to determine what is meaningful and important to that person. It helps to express who the person is and what the person stands for.

Every one of us has a set of values. These are entities, situations or conditions that we consistently strive to acquire or maintain. They are things that mean a lot to us. For example, some people's values in life could be good health, physical fitness, a sense of accomplishment, fame, mental vitality, education, creative endeavours, spirituality, religion, helping others, protecting the environment, nature etc.

In relationships, some people may value love, trust, honesty, respect, loyalty, family, close friends, marriage, companionship etc. When it comes to work or career, some others value security, stability, control, creativity,

entrepreneurship, free time, less stress etc. And in finance, people may value owning nice things, having extra money for travel or leisure, being financially secure, being debt-free or being wealthy.

The challenge of life is that something that may have immense value to one person could be entirely worthless to another. One man's meat, they say, is another's poison. This situation would result in a conflict. You could spend a major part of your life acquiring something of value to you; only to find out that there is no regard for what you have acquired in the situation you now find yourself.

While one person in Nigeria celebrates the purchase of a new car, another person in Japan is celebrated for developing a new car design. Every individual in life has his or her own set of values, and if we are to effectively connect with people, we must understand what is important to them and relate with them accordingly. We must also determine where we are heading to; where our goals and aspirations would lead us to; and discover what values would be relevant.

It is a sad situation when we encounter a new terrain, like embarking on a new endeavour or pursuing a new relationship, only to realise that we are shortchanged in the values that would have made us effective and guaranteed

success. Like I have painfully observed, every specific region has its own value system. It is my responsibility to acquire the right currency to make maximum impact.

POWERPOINT



*“Young people tell you what they are doing,
old people what they have done and fools what
they wish to do.”*

-French

*“You only have to do a very few things right in your
life so long as you don't do too many things wrong.”*

-Warren Buffett

*“Your life is a gift from the Creator. Your gift back to
the Creator is what you do with your life.”*

-Billy Mills

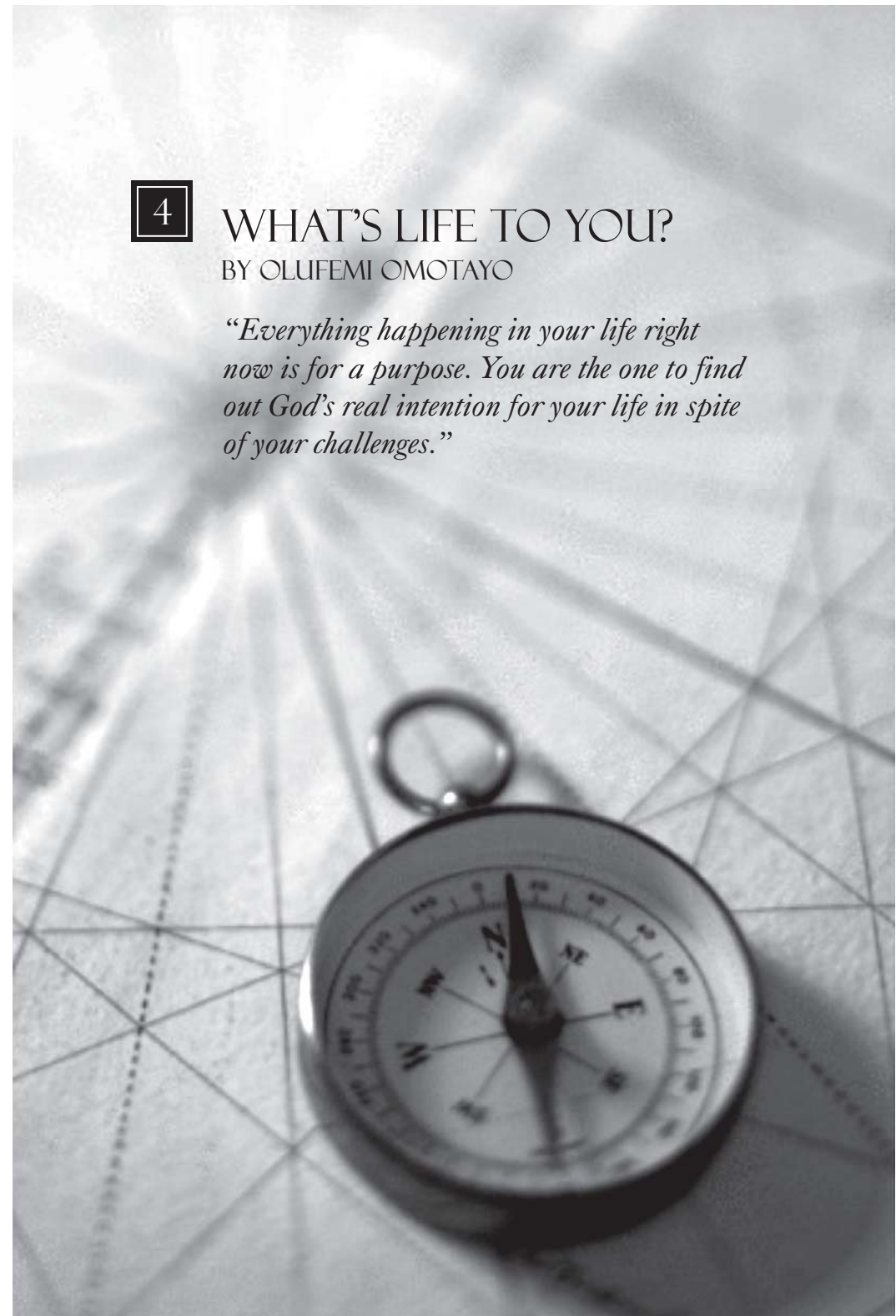


4

WHAT'S LIFE TO YOU?

BY OLUFEMI OMOTAYO

*“Everything happening in your life right
now is for a purpose. You are the one to find
out God's real intention for your life in spite
of your challenges.”*



WHAT'S LIFE TO YOU?



A YOUNG MOTHER, AFTER A LONG AND DEMANDING DAY, WAS READY TO RELAX. Her young daughter, however, had other plans for her time.

"Read me a story, Mom," the little girl requested. "Give Mommy a few minutes to relax and unwind. Then I'll be happy to read you a story," pleaded the mother.

But the little girl insisted that Mommy read to her now. And with a stroke of genius, the mother tore off the back page of the magazine she was reading. It contained a full-page picture of the world, which she tore into several pieces. She asked her daughter to put the picture together and then she would read her a story. Surely, this would buy her considerable relaxing moments – or so she thought.

A short time later, however, the little girl announced the

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completion of her puzzle project. To the mother's astonishment, she found the world picture completely assembled. When she asked her daughter how she managed to do it so quickly, the little girl explained that on the reverse side of the page was the picture of a little girl. "You see, Mommy, when I got the little girl together, the whole world came together."

Each of us has the responsibility to put our world together. It starts by getting ourselves put together. We can become better parents, friends, spouses, employees, and employers. The first step is changing our attitude. What is life to you? How do you see the challenges of your life today? Are you willing and prepared to face them?

In its true sense, adversity is the grindstone of life. Intended to polish you up, adversity also has the ability to grind you down. The impact and ultimate result depend on what you do with the difficulties that come your way. Perhaps you want to consider the phenomenal achievements of people experiencing adversity.

Beethoven composed his greatest works after becoming deaf. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote the History of the World during a thirteen year imprisonment. If Columbus had turned back, no one could have blamed him, considering the constant adversity he endured. Of course, no one would

have remembered him either. Abraham Lincoln achieved greatness by his display of wisdom and character during the devastation of the American Civil War. Martin Luther translated the Bible while enduring confinement in the Castle of Wartburg. Under a sentence of death and during twenty years in exile, Dante wrote the Divine Comedy. John Bunyan wrote “Pilgrim's Progress” in a Bedford jail.

The Bible affirms in Romans 8:18 that: **“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”** What an assurance! Sometimes, this is the kind of guarantee one needs to move forward in the midst of perplexing challenges of life.

Joseph obviously had a mindset that whatever happened to him was meant to be. Thus, nothing took him by surprise. In Genesis 50:20, we see Joseph's response to his brothers when they came to plead for their lives after the death of their father, Jacob. Rather than confirm their fears, Joseph extenuates their fault, from the consideration of the great good which God wonderfully brought out of it. Everything happening in your life right now is for a purpose. You are the one to find out God's real intention for your life, in spite of your challenges.

Your interpretation to issues is very important in

determining your eventual outcome. Joseph had a different reasoning to his brothers concerning how his life turned out. They thought evil (to disappoint the dreams), but God meant it unto good, in order to fulfil the dreams, and make Joseph a greater blessing to his family than otherwise he could have been. God makes use of men's agency for the performance of his counsel, but it is common for Him to mean one thing and then another, even the quite contrary. Eventually, it is God's counsel that shall stand (See Isaiah 10:7). God often brings good out of evil, and promotes the designs of His providence, even sometimes by the sins of men.

Adversity – the grindstone of life. Will it grind you down or polish you up? Is life really a tragedy or a blessing? Well, it depends on you. Years ago in Scotland, the Clark family had a dream. Clark and his wife worked and saved, making plans for their nine children and themselves to travel to the United States. It had taken years, but they had finally saved enough money and had obtained passports and reservations for the whole family on a new liner to the United States.

The entire family was filled with anticipation and excitement about their new life. However, seven days before their departure, the youngest son was bitten by a dog. The doctor sewed up the boy but hung a yellow sheet on the

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Clarks' front door. Because of the possibility of rabies, they were being quarantined for fourteen days.

The family's dreams were dashed. They would not be able to make the trip to America, as they had planned. The father, filled with disappointment and anger, stomped to the dock to watch the ship leave - without the Clark family. The father shed tears of disappointment and cursed both his son and God for their misfortune.

Five days later, the tragic news spread throughout Scotland - the mighty Titanic had sunk. The unsinkable ship had sunk, taking hundreds of lives with it. The Clark family was to have been on that ship, but because the son had been bitten by a dog, they were left behind in Scotland.

When Mr. Clark heard the news, he hugged his son and thanked him for saving the family. He thanked God for saving their lives and turning what he had felt was a tragedy into a blessing.

POWERPOINT



“Our most valuable possessions are those which can be shared without lessening those which when shared multiply. Our least valuable possessions are those which when divided are diminished.”

-William Danforth

“In this life we only get those things for which we hunt, for which we strive and for which we are willing to sacrifice.”

-George Adams

“Whenever we allow ourselves to be dependent upon anyone or anything, we are weakening ourselves and denying our own potential.”

-Roy Eugene Davis

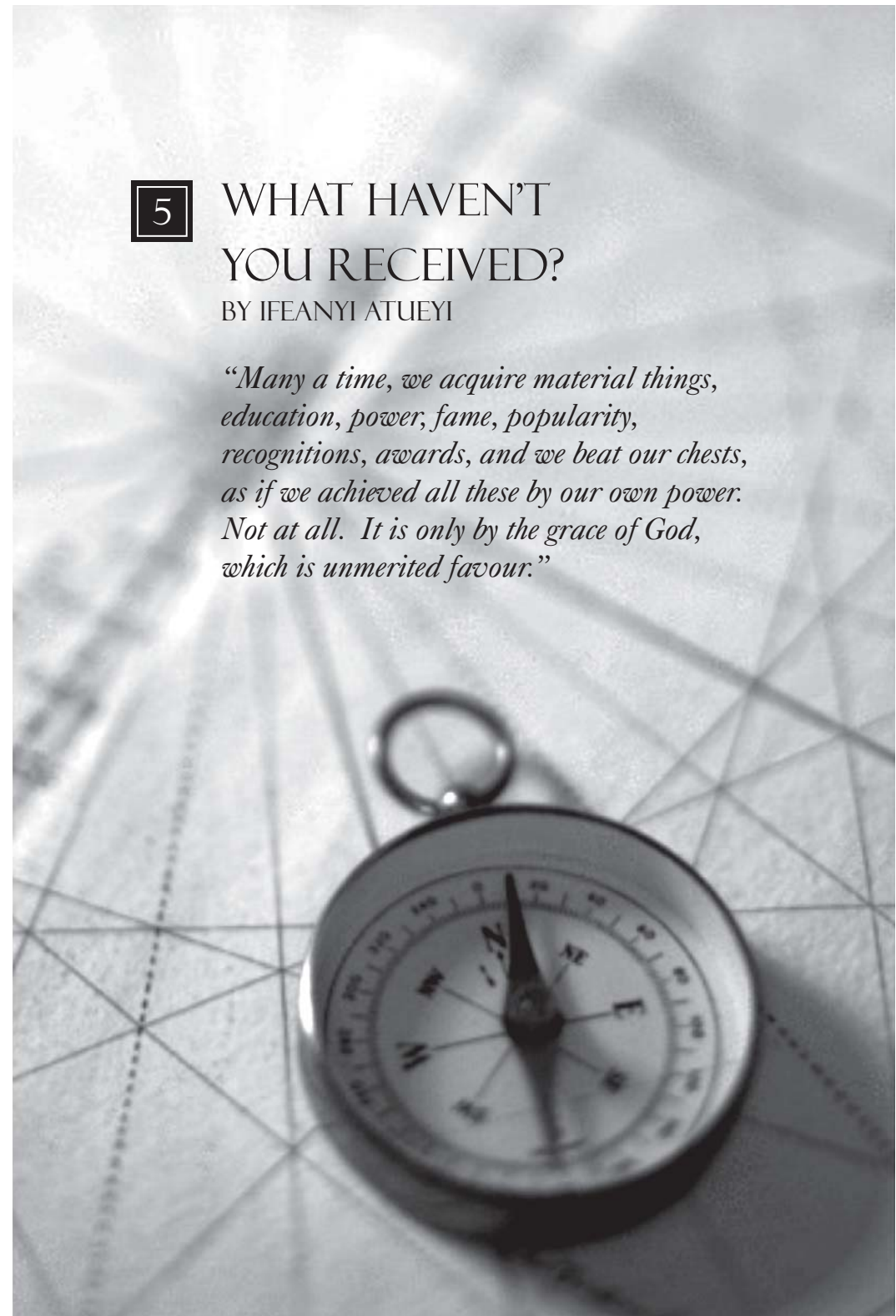


5

WHAT HAVEN'T YOU RECEIVED?

