

If I Were to Live Again

Table of Contents

<i>Dedication</i>	iii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	iv
<i>Forward</i>	vi
<i>Trying to Live Again</i>	1
<i>Exploring Life</i>	3
<i>The Meaning of Fatherhood</i>	6
<i>Education for Life</i>	12
<i>Gifts and Talents</i>	16
<i>Starting Out Early</i>	20
<i>Mastering Time</i>	26
<i>Open Shortest Path First</i>	31
<i>Surrounded by Fellows</i>	36
<i>Between God and Men</i>	40
<i>Focus: The First Law</i>	46
<i>Grace, Truth & Morality</i>	50
<i>You Can Live Again</i>	57
<i>References</i>	62
<i>Back Cover</i>	64

Dedication

To Dad. Always loved, always respected.

To Mom. You gave us a great foundation.

To Jay, Shem and Jemmy Mine.

Acknowledgements

In my place they say “*Nwanne di na mba*” meaning, “siblings are available in foreign lands”. In line with this truth, my maternal grandfather taught me (through my mother) not to expect the rewards for goodwill solely from the immediate recipients of such goodwill. The rewards could come from other sources in distant lands as God wills. I have learnt the meaning of this profound philosophy in the few years I have lived in Ghana. I have found brothers and sisters who were not born by my mother. I have also experienced much deeper love from friends and family whom I left in Nigeria and who have also moved to other distant places over the years.

There are people who have been of immense help to me in my efforts as a writer whom I appreciate so much. They have encouraged me and helped fine-tune my ideas as I penned them down across five books. I am grateful to all of them from family and friends in Nigeria to colleagues in Airtel Nigeria and eProcess International. I would especially like to thank those who contributed to this particular book which is my first effort at non-fiction. Ijeoma Ukandu, Dorcas Olulana, Daniel Ayittey (affectionately called Uncle Danny), Marjorie Lartey and my very dear wife Joycelyn Igiri all helped to review the content and proof-read. Ijeoma has been of immense support through the years and I particularly appreciate her husband Chidi for sharing her so much with all the people whose lives she touches. Dorcas was so dedicated in helping me proof-read this book and my previous book *Entangled*. She always does it with professional-grade scrutiny. Uncle Danny has done an amazing job of encouraging me to keep writing all the ideas I share with him from time to time. He is an amazing father figure.

When I told Dr. Gloria Dzeha to do me the honour of writing the forward, I knew I had made the right choice and while she keeps saying she doesn't write very well, I beg to differ! She is an amazing writer and a great supporter. I must say her husband Rev. Eric Dzeha is greatly blessed. Prince Aaron Bredzei designed the book cover in twenty-four hours! When he sent it to me it was love at first sight. God bless you and bless *Home Media Productions*.

Many people who have touched my life in one way or another will find their names showing up in this book. I consider them contributors to the work. I may not be able to name everyone who has contributed to this book in one way or another but I do appreciate them from the bottom of my heart. Thank you all. "*Nwanne di na mba*".

Forward

Occasionally I have had the honour to share my life experiences on various platforms and it is heart-warming to note that the effort in sharing such experiences for the benefit of posterity is being perfected in the exhibition of such great effort and skill as expressed in this book “*If I Were to Live Again*” by my dear friend Kenneth Igiri.

Reading Ken’s piece, it is obvious that Ken is a shrewd student of life and what struck me even beyond this was his fertile imagination and his sheer dearth of pretension. The hook of this book is Ken’s let-it-all-hang-out honesty which makes his writing not only engaging, but relevant, for parents, students, lecturers, instructors, workers and for everyone who dares to *live again* irrespective of age, sex or race. I am not surprised that Ken’s life lessons written in this book are shrouded in wisdom that will guide you through the trajectory of life.

Exploring life, Ken expresses copiously that life never stops asking questions yet you are too embarrassed to let other people know that you do not know. Meanwhile the earlier you find answers to life’s questions the better it will be. Ken admonishes you not to fail in digging deep enough to find answers to the questions life throws at you. It is worth noting that no matter how disadvantaged your beginning appears to have been, there is no rheostat with regards to your past however the power to influence the future lies with you starting immediately.

