

ADDING

Life

to

Years

*Living Better
As You Grow Older*

Ifeanyi Atueyi

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Preface

From 2004, I determined to be publishing motivational books every year, by God's grace. Consequently, we have the following: *Your Best Pathway for Life* (2004), *The Joy of Good Life* (2005), *Life without Life* (2006), *The Fullness of Life* (2007) and *Life Is A Choice* (2008).

This year which marks my 70th birthday and 30th anniversary of *Pharmanews*, I thought of making a difference. Hence, I invited Olufemi Omotayo, our Editor (Special Publications) and Dozie David Atueyi, the legal consultant, as contributors.

I am, therefore, happy that in this book, *Adding Life To Years*, you will enjoy reading from three authors writing from their own perspectives. We are all looking at life from the eyes of the young and old.

Pharmanews was started on my 40th birthday in 1979 and at 70, I have cause to thank God for His love and kindness. *Pharmanews* has been published, all these years without interruption, thereby maintaining an enviable record of performance.

Everyone must get old and eventually die. What makes the difference is not only the length of life but, more importantly, the contributions and impacts one has made to other people's lives. One is remembered more by what he has given to his world than the days of his life or what he has acquired or received. Peter Marshall said, "The measure of life is not in its duration, but in its donation."

Adding Life To Years, like the previous books, is reader-friendly and inspirational. Each of the 15 chapters begins with PowerPoint and Insight to add value to the contents of the chapter.

You will not benefit fully from this book if you merely scan through it. It is a book that demands reflection and meditation. If it impacts your life, recommend it to those you love.

Ifeyani Atueyi

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Pharmanews staff, subscribers, advertisers and business associates; all those that have contributed to the success of the thirty-year journey. It is also dedicated to those who have positively influenced my life to make me become who I am at 70.

Ifeanyi Atueyi

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PowerPoint

“The greatest successes we see everywhere are but the realisation of an intense longing, a concentrated effort.”

- **Dr Orison Swett Marden**

“Unless life is lived for others, it is not worthwhile.
A self-centered life is totally empty.”

- **Mother Teresa**

“The measure of life is not in its duration,
but in its donation. Everyone can be great
because everyone can serve.”

- **Peter Marshall**

Insight

Many a time we think we are serving God. No doubt, it is good to serve God but we must do it the way God wants it done. He has His own specific methods.

Ifeanyi Atueyi

Chapter One

The Question of Life

One eternal question should be in everyone's mind at all times. It is like the question Paul asked after encounter with Jesus on his way to Damascus to persecute believers. Jesus said to him, **“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”** Paul, trembling and astonished said, **“Lord, what do you want me to do?”** This is one great question which I always ask and everyone must form the habit of asking. “God, what do you want me to do? When faced with a decision or choice to make, do you ask God to decide or choose for you, knowing that He knows what is best for you?”

Many a time we do not receive help from God because we do not ask (James 4:2). But God has encouraged us to ask and it shall be given to us (Matthew 7:7). My people have an adage which says, “He who asks questions never misses his way.” God has promised us that if we call on Him, He will show us the great and mighty things which we do not know (Jeremiah 33:3).

I am a member of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI) and I occasionally scan through the story of the founder of this great Fellowship. In 1951 Demos Shakarian had the passion to establish the Fellowship for businessmen to share the love of God at Saturday breakfast meetings. He mobilized available resources to get it started. Being a very wealthy dairy farmer, he invested a lot of money on publicity, travelling within and outside USA to promote the Fellowship. He provided free breakfast in an exclusive Clifton's Cafeteria in Los Angeles. He made innumerable phone calls, radio announcements and distributed thousands of invitation cards. Demos Shakarian was committed, determined and focused on his mission. He was a very influential person in the society and had all that was needed to realize his ambition. Yet he failed woefully in the first 14 months of the Fellowship. In fact, the result of his efforts was shameful and embarrassing to him and his wife, Rose, who gave him all the support and encouragement.

Instead of growing, the number of guests to the free breakfast in one of the best restaurants in Los Angeles was dwindling. Dr Shakarian recorded in his

book titled “The Happiest People on Earth” that at the meeting held on Saturday, 26th December, 1952, only 15 people were present, six less than 21 he started with.” Naturally, who would not be disappointed? It is only a fool that will continue to waste his valuable resources on a project that is clearly unprofitable and is doomed to fail. Therefore, he took the wise decision - to wind up the Fellowship.

However, before taking the ultimate action, he asked God the crucial question “God, what do you want me to do? It was then that God revealed to him what he was doing wrongly all the 14 months. What was he doing wrongly? Was his promotional strategy not effective? Was he not putting enough money on promotion? Was the restaurant and breakfast not attractive enough? Was he not inviting the right target? Was he not traveling enough? Was he not praying? Behold, the Fellowship did not take off as expected because of any of these reasons. When Demos was praying, God revealed to him that he was depending on his money, power and influence as if the Fellowship would take off and grow by his strength and wisdom. God told him that he must depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit to succeed. Hear Demos: “I had acted as if my strength was the Fellowship's hope. What a fool I had been. Nothing, nothing, nothing man can do, or will ever do, will ever make a second difference in eternity unless it is energized by the power of God.” From the next Saturday meeting which was meant to be the last, things changed miraculously and the Fellowship started to grow.

I learnt from the Shakarian's story that my achievements and successes do not depend on my efforts, ability and talents. It is all by God's grace. **“For by strength no man shall prevail (1 Samuel 2:9).** Only God can give you the purpose and direction for your life.

Many a time we think we are serving God. No doubt, it is good to serve God but we must do it the way God wants it done. He has His own specific methods. It is interesting to read from Genesis chapter 6 that when God asked Noah to build an ark, He gave the specifications - the type of wood, the rooms, width, breadth, height, doors, windows etc. In making the altar of incense, God gave detailed instruction to Moses. (See Genesis chapter 30). Also in making the ark, the instructions were clearly given and even how it should be moved from place to place.

Our ways are not usually God's ways. **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8).** That is why we must always commit all our plans and programmes to God. We

cannot make any perfect plan by ourselves. After all, we are not perfect beings. Ask God what he wants you to do and how you have to do it. This is wisdom.

Demos Shakarian loved God and was determined to do everything possible to work for Him through the Fellowship. But his attitude was wrong. **“Every way of man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts (Proverbs 21:2).** He depended on his strength and resources instead of the power of God and he suffered terribly for the first fourteen months of the Fellowship. May it not be your case.

PowerPoint

“I am long on ideas, but short on time. I expect to live to
be only about a hundred.”

–

Thomas Edison

“No person was ever honoured for what
he received. Honour has been the
reward for what he gave.”

–

Calvin Coolidge

“You are not old until you have
lost all of your marvels.”

Anonymous

Insight

No one is certain of the continuance of life for a day to an end, because death can come knocking at less than an hour's warning.

Olufemi Omotayo

Chapter Two

How Old Are You Now?

How old are you now? Isn't this a familiar question? Everyone has had moments when this question pops up in their lives. Remember that popular song usually sung during the birthdays? "Happy birthday to you....how old are you now?" Many people would rather have the felicitation part of the song sung over and over, while they avoid the question part. Why? They simply do not want to be reminded about their age!

However innocuous it may seem, many would rather not want to hear the question about their age. But, dear reader, the purpose of this book is to make you have a healthy and positive view about your age and the quality of your life. So, take a few moments to reflect on this important question. How and why is it important, you ask? Perhaps an example of an earlier time would better explain. The Bible accounts of an exact scenario in Genesis 47:8: **"And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, 'How old art thou?'"**

The question came from the deep and impressive interest which the appearance of the patriarch had created in the minds of Pharaoh and his court. In the low-lying land of Egypt and from the artificial habits of its society, the age of man was far

shorter among the inhabitants of that country than it had yet become in the pure bracing climate and among the simple mountaineers of Canaan. The Hebrews, at least, still attained a protracted longevity. Jacob's countenance no doubt showed him to be old, for he had been a man of labour and sorrow. And Pharaoh could only look upon him with wonder.