BY IFEANYI ATUEYI

“Many a time, we acquire material things, education, power, fame, popularity, recognitions, awards, and we beat our chests, as if we achieved all these by our own power. Not at all. It is only by the grace of God, which is unmerited favour.”



WHAT HAVEN'T YOU RECEIVED?



IN JUNE 2008, I HAD AN IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENT IN ABUJA, where I was to make a presentation. Therefore, I decided to be in my best, spiritually, emotionally and physically, to give an impression of a successful and prosperous professional. As I was dressing up in my hotel room that morning, certain thoughts flashed across my mind. Looking at the tall mirror fixed to the wardrobe, I could not but score myself high in terms of dressing and grooming. I recalled the way God used to stand out, observe, evaluate and admire whatever He accomplished during the creation period. After each session of creation, the Bible records, **“And God saw that it was good.”** I looked at myself at the mirror and I was really good.

I put on my jacket, adjusted my tie and combed my hair and beard again to assure myself of readiness for stepping out and performing with confidence. Then the thought came to

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me. The suit I was wearing was given to me by my brother-in-law in Birmingham. The shirt was given to me by my professional colleague and friend in Houston. The tie was a gift, as I never bought any tie for myself for many years. The pair of shoes was a gift from my former staff member, who now lives in New York. The wristwatch was given to me by my wife. It dawned on me that everything on me was given to me by other people. For many years, I have not paid for my clothing materials. I realised how indebted I am to people around me.

For a moment, think deeply on what you have which has not been given to you by God. Truly, God has given all. There is a prayer we say during Holy Communion in the church. The priest takes the offering in his hands and says with the congregation: **“Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the splendour, and the majesty, for everything in heaven and on earth is Yours. All things come from You, and of your own do we give You.”** This is a solemn and powerful prayer that makes us appreciate God as the source of all good things we have. Anything we offer him is only a fraction of what He has given us. Let us say this prayer with understanding and humility. This eternal truth transforms the lives of those who internalise it.

Obviously, the most precious thing a person has is his life. The moment one stops breathing and the heart ceases to

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beat all is gone. We all, even atheists, know that only God can give life. To me, the second most precious gift is the Spirit of God. It is this gift that makes life meaningful and purposeful. The Holy Spirit is the Counsellor, given to all who believe to be with us all the time. Life without the leading of the Holy Spirit is not only unfruitful and unproductive but also dangerous. Without the Spirit, one is led by the desires of the flesh. Galatians 5: 19-21 (CEV) says, **“People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. They worship idols, practice witchcraft, hate others, and are hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well.”**

Today evil desires of the flesh lead some young men to the business of kidnapping and armed robbery. Some ladies have converted their private regions into receptacles for narcotics. Some time ago, I read in the newspapers of a young lady who was caught with about N10 million worth of heroin cleverly hidden in her hair. Thank God for the sophisticated detection equipment now being used at the airports by the NDLEA operatives.

Many a time, we acquire material things, education, power, fame, popularity, recognitions, awards, and we beat our

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chests, as if we achieved all these by our own power. Not at all. It is only by the grace of God, which is unmerited favour. They are hundred per cent God's gift and mercy. **“So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy”** (Romans 9:16). Of course, let's not forget that not all these “good” things come from God. There are always counterfeits of God's gifts. I pray that you do not receive an award from Satan.

Proverbs 18:16 says, **“A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men.”** This means that we become relevant, noticeable and important because of the gifts of God in us. No one has any worth or value without what he has received from God. Your smartness, intelligence and physical strength cannot lead you to your destiny. It is wrong to trust our abilities when carrying out God's programmes. Instead, we have to depend on divine provisions. Whenever God calls you out for an assignment, He equips you with the resources you need to accomplish the task. If the assignment you are carrying out appears tedious and laborious and does not give you joy, ask yourself whether you are actually doing the right thing.

The sure way to greatness is to discover your gifts and work on them with all your heart and strength. These gifts are purposely for His own work or service. God has planned which service you will render, even before you were born.

WHAT HAVEN'T YOU RECEIVED?

“Your eyes saw me when I was inside the womb. All the days ordained for me were recorded in your scroll before one of them came into existence” (Psalm 139:16 NET).

POWERPOINT



“In faith there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough shadows to blind those who don’t.”

-Blaise Pascal

“It doesn’t matter how many say it cannot be done or how many people have tried it before; it’s important to realize that whatever you’re doing, it’s your first attempt at it.”

-Wally Amos

“It is always easier to believe than to deny. Our minds are naturally affirmative.”

-John Burroughs

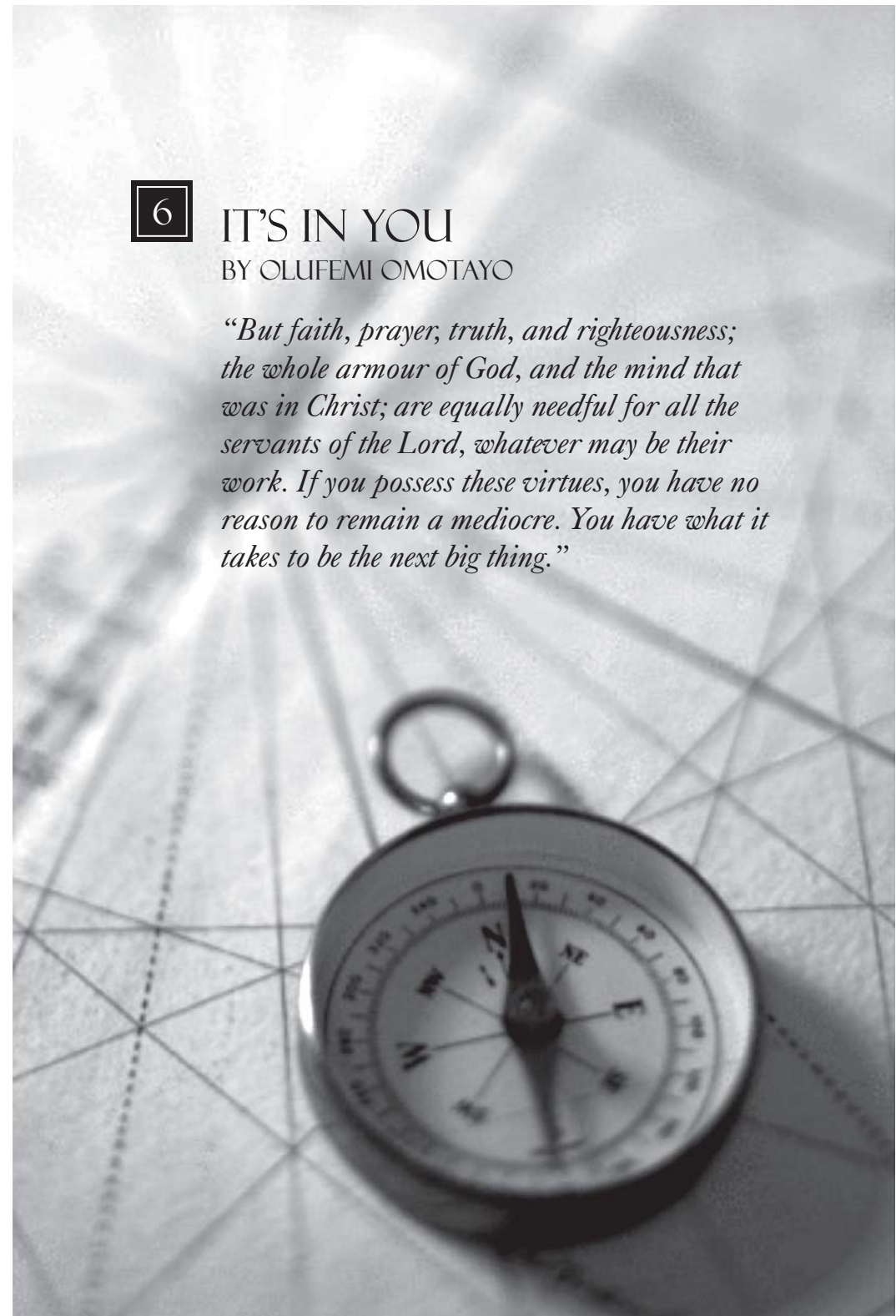


6

IT'S IN YOU

BY OLUFEMI OMOTAYO

“But faith, prayer, truth, and righteousness; the whole armour of God, and the mind that was in Christ; are equally needful for all the servants of the Lord, whatever may be their work. If you possess these virtues, you have no reason to remain a mediocre. You have what it takes to be the next big thing.”



IT'S IN YOU



THIS TITLE SHOULD REMIND YOU OF THE CAMPAIGN SLOGAN of a popular dairy product in Nigeria. The model for the commercial, Nwankwo Kanu, is a good example of how one can turn adversity to success, having overcome a serious heart condition to become one of the most decorated footballers ever from Africa. But he also had to surmount suggestions that he would never be able to play again.

Indeed, history abounds with tales of experts who were convinced that the ideas, plans, and projects of others could never be achieved. However, accomplishment came to those who said, "I can make it happen."

Do you remember David? Yes, that shepherd lad that seemingly had more courage than all the mighty men of Israel (see the story in 1 Samuel Chapter 17). The Bible's record of his first encounter with King Saul is quite

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instructive. Having been on the "backside" of the land where he faithfully tended his father's cattle, the challenge posed by Goliath the Philistine provided the opportunity for David to demonstrate His God-given abilities. Of course, he had oppositions, even from his own. But he was tenacious. His reply was: "**Is there not a cause?**"

Really, is there not a reason for who and what you are presently? Do you think life has been unfair to you? Why do you seem to have so much opposition against your life? Your answer to life's challenges, like David, should be to confront them headlong. You should ask: "Is this giant invincible? Is God unable to oppose him and subdue him?"

David refused to be deterred from his undertaking by the hard words of his brother, Eliab. Anyone who undertakes public service must not think it strange if opposed by those from whom they had reason to expect assistance. They should rather humbly go on with their work, in the face, not only of threats from their enemies, but also of slights, suspicions and censures from their friends.

Consider other examples beside David's. In the Medieval era, Italian sculptor Agostino d'Antonio worked diligently on a large piece of marble. Unable to produce his desired masterpiece, he lamented, "I can do nothing with it." Other sculptors also worked this difficult piece of marble, but to

no avail until Michelangelo discovered the stone and visualised the possibilities in it. His "I-can-make-it-happen" attitude resulted in one of the world's masterpieces – David.

The experts of Spain concluded that Columbus' plans to discover a new and shorter route to the West Indies was virtually impossible. Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand ignored the report of the experts. "I can make it happen," Columbus persisted. And he did. Everyone knew the world was flat, but not Columbus. The Nina, the Pinta, the Santa Maria, along with Columbus and his small band of followers, sailed to "impossible" new lands and thriving resources.

You see, there will always be opposition to any worthwhile vision. It depends on the 'visioner' to be persistent if the dreams will become realities. Even the great Thomas Alva Edison discouraged his friend, Henry Ford, from pursuing his fledgling idea of a motor car. Convinced of the worthlessness of the idea, Edison invited Ford to come and work for him. But Ford remained committed and tirelessly pursued his dream. Although his first attempt resulted in a vehicle without reverse gear, Henry Ford knew he could make it happen. And, of course, he did.

"Forget it," the experts advised Madame Marie Curie. They agreed radium was a scientifically impossible idea.

However, Marie Curie insisted, "I can make it happen." For the Wright Brothers – Orville and Wilbur – journalists, friends, armed forces specialists, and even their father laughed at the idea of an airplane. "What a silly and insane way to spend money. Leave flying to the birds," they jeered. "Sorry," the Wright brothers responded. "We have a dream, and we can make it happen." As a result, a place called Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, became the setting for the launching of their "ridiculous" idea.

David's example proves how God does great things for His people by the weak and foolish things of the world. David answered his brother's passion with meekness, and Saul's fear with faith. Our experience ought to encourage us to trust in God, and be bold in the way of duty. He that has delivered, does, and will continue to do so. In the face of overwhelming odds against him, David believed he could overcome Goliath.

When he eventually gained leave to fight the Philistine, David had another issue to contend with. Not being used to such armour as Saul put upon him, he was not satisfied to go in that manner. "The arm of flesh will fail you," admonished the songwriter. His courage was from the Lord, that it might more plainly appear he fought and conquered in faith, and that the victory was from Him who works by the feeblest and most despised means and instruments.

IT'S IN YOU

The properness of anything should be desired more than how excellent it is. Let Saul's coat be ever so rich, and his armour ever so strong, what usefulness are they to David if they don't fit him? But faith, prayer, truth, and righteousness; the whole armour of God, and the mind that was in Christ; are equally needful for all the servants of the Lord, whatever may be their work. If you possess these virtues, you have no reason to remain mediocre. You have what it takes to be the next big thing.