While fatherhood remains an enigma to some males, Ken’s fatherhood experience clarifies that fatherhood has a much broader meaning than just the biological production of children. He tips his literary hat to clearly explain that every adult male is meant to be a father, and his personal fulfilment is linked to living out that purpose. And that a

father's role of natural leadership is critical to "driving" his children to explore their limits, and identify their unique strengths early enough.

Ken's experience demonstrates that you must create clear path of progress for your children deliberately by exploring most importantly their talents to the fullest; and bearing in mind that 'Talent is never enough'. Skill differentiates a person from other talented people. Be conscious of the fact that talent, dynamic skills (not just letters and figures) and attitude is what is needed concomitantly to survive and thrive on earth.

Indeed, if you were to live again, Ken's experiences instil in you the need to start life early. Life is too short. Time is the raw material of life and wasted time means wasted life. Whatever you need to do on the long haul it is advisable to start it today –investment, building, raising children, learning. Start today because if you fail to address the important things in life they become urgent. We can reduce the frequency of urgency in our lives if we address important things before they become urgent. Budget your time in the same way you budget your money.

What comes through again and again in Ken's writing is his recognition of the power of real life experiences as a tool to cope with, interpret, and navigate the real world in which we all live. And so in navigating life's path Ken demonstrates how to open the shortest path in life first by quickly accepting the reality that you are not good at everything and so its quicker to identify what you do easily and pursue it as a career or side business. You have a better chance at success with this.

Be surrounded by the friends that inspire you to make progress in your life and develop ways to deliberately grow the relationship and contrarily identify the friends who exhaust your resources consistently and gradually pull away from them.

In the matter on “between God and Men” suffusing Ken’s stories is the weight of consequences: as he encourages that you must exert every possible effort to achieve the goals you define which require human effort – strategic thinking, training, external help etc. however you work with the systems God has created for our normal life adding that you should expect miracles from God but let that be His decision not your plan ‘A’. Ken explain that keeping your focus is the first law to successful achievements and that distractions rob us of depth and limit the scope of our output particularly in our personal development.

Ken recognizes that Holy Spirit does not only tell us the truth but He guides us into all truth and that the Word of God is timeless in the face of changing traditions of men. He admonishes that you relate with everyone on the basis of God’s love and God’s truth as revealed in the Bible and major on what God majors and be silent about what He is silent about.

It’s all here. Honest expressions, serious purpose, even fearless candid opinion and Godly instruction and guidance through scriptures, when Ken boldly and bravely dares to tell you anytime you wake up is your morning and you can live again.

There is no doubt that for Ken, the choice to write this book was a labour of love to those who are younger than himself that they can learn and make the required adjustments in their own lives. Those who are older than he is or his age mates can also contemplate their own lives and begin again. For you, I hope reading it will be a great blessing as Ken pours himself out in this book *‘If I Were to Live Again’*. It is a must read for all.

*Dr. Mrs Gloria Clarissa O. Dzeha, Ph.D, M.Phil., BSc., Dip.
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Trying to Live Again

By the time this book is released, it would have been twenty years after my twentieth birthday. I do not remember everything that has happened in my life in the past twenty years neither do I remember all the details of the past forty, but I do have some significant memories. This book is about some of my significant memories and the lessons I would like to share from those memories. In our lives on earth, we are not designed to remember everything about the past. We do not need to remember the actions, events and thought patterns of our past in order for them to shape our present. Interestingly, our future is shaped by our present in much the same way. The Igbo say, "*Whenever a person wakes up, that is his morning*"

We cannot change anything about the past, though it significantly shapes our present and future but we can help those who haven't travelled the journey of life as long as we have to avoid the pitfalls we experienced in our own journey, and begin the correction of their errors earlier. This is what this book is about. I am hoping that young people will come across the lessons in the book early enough to learn something that will contribute to their lives and drive them in the right direction.

Some lessons in this book are intended to be practical tips that young people can apply, others are simply included to shape our collective thinking and maybe give the older ones among us something to teach our children, "*philosophy of life*" if you like. Whatever impact my intriguing expressions of thought have on you, it is my hope that they are all positive.