Do you still seek admission after several attempts without success, even when your colleagues are almost done in the higher institution? Don't you feel "becoming too 'old'?" Oh, you graduated some years ago with flying colours, congratulations! But this hasn't resulted into getting your dream job and you now barely survive on a daily basis. Meanwhile, some of your friends now live the life you dream about. When will it be your turn? As a lady now above 30 years but without marriage, how do you feel? Or, are you still without a child after a few years into your marriage? Surely, you'll be wondering when it would happen, especially as you are becoming "older." Have you got greys in your hair yet? How does it feel?

These represent a few everyday life experiences of many people today. And they come with the attendant tensions. Russian playwright, Anton Chekhov, aptly captured the frustration thus: "I'm twenty-three, I've been working all this time and my brain's shriveled up. I've grown thin and ugly and old and I've nothing to show for it, nothing, no satisfaction of any kind, while time passes by and I feel I'm losing touch with everything fine and genuine in life." Does this describe your situation? Are you desperate to achieve something because you feel you are getting 'older'? If that is your experience, then your priorities may not be in order.

Is there a better way of responding to the age question? Perhaps the response of Jacob to Pharaoh's enquiry would help. In Genesis 47:9, we see Jacob give Pharaoh an uncommon answer. He speaks as becomes a patriarch, with an air of seriousness, for the instruction of the monarch. He describes his life as a

pilgrimage, looking upon himself as a stranger in this world, and a traveller towards another world. This earth was his inn, not his home. He not only reckoned himself a pilgrim now that he was in Egypt, a strange country in which he never was before; but his life, even in the land of his nativity, was a pilgrimage. If you reason like this, you will be able to bear life's inconveniences.

We also find that Jacob reckons his life by days. This is wisdom. No one is certain of the continuance of life for a day to an end, because death can come knocking at less than an hour's warning. It is therefore an apt prayer by the psalmist: **“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”** (Ps 90:12). It is good to number our days, so as not to be out in our calculation, as the rich fool who counted upon many years to come when, that night, his soul was required of him. We must live under a constant apprehension of the shortness and uncertainty of life and the near approach of death and eternity. We must so number our days as to compare our work with our time. We must use our time with wisdom and diligence, as those that have value for life.

Although Jacob was 130 years old when he faced Pharaoh, that period seemed to him but a few days, in comparison with the days of eternity, in which a thousand years (longer than ever any man can live) are but as one day. Secondly, those days were evil. This is true concerning man in general **“Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble”** (Job 14:1). Thirdly, the days were short of the days of his fathers. They were not so many, and not so pleasant, as their days. If you will take this approach to life, you will have fewer worries and live longer and better. Consider this admonition by John Keats, the famous English poet:

*Stop and consider! Life is but a day;
A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way...*

PowerPoint

– “If you can’t write your idea on the back of my business card, you don’t have a clear idea.”

– **David Belasco**

– “A winner knows how much he still has to learn, even when he is considered an expert by others. A loser wants to be considered an expert by others, before he has learned enough to know how little he knows.”

– **Sydney J. Harris**

– “Iron rusts from disuse, stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigour of the mind.”

– **da Vinci**

Insight

The age of forty ushers in a new dispensation. It is the opening of another chapter in one's life. It is an age when the fulfillment of ideas begins to seem possible. There is a release of grace; a store of energy and usually, one has attendant responsibilities.

Dozie David Atueyi

Chapter Three

Life At Forty

It was a Saturday morning. We were sitting at the dining table, as my father shared his thoughts on the celebration of his seventieth birthday and the thirtieth anniversary of Pharmanews Limited. Then, it dawned on me for the first time. Pharmanews would be thirty years old at the same time the founder would turn seventy. This publication, that has made tremendous impact in the health sector across Africa and beyond, was started by the visionary at the age of forty.

It seemed like yesterday, when he suddenly stopped dashing off to work early in the morning from Mondays to Fridays. I was not told of the launch of a new project. You can imagine that no one thought it necessary to inform a five-year-old. However, I knew something was up when my siblings and I were restricted from using what had been our “playing room”. Instead, we observed that our dad began to spend time there, reading and writing. Soon, some people began to visit regularly. They would go straight to our “playing room” and stay there for hours. I was very young but I knew something was definitely going on in that room.

Eventually, the maiden edition of Pharmanews emerged; what has become West Africa’s foremost health journal. We were then told that our father had become a publisher. All of that was thirty years ago. He was exactly forty years old. Thinking about it, I began to wonder. How many great achievements were commenced at the age of forty? How many people have made radical decisions that pioneered a revolution at that age? Simply put, does life really begin at forty?

My search for answers took me to one of the greatest men that ever lived. He was raised in a palace as the son of a princess. He rejected a life of grandeur and became a crusader against injustice. He led the largest group of people across territories. He sat in judgment over millions of families, settling disputes and establishing order. His name was Moses.

Most of us are familiar with the story of Moses. What we do not know is how it all began. The Book of Acts 7: 22 - 24 tells us that **“he learned all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds. Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed and struck down the Egyptian.”**

This move led to major developments that have written the course of history. What arrests my attention here is that for forty years, Moses studied and equipped himself. When he turned forty, “it entered into his heart” to do something.

Life is full of great achievers with notable accomplishments around the age of forty. In 1884, Mark Twain published *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, reputed to be the most influential American novel. In 1891, Thomas Edison invented the kinetograph camera that became the forerunner to the modern motion picture. In 1903, Henry Ford established the Ford Motor Company. In 1911, Marie Curie became the first two-time winner of the Nobel Prize for her discoveries in physics and chemistry.

There seems to be a trend of people launching out to do spectacular things about the time they turn forty. In his book, *Think and Grow Rich*, Napoleon Hill observes that, “biographies of American industrialists and financiers are filled with evidence that the period from forty to sixty is the most productive age of man.”

Anyone that is familiar with Bible stories will realise that there are frequent occurrences of the number forty in various accounts. The children of Israel were in the wilderness for forty years. At other times, for forty years, they were oppressed by rival nations. There were kings that reigned for forty years. Great men fasted and prayed for forty days and forty nights. What really is the significance of the number forty?

From my study, I have seen that there is a forty-year cycle in life. The number forty is the fullness of time. It represents the end of a season and the beginning of another. Just as seven days form a week and twelve months make one year, forty years in the life of a person establish a season in that life. It is a period of time during which certain things can happen.

We are told that Moses spent the first forty years developing himself. I believe that all the great achievers took advantage of the opportunities they had during this period of growth. It is a time to learn. A time to exercise one's mind and body, in preparation for the assignment ahead.

The age of forty ushers in a new dispensation. It is the opening of another chapter in one's life. It is an age when the fulfillment of ideas begins to seem possible. There is a release of grace; a store of energy and usually, one has attendant responsibilities. Having reached a stage of maturity, one must begin to consider what one will accomplish in one's lifetime.

There are many people that have laughed at the expression "life begins at forty", dismissing it as a mere consolation for people as they grow older. Some others have received it as a licence to start enjoying themselves, indulging in frivolities.

Taking a cue from the lives of great achievers, we should embrace this concept with a lot more seriousness. Whether we like it or not, there are seasons in life. Depending on what side of the divide you find yourself, you should maximize the moment in attaining a life of fulfillment.

PowerPoint

“Age is not measured by years. Nature does not equally distribute energy. Some people are born old and tired while others are going strong at seventy.

–

Dorothy Thompson

“The first forty years of our life give the text, the next thirty furnish the commentary upon it, which enables us rightly understand the true meaning and connection of the text with its moral and its beauties.

–

Arthur Schopenhauer

“You can’t get much done in life if you only work on the days you feel good.” – **Jerry West**

Insight

The solution is to be true to one's age no matter the situation. Understand that there are things you will never be able to do, however hard you try. You are only meant to achieve what YOU can, and not what people think you should.