Perhaps you are reading this under the magnificent lighting of your environment. Consider the plight of Benjamin Franklin. He was admonished to stop the foolish experimenting with lighting. What an absurdity and waste of time! Why, nothing could outdo the fabulous oil lamp. Thank goodness Franklin knew he could make it happen. You too can make it happen!

POWERPOINT



*“More goal has been mined from the thoughts of man,
than has ever been taken from the earth.”*

-Napoleon Hill

*“Life is full of chances and changes,
and the most prosperous of man may meet with
misfortune.”*

-Aristotle, Greek Philosopher

*“Some temptations come to the industrious,
but all temptations attack the idle.”*

-Charles Spurgeon

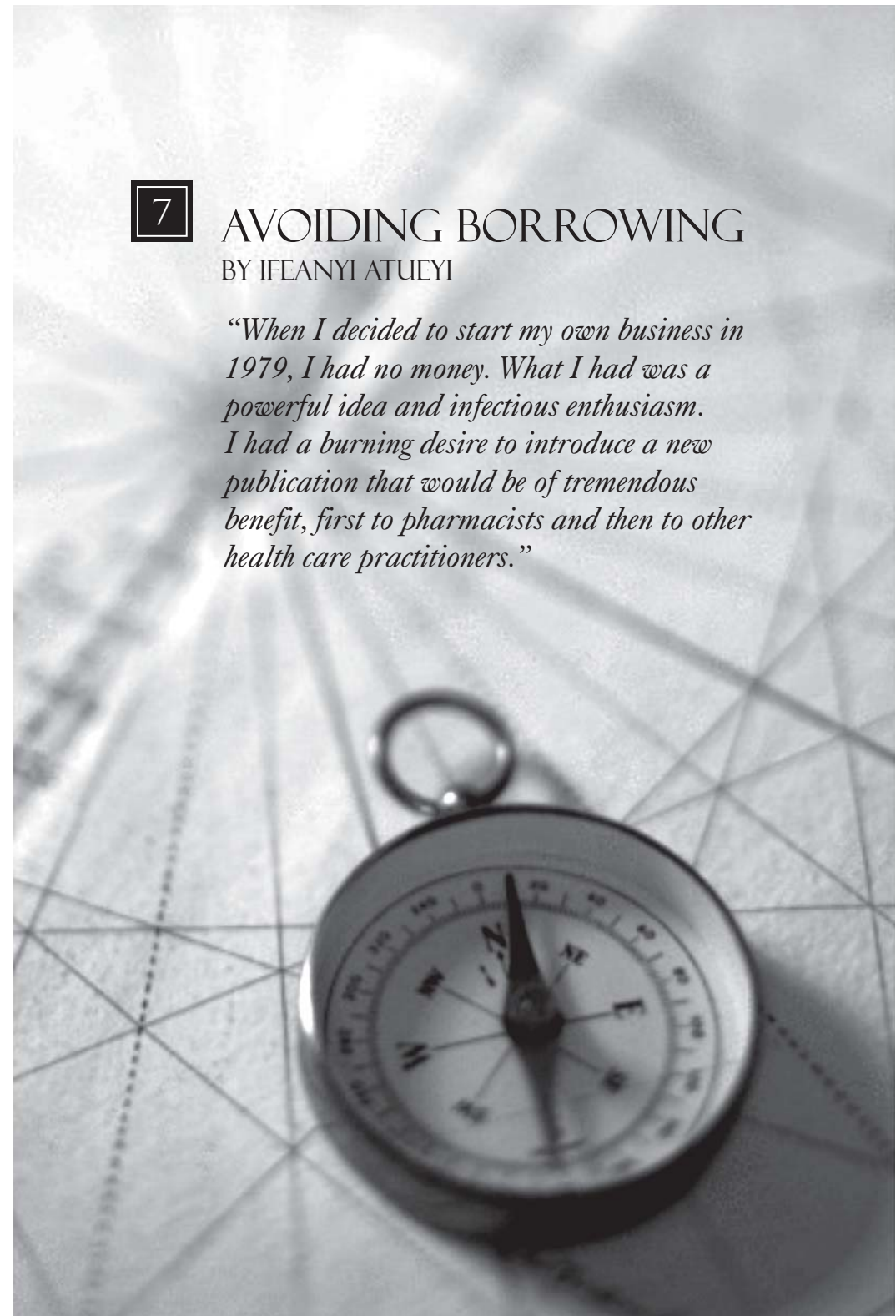


7

AVOIDING BORROWING

BY IFEANYI ATUEYI

“When I decided to start my own business in 1979, I had no money. What I had was a powerful idea and infectious enthusiasm. I had a burning desire to introduce a new publication that would be of tremendous benefit, first to pharmacists and then to other health care practitioners.”



AVOIDING BORROWING



ONE THING I LEARNED FROM MY MOTHER early in life is to avoid borrowing. My mother was a petty trader and seamstress. From her business, she satisfied the family's basic needs, since our father died prematurely. She dealt with many clients and customers but was always displeased with those who bought on credit or collected the dresses with the promise to pay later. She often remarked that she was ashamed of begging or borrowing.

Right from that time, I imbibed the philosophy of not begging or borrowing. In my personal and business life, I have avoided borrowing. I do not imply here that one is condemned for borrowing. No. There are situations when borrowing is justified. For example, you may borrow to invest in assets which will generate adequate returns on the investment. There is wisdom in such borrowing. Even then, the recent crash in the stock market and general economic

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downturn showed that anything can happen to borrowed funds. Businesses and individuals who had loans during the recapitalisation of banks in 2005 passed through terrible times. The banks forced their debtors to return the loans or surrender their assets. Some borrow for liabilities like personal cars, household furniture, clothing items, holiday travels, parties and speculative activities. This is not wise borrowing.

The philosophy I inherited from my mother caused me not to make a difference between borrowing for investment (good borrowing) and borrowing for liabilities (bad borrowing). To me, borrowing is borrowing. One Scripture that comes to my mind is “**The rich rules over the poor and the borrower becomes the lender's slave**” Proverbs 22:7. This is a serious warning to those who borrow without being sure of their ability to pay back.

I always remember the story of a widow in 2 Kings Chapter 4. Her husband, a seminary student, died leaving behind a heavy financial debt and the widow was in great distress because the creditor demanded settlement or he would take her two sons as slaves. Fortunately, Prophet Elisha intervened and the debts were settled.

Many a time, some people have the ability to pay their debt but are reluctant to do so. They take delight in owing and

sitting on creditors' funds. They believe it makes business sense to flourish on other people's money (OPM). The Bible describes such people as wicked. Psalm 37:21 says, **“The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives.”** What is the fate of the wicked? Psalm 75:10 says, **“All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off. But the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.”**

In one of our recent seminars, I told the participants that I have never borrowed money because God provides my needs according to His promise to me in Philippians 4:19, **“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** Capital to start business is a challenge to people venturing into business and many resort to borrowing from relations and friends. When I decided to start my own business in 1979, I had no money. What I had was a powerful idea and infectious enthusiasm. I had a burning desire to introduce a new publication that would be of tremendous benefit, first to pharmacists and then to other health care practitioners. The vision was very clear to me and I wrote it in a notebook with hard cover, which is in my table drawer as I write this piece.

I went to town with my God-given idea and solicited advert support from some colleagues in the pharmaceutical industry. A few supported the maiden (May) edition, while others promised to advertise in the subsequent editions.

But the payment would be made after publication. The challenge was to find the money to start. I did not want to beg or borrow because of my attitude. At that time, I indulged more in thinking and worrying, instead of praying. I did not know how to take my requests to God. But even in that situation God was taking care of me.

At this stage, He did something incredible. He directed my steps to a company, Merck, whose managing director, a German, I had never met before. He received me in his office after I introduced myself. After sharing my vision for Pharmanews I asked him for an advert. He simply took the dummy from, and pointed at the bottom strip advert space of page 2, and said he would take the space from May to December and then continue the following year. “How do you plan to post the copies?” he asked. “I will use brown paper as wrapper,” I replied. “Why not use good quality white bond paper and also place my advert on it,” he suggested. Of course, it was a sound idea. He then asked me to go and prepare his bill from May to December. You can imagine my excitement, which I tried to hide.

The following day, I returned with the invoice. On presentation, he asked, “What is your company's name?” “I don't have a company name yet. Please write the cheque in my name,” I requested. He refused but said that he would keep the cheque until I had a company name. In less than

AVOIDING BORROWING

two weeks I had a business name and opened an account with Afribank, Ilupeju Branch. On the next visit to Merck, I collected the cheque and went straight to the bank. That was how God provided start-up capital for my business.

POWERPOINT



*“Concentrate on what you do well, and do it better.”
-John Schnatter*

*“This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but
know what to do with it.”
-Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*“One always has enough time,
if one will apply it well.”
-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

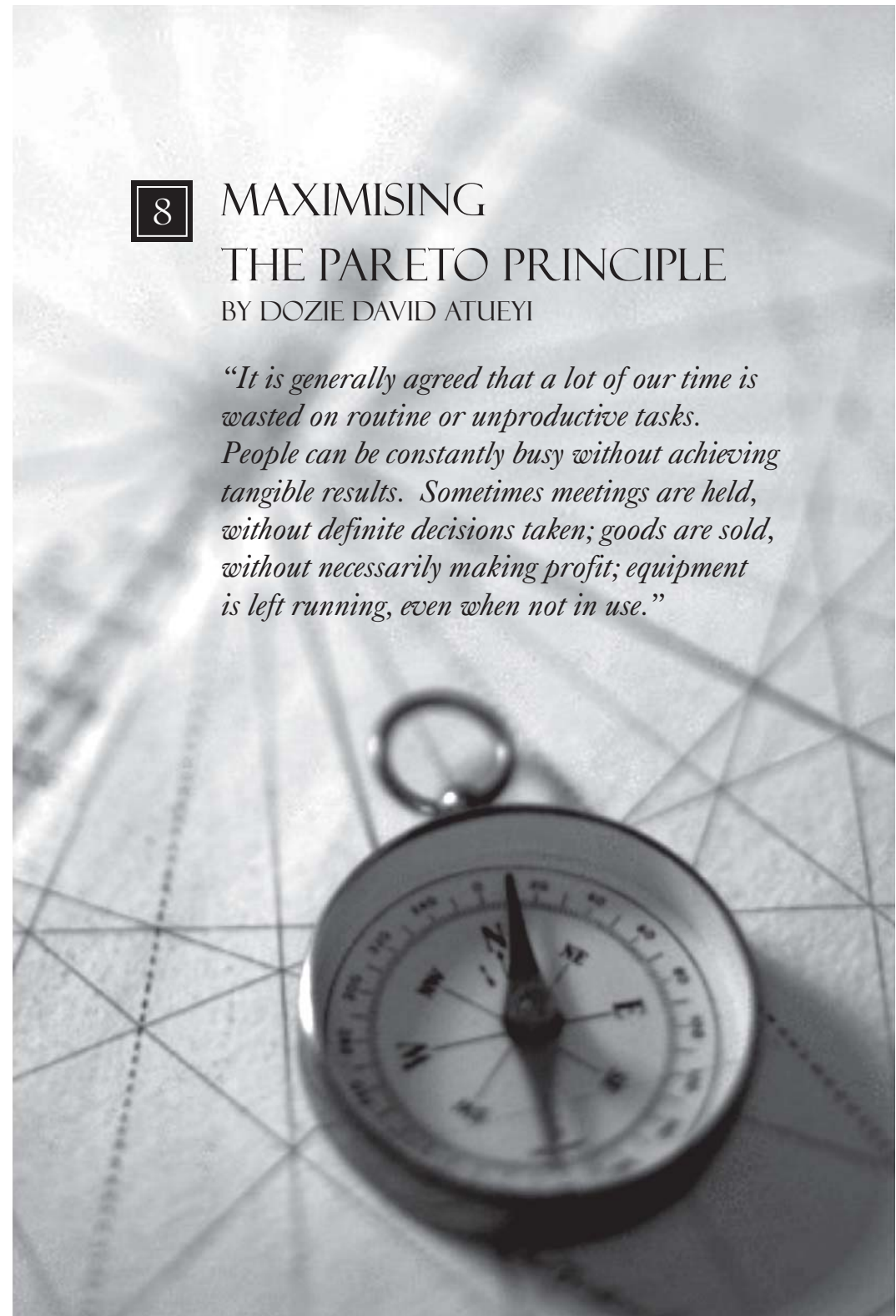


8

MAXIMISING THE PARETO PRINCIPLE

BY DOZIE DAVID ATUEYI

*“It is generally agreed that a lot of our time is
wasted on routine or unproductive tasks.
People can be constantly busy without achieving
tangible results. Sometimes meetings are held,
without definite decisions taken; goods are sold,
without necessarily making profit; equipment
is left running, even when not in use.”*



MAXIMISING THE PARETO PRINCIPLE



IN 1848 A BABY BOY WAS BORN TO AN EXILED NOBLE GENOESE FAMILY IN PARIS. This was the centre of the popular revolutions of that year. Like other Italian nationalists, the father, Raffaele Pareto, was a civil engineer, who had left Italy. The mother, Marie Metenier, was a French woman. The parents named their child Fritz Wilfried, in honour of the 1848 German revolution, but the boy's name was changed to Vilfredo Federico, at the age of ten, when the family moved back to Italy.

The young Pareto lived in a middle-class environment and received a high standard of education in his childhood. He later went on to earn a degree in engineering from what is now the Polytechnic University of Turin. He became renowned as an engineer, sociologist, economist and philosopher. Pareto made several important contributions to economics, particularly in the study of income

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distribution and in the analysis of individuals' choices.