At a certain age in a person's life, it is instructive to have these kinds of reflections which can help create a better future for oneself and for

those coming after us. No matter how anyone's life seems, our imperfections as humans certain may have tainted our past. We cannot erase those stains, but we can choose to get new clothes on and chart a course different from what we are used to. So living again would mean not starting over in terms of becoming a child a gain but changing certain things about our nature and character that could have been responsible for the errors in our past.

You do not have to be my age before you start considering living again. And if you are past my age, do not think it is too late to live again. You just have to decide that it is what you want to do. Whatever your age is, my prayer is that this book will contribute to helping you rethink your life and make any adjustments necessary from the point you drop the book onwards. I dare say to you, *"Good Morning!"*

Exploring Life

I was born in a village and the first language I spoke was Igbo. I faintly remember the encounter I had with a fellow two or three-year-old in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. We were examining a little pool of water. I guess I was fascinated by the fact that I could see my reflection in the water, and his too. I made a certain comment about the water in Igbo, which I do not he understood. One thing I was very sure of was that I did not understand whatever it was he said in English when he responded. I do not even remember what he said today, but I remember I felt out of place when I could not understand him. I remember another incident in my early life. I am sure I could have been about four years old when I heard the first song I remember hearing: Madonna's *La Isla Bonita* (The Beautiful Island). Till date, every time I hear that song somewhere, I remember the blue lights that lit up the hall in that remote village of the then Imo State called *Amaiye Igbera*. My father was well known, generous and used to host parties every now and then replete with food and drinks. Incidentally, it was at one of those parties in 1986, where I had my first taste of beer at age seven: a mix of left-overs from several bottles of Guilder, Star and the likes.

A child's earliest experiences have a huge impact on the outcome of his or her life, even if he doesn't consciously remember those experiences. I believe that some experiences of our childhood stick with us so deep that even if we do not remember them consciously, they lie hidden deep in our subconscious and subtly contribute to our patterns of thinking and maybe even our actions as adults. While it is safe to say that most of us have these scripts written in our subconscious, inadvertently, as parents, we can take advantage of these realities and

attempt to deliberately shape the thinking of our children right from childhood by regulating the things they are exposed to.

I once saw a picture from my childhood when I was about two years old. I was fiddling with the record player looking very serious. My Mom told me I tended to find some electronic device to play around with at every opportunity. She also told me I always found a way to open our bedroom window from the first floor of our house in the village until my Dad secured it with binding wire. That is the nature of every new born: *always exploring*.

My son is less than two years old as at the time of this writing, and he, like all his peers, is an explorer too. Every human being who enters this world is looking for something, looking to understand everything around him/her. The more they find to explore, the greater the breath of their neural network. Do you know that unused brain cells tend to die? Do you know that at age five, a human being has built up 90% of his brain cells? (*First Things First, n.d.*) This means that as parents, we have little time to make the strongest impressions on our children's minds. We must be deliberate about making such impressions.

I think our lives would be much more productive if we carried on our curiosity throughout life. We seem to stop actively asking questions as we get older. Maybe we think it's no longer worth it learning more and more. Let me give an example: On holiday at one time while in the University, I had a short discussion with my Aunt Nene. I was letting her know that I had a certain experience while fiddling with a Personal Computer Power Module that I had opened up. She asked me a poignant question: Why didn't I visit my lecturer and ask him. You see, as we grow up, we tend to suppress our curiosity, we fail to dig deep

enough to find answers to the questions life throws at us. We choose to let some things be. Maybe we are too embarrassed to let other people know what we do not know or we are of the opinion that it really doesn't matter anymore. The fact is, life never stops asking those questions, so the earlier we find the answers, the better for us.

It is important to point out here that life has different questions for different people. Each one of us gets a different set of questions and we can get help in answering our questions, but we can never get complete answers to our questions from someone else. It just does not work that way.