Olufemi Omotayo

Chapter Four

The Age Reduction Game

A statement is credited to a former politician in Britain, Nancy Astor, which sounds somewhat ludicrous. “I refuse to admit that I am more than fifty-two, even if that does make my sons illegitimate,” she was quoted to have said at a time. Nancy Witcher Langhorne Astor (1879-1964), born in Danville, Virginia, was an America-born political and social leader in Britain during the first half of the 20th century. She married Waldorf Astor, her second husband, in 1906, who became Viscount Astor and thus a member of the House of Lords when his father died in 1919. Nancy ran as the Unionist candidate for his seat in the House of Commons and was elected by a substantial majority in November 1919. The first woman to hold a seat in Parliament, Lady Astor remained a member until her retirement in 1945. She was a champion of women's rights, temperance, and progressive education, as well as a famous hostess in her country home, Cliveden, in Buckinghamshire.

With all the achievements of this woman, it is rather unfortunate to know she had once denied her age. But, doesn't this sound too familiar? Politicians are known to be adept in the art of age falsification. And, rather than just the politicians alone, it has become a phenomenon that is gradually drifting toward a dangerous dimension, as people everywhere now seem to shorten their age for

one reason or another. Whether it is the purpose of application for jobs, qualification for participation in athletics, or many civil servants who want to delay retirement, the story is the same. Why is this so? Society, it appears, now has age limit to many ordinary things. There is age for participation, which is a restriction limiting participation in an activity to people above or below a particular age. Many who do not meet this barrier, would do anything to overcome it – including falsifying their age.

I know a young man who has graduated for more than three years, and was yet to get a job. Because of the several rejections he had faced from prospective employers due to his age, he decided to shorten his age by four years. This is a person who is older than me by two years but who I am now ‘older’ than, also by two years. During an interaction involving another applicant, the two accomplices tried in vain to justify the reason behind their action, and were even surprised that I decided to retain my real age. They seem to have forgotten the biblical injunction that **“The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment (Proverbs 12:19).** The truth will always be vindicated at last, although liars may have their way at the moment.

The same Proverbs, in chapter 21, verse 6, says that **“The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.** This shows the folly of those that hope to enrich themselves by dishonest practices, and those that make no scruples of lying when there is any thing to be got by it. They may perhaps heap up treasures by these means, that which they make their treasure; but, they will not get the satisfaction they expect. It will be disappointment and vexation of spirit to them; they will not have the comfort of it, and will be perpetually uneasy. It will be “tossed to and fro” by their own

consciences, and by the censures of men. And they will meet with destruction they do not expect, because while they seek wealth by such unlawful practices they are really seeking death and the wrath and curse of God.

U.S. writer and feminist, Gloria Steinem, while referring to a time when she lied about her age, made a profound statement thus: “I learned that falsifying this one fact about my life made me feel phoney, ridiculous, complicit, and, worst of all, undermined by my own hand.” This is very important for you. There is absolutely no reason why you should become jittery over your age. The problem is perhaps more pronounced among the womenfolk, especially as they see the “clock” of their lives tick away. Most women, given the opportunity, would want to remain 18 years old throughout their lifetime. You surely don’t want to sound like Nancy Astor, the politician, who screamed when asked for a close-up photograph: “Take a close-up of a woman past sixty! You might as well use a picture of a relief map of Ireland!”

Is there any antidote to this problem? Yes. The solution is to be true to one’s age no matter the situation. Understand that there are things you will never be able to do, however hard you try. You are only meant to achieve what YOU can, and not what people think you should. So, break free from societal barriers to age! Abraham was 75 years old and childless before God called him to become father of nations. Moses did not begin his ministry until he was 80 years old. He tried earlier but failed. God doesn’t judge like men. He knows the right time to do what you are destined to do. Yours is to remain in His plans.

Don’t allow society tell you what you can do at what age. You can achieve whatever you want at whatever age. You may not become the youngest medical doctor around, but you can become one all the same when you really want to.

According to Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, Austrian novelist and poet, “You can stay young as long as you can learn, acquire new habits and suffer contradictions.” Age should not be a yardstick for anything in your life.

PowerPoint

“You become great by doing small
things in a great way.”

– **Zig Ziglar**

“Always be on the lookout for ideas.
Be completely indiscriminate as to the source ---
It doesn't matter who thought of the idea.”

– **Jeffrey J. Fox**

“Men and women are limited not by the place
of their birth, not by the colour of their skin,
but by the size of their hope.”

– **John Johnson**

Insight

Every youth who is ambitious to grow to the full stature of noble manhood must make up his mind at the start that he has got to be bigger than the things that are trying to hold him down.

If he doesn't he will go down with them.

Olufemi Omotayo

Chapter Five

Too Young Or Too Old?

Going by the current retirement age of 60 years, Moses was twenty years older by the time God commissioned him for the biggest assignment of his life. One may therefore argue that his initial excuses were not totally out of place – he was simply telling God to look elsewhere as he had already retired! He had voluntarily opted to carry out the mission much earlier in his life but was rejected. Then, after forty years had expired (during which time he was literally buried alive in Midian, and was now grown old, and one would think past service), he entered upon the post of honour to which he was born. This, in a way, recompensed for his self-denial at forty years old and proved that all his performances were products of divine power and promise. You can never be too old or too young to achieve God’s purpose for your life.

Proverbs 20:29 says: **“The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head.”** This shows that both young and old have their advantages, and therefore each of them must be, according to their capacities, serviceable to the public. Neither of them should despise nor envy the other. Let not old people despise the young, for they are strong and fit for action, able to go through business and break through difficulties, which the aged and weak cannot grapple with. The glory of young men is their strength,

provided they use it well (that is, in the service of God and their country and not of their lusts), and do not become too proud to boast about it.

Neither should young people despise the old, for they are grave, and fit for counsel. Although they do not have the strength that young men have, yet they have more wisdom and experience. *Juniores ad labores, seniores ad honores* is a popular Latin saying that means “Labour is for the young, honour for the aged.” God has put honour upon the old man; for his grey head is his beauty. **“With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding”** (Job 12:12). Among men we find wisdom and understanding, although this is limited to those who are blessed with length of days. They get it by long and constant experience. And, when they get it, they usually have lost their strength and are unable to execute the results of their wisdom.

However, bodily weakness is not tenable as alibi for failure. As Bonstetten said, “to resist the frigidity of old age, one must combine the body, the mind and the heart – and to keep these in parallel vigour one must exercise, study and love.” Talk about old age achievers; Harlan Sanders, the goateed colonel whose picture is familiar on America’s roadside signs, patented his method of cooking chicken ‘finger-lickin’ good’ – the Kentucky Fried Chicken – when he was 65. A Nigerian musician, Fatai ‘Rolling Dollars’, only came into public relevance shortly before he turned 80, after several years of struggle. And comedian George Burns won an Oscar in his eighties and signed a ten-year performance contract when he was in his nineties. Burns used to say his daily key to success was to get up and look in the obituaries; if his name was not listed, then he would get busy! He lived until a hundred years and then he died, unlike many who retire at 60 and are simply buried years later.

Indeed, we can choose to delay our death. In the words of Jewish novelist, Franz Kafka, “Youth is happy because it has the ability to see beauty. Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old.” And English poet, Robert Southey, admonished: “Live as long as you may, the first twenty years are the longest half of your life.” Never tell a young person that something cannot be done. God may have been waiting for countless centuries for somebody ignorant enough of the impossibility to do that thing. Every youth who is ambitious to grow to the full stature of noble manhood must make up his mind at the start that he has got to be bigger than the things that are trying to hold him down. If he doesn't he will go down with them.

No young person has an excuse to fail, because God has invested in every person. Youths should learn not to think too much about themselves but try to cultivate the habit of thinking of others as this will reward them. Nourish your minds by good reading; discover what your life work is, work in which you can be happiest. Be unafraid in all things where you know you are right. Be unselfish. That's the first and final commandment for those who would be useful and happy in their usefulness.