In 1906 Vilfredo Pareto made an amazing discovery. He observed that 80 per cent of the land in Italy was owned by 20 per cent of the population, leading to the introduction of what is now known as the Pareto Principle. He then carried out surveys on a variety of other countries and found, to his surprise, that a similar distribution applied. He further developed the theory by observing that 20 per cent of the pea pods in his garden contained 80 per cent of the peas.

The Pareto Principle is also known as the 80-20 Rule; the law of the vital few; and the principle of factor sparsity. It states that, for many events, roughly 80 per cent of the effects come from 20 per cent of the causes. This has become a common rule of thumb in business. Experts say that about 80 per cent of business sales are usually generated from 20 per cent of the clients.

The 1992 United Nations Development Program Report contained a chart that gave the inequality a very visible and comprehensible form; the so-called 'champagne glass' effect. It showed the distribution of global income to be very uneven, with the richest 20 per cent of the world's population controlling 82.7 per cent of the world's income. The observation of Pareto led to many other discoveries in various fields of work. Dr. Joseph Juran, a Quality

Management pioneer, working in the US in the 1930s and 40s recognised a universal principle he called the "vital few and trivial many".

The 80-20 Rule means that in anything a few (which would be about 20 per cent) are vital and many (approximately 80 per cent) are trivial. In Pareto's observation, 20 per cent of the people owned 80 per cent of the wealth. In Juran's work, he discovered that 20 per cent of the defects cause 80 per cent of the problems. The implication of this is that 20 per cent of the work we do consumes 80 per cent of our time and resources. Also, 80 per cent of the results we get are generated by 20 per cent of the efforts we make. This principle is relevant to almost everything in life.

In applying the rule to business, the best-selling co-author of the book, "Call to Action", Brian Eisenberg asks the following questions: Does 20 per cent of your sales force produce 80 per cent of revenues? Do 20 per cent of your products account for 80 per cent of product sales? Do 80 per cent of your visitors see only 20 per cent of your website pages? Do 80 per cent of delays arise from 20 per cent of the possible causes of delay? Do 80 per cent of customer complaints arise from 20 per cent of your products or services?

It is generally agreed that a lot of our time is wasted on

routine or unproductive tasks. People can be constantly busy without achieving tangible results. Sometimes meetings are held, without definite decisions taken; goods are sold, without necessarily making profit; equipment is left running, even when not in use.

Eisenberg notes that we tend to ignore these realities in practice by giving the best salespeople the most difficult accounts, instead of focusing their talent in areas where they could generate extraordinary volumes. **"The most highly skilled workers are often given the toughest work, although concentrating their skills on trouble-free jobs would allow them to produce significantly more than less-skilled coworkers. The most talented people are often assigned to the most challenging problems that, even when resolved, generally contribute little additional revenue for the company."**

The Pareto Principle requires that we focus 80 per cent of our time and energy on the 20 per cent of our work that is really important. Instead of just working hard, we should start working smart. To maximise the 80-20 Rule for productivity, another writer, Roy Primm, teaches that the key is to zero in on the successful 20 per cent of our actions and find creative ways to expand them. He offers the following tips:

MAXIMISING THE PARETO PRINCIPLE

1. Focus more on the 20 per cent but don't ignore the 80 per cent.
2. Keep optimising your business by identifying and increasing the efforts that produce results.
3. Reduce 80 per cent of waste with 20 per cent of the effort.

Ephesians 5:15-16 says, “**Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time...**” There are many different qualities of various great achievers but one common factor is the way they use their time. The esteemed Dr. Mike Murdock says, “**I have never met a rich man who was not conscious of his time.**”

Which activities do you do that lead to the most results? Which relationships do you have that provide you with the most value? The most successful people in life are those who are able to identify the things that truly matter in their purpose and then pursue them with vigour.

POWERPOINT



“There are two primary choices in life; to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them.”

-Denis Waitley

“Tomorrow is the most important thing in life. Comes into us at midnight very clean. It’s perfect when it arrives and puts itself in our hands. It hopes we’ve learned something from yesterday.”

-John Wayne

“We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them.”

-Kahlil Gibran

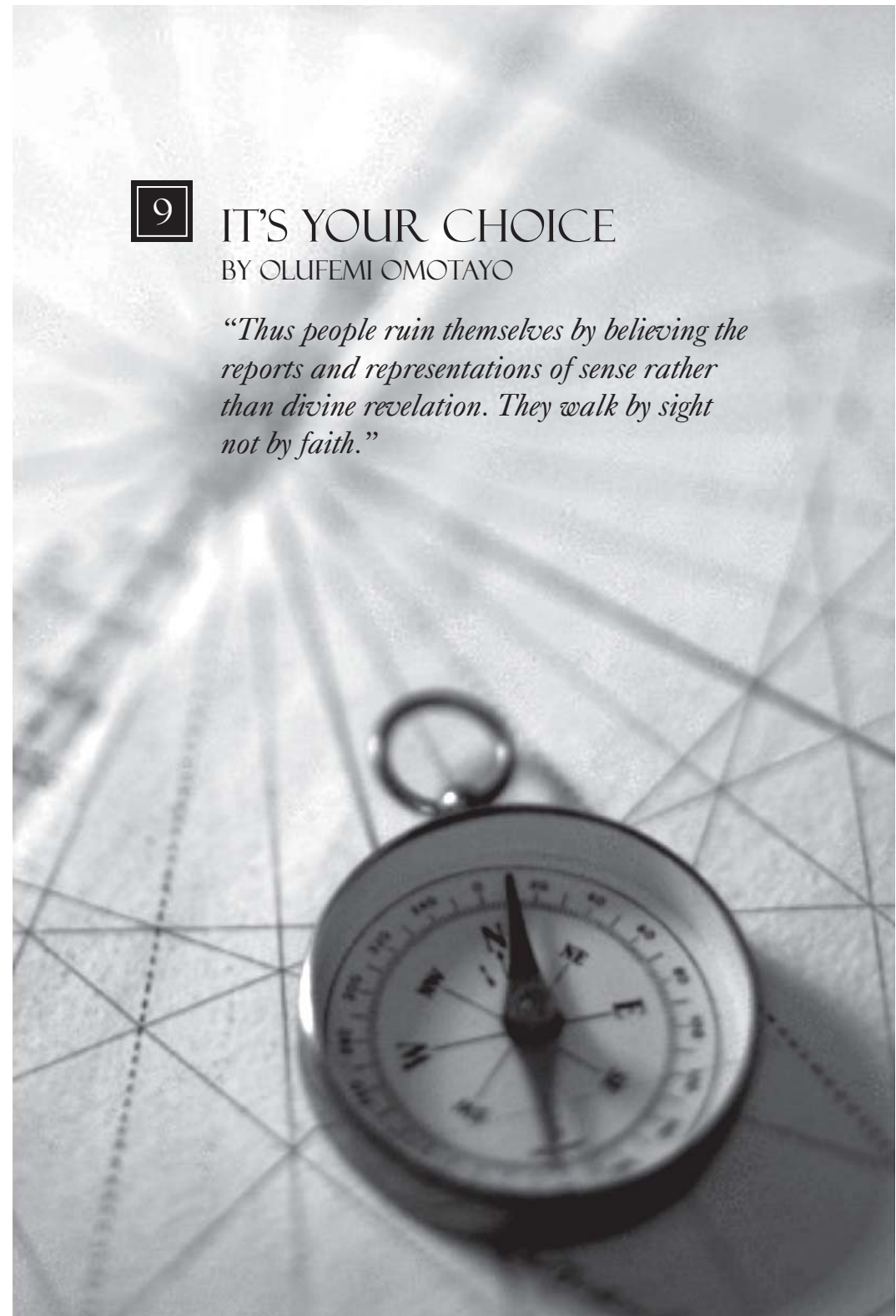


9

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

BY OLUFEMI OMOTAYO

“Thus people ruin themselves by believing the reports and representations of sense rather than divine revelation. They walk by sight not by faith.”



IT'S YOUR CHOICE



OBSERVATIONS HAVE SHOWN THE PREDICTABLE AND STRANGE HABIT OF FLEAS. The small, bloodsucking, wingless insects are trained by putting them in a cardboard box with a top on it. The fleas will jump up and hit the top of the cardboard box over and over again. As you watch them jump and hit the lid, something very interesting becomes obvious. The fleas continue to jump, but they are no longer jumping high enough to hit the top. Apparently, headache forces them to limit the height of their jump.

When you take off the lid, the fleas continue to jump, but they will not jump out of the box. They won't jump out because they can't jump out. Why? The reason is simple. They have conditioned themselves to jump just so high. Once they have conditioned themselves to jump just so high, that's all they can do!

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Many times, people do the same thing. They restrict themselves and never reach their potential. Just like the fleas, they fail to jump higher, thinking they are doing all they can do. Jim Collins said: "Whether you prevail or fail depends more on what you do to yourself than on what the world does to you."

The issue of becoming who you are is not tied to the government of whatever country you are in or from but on what you have decided to make out of yourself. Someone said, "You are a total failure until you stop pointing accusing fingers at those you feel are the fault for your failure."

The Bible records a striking account in the 13th chapter of Numbers. It was about a memorable and melancholic incident, the turning back of Israel from the borders of Canaan, and their sentence to wander and perish in the wilderness, for their unbelief and murmuring. The motion to search out the land came from the people. They had a better opinion of their own policy than that of God's wisdom. Thus people ruin themselves by believing the reports and representations of sense rather than divine revelation. They walk by sight not by faith.

God had, through Moses, given the spies the charge to "be of good courage." It was not only a great undertaking they were embarking on, which required good management and

resolution; but also, a great trust was reposed in them, which required that they should be faithful. Courage in such circumstances can only spring from strong faith, which Caleb and Joshua alone possessed. It was the choice of the remaining ten spies to display cowardice, even when they had, themselves, testified of the bounties in the land. They filled their minds with thoughts of defeat, instead of success. They thought they were grasshoppers!

Something was fundamentally wrong with their thought-system. But theirs is only a reflection of life. Many people have a mistaken identity of who they really are. They think contrary to what God calls them. But life is essentially the accumulation of decisions on varied circumstances one takes on a daily basis. You are solely responsible for your life. Life is really what you make of it. How do you see yourself?

Wise men and philosophers throughout the ages have disagreed on many things, but many are in unanimous agreement on one point: "**We become what we think about.**" Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "**A man is what he thinks about all day long.**" The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius put it this way: "**A man's life is what his thoughts make of it.**" In the Bible we find: "**As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.**"

One Sunday afternoon, a cranky grandfather was visiting his family. As he lay down to take a nap, his grandson decided to have a little fun by putting Limburger cheese on grandfather's moustache. Soon, Grandpa awoke with a snort and charged out of the bedroom saying, "This room stinks." Through the house he went, finding every room smelling the same. Desperately, he made his way outside, only to find that "the whole world stinks!"

So it is when we fill our minds with negativism. Everything we experience and everybody we encounter will carry the scent we hold in our mind. One wonders that the people of Israel stayed forty days for the return of their spies, when they were ready to enter Canaan, under all the assurances of success they could have from the divine power, and the miracles that had hitherto attended them. But they distrusted God's power and promise. How we stand in our own light by our unbelief!

When the messengers finally returned, the greater part discouraged the people from going forward to Canaan. The Israelites are justly left to this temptation, for putting confidence in the judgment of men, when they had the word of God to trust in. Though they had found the land as good as God had said, yet they would not believe it to be as sure as He had said, but despaired of having it, though God had revealed it to them. This was the representation of the

unbelieviing spies.

But Caleb and Joshua did not share the pessimism of the other spies. They understood the power of choice and encouraged the congregation to go forward. They did not say, “let us go up and conquer it”; but, “let us go and possess it.” Difficulties always dwindle and vanish before a lively, active faith in the power and promise of God. All things are possible, if they are promised, to him that believes; but carnal sense and carnal professors are not to be trusted. Unbelief overlooks the promises and power of God, magnifies every danger and difficulty, and fills the heart with discouragement. May the Lord help us to believe, for then shall we find all things possible.