Take Action

"Do not say, 'Why were the old days better than these?' For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this." Ecclesiastes 7:10

- No matter how disadvantaged your beginning appears to have been, you cannot do anything about it now. Work at influencing how the future turns out starting today.
- Never be tired of asking "Why" things are the way they are and looking for ways to make them better in your own life, and in the society you live in.

The Meaning of Fatherhood

It is not a light matter to be someone's father. Do not mistake the statement you just read for what it is not. When I say the word "father", it is quite easy to think of it as someone that impregnated your mother. That is not the complete definition. Sexual intercourse is the beginning of fatherhood, but really being a father requires more work than that.

In his book, *The Fatherhood Principle*, Myles Monroe speaks of fatherhood as follows:

"As we will see, 'fatherhood' has a much broader meaning than just the biological production of children. Fatherhood is not a choice for a male but is inherent in his very nature. The essence of the male is fatherhood. Every adult male is meant to be a father, and his personal fulfillment is linked to living out that purpose."

He further delves into the various meanings of the original word for *father* in the Hebrew as *source, nourisher, sustainer, supporter, founder, and protector*. The entire book explores these roles of a man who decides to become a father. John Maxwell in the forward to this same book, points out that fatherhood is something we learn to become over time as long as we make the effort.

I believe one of the biggest responsibilities of fatherhood is to help a child acquire an identity. First as part of a larger group - family, clan,

tribe, nation etc. - and then as a unique individual with a set of capabilities and characteristics unique to him, the child. The child cannot identify these by himself early enough for him to make significant impact in life with his uniqueness. He relies on his parents to notice that what is natural to him is rare in the world he has come in to. The newborn is not familiar with this world, his parents are, and they must guide him.

The reason why a father's role is critical in this equation is that the natural leadership responsibility in the family unit falls on the father. The child's mother tends to nurture and provide balance, giving the child a more emotional experience of life. The father must "drive" his children to explore their limits, and identify their unique strengths early enough.

A child's mind is like fresh soil, you can plant anything you want, but in planting, we have to realize that there are different types of soil, thus when you identify the soil, you get to know what would grow best or what needs to be done to improve the soil. You can identify the soil by the nature it freely expresses. You can tell loamy soil from how dark it is, clay soil from how smooth it is, sandy soil from its sharpness. In a similar fashion, we can tell what a child is capable of by what he or she exposes to us without excessive external stimulus. The twist to this is that the child will typically not expose anything to us if we do not expose the child to an environment that gives him or her room to express himself or herself.

Exposing the Child

Part of parenting involves exposing the child to a variety of scenarios that will help the parent discover his or her true gifts. Research has it that a human being grows 90% of all his/her brain cells before age five. (*First Things First, n.d.*) This means this short window is the greatest opportunity a parent has to harness the IQ of the child. Parents need to make the best use of this window while it lasts by giving the child a broad range of experiences that can help unearth the child's talents.

We must realize that whether we like it or not we are already exposing the child. He or she is seeing our actions, watching the TV Shows we watch, observing his environment and so on. What we are saying is we need to be more deliberate in utilizing this short window in a child's life so we can lay strong foundations for the child's growth mentally and spiritually. We can choose what constitutes the foundation in a child's mind. That is responsible parenting.

Learning Styles

According to *Time 4 Learning* there are a number of ways children can assimilate knowledge: (*Time 4 Learning, n.d.*)

- **Visual (spatial):** the child prefers using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
- **Aural (auditory-musical):** the child prefers using sound and music.

- **Verbal (linguistic):** the child prefers using words, both in speech and writing.
- **Physical (kinesthetic):** the child prefers using the body, hands and sense of touch.
- **Logical (mathematical):** the child prefers using logic, reasoning and systems.
- **Social (interpersonal):** the child prefers to learn in groups or with other people.
- **Solitary (intrapersonal):** the child prefers to work alone and use self-study.

Exposing a child means exploring all these learning types: exposing the child to books, to toys, to travel destinations, to cultural heritage sites, to age-appropriate videos, to various areas of learning, to influential figures in society that can act as role models and so on. The earlier a child has this exposure, the better.