Examples of successful young people abound both in the Bible and contemporary times. Although society continues to groan under incidences of vices and crime, with the youths as major culprits, we still have several young people that stand out as shining lights. Joseph, although still very young, maintained the righteous stance of his father's religion in a foreign country. Among Israel warriors, no one dared to face the enemy called Goliath until young David arrived, who went ahead to defeat the giant. There are still giants to kill today, and brave children and teenagers are facing them head on.

The record for the youngest professional artist was achieved by Arushi Bhatnagar, who had her first solo exhibition when she was 344 days (or 11 months) old. Adám Lörincz was aged 14 years 76 days when his 92-minute musical, 'Star of the King' was performed. For many people, at 15 years old, passing geometry is considered a major accomplishment. But that is nothing compared to a young Nigerian girl, Kimberly Anyadike, who at 15 became the youngest African-American female pilot to ever fly across the United States recently. What impact are you willing to make at this time?

PowerPoint

“If you chase two rabbits,
both will escape.”

—

Unknown

“The world hates change, yet it is the only thing
that has brought progress.”

—

Charles F. Kettering

“We do not need more intellectual power,
we need more spiritual power. We do not need
more things that are seen, we need more of the
things that are unseen.”

—

Calvin Coolidge

Insight

Getting older like me means being more selective with activities to be undertaken. One can no longer dissipate one's energy and time on everything. It is a time to say "No" to some invitations and functions.

Ifeyi Atueyi

Chapter Seven

You Cannot Be Me

Occasionally, my mind runs to something a professional colleague said to me some months ago. It was on 4th November, 2008, at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, at the opening session of the national conference of the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria (PSN). During the session, I received the May & Baker Nigeria Plc Professional Service Award in Pharmacy 2008. I am not quite familiar with this colleague but he was one of those congratulating me after the award. He said to me, “Mr. Atueyi, I was very much impressed with your citation. You've done very well and merit the award. I admire you and wish I were to start life again as a young pharmacist.” This statement was definitely from the bottom of his heart. He meant it.

I strongly believe that my friend was not alone in thinking that way. Many colleagues in the hall might have been wishing that they were the ones receiving the award. Unfortunately, there is only one award for only one pharmacist in any one year. And that one went to Mr. Atueyi. Next time it will go to another person.

My friend's statement reveals one of those realities most people face as they get older - regrets for those things not yet achieved or accomplished. There are always certain things one wished one had done while young. Blessed is the man who has no regret or regrets. However, the one who has regrets but pretends that he has none and covers them up may not be blessed because he is deceiving himself and there is no truth in him.

When I was in the secondary school in the fifties, I had the opportunity to learn music and play on the organ but I didn't seize the opportunity to do that. I didn't show enough interest. I thought that learning music was wasting the time I should have used for academic work. However, in 2000 I said to myself, “Enough of envying those who know music and can play.” I bought myself a keyboard and hired a music teacher. I also attended some external

lessons. That was a bold attempt to redeem the lost opportunity and stop regretting. Don't ask me whether the ambition has been fulfilled or not.

There is hardly anyone who does not have one form of regret or the other. If you can still remedy the situation why not do so before it becomes too late. I know some parents who are illiterates but made up their minds that their children must have good education. Some people were born in very poor homes and the children who suffered abject poverty while growing up swore never to experience poverty themselves. With determination, they reversed the trend.

Many people suffer from stress, hypertension, peptic ulcer, and some other psychosomatic diseases as a result of worrying about unfinished businesses. We set and pursue many goals. We think and fret especially as we get older and count our days. We worry over what will happen even after we are dead and enjoying in heaven. Frankly, we must continuously examine our ambitions and goals. The big question should be, what goals do I need to pursue within the time available to me to live on earth? Such goals must be achievable, relevant and worth the while. Unachievable goals cause stress and lack of fulfillment.

Getting older like me means being more selective with activities to be undertaken. One can no longer dissipate one's energy and time on everything. It is a time to say "No" to some invitations and functions. It is a time to invest the remaining precious time on relevant and profitable ventures. It is also a time to spend money wisely and think more rationally.

My colleague who wished he were me could never be me and I can never be him. Two parallel lines can never meet. We have our own destinies. Some of the things people consider great achievements may not be achievements to some other people. Each person must identify his own life's mission. What role does God want you to play here on earth? I remember what Jesus told His disciples in John 4:34(AMP). The disciples had eaten their lunch but Jesus engaged Himself with a Samaritan woman at the well of water trying to reveal Himself to the woman. Consequently, the disciples came to remind Him of lunch but He told them, **"My food (nourishment) is to do the will (pleasure) of Him Who sent Me and to accomplish and completely finish His work."**

Nothing gives true satisfaction or fulfillment as doing the Father's will for your life. That is living a purpose-driven life. All other so-called achievements amount to nothing eventually. Regret in one's life can only come from not doing the Father's work and completing it. Fulfilment can never come from acquiring property, amassing wealth and building empires. It can never come from the university degrees, chieftaincy titles, awards, honours or exalted positions we hold in the society. "Guard yourselves and keep free from all covetousness (the immoderate desire for wealth, the greedy longing to have more); for a man's life does not consist in and is not derived from possessing overflowing abundance or that which is over and above his needs(Luke 12:15 AMP).

As our days get shorter we tend to compare ourselves with our peers to judge how we have performed. In this comparison we use arbitrary human standards. If we think we have not done well the result of the exercise will be frustration and stress with its unpleasant consequences. This type of assessment is futile because God is the only wise Judge. He will judge according to His own standards which are fair and universal. He will base His judgement on the assignments He gave us to do for Him.

PowerPoint

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

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

“Everything we know we learned from someone else.”

—

John Wooden

“Learning is defined as a change in behaviour.
You haven’t learned a thing until you can take action and use it.”

- **Don Shula and Ken Blanchard**

Insight

The creation of man is orderly and purposeful. Each person has a unique and special role to play and there is no duplication. If duplication of roles were possible there would be confusion and anarchy.

Ifeanyi Atueyi

Chapter Eight

Fill Your Own Gap

One truth must guide us. The truth is that we are all unique creatures of God. Of the estimated 6.770 billion people on earth, no two people have the same face, fingerprints or DNA. In the same way, the purposes for our creation are different and unique. There is at least one specific thing you are created to accomplish. If you do it, you fill an existing gap. But if you fail to do it, the gap remains unfilled because no other person can fill it. This implies that every person is important and relevant.

In the Book of Revelation apostle John saw a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. He saw an angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll.” But no one in heaven or earth could open the scroll. John wept bitterly until an elder told him that the Lion of the tribe of Judah was able to open the scroll and its seals.

I believe that God has a sealed scroll which can only be opened by one person. God has provided that person with ability or enablement to open the seal. Your greatest life discovery is that of the sealed scroll which only you can open. And if you accomplish it, you will be known and remembered for that singular action.

The creation of man is orderly and purposeful. Each person has a unique and special role to play and there is no duplication. If duplication of roles were possible there would be confusion and anarchy. But that would not be God’s design. There is no mass production of human beings. Each person has his own mould. This is why every person has a value and must therefore have self-respect.

I don’t know whether you ask yourself as I ask myself always. Have I yet opened that door which God gave me the key to open? This key which has no duplicate can open only one door. However much you try it on other doors it will never open them. That door is meant to be opened and not

remain closed. That is the purpose of your creation. Opening that door will bring joy, contentment, fulfillment and self-actualisation.

In applying this truth to myself, I try to do things in my own peculiar way as much as possible. I want to think and behave as Ifeanyi Atueyi and not any other person. I want to do business as myself and determine my own priorities and important issues. A friend made what I considered a complimentary remark when he told me that even if I wrote my articles anonymously, he would easily recognise them as my work. Truly, there is power in uniqueness and originality. Before I started writing some pieces, I feared that people might not like to read them because they would not be like what they were used to. But I have discovered that if I write from my own heart, I will make a difference because it will be original. After all, there is no other person in this world who has had identical experience as I have. And no other person will ever have it. I have realised that the moment I start mimicking other writers, I will be like salt that has lost its flavour which cannot be seasoned. We must aspire to make a difference in life.