Finally, consider the timeless admonition by Walter D. Wintle: **“If you think you are beaten, you are. If you think you dare not, you don't! If you want to win, but think you can't, it's almost a cinch you won't. If you think you'll lose, you've lost; for out in the world we find success begins with a fellow's will; it's all in the state of the mind. Life's battles don't always go to the stronger and faster man, but sooner or later the man who wins is the man who thinks he can.”**

POWERPOINT



*“Until thought is linked with purpose,
there is no intelligent accomplishment.”*

-James Allen

*“The mental attitude we take toward anything
determines to a greater or less extent its effects on us.”*

-Ralph Waldo Trine

*“An organization can give a man the title of manager,
but only the man can make himself into one.”*

-Joseph Mason

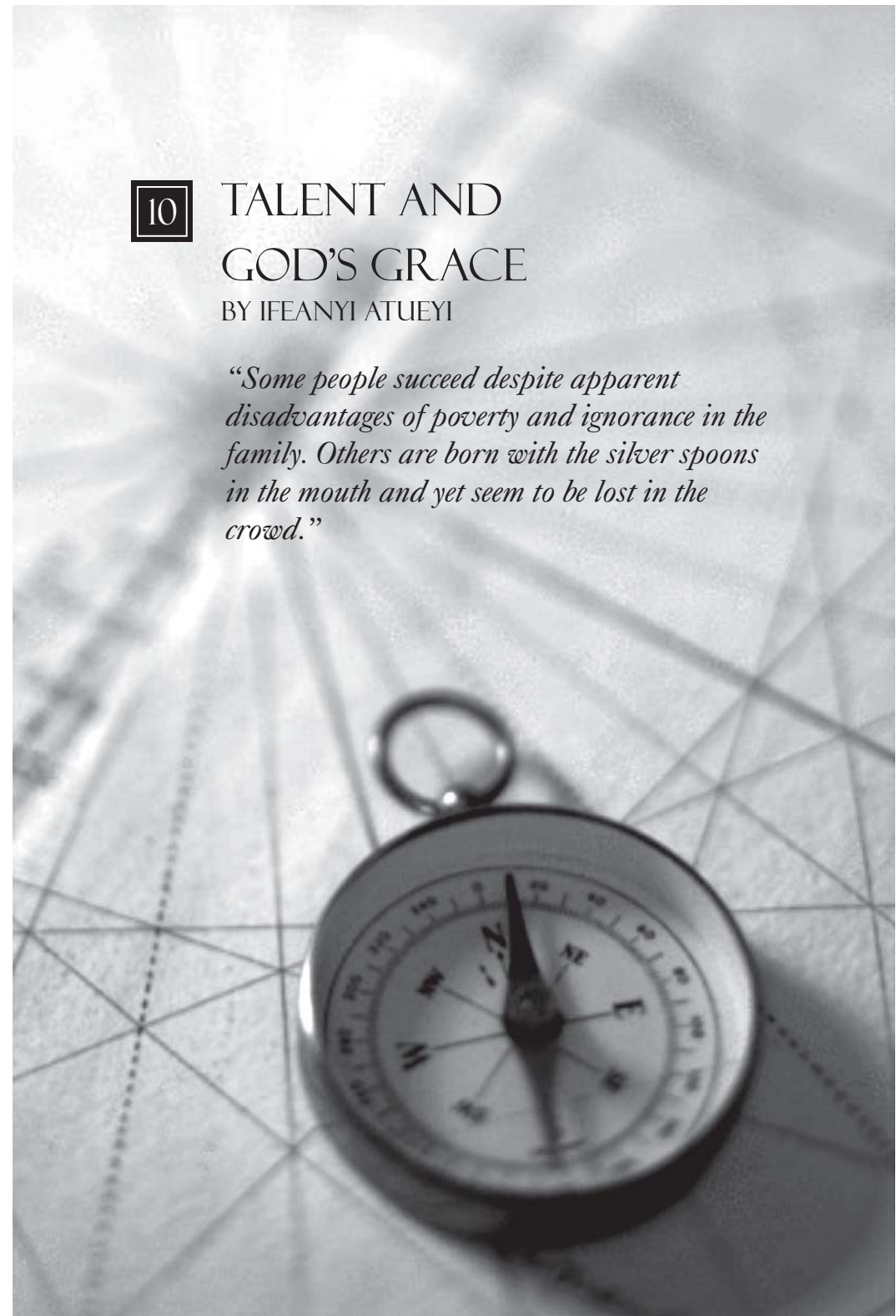


10

TALENT AND GOD'S GRACE

BY IFEANYI ATUEYI

*“Some people succeed despite apparent
disadvantages of poverty and ignorance in the
family. Others are born with the silver spoons
in the mouth and yet seem to be lost in the
crowd.”*



TALENT AND GOD'S GRACE



I LIKE TO READ ABOUT AND LISTEN TO PEOPLE WHO ARE SUCCESSFUL in their endeavours and are really fulfilled. There are, in most cases, elements of talent, hard work, discipline and providence.

Natural abilities make it easy for one to accomplish great results. The professional musicians, entertainers, athletes, academicians etc succeed easily because of their natural abilities. They capitalise on this advantage and rise above others to distinguish themselves in their fields. Today, there are some young graduates who have taken to the career of master of ceremony at social functions. They joke and keep the guests relaxed, merry and laughing. I understand these guys are highly paid. Of course, none of them entered the university to study what they now practise. They are not even applying whatever they have studied. Instead, they have discovered what they can easily do with their talents

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and are doing it with passion.

It is not so with some other people. Some succeed through working hard and intelligently. They identify some opportunities and determine to make the best use of them. They focus intensely on what they want to achieve. They think big and positively. They develop high self-worth and carry themselves about as important and successful people. Even without money in the pocket, they don't give the impression that they cannot afford whatever they want. The truth is: they eventually get what they want because of their positive attitude and strong belief.

I had a friend and colleague named Greg. He was a workaholic and this eventually propelled him to the top of the company. We used to have our lunch in the same restaurant, when I was in employment. Greg would hurry over his meal and return to his table, leaving us to chat away and wait for the lunch period to be over. He was so committed to his work as if it was his personal business. Of course, Greg rose to the position of the CEO after some years. He was focused. He took his work very seriously and, above all, he loved his work. These qualities accounted for his success and rapid progress in the company. I cannot say confidently that he was talented or lucky. If he was lucky, then he worked hard for that luck. Those who work hard become lucky.

Greg never allowed any distraction to take him out of his focus. He set clear goals for himself and worked with perseverance to achieve them. One day, during lunch, Greg said to me, "If I have the chance to be in control of this company, I will surely do better than the MD." Greg never limited himself. He saw future possibilities and believed in making positive contributions. Even as a junior manager at that time, he was already seeing himself as a possible MD of the company. And his dream came true eventually.

Success is not easy. Having your own company and managing it well is challenging. It demands discipline, hard work, perseverance and determination. Despite these attributes, the truth is that success cannot be guaranteed by talent and hard work alone. I found something in the Bible which is revealing. Ecclesiastes 9:11 says, "**The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favour to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.**"

Life is full of cases where the talented and educated people are poor and not honoured. Natural abilities and hard work are not enough to assure success and prosperity. Some people were very brilliant in school but found it hard to make meaningful progress in their careers and businesses. You have to be at the right place at the right time. The element of chance can have tremendous impact on people's

lives.

There are some people who can be described as just ordinary, but as a result of association with certain persons, they became wealthy and influential. On the other hand, some people have made a mess of their abilities and destinies as a result of associating with the wrong people. First Corinthians 15:33 says, "**Bad company corrupts good character.**" The type of people you associate with will surely affect your progress in life. "**Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another**" (Proverbs 27:17).

Some people succeed despite apparent disadvantages of poverty and ignorance in the family. Others are born with silver spoons in the mouth and yet seem to be lost in the crowd. Here, personal choices and decisions play crucial roles. I listened to a successful businessman talk about himself. He said that, as a child, poverty in the family kept him out of school and other activities which other children enjoyed. He said that right from that early age, he hated poverty and made up his mind that he would accumulate wealth, and his children would never taste poverty, as he did. He chose to be rich and he truly became wealthy.

Lack of discipline has been the cause of failure for those who would have otherwise succeeded. In school I had a classmate, James, who was very brilliant. He was very good,

especially in the sciences, but was very stubborn and disobedient. He flouted school rules, disobeyed the teachers and absented himself from classes without permission. He preferred to study without attending classes. Since he was exceptionally good in physics and mathematics, he only needed to know from the classmates the topic taught by the teacher. Just mention the topic, James would start lecturing you on it. He would boast that he had already studied beyond what we were taught.

Unfortunately, his lack of discipline caused him dismissal from the school in the fourth year. When he was dropped from school no other institution was willing to admit him. No employer was ready to engage him. In fact, his education just ended that way. About ten years ago, I met him by accident in Enugu. That first-class brain ended up as a petty trader in Ogbete market. He married but got divorced. Today, he lives alone unfulfilled in a rented apartment on Udi Street in Enugu.

POWERPOINT



*“Man will not merely endure; he will prevail.”
-William Faulkner*

*“Champions keep playing until they get it right.”
-Billie Jean King*

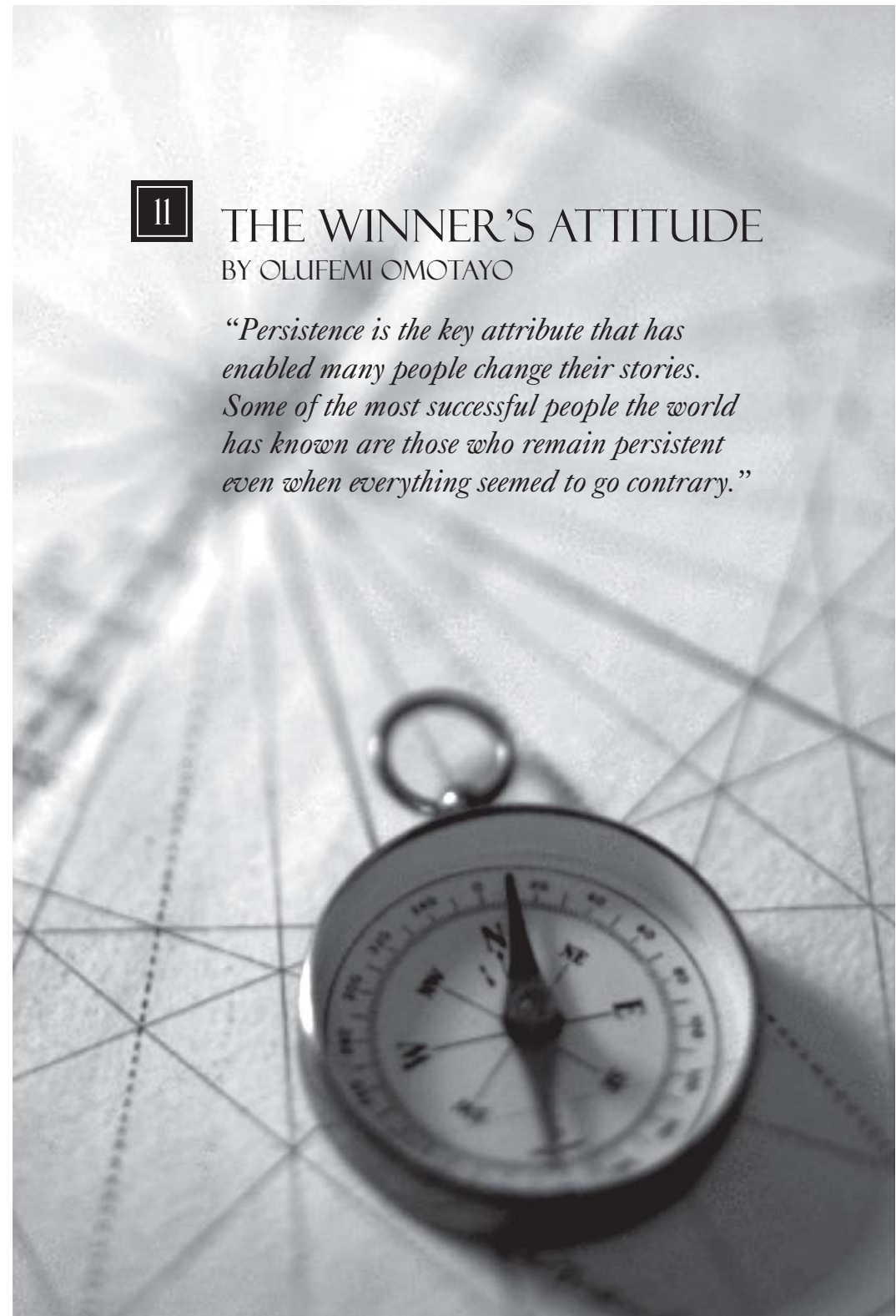
*“Defeat never comes to any man until he admits it.”
-Josephus Daniels*



THE WINNER'S ATTITUDE

BY OLUFEMI OMOTAYO

“Persistence is the key attribute that has enabled many people change their stories. Some of the most successful people the world has known are those who remain persistent even when everything seemed to go contrary.”



THE WINNER'S ATTITUDE



OUR WORLD IS FULL OF MEDIOCRITY. Look around you; many people you see now are using less than 5 per cent of their potential. This staggering statistics, scientists believe, is the difference between genius and folly. The question is: what do people reserve their other abilities for? What is an average person's disposition to achieving greatness in life? This question is imperative because, much more than anything else, attitude is the key to success in life. It is the attribute that makes some people 'winners' and others 'losers.'

You see, a winner always has a plan, while a loser always has an excuse. A winner sees an answer for every problem and says, "It may be difficult, but it's possible." A loser, on the other, hand sees a problem in every answer and says, "It may be possible, but it's too difficult." Whereas a winner says, "Let me do it for you," a loser says, "It's not my job." A

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winner listens, but a loser just waits until his turn to talk. When a winner makes a mistake, he says, "I was wrong," whereas a loser says, "It wasn't my fault." A winner says, "I'm good, but not as good as I could be." A loser says, "I'm not as bad as a lot of other people." Really, it's all about attitude.

You – and you only – are the one that ultimately determines the outcome of your life. There are millions of people in this world that have extreme circumstances through bad health, poverty, natural disasters, abuse, location, wars, terrorism, problem families, and many more. However, many have overcome their overwhelming adversity and the many extreme obstacles in their lives, and gone on to become very successful. They have achieved greatness. These people have the will, the desire, the power and the passion to succeed. Along the way, they have acquired the knowledge necessary to succeed.

No doubt you've heard the refrain: "Winners never quit and quitters never win." Persistence is the winner's attitude. It is the most important quality for success. Sometime in 1958, a baby boy was born. Four years later, he lost his father. He was forced out of school at elementary 3. He became a business apprentice at age 7 and got his business freedom at age 14. He started his business in 1975, and 35 years later, he sits atop a business with an annual turnover of N15

billion. This is the story of Dr Cosmas Maduka, chairman of Coscharis Group, one of Nigeria's thriving indigenous conglomerates.