When we were young, we had a number of pastimes that engaged us. These activities seemed trivial but looking back and observing the present, I find that those activities had strong potential to become brand new ideas in our contemporary culture. For example, we did lots of drawing, and created comic books. We also created adventure board games that mimicked a mix of *Monopoly* and video games we had played. I then wrote some five, ten, twenty page booklets early in my teens, short stories which were discarded at some point. I believe my parents may have missed an opportunity there (with due respect to and love for them).

Life Skills

As we advance as a race, it becomes more and more obvious that the skills a person needs to survive and thrive on earth are very dynamic. In my growing years, the focus was mostly on formal schooling but we find that many who did not attend formal school ended up making greater impact in business, sports, entertainment, and even technology than those who focused on formal schooling. They got educated in some other way and it just so happened that the education they were exposed to was the exact exposure their talents aligned with. This is what we must now do as parents, deliberately.

Some people speak of the unhealthy practice of *outsourcing* parenting to class teachers. Some parents think that once they are able to send a child to school, then all the knowledge the child requires for life are catered for. That cannot be true. Life teaches us that you need much more than of letters and numbers to succeed even in the corporate world not to talk when life throws a curved ball. My father used to tell me that life was not all about knowing how to solve mathematics and he was right. We must learn how to use mathematics to solve life.

Take Action

"My son, pay attention to my words and be willing to learn; Open your ears to my sayings. Do not let them escape from your sight; Keep them in the center of your heart. For they are life to those who find them, And healing and health to all their flesh." Proverbs 4:20-22

- Work hard at creating a clear path of progress for your children even if your parents did not do this for you deliberately.
- Work hard at getting this done as early as possible in your children's lives and with all the tools available to you.

Free Copy

Education for Life

The story is told of a university professor who went canoe riding with a local in a certain village. While the river was friendly he kept asking the uneducated man whether he had learnt such subjects as ontology, physiotherapy, eschatology, astronomy etc. (of course I made these ones up). At the end of each question he would tell him how horrible his life was because he had not learnt any of these subjects and how disconnected he was from civilization. It so happened that the river got upset with his intellectual ranting and became quite turbulent. At the peak of the turbulence, the canoe man asked the professor, "Sir, have you by any chance studied 'swimology'?" to which he answered "No" his voice now shaking. The canoe man responded, "Then I am afraid your life has ended!"

I earlier mentioned something my father told me when I was a child, a teenager to be precise. He knew I had a knack for solving mathematical problems. Genetically, I believe I got this capability from my mother's side of the family, in my father's lineage the talents are more literary. He said to me in Igbo "Being intelligent is not just about knowing how to solve mathematical equations". It was poignant! I thought at that time he was regretful about his inability to study engineering because of his math limitations but that was not it. He said something that came out of deep wisdom: life is a lot more complex than the classes we take in formal school. All parents should realize this and expose their children to a much wider scope in learning. That is the best way to make sure your child is prepared for life, prepared to actually thrive in life not just survive. The value of our education should be measured not by how much we know in our heads but how much we do with

what we know and how much impact that expression of our knowledge is having on us, our families and communities as well as on the world at large.

In the pre-colonial days, educating a child was simple. It meant having that child toe the line of his ancestors. If they were farmers, as early as possible in life he would join the family in going to the farm and learn the ropes by *doing*. If his father was a hunter or fisherman, or juju priest, he would also learn this trade. So each family was highly specialized in their trade but the key problem was hardly anything was documented so each generation seemed to repeat the cycles of the previous generation. They never built upon knowledge. However, the point I am making here is that the education was specific to the needs of the child and the society; there was hardly any vain knowledge. I heard the story of an encounter Lee Kuan Yew had with Dr. Kwame Nkrumah when the latter was hosting a dinner with senior ministers of his cabinet to honour the thirty-year-old new vice-chancellor of the University of Ghana. Lee was shocked that of all the subjects that could have been chosen to aid the development of Ghana, the young man studied Classics – Latin and Greek! There was a celebration in honour of this young man because the focus was on the fact that he had earned the title “graduate” not necessarily what he was going to do with the education he had received in England. (Yew, 2000).