The founder of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International and author of *The Happiest People on Earth* made some remarkable statements in that book. He said, "I believe God has a particular gift for each of His servants, some special ability we're to use for His kingdom. I believe if we find that gift and use it we'll be *the happiest people on earth*. And if we miss it, no matter how many excellent things we do, we will be utterly miserable." Of himself, he said, "I'm lucky, I've found my job. I'm a helper. My gift is to help other people do what they do best." Blessed are those who discover God's purpose and plans for their lives and then implement them.

Man's greatest discovery is the discovery of oneself. You cannot discover anything if you have not first discovered yourself. In his book, *The Principles and Power of Vision*, Dr Myles Munroe said, "Every human being was created to accomplish something special. You are meant to do something that will make you unforgettable."

The world cannot forget Thomas Edison (1847 – 1931), a scientist and inventor who held a world record of 1093 patents for inventions such as electric light bulb and phonograph; Louis Pasteur (1822 – 1895), a French chemist and biologist who proved the germ theory of disease and invented

the process of pasteurisation; Bill Gates (born October 28, 1955), an American business magnet, philanthropist, author and chairman of Microsoft Corporation. It will not be easy to forget Michael Jackson (August 29, 1958 – June 25, 2009) the world's greatest entertainer, the king of Pop/Rock/Soul music.

From the Bible's account of Jericho, we can infer that there might have been very many prostitutes in that city. But we will always remember only one of them called Rahab. The Bible records that this woman risked her life by hiding the spies sent by Joshua to survey Jericho. God used Rahab as an instrument to make the Israelites to defeat Jericho. This social outcast will always be remembered for this one good thing she did. How will you be remembered?

PowerPoint

“From the fruit of his lips a man is filled
with good things as surely as the work
of his hands rewards him.”

—

Prov. 12:14

“For good or ill your conversation is your
advertisement. Every time you open your
mouth you let men look into your mind.”

—

Brace Barton

“The most important thing in communication
is to hear what isn't being said.”

- Peter F. Drucker

Insight

The battles of life are more spiritual than physical. Whether or not we realise it, the world is always speaking to us. When we turn on the television, it is speaking to us. When we read a newspaper or book, it is speaking to us.

Dozie David Atueyi

Chapter Nine

Win Your Battles With Words

Life is an eventful journey. From an early age, we begin to encounter oppositions towards reaching our goals. As we grow older, the challenges we face increase in dimension. The rewards of success become more valuable and the consequences of failure are more grievous. Life can be a series of battles.

Many years ago, a battle was fought in the land of Judah. The army of the Philistines pitched their camp against the children of Israel. King Saul and the Israelites camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the rivals.

A champion named Goliath came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head, wore a coat of bronze armour and carried a bronze spear. Goliath stood and shouted at the ranks of Israel, **“Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us.”** On hearing these words, Saul and the Israelites were dismayed and greatly afraid.

For forty days, the Philistine came out every morning and evening and took his stand. This continued until one day, when a little shepherd boy arrived at the camp. David had been sent by his father to his elder brothers that were serving in Saul’s army. On seeing the defiance of the Philistine champion and the terror it caused, David offered to challenge the enemy. But how would a small boy engage in battle with an older man?

When it was reported to Saul, he expressed his concern to David saying, **“You are not able to go against this Philistine; you are a youth and he a man of war from his youth.”** How many times have people been written off on account of their age? How often have we heard it said that “He is too young” or “She is too old”? How easily have individuals been disqualified,

not by virtue of merit, not on the premise of character but simply on the basis of age?

Eventually, David went to battle with Goliath. When the Philistine saw that he was only a boy, he despised him. He said, **“Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks? Come here and I’ll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!”** David said to him, **“You come against me with sword and spear, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today, the Lord will hand you over to me and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. Everyone here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s and He will give all of you into our hands.”**

As the Philistine moved to attack, David ran towards the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck Goliath on the forehead, knocking him down to the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine, but the battle had been fought even before he slung a stone.

For forty days and forty nights, Goliath had engaged in psychological warfare. He had threatened the Israelites, terrified them and subsequently, weakened them. How often do we receive information that weakens our resolve? How many times have we faced rejections that threatened our self-esteem? How easily do we have encounters that leave us feeling inadequate?

The battles of life are more spiritual than physical. Whether or not we realise it, the world is always speaking to us. When we turn on the television, it is speaking to us. When we read a newspaper or book, it is speaking to us. When we interact with friends or family, they are speaking to us. Very often, the things that are spoken are not positive but negative. Even from people around us, sometimes the information received does not build us up; it breaks us down. Everyday of our lives, we are exposed to various voices that are speaking into our hearts and souls.

David won the battle because he did something no Israelite soldier had done. He spoke back to the enemy. For the very first time, someone withstood the challenge of the giant and spoke in return. The physical victory that he had

was translated from the verbal battle he had won against the Philistine. Words are spiritual. They are powerful beyond measure.

Every religion uses the power of words to propagate its message. Every political movement utilises words to galvanise the people into action. Every revolution in life is driven by a charismatic orator. The end of colonialism in Africa is attributed to the leadership of speakers like Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. The American civil rights movement was spearheaded by great orators like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Most recently, a man was said to be too young and inexperienced to lead his nation but the world was captivated by the speeches of Barack Obama. These men used words to empower the people in the fulfilment of the vision.

Is there a problem you are faced with? Are you dealing with a recurring issue? Have you found yourself threatened in anyway? Make it a duty to rise everyday and release declarations over that issue. Engage in battle and speak words of victory. Every time you receive a negative report, do not stay silent. Respond to the situation with words of warfare and just like David, you too will kill that giant.

PowerPoint

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

– **Sir Winston Churchill**

– “Character is the sum total of all our
everyday choices”

– **Margaret Jensen**

– “As long as you keep a person down,
some part of you has to be down there to
hold him down, so it means you cannot
soar as you otherwise might.”

– **Marian Anderson**

Insight

In some churches and Christian fellowships many members who pledged some money for God's work have reneged on those pledges thinking that God would forget them. But does God forget? No.

Ifeanyi Atueyi

Chapter Ten

Throwing The First Stone

When I moved my office to the present location, I hired a young man, called Ibrahim, in the neighbourhood to clean my office. At the time we met he told me that he had known me for many years but would not expect me to remember him. He told me that the first time he met me was when his father died in Ilorin, Kwara State, and he had no money to go home. He was then a student at a technical college at Apapa. According to him, he was crying for the death of his father but more for the fact that he had no money to travel home.

His neighbour who came to sympathise with him appreciated his pitiable condition and advised him to go and tell “the pharmacist” his problem. At first, he was reluctant to come to me because I did not know him and, moreover, it was getting too late to knock at my door. However, out of desperation, he came to my house in the night and pressed the bell at the gate. According to him, I personally came to the gate and, in tears, he narrated his predicament. After listening to him, I asked him how much he needed to travel home. I simply asked him to wait as I went back to the house. On coming back, I handed over to him some money in a Pharmanews envelope. On his way back, he counted the money and it was exactly double the amount he asked for. Early the next morning he travelled home with enough money in his pocket. He confessed to me that he would never forget that kindness to him at that crucial moment and assured me that he was ready to do whatever I wanted. Nevertheless, we agreed on a fee for his service. Subsequently, I vacated my office to allow him do the cleaning.

When I came back later to see how he was getting on, he had left without completing the job or waiting for his pay. Intuitively, I opened the drawer of my table and discovered that part of the money I left there to pay the casual workers had disappeared. That was the last time I met that guy and I cannot recognise him if I see him again.

In spite of my help to him at the time he was in great financial need, he still stole my money. Why did he do that? He simply demonstrated his value system. He had no value for honesty and integrity. He valued money more than his name or self-image.