According to St. Catherine of Siena, **“To a brave man, good and bad luck are like his left and right hand. He uses both.”** Challenges will always test your resolve to succeed. People will say things you don't like. But opinions, says Mark Leonard, **“are like arm pits – everyone has them and they stink.”** When we live our lives by what others say, we devalue the word of God and the dream He sent to our hearts. The dreams you don't fight for will haunt you for life. It may seem impossible for you to attain but things are not always the way they seem. Nothing is impossible. You've got to keep kicking and never give up.

Why is it important to persist? The story is told of two frogs going down a country road when a great storm got them confused and they became separated. Fortunately and unfortunately, they both fell into different bottles of milk. As it found itself stuck, the first frog got angry, cursed life and its bad breaks. It cried, whined, complained and focused its energies on the problem, and it soon gave up and died. The second frog, however, had a different, positive perspective. It didn't like the situation also, but directed its energies to the solution, rather than just the problem. It started kicking, and kept kicking, until it turned the milk

into cream, and then to butter, after which it walked out. So, don't give in to what some call “fate.”

Persistence is the key attribute that has enabled many people change their stories. Some of the most successful people the world has known are those who remain persistent, even when everything seemed to go contrary. Like Albert Einstein, the German-born American physicist and Nobel laureate, they want to change their life stories. Despite his slow start and humble beginning, Einstein is perhaps the most well-known scientist of the 20th century.

For Thomas Edison, arguably the greatest inventor of all time, his persistence was to prove a point. He only had three months of formal public education and became partially deaf at age 12. So, the odds were really stacked against him. But he didn't give up. Rather, he persevered to produce many inventions the world enjoys today, including the incandescent lamp which took considerable time to achieve. Ask Abraham Lincoln what made him to continue to seek elective position, even after his numerous failures. It was the vision to abolish slavery that propelled him, despite the setbacks he encountered in business and politics. Lincoln rose from a humble backwoods origin to become one of the great presidents of the United States.

While teaching on prayer, Jesus Christ gave an instructive

illustration in Luke 11. It was about a man who received visitors but had nothing to offer them. He went to his neighbour-friend, who complained that it was too late and he didn't want to wake his children. Jesus says: **“Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth”** (Luke 11:8). Friendship should have prompted the man to supply his friend. It failed. However, the bread was yet given to get rid of a noisy beggar, to be rid of whom all the bread in the house would be willingly sacrificed, if necessary. You just have to be persistent, if you want to meet a pressing need.

The widow in Luke 18 employed the same tactic. Having been a subject of abuse for a long time, she was ready to turn the page. She loved life and wanted to continue living. What is more important, really? She pestered the judge until she got what she wanted. Even though he didn't want to answer her initially, **“afterward he said within himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me”** (Luke 18:4-5).

Persistence breaks down resistance. The Law of Averages says if you keep asking long enough, you are going to get a yes. Life is going to say NO. People are going to say NO. But if you persist, then life will finally have to say YES. In the

words of former US President, Alvin Coolidge: **“Press on. Nothing can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; the world is full of unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”**

POWERPOINT



“A successful man is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks others have thrown at him.”

-David Brinkley

“Courage is the capacity to go from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm.”

-Winston Churchill

“Success is not measured by what you accomplish, but by the opposition you have encountered, and the courage with which you have maintained the struggle against overwhelming odds.

-Orison Swett Marden

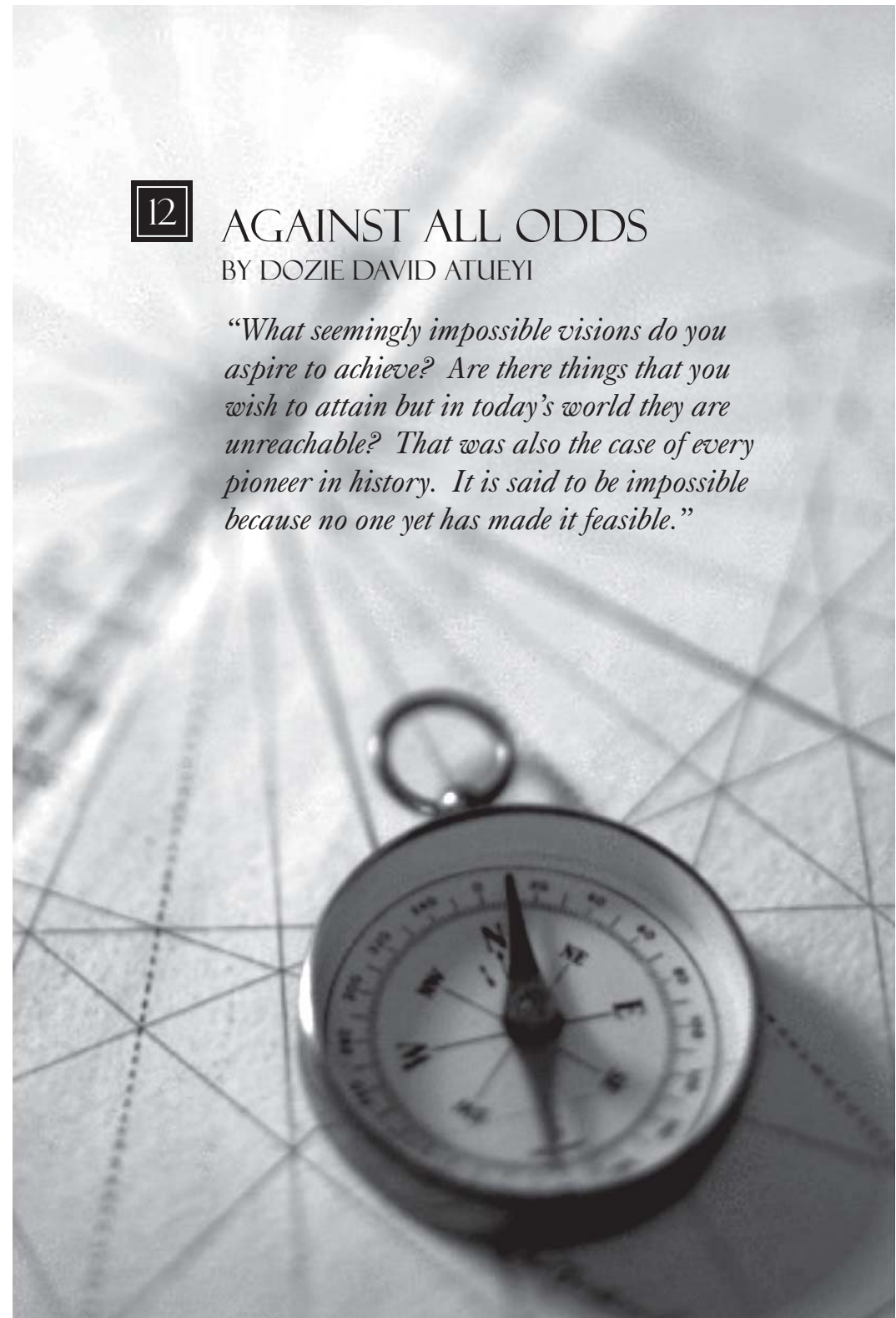


12

AGAINST ALL ODDS

BY DOZIE DAVID ATUEYI

“What seemingly impossible visions do you aspire to achieve? Are there things that you wish to attain but in today’s world they are unreachable? That was also the case of every pioneer in history. It is said to be impossible because no one yet has made it feasible.”



AGAINST ALL ODDS



HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED HOW LIFE MUST HAVE BEEN HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO? Have you imagined how people survived before the advent of modern technology? Have you considered how people communicated without the benefit of telephones; how they travelled long distances without airplanes, trains or vehicles; or how they even received information before the invention of television, radio and newspapers?

Every form of technology, and indeed every means of advancement, was pioneered by a person or a group of people, at some point in time. Each new invention was the product of someone's vision. Very often, this was a dream that was borne by the pioneer for many years. History tells us how many of these initiators toiled with the visionary project, and failed numerous attempts, before finally enjoying the taste of success.

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The most remarkable thing is that every innovation was conceived in a world where that dream seemed impossible. Every pioneer, inventor or innovator had to contend with the condemnation of their peers. Indeed, as far back as 1899, an official at the US patent office, Charles H. Duell, declared that: **“Everything that can be invented has already been invented.”** His position was that there was no need for anyone to continue to research the development of new inventions. Since then, inventors have striven to prove him wrong and contribute many things of value for the advancement of mankind.

In the face of the struggles of the Wright brothers to develop the first airplane, Simon Newcomb announced that: **“Flight by machines heavier than air is unpractical (sic) and insignificant, if not utterly impossible.”** In 1895, Scottish mathematician and physicist, Lord Kelvin, said **“Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible.”** Even the tenacious American inventor, Thomas Edison, declared: **“It is apparent to me that the possibilities of the aero plane, which two or three years ago were thought to hold the solution to the (flying machine) problem, have been exhausted, and that we must turn elsewhere.”** The constant barrage of discouragement must have taken its toll on the brothers. In 1901, Wilbur Wright was quoted as saying to his brother, Orville, **“Man will not fly for 50 years.”**

After about four years of studying birds in the air, developing and testing various forms of machinery, and making multiple unsuccessful attempts to fly, the Wright brothers took their craft, the Flyer, for a 12-second sustained flight on December 17, 1903. This is recorded in history as the first successful, powered, piloted flight.

Lee De Forest was born in 1873 in Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Henry Swift DeForest and Anna Robbins. His father was a Congregational Church minister who hoped that his son would become a minister, too. De Forest went to Mount Hermon School, and then enrolled at the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale University in Connecticut in 1893. As an inquisitive inventor, he tapped into the electrical system at Yale one evening and completely blacked out the campus, leading to his suspension. Fortunately, he was eventually permitted to complete his studies. He remained at Yale for graduate studies, and earned his Ph.D. degree in 1899 with a dissertation on radio waves.

In 1897 Lord Kelvin, former president of the British Royal Society declared, **“Radio has no future.”** In response to a call for investments in the production of the radio, potential investors said, **“The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to no one in particular?”** In 1913 DeForest was arrested and prosecuted for selling stock fraudulently through the mail

for his Radio Telephone Company. During prosecution, the U.S. District Attorney said, **“Lee DeForest has said in many newspapers and over his signature that it would be possible to transmit the human voice across the Atlantic before many years. Based on these absurd and deliberately misleading statements, the misguided public... has been persuaded to purchase stock in his company...”**

However, in November 1916, De Forest, from experimental radio station 2XG in New York City, broadcast the first radio advertisements (for his own products) and the first Presidential election report by radio for Charles Evans Hughes and Woodrow Wilson.

This is the same story of everyone that has dared to step out from the crowd and pursue a singular vision. From Thomas Edison, who developed devices like the electric light bulb and the phonograph, to Charles Babbage, who invented the first mechanical computer; from Isaac Newton, who discovered gravity, to John Pemberton, the American druggist who developed the formula for Cola drinks; all great innovators accomplished their feats against major opposition.

What secret dreams do you carry in your heart? What seemingly impossible visions do you aspire to achieve? Are

there things that you wish to attain but in today's world they are unreachable? That was also the case of every pioneer in history. It is said to be impossible because no one yet has made it feasible.

Maybe you are despised because of people's impression of you. In 1964 a male actor was rejected from playing the lead role in a film. The United Artists Executive who turned him down was quoted as saying, **“He doesn't have that presidential look.”** But on January 20, 1981, that same actor, Ronald Reagan, was sworn in as the fortieth president of the United States of America.

Maybe you are held down by your race, gender or creed. For many years, women were not considered to have any role in politics or government. U.S. President, Grover Cleveland, said in 1905, **“Sensible and responsible women do not want to vote.”** On October 26, 1969 a female politician declared, **“It will be years – not in my time – before a woman will become Prime Minister.”** Fortunately, that lady changed her thinking because ten years later, she herself, Margaret Thatcher, became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

What limitations have you imposed on yourself? What barriers have people set before you? You can rise, like every great pioneer, and forge ahead to the fulfilment of your mission, regardless of the opposition.