In the true story movie *Freedom Writers* (2007), a young school teacher referred to as Miss. G was tasked with impacting the lives of a bunch of street kids, gangsters and the like who were part of a school program. She was in a dilemma because she was not provided any tools or books to help these kids. She had to take two additional jobs to fund books and other materials she needed to work with. One of the most impactful experiences she gave these teenagers was a trip to a place called New

Port where they learnt about the injustices faced by the Jews. She felt that exposing them to something other than their gang-infested, gun-infested small town would help them think a bit differently. It worked! They saw things differently. They were educated in an unconventional way and transformed by this unconventional approach.

You know, in today's ultra-fast paced world, whatever knowledge we are passing on to our children is likely to be no longer relevant before they get out of school. That's a personal opinion and largely applies to the developing world. I am sure most people in my part of the world would agree. It follows then that it is more important to teach children how to learn than to make them simply remember facts from outdated books. Each child is unique and both parents and teachers must keenly observe them to identify possible ways to help them achieve the very best with their lives.

Take Action

"But beyond this my son, [about going further than the words given by one Shepherd], be warned: the writing of many books is endless [so do not believe everything you read], and excessive study and devotion to books is wearying to the body" Ecclesiastes 12:12

- Pass on to your children the need to value knowledge – sit down with them and tell them this, read with them - but more importantly pass on to them the need to *utilize* knowledge

- Expose your children to learning opportunities that are not available in formal school – travel to historical sites, schedule meetings with influential people, have them participate in educative events and so on. Teach them about life.

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Gifts and Talents

I was privileged to be born into a significantly gifted family. My father told me how he made battery powered lights when he was a boy in the village. He wrote his own unpublished 300+ page work of fiction with an incredible level of detail and literary prowess. Practically every one of my Dad's children can create impressive works of visual art, almost everyone sings extremely well and so on. And of course, some of us can write. We were all born with these creative abilities and have used some of them to varying degrees both as hobbies and for commercial purposes.

One of the saddest things in the world is to see a very talented person grow up and fail to develop such talents into useful careers or occupations that could help that person make income or impact or even both. Sometimes such failures come about because the subject did not have sufficient guidance early enough to explore their talent fully. It could also come about because that person failed to listen to those who could help him reach great heights by virtue of his gifting. In many cases, the problem is no fault of the subject – he could just be disadvantaged in terms of his family's social status or access to opportunities to express such talent.

The story is told of an uncle of mine who was exceptionally good at manipulating electronic circuits. He built and fixed electronic devices at a time when there was no Internet to "Google" or "Bing" knowledge and no "YouTube" to watch *How-tos* on. He thrived in the 1980s. My father told me he once designed and built an offering box which would not open by any means except when it was full. The problem was that when an opportunity came for him to attend University in Sokoto, Nigeria, he refused, concluding that he was smarter than 'all those

Hausa people'. Talent is great but attitude takes people further than talent. My uncle is still very smart, very talented and very good at electronics – discrete devices – but he can no longer compete in the twenty-first century so he has to make do with fixing home appliances in my hometown. Talent is good, attitude is better.

Knowing the limits of our talent is akin to knowing the limits of ourselves. The world will leave us behind if we fail to assess ourselves properly and identify the point beyond which merely being talented is insufficient. Talking about limits, another story comes to mind. I was in Senior Secondary School II when I was chosen among others to represent my school in a debate with other schools. Right now I cannot even remember what the topic of the debate was but there is something I remember very strongly about the moderator's comment when we eventually came second place. I was the lead debater for my school and was doing very well, the audience was clapping at my every point until I ran out of points. Having run out of points, I decided to do some on-the-spot thinking but which didn't help because everyone noticed I was grappling with words.

What the moderator said that caught my attention was "... bow out when the ovation is loudest". I have never forgotten that saying. I was good at talking, my diction was good, and my confidence was good. One thing that was just too good was my hubris! It did not have to be that good.