This particular incident kept me reflecting on our relationship with God. Whenever we are in trouble we call on God to help us and truly He delights in coming to our aid. In Jeremiah 33:3 God says, **“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”** Many a time He provides more than we have asked for. Ephesians 3:20 says, **“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us...”** Just as I gave Ibrahim more than he asked for knowing full well that he would need extra money for other expenses, our kind God loads us with blessings daily. But like Ibrahim, do we not easily forget all the blessings and provoke God in several ways? We disobey, rebel and do not give Him the first place in our lives. We take Him for granted.

In some churches and Christian fellowships many members who pledged some money for God’s work have reneged on those pledges thinking that God would forget them. But does God forget? No. **“When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, ‘My vow was a mistake’. Why should God be angry and destroy the work of your hands?”** (Eccl. 5:4-6). My friend, if you have made any promise to God, go and fulfill it as quickly as possible. It is dangerous to play games with Him.

We even rob God who has given us hundred percent of what we have. As Ibrahim robbed me after I had helped him out of his financial problem, we steal from God what belongs to Him in tithes and offerings. Any one I tell the story of Ibrahim quickly concludes that Ibrahim was wicked and unreasonable just like David reacted to Nathan’s story of the rich man who had a very large number of sheep and cattle but when he needed to entertain his guest he took a ewe lamb belonging to his poor neighbour. David vehemently condemned the action of that rich man not knowing that prophet Nathan was merely using the story to convict him. Therefore, before you

judge and condemn Ibrahim examine your relationship with God to ensure that you have not done worse things than Ibrahim.

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman caught in adultery and plotted to use her case to implicate Jesus and accuse Him of contravening the Law of Moses which prescribed stoning to death for such offence. The Bible records that Jesus said to them, **“If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw the first stone.”** This story in John chapter 8 ended with all the woman’s accusers shamefully going away from the scene one after the other.

PowerPoint

“The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.”

Theodore Roosevelt

— “There is but one cause of human failure. And that is man’s lack of faith in his true self.”

Willian James

— “The key choices you make – apart from the natural talent you already have – will set you apart from others who have talent alone.”

John C. Maxwell

Insight

Whatever traits you have, they are expressions of some underlying abilities.
The skills and talents you possess can be used in positive or negative ways.

Dozie David Atueyi

Chapter Eleven

Turning Vices Into Virtue

There are several things that can be learned from observing children. A close study of kids in a group will reveal the peculiarities of each one. Some children are loud, seeking attention or dominating affairs. Some others are introverted, shy and easily embarrassed. Yet there are others, who may be quiet sometimes but are distinguished when they speak. These ones do not usually talk until they are spoken to. When they do, the words they use are advanced beyond their age.

There seems to be at least one ‘intellectual’ child in every group. The one that does not always play games with the others. This is the child who asks questions from adults as nothing escapes his attention. He is the one that has the final say in the group, with the information and mien of a grown-up.

When I was younger, I was that child. As a principle, I would not speak until everyone else had spoken and exposed their ignorance. Even in school, I would seat at the back and deliver the closing remarks on any discourse. After everyone had talked, they would wait to hear what I had to say. Very often, it was not kind. I was not known to be merciful. I enjoyed running down my mates and subjecting them to ridicule. It was dangerous to challenge me.

I sharpened this weapon of mine as I went through primary and secondary schools. One day, while I was in the university, there was an exchange of words with someone. True to self, I delivered the technical knockout that sent my peers reeling with laughter. When my friend, Yetunde Durand, turned to me and made a comment about my lethal tongue, I shocked her as I simply acknowledged, “I know. It is a gift!”

Indeed, I had the gift of the gab and I knew it. I had the ability to tear down people with my words and settle any contention. I had developed a reputation that few of my peers dared contend with, for fear of looking foolish. I had a weapon of war and I frequently used it.

That experience with Yetunde and some others that I relived began to affect me. I would sit alone for hours, reviewing the encounters I had as I grew up. I thought about the kids in primary school and my mates in secondary school. I began to wonder: How many people have been discouraged in life because they crossed my path? How many of my mates have suffered from depression, resulting from something I said? How many individuals today have a low self-esteem because of intellectual bullies like me?

In the Book of Jeremiah, a young man had an encounter with God, where he was called to fulfill an assignment. Just like many of us would do, his fearful reply was **“Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth”**. He was quickly reprimanded. The Lord said to him, **“Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ for you shall go to all whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.”** Then the Lord touched his mouth and said, **“Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.”**

I began to realise that, even from childhood, I had been given a gift by God. I had an unusual ability to speak words of power. The gift that made me able to pull down people had been given to build up. I began to see the potency of the gift I possess. As I grow into maturity, I purpose in my heart to use this gift for good and not for evil. Instead of the fun I derived from knocking down people, I choose to be blessed by lifting someone up.

Everyday I meet people who are going through problems. Someone needs advice. Someone needs encouragement. Someone needs wisdom for direction. While someone just needs some love and attention. I choose to bless and not curse. I commit to turn my vice into a virtue.

That was my vice. What is yours? Every one of us has had some bad habits. Some of us still exhibit some negative patterns. Whatever traits you have, they are expressions of some underlying abilities. The skills and talents you possess can be used in positive or negative ways. The choice is yours. You can make an assessment of your life and identify those anti-social tendencies. Those things that you do that affect people negatively. You can make a decision today to turn every ability into a blessing.

There are people today engaged in fraudulent activities, making money off unsuspecting victims. Every criminal mind is a potential entrepreneur. The ability to think through a fraudulent scheme and successfully execute it could have been used in building a business venture; possibly developing a successful product. Ephesians 4:28 says, **“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”**

A lady that is given to gossip and the spread of rumours exhibits the qualities of a good communicator. Her abilities can be put to use in journalism and the broadcast media. A man that is known for violence, dreaded for his fits of fury, can channel that energy into a just cause. He can become a crusader against injustice; a defender of human rights.

Whatever your vice, there is a hidden virtue. Paul the Apostle said in I Corinthians 13:11, **“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things”**. It is time to turn your vices into virtue.

PowerPoint

“We cannot become what we need to be
by remaining what we are.”

–

Max Depree

“The most common trait I have found in all
successful people is that they have
conquered the temptation to give up.”

–

Peter Lowe

“Do what you can with what you have,
where you are.”

–

Theodore Roosevelt

Insight

You know that the number of your years is not as important as to the quality of life in those years. You don't want to get old without making the desired impact you are destined to make.

Olufemi Omotayo

Chapter Twelve

The Importance Of Now

Now – this very moment – is the time to be all you always wanted to be. Now is the time to make your dream come true. Think about it: whatever your desires are, however much you want a change in your circumstance, there is no other time to make your life better than now. How many people worry over what they ought not, because they lose the significance of the moment? Look at yourself right now. Yes, what are you doing now to take you to where you wish to be?

Consider this profound statement: “We have to live but one day at a time, but we are living for eternity in that one day.” Even the seemingly insignificant moments of the day matter at the end. Those moments eventually define our lives. If you understand this, you will not bother yourself over the mistakes of the past or the aspirations of the future, as this only indicates worry. And as Hyde puts it: “To worry about tomorrow is to fail of devotion to the tasks of today, and so to spoil both days.”

That you are still alive at this moment should mean a lot to you. It should convince you about what you can still achieve while you are here. We have seen countless numbers of people who experienced a turnaround just when they had been written off. Who would have imagined that the same Peter who betrayed Christ earlier would become the champion of the fearless church in the first century? The story of the prodigal son is very instructive in many ways. In Luke

15:19, we read **“And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!”** The moment came in his life when he realised he had the opportunity to change his story, however bad it had been. And he did. Don't allow anything to hinder you from God's blessing today. Make the most of this moment.