POWERPOINT



*“You’ll always have everything in life that you want,
if you’ll help enough other people get what they want.”*

-Zig Ziglar

*“We make a living by what we get, we make a life
by what we give.”*

-Sir Winston Churchill

*“Don’t think too much of yourself. Try to cultivate
the habit of thinking of others; this will reward you.
Selfishness always brings its own revenge.”*

-Charles Elliot

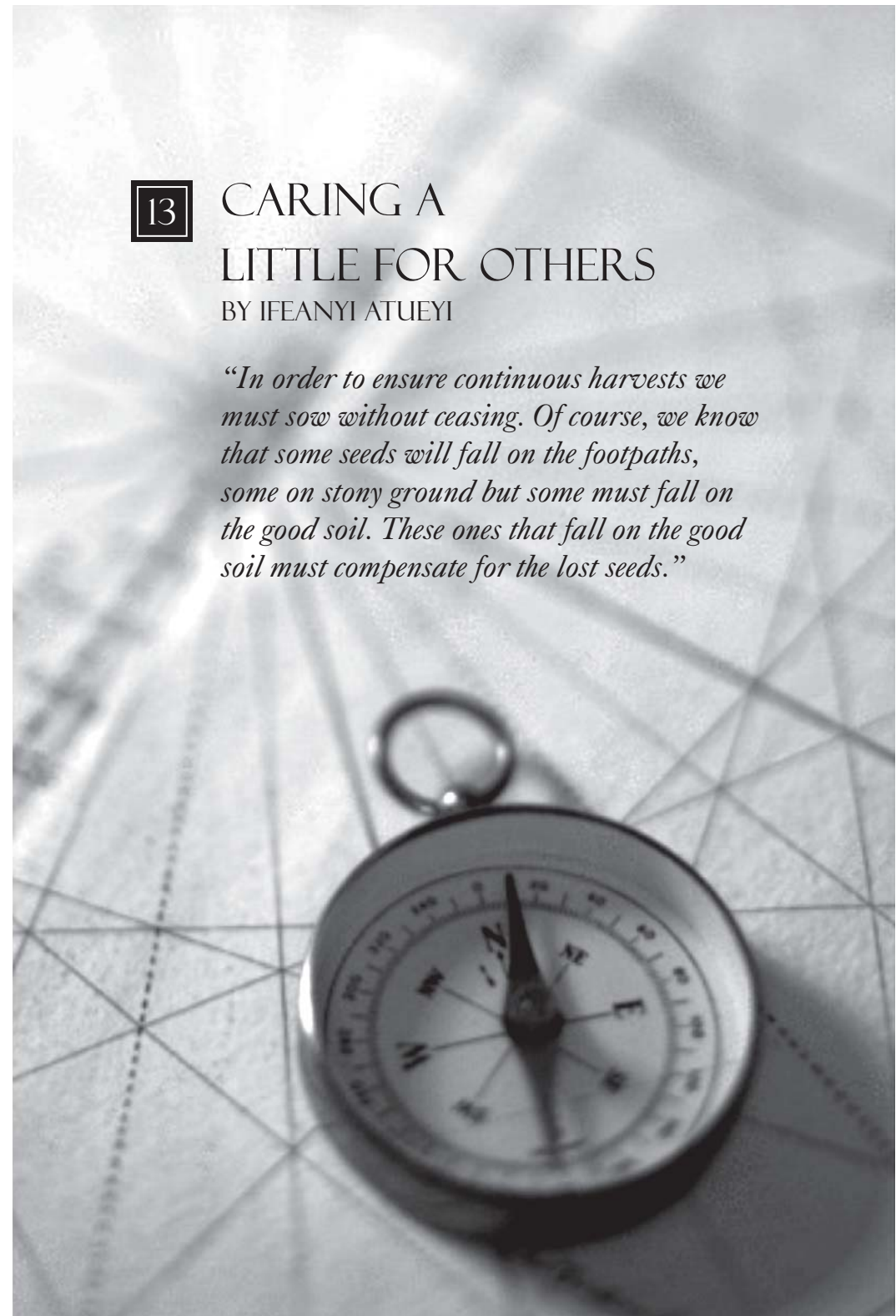


13

CARING A LITTLE FOR OTHERS

BY IFEANYI ATUEYI

*“In order to ensure continuous harvests we
must sow without ceasing. Of course, we know
that some seeds will fall on the footpaths,
some on stony ground but some must fall on
the good soil. These ones that fall on the good
soil must compensate for the lost seeds.”*



CARING A LITTLE FOR OTHERS



IN SEPTEMBER 2008, I WAS AT THE SHERATON HOTEL, Downtown Atlanta, in the USA, for the conference of the Nigerian Association of Pharmacists and Pharmaceutical Scientists in the Americas (NAPPSA). At the end of one of the sessions, I retreated to my room to have a short rest. Then I got a call from the reception. I had a visitor. Hurriedly, I entered the lift and landed at the reception. Approaching me, with a broad smile, was a strange face. He perceived my embarrassment and quickly introduced himself as Professor Augustine Ezenwegbu but the name did not ring a bell. He said he saw my name, as a speaker, at the conference and so decided to meet me. I relaxed a bit and we then moved to the lobby for a chat.

In 1964 Augustine stayed with me for some days in Lagos to process his USA visa application. According to him, his cousin, who was my schoolmate at the Dennis Memorial

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Grammar School (DMGS), Onitsha, in the fifties, gave him a note for me to accommodate him. He said that, on arrival, he gave me his cousin's letter of introduction. After glancing through the letter, I received him without any hesitation. I treated him well, provided his needs and even drove him to the airport in my Peugeot 403 the night he travelled. I then recalled vaguely the occasion he was referring to. Of course, his case was not an isolated one. Many relations and friends had, at one time or the other, stayed with me. Some of them travelled out from my house. Augustine surprised me. He handed over to me an elegant packet of wristwatch and added that, at my convenient time, we would go together to a shopping mall to select a suit.

Back in my room, I was thinking of Augustine and his efforts to reach me and appreciate the assistance I rendered to him 44 years ago. He didn't forget, as I did, and was hoping that, one day, he would have the opportunity to demonstrate his gratitude. Hosting him in 1964 has turned out to be an investment that has yielded great returns.

Sowing and reaping is a physical and spiritual law. Galatians 6:7-9 says, **“Be not deceived: God is not mocked for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well**

doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

Whenever we sow something good in other people's lives God is always pleased and He is the one to arrange for a harvest. God's reward for good things done may be immediate or delayed. His timing is different from our own. Sometimes we support God's work with money and expect financial returns. But the reward may not always be financial. God blesses us in several ways. It could be peace of mind, good health, long life, protection from dangers, and prevention of losses and so on. God is so faithful that He does not, like man, forget the reward due to anyone. If after 44 years, Augustine remembered to appreciate me for helping him when he was in need, how can God forget anyone who has pleased Him?

Do you know that sound sleep at night could be a harvest of good works? Some people cannot sleep, even with all sorts of tranquilisers. We learnt that the popular singer, Michael Jackson, depended on various drugs to sleep. And that habit eventually led to his death. Psalm 127:3 says that God gives sleep to His beloved. He does not allow their minds to be overwhelmed with stress, fear and worry, which drive away sleep.

In order to ensure continuous harvests, we must sow without ceasing. Of course, we know that some seeds will

fall on the footpaths, some on stony ground but some must fall on the good soil. These ones that fall on the good soil must compensate for the lost seeds.

One thing is certain. There can be no harvest without planting. I could not have received a gift of a wristwatch and a beautiful suit from Augustine if I had not housed him in 1964.

I have realised that satisfying other people's needs is an important criterion for separating the sheep and the goats on the last day. Matthew 25:31- 46 is a passage that we need to meditate on daily. The main lesson there is that we shall be judged by our relationship with our fellow men and women. God is pleased with us when we provide for the needs of other people. Check this out with me from Proverbs 11:24-25 which says, **“One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”** When we provide for others, God also provides for our own needs. We must prove our love to others by our readiness to assist them. We must deny ourselves of some comfort to help others. Good wishes without good works are a mockery. Apostle James says that faith without works is dead.

When I shared this idea with a friend, he told me that he

CARING A LITTLE FOR OTHERS

does not sow seeds in a soil he knows to be bad and would not support any harvest. He selects carefully where to sow and counts his church as the number one place. Definitely, supporting the church of God is very important. But these profound statements by Jesus should not be taken lightly because He knows all about sowing and harvesting. One thing I learnt is that those who do not help those in need are indirectly not helping even the church of which Jesus is the head.

POWERPOINT



“I may be here for a short while, gone tomorrow into oblivion or until the days come to take me away. But, in whatever part you play, be remembered as part of a legacy... of sharing dreams and changing humanity for the better. It's that legacy that never dies.”

-Anonymous

“If I have done any deed worthy of remembrance, that deed will be my monument. If not, no monument can preserve my memory.”

-Agesilaus II

“The legacy of heroes is the memory of a great name and the inheritance of a great example.”

-Benjamin Disraeli

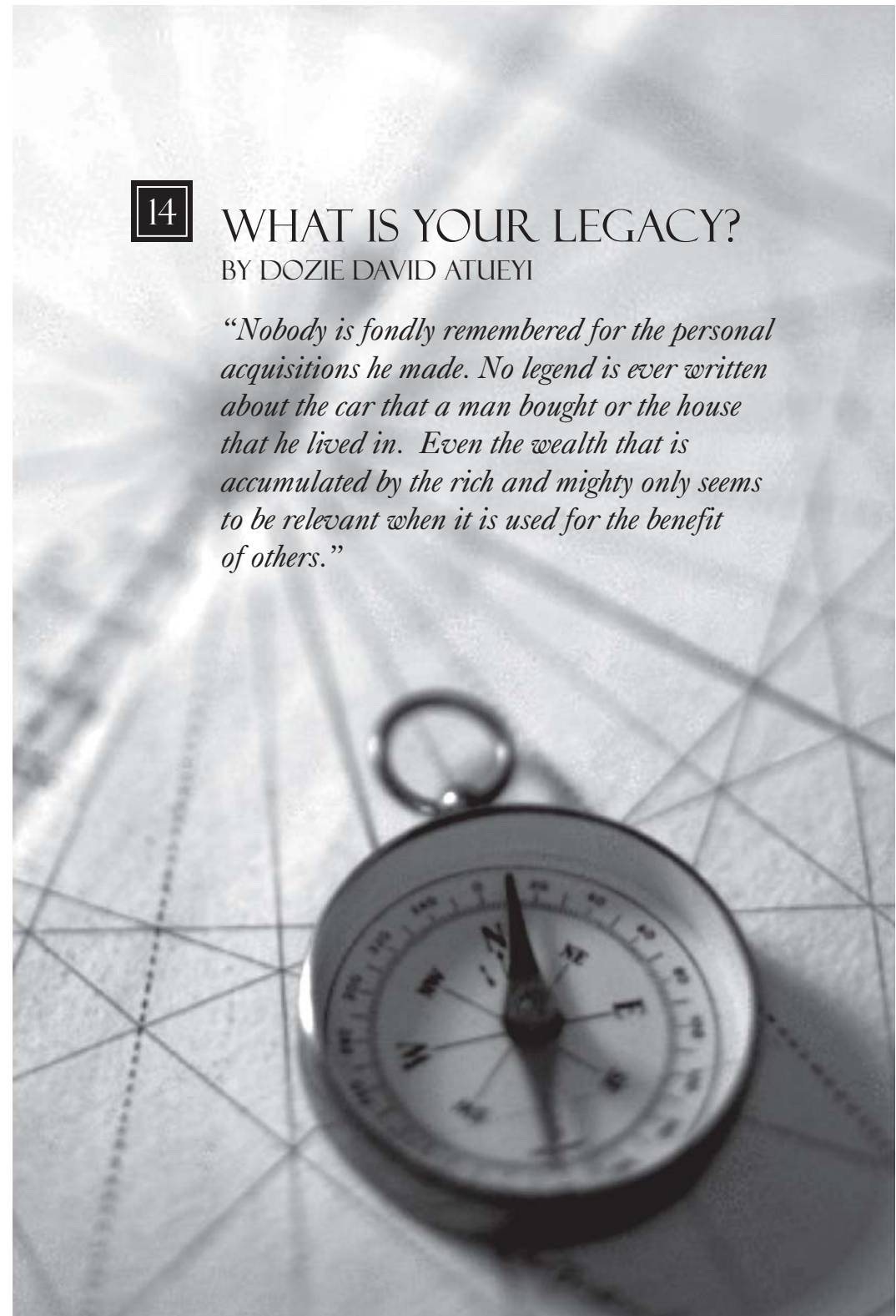


14

WHAT IS YOUR LEGACY?

BY DOZIE DAVID ATUEYI

“Nobody is fondly remembered for the personal acquisitions he made. No legend is ever written about the car that a man bought or the house that he lived in. Even the wealth that is accumulated by the rich and mighty only seems to be relevant when it is used for the benefit of others.”



WHAT IS YOUR LEGACY?



ALMOST THREE YEARS AGO, WE WITNESSED THE PASSING AWAY OF MY PATERNAL GRANDMOTHER. I was in Johannesburg on the day that I got a call from my mother to relay the sad news. I was informed of how she had woken up that morning and had her breakfast as usual. Afterwards, it seemed like she lay down to rest for a while. However, it was soon discovered that she had passed on in her sleep. I was then saddled with the responsibility of communicating with my younger siblings in Manchester and Boston. This was not the kind of news I looked forward to sharing.

Mama had been sick for many years. Having lived to the ripe age of 92 years, she had battled with various ailments associated with age. The woman was strong-willed and very resilient. I recalled how, every New Year, I would be amazed that she had survived the previous one. It seemed

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that she loved life and was determined to live it fully.

As preparations were made towards having a befitting burial ceremony for her, I was requested to write a tribute for publication in the event programme. It occurred to me that many other people would be doing same. She had given birth to four children, who produced many grandchildren for her. She was also the matriarch to an extended family and was well known in the village, the community and the church. For this reason, she was known to many people as Mama Okija.

I realised that everyone would testify of her from varying viewpoints. She had been many things to many people and so, it was natural that each of us would say what he or she experienced of her. As I wrote this tribute to my late grandmother, I pondered over the years we spent with her; the experiences we had and the contributions she made to our lives.

Mama lived a long life and there were many things that could be said about her. However, as her first grandson, the memories that first occurred to me were the times she visited us when we were very young. She would gather us together; tell us stories; teach us songs and make us say our prayers before we went to bed.

WHAT IS YOUR LEGACY?

We have always been a Christian family, committed to spiritual values; but looking back, I realised the role that Mama played in establishing the place of family devotion. Now, after more than thirty years, our family still comes together daily to pray.

I cannot help but wonder: when I am gone, after I have lived a full life, what will be said of me? What will my tribute read? What will be my legacy? There are many things we hope to accomplish; so many things we eventually do. Nevertheless, I have come to understand that the things that really matter are the ones that affect the lives of people.

Nobody is fondly remembered for the personal acquisitions he made. No legend is ever written about the car that a man bought or the house that he lived in. Even the wealth that is accumulated by the rich and mighty only seems to be relevant when it is used for the benefit of others.