You see, it is human nature for people to applaud you when you are of good use to them. The applause is not exactly for you as a person, rather it is what you bring to the table – your output - that is being applauded. Let's liken it to a work environment. Imagine you have been employed to address a particular serious within an organization. Though, you were employed as a permanent staff, in reality, once you solve that key problem and create a process around it, you are really not so necessary anymore. That may be the best time to change roles and add value in

another way or simply move to another environment – that moment when your achievements are fresh in the minds of stakeholders and you are still loved. You will not be needed indefinitely.

There is another aspect of being gifted which run in my family: the tendency to assume we can do everything or that every other person's method of arriving at an answer is not valid. This disposition leads us to try too hard to solve all problems that come our way. I remember living in my Aunt Oyiri's house during my first year in the university. On a certain occasion, I was working out some math problem and I spent so much time on it that I got frustrated. I tried to run it by her as she has a Master's degree in mathematics but her response was a bigger lesson about life. She told me sometimes you have to let a problem be for some time and come back to it later rather than exhausting yourself trying to solve the problem. This lesson was extended to such matters as delegation and the awareness that not all problems can be solved! Being gifted doesn't mean being omnipotent.

Mentally exhausting oneself trying to solve a problem typically leads to one directional thinking. One tends to keep trying the same solution over and over without success. Taking a break, adopting a "workaround" or letting someone else look at the problem could be a much wiser approach to looking at the issue. Not all problems are meant to be solved in your lifetime and certainly not all problems are meant to be solved by you.

Overconfidence is another possible trap for people who are talented. In the year 2009, I tried out Multi-level Marketing for the first time. I had heard on the surface how a lot of people had earned serious amounts of money through the scheme and I decided I could do it. What could it possibly take to get three down lines? I had many friends. I had a similar disposition when I wrote my first book in 2011. I had over one thousand friends on Social Media and otherwise so I figured there was no way I would not sell one thousand copies of *Njansi* in the first few

months. I assumed people would be willing to go online and order my book and get bespoke printed copies from Authorhouse at a very expensive rate for a new author. This innate confidence repeated itself in 2016 when I started trying out a number of business ideas with very smart young people. Many failed. These failures came from my failure to deeply analyze the pros and cons of the opportunities that were coming my way. They came from the ease with which I was able to release money as Startup capital. It was too easy to convince me that a business idea would work and the money would be recouped in a short time. It was too easy to get me to trust someone. The dynamics of life are much more complex than that and the way God designed the universe is such that we simply cannot override laws by much prayer (I have learned this along the way). Those who do not believe but obey the laws appear to make more progress than those who believe and pray much but have little understanding of the laws already at work in creation.

Take Action

- Explore your talents to the fullest even if you are over sixty. However, this goes to young people, remember that talent is not an excuse for pride.
- As talented as you are, work at acquiring *skill* in the area where you discover you are talented. Like someone would say, 'Talent is never enough'. Skill differentiates you from other talented people.

Starting Out Early

A friend of mine told me the story of his wealth. He joined an investment club while still in school who made it their aim to set aside one thousand naira monthly and put in the stock market. He had earlier told me back in secondary school that he wanted to make his first million at age twenty-one. Now he wasn't the best student in class back in the day but he learnt something that wasn't taught in school: the stock market! (They do say the "C" students always end up employing the "A" students) (*Hardy, n.d.*). In my estimation, he definitely achieved his dream, he is very wealthy and currently owns his own company. I believe he succeeded at achieving his dream because he knew what his dream was early enough and chose to go after it early enough.

We are told that Mr. Williams started teaching his daughters Venus and Serena to play tennis at a very young age (*Wikipedia, n.d.*). Both champions had won medals at age 20 and 19 respectively. Tennis is what has made both ladies significant in the world and they are still playing at almost 40. Most Information Technology big wigs we know started coding in college or even before then. They broke into something new and needed enough time to make all the mistakes life would allow them before they would stop paying attention. One thing starting out early does for you is that it gives you enough room to make mistakes and recover. You confidently take risks and experiment knowing that time is still on your side. I remember an admonition I got from my Aunt Nene to learn the keyboard when she noticed I could sing well. I didn't. Today two of my brothers play the keyboard and other instruments. I do too, not in front of crowds though but at least when I strike those keys, some kind of sound definitely comes off the instrument.