While teaching His disciples how to pray, the Lord Jesus Christ bids them to ask for their bread, not for future years, but for “this day.” **“Give us this day our daily bread”** (Matthew 6:11), he says. This is helpful because our natural being is necessary to our spiritual well-being in this world. Therefore, after the things of God's glory, kingdom, and will, we pray for the necessary support and comfort of this present life. Understand that everyday comes with its peculiar challenges. There is bread for you on a daily basis, but are you willing to eat it? Many people often reject this ‘bread’ because it is usually wrapped in unattractive packs. But, you can be like Caleb and Joshua who referred to the same challenges that terrified others as **“bread for us”** (Numbers 14:9). You know how those men enjoyed their delicacies for a long time afterwards.

It is time you realised the significance of the moment you are reading this book now. It is both solemn and important. You are deciding to improve the quality of your life. Like former U.S. boxing great, Muhammad Ali, said: “The man who views the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life.” You know that the number of your years is not as important as to the quality of life in those years. You don't want to get old without making the desired impact you are destined to make. Surely, you don't want to look back at your life with regret. What, then, should be your preoccupation at this time? What must you do at this moment to improve the quality of your life? We have found the answer in the perfect Book.

The Bible says, in Ecclesiastes chapter nine verse ten; **“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”** This is quite encompassing, and, should be the summary of this chapter. Understand that there is not only something to be had, but something to be done in this life. Our priority is to seek after the good we should do. This is the world of service; that to come is the world of recompense. This is the world of probation and preparation for eternity. We are here for business, and expected to demonstrate good behaviour. There is now opportunity for you to direct and taken action. We must do whatever our hands find to do, whatever occasion calls for. An active hand will always find something to do that will turn to a good account. Whatever must be done, it is of necessity that we pay the price to do it here and now.

Whatever good we have an opportunity of doing we must do while we have the opportunity. We must do it with our might, with care, vigour, and resolution, whatever difficulties and discouragements we may meet with in it. Harvest days are busy days; and we must make hay while the sun shines. Serving God and working out our salvation must be done with all that is within us, however little they seem. There is good reason why we should devote ourselves to our work now. Jesus talks of the time of night, **“wherein no man can work”** (John 9:4). We have to be up and doing now with all possible diligence, because our doing-time will be done shortly and we don’t know how soon that will be. We are all going towards the grave, as everyday brings us a step nearer to it. When we are in the grave it will be too late to mend the errors of life; too late to repent and make our peace with God; too late to lay up anything in store for eternal life. It must be done now or never.

An Irish Proverb puts it succinctly: “Time is so precious that it is dealt out to us only in the smallest possible fractions – a tiny moment at a time.” What do you do with yours? Do you waste your time on unnecessary things? Do you procrastinate over important things in your life? You must overcome the thief of time that manifests through worldly entanglements, family cares, unbelief, or search for personal convenience. In the words of Halle: “To snatch the passing moment and examine it for a sign of eternity is the noblest of occupations.”

PowerPoint

“Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss it,
you will land among the stars. You and I are
like rubber bands, We are most useful
when we are stretched.”

—

Les Brown

“Of all things a leader should fear,
complacency should head the list.”

—

John C. Maxwell

“That some achieve great success is proof to
all that others can achieve it as well.”

- Abraham Lincoln

Insight

The greatest damage one can do to oneself is to aspire to be a copy of another person. You can only fulfill your own destiny and never another person's. It will be a fool's labour trying to be another person.

Ifeanyi Atueyi

Chapter Thirteen

The Labour Of Fools

I still remember one story the renowned evangelist, Dr Billy Graham, narrated during one of his crusades in 1994. He told us how a man travelled to a distant country to do business and acquire wealth. Being very determined and industrious, he succeeded in achieving his heart's desire and, consequently, decided to return to his own country after many years. He thought of various ways to take his accumulated wealth home. Eventually, he decided to sell everything he had and use the money to buy gold to be converted to cash for saving and investment. What a wonderful idea! He bought the gold and joyfully boarded a boat that would take weeks to arrive at his country. Since the gold was the only property he had, he handled it very securely. But a disaster struck.

He was relaxing at the edge of the deck and meditating on how he would convert his gold to other forms of wealth in his country. Inexplicably, that lump of precious metal suddenly slipped off his hand and fell into the deep ocean. He stood there dumbfounded and utterly confused. All the labours of years in a foreign country just vanished within seconds.

Igbo people have an adage of someone washing his hands clean to crack palm kernel to eat only for a clever and mischievous fowl hanging around the corner to grab the nut and escape. What a wasted effort!

When someone toils and there is nothing to show for it one should naturally ask himself whether the labour is worth it, after all. Sometimes, people labour with no definite purpose and, therefore, no result. It is not enough to work hard. The result must justify the effort.

People who are ignorant and lack knowledge and understanding are described as fools. In fact, the Bible says **“Fools say there is no God (Psalm 14: 1)**. They don't know God's plan for their lives. They live purposeless and meaningless lives. They lack vision for their lives and no set goals to pursue. Definitely, God who created us has a purpose for our lives and He expects us to discover that purpose in order to fulfill our destinies. If one's life purpose is not discovered, the life will not have a meaning. Every person has a measure of internal research to

conduct on himself to find out who actually he is created to be. Without this self-assessment someone may be foolishly copying another person and end up as copy and not the original. The greatest damage one can do to oneself is to aspire to be a copy of another person. You can only fulfill your own destiny and never another person's. It will be a fool's labour trying to be another person. Do not abandon your God-given originality and foolishly labour to be a copy. The labour to remain an original is justified but not the labour to be a copy. A photocopy of a document will ever remain a copy. Only the original remains original.

Proverbs 14:24b says **“The effort of fools yields only foolishness”**. Those who do not believe in God are foolish. They can never obey God or live by the standards of His truth. We can become atheists ourselves when we rely more on ourselves than God. Deut. 8:17 warns, **“Do not say in your heart 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’** But how often do we beat our chest and claim that our prosperity or success is due to our ingenuity, intelligence or hard work?

The fools' efforts wear them. They work very hard because they are ignorant of very little things to make them productive. Do you enjoy the efforts of your labour or do you labour for others to enjoy? King Solomon had this in mind when he said in Ecclesiastes 6:1-2 **“I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men: God gives a man wealth, possessions and honour, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires, but God does not enable him to enjoy them and a stranger enjoys them instead. This is meaningless and grievous evil.”** If things go as expected, everyone should enjoy the fruit of his labour.

One parable told by Jesus in Luke 12 has a lot of lessons for us. A rich farmer worked hard one season and God blessed the works of his hand. The harvest was unusually plenty and beyond his expectation just we sometimes make huge profit from our business venture. Of course, the guy was very happy and started planning what to do with his wealth. But one thing made him to be a fool. He appropriated all the glory to himself as if he caused the land to be fertile or the seeds to germinate and bear fruits. He did not realise that there are many factors which were beyond his control that contributed to the high yield. Are many of us not making the same mistake today?

He visualised how he and his family would live in abundance and comfort for years. He soliloquised, **“I will say to myself 'You have plenty good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’** Unfortunately, God dealt with him instantly by causing him to die that same night. Perhaps if a

pathologist were around then, he might have diagnosed cardiac arrest. Whatever might have been the cause of his death was determined by God. He used that guy to teach us that we should not take Him for granted when He has blessed us. We must appreciate, thank and give Him the deserved glory.

PowerPoint

“Nothing is as easy as it looks; everything takes longer than you expect; and if anything can go wrong, it will and at the worst possible moment.”

- **Murphy's Law**

“Our thought life, not our circumstances, determines our happiness.”

– **John C. Maxwell**

“The more skilled you become at precisely duplicating in your head what you want to see in your life, the more rapidly you will reach your goals.”

- **Tommy Newberry**

Insight

Many times, our success is just a step away from the point we are planning to quit. Do not leave without fulfilling your life's mission. However late you think you are in life presently, spare this moment to believe in your ability to reach your potentials.