We may acquire knowledge; we may build empires; we may attain incredible goals in this life. But how do all these accomplishments affect the lives of people? In what ways are the progress we are making translating to the prosperity of others?

Every day, we have a golden opportunity to add value to the life of someone, spiritually, materially, emotionally or

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physically. Something can be done that would yield lasting returns. Beyond personal gains and accomplishments, we need to consider what contributions we are making in the lives of our fellow men. In our homes, in our schools, at our places of work and various associations, what do we do to improve the lives of others? How are we making a positive impact for which we could be remembered?

After your life is lived, what will be written about you? In what ways have you been a blessing? What is your legacy? If a tribute were to be read today on the life you have led, what would be the testimony of the people that have known you?

For every one of us, I pray that we be filled with the knowledge of God's will; I pray that we walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him; I pray that we be fruitful in every good work and that we fulfill our destinies. May our lives be impactful every single day. May we have a legacy, like Mama who taught us to pray.

POWERPOINT



*“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life,
that no man can sincerely help another without
helping himself.”*

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

*“If you think about what you ought to do for people,
your character will take care of itself.”*

-Woodrow Wilson

*“You have not lived today until you have done
something for someone who can never repay you.”*

John Bunyan



15

GIFTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

BY IFEANYI ATUEYI

*“The greatest gift of God to the world is
His only Son, Jesus Christ, whose death on the
cross provided salvation to those who believe.
It is actually the spiritual implication of this
gift that gives it its meaning and significance.
The spiritual impact of the death of our Lord
Jesus Christ makes all the difference in
our lives.”*



GIFTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE



FOR THE PAST 54 YEARS, I HAVE BEEN NURSING THE IDEA OF NARRATING A STORY about Mr. Phillips. Mr. Phillips was my history teacher when I was at the Dennis Memorial Grammar School (DMGS), Onitsha. He gave me a gift that touched my heart in 1956. The opportunity for this story surfaced on 1st October, 2009, when I celebrated my 70th birthday.

The occasion was unique in my life, as I had never celebrated any birthday. This time, I was encouraged to celebrate it by my wife and children. I agreed because it was combined with the 30th anniversary of Pharmanews and the launching of a new book titled “Adding Life to Years”. Ordinarily, October 1st, being a public holiday, gives me the chance of working alone in my office. Of course, my wife would prepare a delicious meal for the family and call me out of the office to eat together. One or two birthday cards

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from the children might be standing on the TV set.

One remarkable thing about this October 1st was the number of guests (about 500) from the pharmaceutical industry, church, Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, relations, friends and neighbours. Never in my life have I received such a large quantity and varieties of birthday cards, material gifts and cash. It was overwhelming. Our living room was littered with cards for about a week after the event. I spent two days opening the parcels of gifts and envelopes containing cash and cheques, and recording them. I asked myself why I was not celebrating my birthdays to acquire gifts. Or was it so because I never celebrated one before? Or because it was 70 years?

Even though I took my time to record the gifts and their givers, I am already beginning to forget a few of them. With time, I will forget most of the gifts and the givers unless I refer to the records. But I will definitely remember some of them that touched my heart. Such was the case of Mr. Phillips' gift of bananas to me in 1956. I was then in my third year in school when I had a bout of acute malaria. This led to my admission into the General Hospital, Onitsha, about 2km from the school. My first night in the ward was a horrible experience. An old man next to me died. Even though the nurses screened him off while battling to save his life, I perceived all that happened and was terribly afraid.

It was one of the experiences that made me to run away from studying medicine.

The following day, some classmates visited me and spent some time with me. After they left, Mr. Phillips, our British history master, came along just before the visiting time was over. I was surprised and excited to see him enter the ward, looking right and left to locate me. When I saw him coming, I sat up on my bed to enable him see me. He was like an angel of God bringing healing to me. His presence seemed to have destroyed all the malaria parasites in my system. I regained my strength and vitality. He comforted me and assured me that I would soon be discharged. As he was about to leave me, he put his hand in the pocket of his trousers, brought out two small bananas and handed over to me. The bananas were so small that they easily entered his pocket without attracting attention.

This gift of two small bananas lifted up my spirit. I gently peeled off one of them and ate it slowly. It was as if I was taking Holy Communion. I left the other one to be taken after supper. This incident has remained fresh in my mind. The gift has made me to remember Mr. Phillips always. He might be alive or not today. I do not know. But his gift keeps his memory fresh in me. If I see him today, as he was at that time, I will easily recognise him. The gift caused me to have greater interest in his subject and to admire his habits. He

was fond of wearing white short-sleeved shirts on khaki shorts and Clark's brown sandals. The gift even caused me to like his wife, who was a medical doctor at the Iyi-Enu Hospital, Ogidi, about 10km from Onitsha.

I believe that the best gift is one that touches someone's heart. Indeed a gift has a spirit. This spirit does not depend on the value of the gift. There is surely a spirit that operates in gifts.

The greatest gift of God to the world is His only Son, Jesus Christ, whose death on the cross provided salvation to those who believe. It is actually the spiritual implication of this gift that gives it its meaning and significance. The spiritual impact of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ makes all the difference in our lives.

I am coincidentally writing this piece during the Christmas and New Year season, when gifts are exchanging hands. Ask yourself whether your gifts are touching people's hearts. A few days ago, I heard a state governor discouraging people from bringing him Christmas hampers and other gifts because, according to him, such gifts tend to promote corruption. The governor would definitely prefer a type of Mr. Phillips' gift of two bananas that would touch his heart. Indeed, the spirit is what matters in a gift.

POWERPOINT



*“Year’s end is neither an end nor a beginning,
but a going on, with all the wisdom that
experience can instill in us.”*

-Hal Borland

*“Character is the ability to carry out a resolution
long after the excitement of the moment has passed.”*

-Cæcett Robert

*“And in the end, it is not the years in your
life that count. It is the life in your years.”*

-Abraham Lincoln

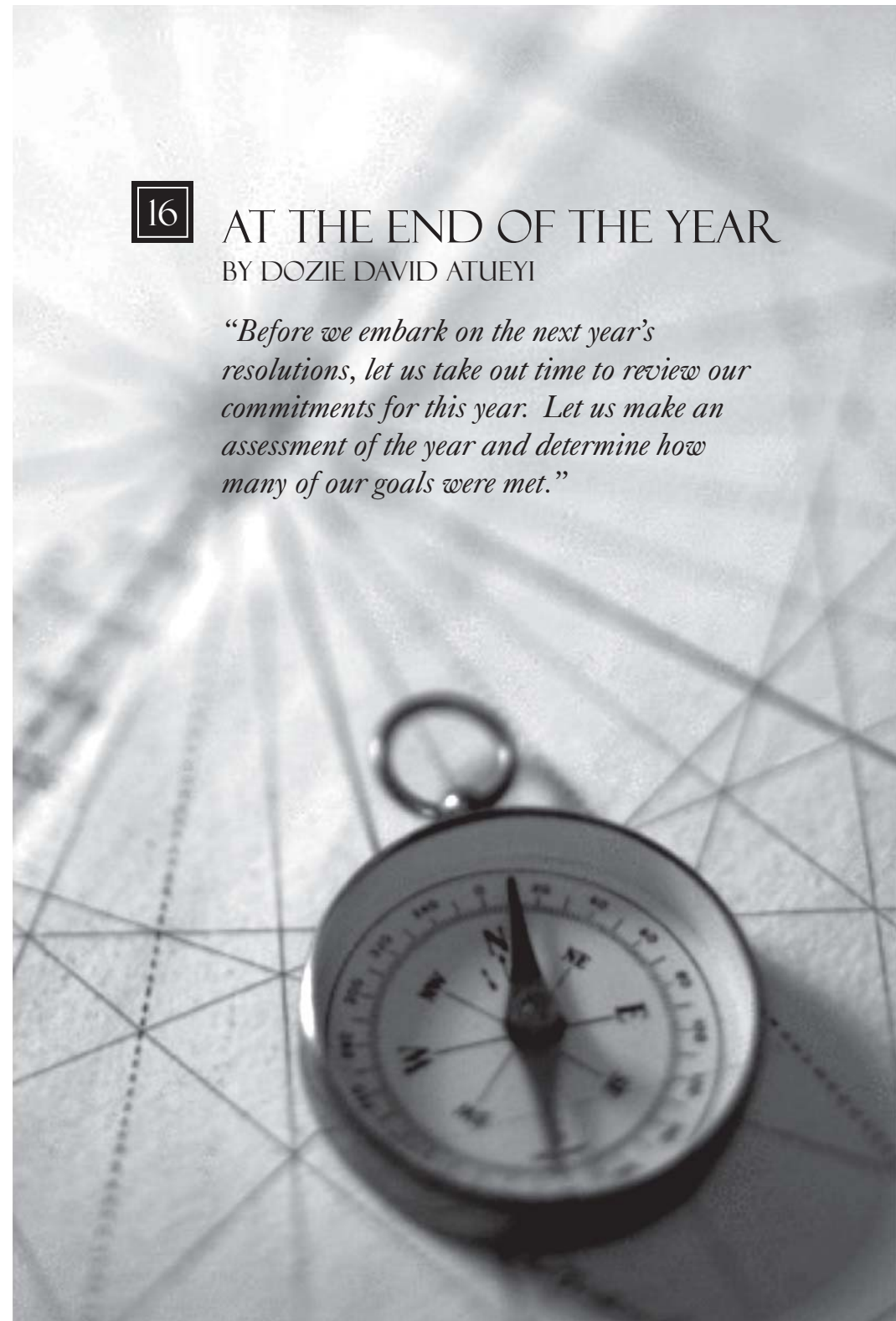


16

AT THE END OF THE YEAR

BY DOZIE DAVID ATUEYI

*“Before we embark on the next year’s
resolutions, let us take out time to review our
commitments for this year. Let us make an
assessment of the year and determine how
many of our goals were met.”*



WHAT IS YOUR LEGACY?



IT IS THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN. It is the period of annual leaves and school vacations; it is the month of travelling and visitations; it is the cycle of shopping and gift-giving. It is December, the season of celebration.

My friend, Chuks, lives in South Africa with his family. The end of the year is a special time for them. It presents the opportunity to travel into Nigeria and re-unite with friends and family members. Every December, he shuts down his businesses and takes the month off, visiting Lagos, Port Harcourt and his hometown in the East. Three years ago was especially eventful, as it was the first time he came back with his baby boy. The excitement and joy of that trip was immeasurable.

Another friend of mine, Sam, is a manager with an oil company in Lagos. This season, for him, is a chance to take

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a much deserved annual leave from work. After making arrangements for his parents' celebration of Christmas and the New Year, Sam would secure flight tickets for his wife and two kids. The young family would jet out to London for a month-long vacation.

While Chuks and his family look forward to the warmth of the festive season in Nigeria, with relatives and close associates, Sam's family is excited at the prospect of a 'White Christmas,' complete with the snow, the jingle bells and Christmas trees, as the children get to play with their very own snowman.

Various people have different ways of spending this period. One begins to wonder, what really is the significance of the month of December? First of all, it is the last month of the year. This inevitably is a time when many companies wind down their activities for the financial year. It is a period of stock-taking and quite often, an opportunity to reward employees with bonuses. This subsequently means that many people are buoyant at this time of the year.

December is also known for hosting many events: from the end-of-year office parties to the traditional family occasions; from serious corporate functions to social wedding ceremonies. The last month of the year is a combination of various activities. The most notable event

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is the celebration of Christmas. This is an annual holiday that commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ. All over the world, Christians and non-Christians alike have come to recognise this as a season of goodwill, sharing gifts and making merry.

It goes without saying that this is a time of increased economic activity, as many traders capitalise on the season for brisk business. In view of the gift-giving and the traditions of the Christmas festival, the economic impact of the festive season has grown steadily over the years. It is not unusual for many people to overindulge themselves, by way of spending and merry-making, only to regret it in the coming month.

At a time like this, I often ask myself, what truly are we celebrating? When we celebrate the month of December, are we marking the attainment of specific objectives or are we just caught up in the euphoria of the festive season?

This year has been a remarkable one. It was a year of promotions for some and yet a year of setbacks for many. It was a year in which several lives were lost but also a year that welcomed additions to many families.

For some people, they are celebrating the survival of the year. While some were rescued from accidents and

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kidnappings, some others like me were delivered from the gruesome hands of armed robbers. I believe I speak on behalf of this class of people when I say that we are grateful to see the end of another year.

However, it is important to note that December is the month before the New Year. It is at that point that many people begin to make their New Year resolutions. These are promises that people often make to develop themselves in certain ways or achieve specific targets over the course of the year.

This month of December, before we embark on the next year's resolutions, let us take out time to review our commitments for this year. Let us make an assessment of the year and determine how many of our goals were met. The festivities of this season should not just be the celebration of the end of the year but rather the reward for accomplishing our previously set targets.

A study on 'The Curious Science of Everyday Lives' by Richard Wiseman shows that even though most people are confident of fulfilling their New Year resolutions, only 12% actually do. Throughout the year, most of us fail to reach our goals for several reasons. Sometimes we have too many resolutions and are unable to focus. Some other times, the targets are too vague, not specific. Many people's problems

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stem from the inability to break down their yearly goals into smaller targets that are achievable on a monthly basis.

Whatever your goals, they must be pursued with persistence. Nothing of value comes easily, and if we are to be successful every year, we must be tenacious and consistent. If we focus on the benefits that will be attained from the achievement of our goals, we would greatly increase the potential for success. This time, let our celebration be based on the fulfilment of our objectives as we reward ourselves at the end of the year.