Olufemi Omotayo

Chapter Fourteen

Don't Live To Regret

A story is told of a man who wanted to change the world. This remained his lifelong ambition until in the twilight of his life when he looked back in regret of not having fulfilled it. After a long reflection, he realised how he could have accomplished the greatest dream of his life. He understood that change must start within before it is manifested without. In other words, his life's ambition could have been achieved if he had changed his own life's course. His new direction would have been easily demonstrated to members of his family, who would carry the banner to their immediate community. An influenced community would spread the positive message to the region and whole country. An inspired nation would soon impact other nations, and in no time the world would have been influenced by that one man. That way, he would have fulfilled his life aspiration.

How many of us are like this man? How many of us have great dreams, yet do nothing about them because we think they are beyond us? William Congreve was right when he said: "It is not years that make souls grow old, but having nothing to love, nothing to hope for." Once you are still alive, you have all the resources to be all you are meant to be. God has given you talents so you can

continue His creation here on earth. Despite the many inventions around, there are still many things yet to be made. While you are still here, would you avail yourself the chance to be used to fulfil that purpose for which you are created?

Perhaps you have already given up on yourself. Perhaps you now reckon yourself a failure with no chance for a turnaround. You should know by now that the world tends to dampen people's resolve to go after their God given dreams. Becoming older can also be quite challenging, even for the most positive person. Aging refers to the irreversible biological changes that occur in all living things with the passage of time, eventually resulting in death. The effects of aging vary from one individual to another. The average life expectancy for Americans is put at 78 years, almost twice what it was in the early 1900s. In Nigeria, people are not expected to live beyond 47 years, according to the UN estimation. I know you do not agree with that opinion.

We know that several general changes take place in the human body as it ages. Hearing and vision decline, muscle strength lessens, soft tissues such as skin and blood vessels become less flexible, and there is an overall decline in body tone. One of the myths of aging is that intelligence diminishes with age. Early studies that used intelligence tests designed for children revealed that older people scored lower than young adults. However, these tests relied heavily on skills commonly used in school classrooms, such as arithmetic, and required the test to be completed within a specific time limit. Older people may require more time to answer questions, but there is relatively little decline in mental ability in healthy people at least up to age 70. There is no excuse to become senile because you are old. You have to use all the time you have here.

Curiously, the Bible seems to lend credence to those who mention 70 as the ideal age of man. Moses says in Psalm 90:10 that **“The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”** What’s the implication of this? Does this mean that anyone above that age should just take their lives? This cannot be true, because Moses himself lived longer than this, although his was the exception to the rule. In his day, life had come to be very much the same in duration as it is with us today. This age is brief compared with the men of older time; and it is nothing when contrasted with eternity. Yet, it is lifelong enough for virtue or for vice.

Swiss writer and philosopher, Henri Frédéric Amiel observed that “to know how to grow old is the masterwork of wisdom and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living.” Your age should be a thing of joy if you have made positive impact in your world so far. But if your existence is yet to contribute anything meaningful, be encouraged by the fact that you are still alive. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 9:4, **“For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.”** While there is life there is hope. It is a privilege to be able to join the living in relation, commerce, and conversation. While these remain, hope remains. If your condition is bad today, cheer up because there is hope it will be amended. Little wonder the Bible talks of a living dog being better than a dead lion. A living beggar has the comfort of, and is capable of rendering service to the world than a dead prince.

This should encourage you not to give up on your goals. Do not be like the job seeker who committed suicide shortly before his biggest breakthrough came

knocking. Many times, our success is just a step away from the point we are planning to quit. Do not leave without fulfilling your life's mission. However late you think you are in life presently, spare this moment to believe in your ability to reach your potentials. In the words of English novelist, George Eliot, "It is never too late to be who you might have been." You can still be all what God intends for you to be. Be challenged by the resolve of the famous English preacher, William Penn:

"I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness or abilities that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

PowerPoint

– “We cannot hold a torch to light another’s path without brightening our own.”

Ben Sweetland

– “There is no more noble occupation in the world than to assist another human being – to help someone succeed.”

Alan Loy McGinnis

– “In a moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing to do. The worst thing you can do is nothing.”

Theodore Roosevelt

Insight

‘Taking a bow’ involves tidying up your affairs before you depart this life. It requires that you put your house in order, establishing how things should be after you are gone.

Dozie David Atueyi

Chapter Fifteen

Take A Bow

The theatre production is almost ready. The stage is set. The costumes have been acquired. The lines of the actors have been vigorously rehearsed. Each scene is prepared and every member of the cast is familiar with the stage directions. All that remains is to practise the curtain-call.

I have had the privilege of being involved in many drama productions. I am the producer of a musical theatre troupe called *Rhythm Of The Black Man*. For many weeks, we would prepare a stage production, before the day of the actual event. We would take the lines of the play and commit them to memory. We would act out each scene several times over. Often, a five-minute presentation could take us a whole month to prepare. All the work has to be done before-hand, because there is no chance for a second take, when we get on stage. Everything has to be done right.

After the rehearsal, when we are ready for the production, the final thing we do is to practise the curtain-call. This is the last performance where all the actors appear on stage, at the end of a play, to receive applause from the audience. It is at this point that we take a bow.

In his famous work, *As You Like It*, William Shakespeare wrote, “All the world’s a stage, and the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts.” Just as Shakespeare said, the events of life often play out like a drama. Each person has a role to fulfill and so each one has to prepare accordingly.

Some of us have engaged in various projects. Some others have embarked on diverse careers. Everyone is driving a separate course determined by the role they would play in life. As we get ready to fulfill our individual functions, do we take out time to rehearse the entire drama? Do we mentally prepare for the journey of life, trying to anticipate what will happen and what we should do? Do we consider the end of the journey and prepare for that last performance? Do we get to practise taking a bow?

‘Taking a bow’ involves tidying up your affairs before you depart this life. It requires that you put your house in order, establishing how things should be after you are gone. This requires that you write a will.

A will is a legal document that states what is to happen to someone’s estate after they die. The word ‘estate’ refers to all the money, property and things of value that a person owns. It is wrongly believed that the writing of a will is for people that are advanced in age. Regardless of one’s age, it is never too early or too late to write a will. The right time to do it is now. The end of life can come for anyone at anytime and so it is best to be prepared for it.

There are those who feel that a will is only needed by the rich and powerful. The truth is that every single person, however rich or poor they may be, possesses some things of value. You may have a share of some property or commercial venture; you may have some items of sentimental importance to you; or you may have children or wards in your care. All of us have things that are dear to our hearts.

When you write a will, you take advantage of the opportunity to lay down instructions on how these things of value should be managed or distributed. It is your prerogative to establish the order. The last wishes of the departed are respected by the law. When a person passes on without a will, he is said to have died intestate. This means that there is no record to show how that person had desired to have his estate managed after his demise.

Another aspect of ‘taking a bow’ is preparing your own tribute. In his book, *Life Is A Choice*, Sir Ifeanyi Atueyi writes about ‘The End of All Things’. He says, “Have you tried to announce your own obituary and write the tributes? I wrote my own in 2004 but I need to update it now. I imagined that I was dead and individuals and groups paid their tributes... I encourage you to do this exercise for yourself. If you do it honestly, it will reveal a lot of things to you.”

I try to live my life each day by the testimonies I anticipate from others. I have ‘rehearsed’ my entire journey and visualised the end of the course. I have written the tribute that I expect and have begun to work towards fulfilling it. Just like in drama productions, I have seen that when you practise the end of your event, it influences your entire performance. When

you determine how you want people to respond to you, you will begin to fulfill that expectation.

What is the story of your life? Have you rehearsed your role? Have you begun to practise taking a bow? Have you drawn up your will and written your tributes? After living a successful life, Paul the Apostle declared in II Timothy 4:7, **“I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. Now, there is laid up for me a crown...”**

Every now and then, I rehearse my course. I practise my lines and then, I take a bow. I determine how my life will affect others. After I am gone, someone will say, “He was a man of vision. He raised people and affected lives. He taught me to discover my potential and to fulfill my purpose. This man helped me make my dreams come true.”