Let's consider child birth a bit. Marriage happens at different points in life for different people, but have you noticed that being fifty and talking about grand-children makes the thought of retirement lighter? If you are fifty and you are still discussing secondary school fees, then you might find the thought of retirement uncomfortable. I do understand cases where people have difficulty having children but if one has the opportunity to marry and give birth early, it is likely to be the better route. If something is inevitable, why procrastinate?

In Dave Ramsey's book *Dave Ramsey's Complete Guide To Money* (Ramsey, 2014), he describes an amazing chart that shows that if one starts saving on compound interest just six years before his peers, he will end up much richer at age sixty-five! Just by starting earlier.

AGE	BEN INVESTS:		ARTHUR INVESTS:	
19	\$2,000.00	\$2,240.00		
20	\$2,000.00	\$4,749.00		
21	\$2,000.00	\$7,558.00		
22	\$2,000.00	\$10,706.00		
23	\$2,000.00	\$14,230.00		
24	\$2,000.00	\$18,178.00		
25	\$2,000.00	\$22,599.00		
26	\$2,000.00	\$27,551.00		
27	\$0.00	\$30,857.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,240.00
28	\$0.00	\$34,560.00	\$2,000.00	\$4,749.00
29	\$0.00	\$38,708.00	\$2,000.00	\$7,558.00
30	\$0.00	\$43,352.00	\$2,000.00	\$10,706.00
31	\$0.00	\$48,554.00	\$2,000.00	\$14,230.00
32	\$0.00	\$54,381.00	\$2,000.00	\$18,178.00
33	\$0.00	\$60,907.00	\$2,000.00	\$22,599.00

AGE	BEN INVESTS:		ARTHUR INVESTS:	
34	\$0.00	\$68,216.00	\$2,000.00	\$27,551.00
35	\$0.00	\$76,802.00	\$2,000.00	\$33,097.00
36	\$0.00	\$85,570.00	\$2,000.00	\$39,309.00
37	\$0.00	\$95,383.00	\$2,000.00	\$46,226.00
38	\$0.00	\$107,339.00	\$2,000.00	\$54,058.00
39	\$0.00	\$120,220.00	\$2,000.00	\$62,785.00
40	\$0.00	\$134,646.00	\$2,000.00	\$72,559.00
41	\$0.00	\$150,804.00	\$2,000.00	\$83,506.00
42	\$0.00	\$168,900.00	\$2,000.00	\$95,767.00
43	\$0.00	\$189,168.00	\$2,000.00	\$109,499.00
44	\$0.00	\$211,869.00	\$2,000.00	\$124,879.00
45	\$0.00	\$237,293.00	\$2,000.00	\$142,104.00
46	\$0.00	\$265,768.00	\$2,000.00	\$161,396.00
47	\$0.00	\$297,660.00	\$2,000.00	\$183,004.00
48	\$0.00	\$333,379.00	\$2,000.00	\$207,204.00
49	\$0.00	\$373,385.00	\$2,000.00	\$234,308.00
50	\$0.00	\$418,191.00	\$2,000.00	\$264,665.00
51	\$0.00	\$468,374.00	\$2,000.00	\$298,665.00
52	\$0.00	\$524,579.00	\$2,000.00	\$336,745.00
53	\$0.00	\$587,528.00	\$2,000.00	\$379,394.00
54	\$0.00	\$658,032.00	\$2,000.00	\$427,161.00
55	\$0.00	\$736,995.00	\$2,000.00	\$480,660.00
56	\$0.00	\$825,435.00	\$2,000.00	\$540,579.00
57	\$0.00	\$924,487.00	\$2,000.00	\$607,688.00
58	\$0.00	\$1,035,425.00	\$2,000.00	\$682,851.00
59	\$0.00	\$1,159,676.00	\$2,000.00	\$767,033.00
60	\$0.00	\$1,298,837.00	\$2,000.00	\$861,317.00
61	\$0.00	\$1,454,698.00	\$2,000.00	\$966,915.00

AGE	BEN INVESTS:		ARTHUR INVESTS:	
62	\$0.00	\$1,629,261.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,085,185.00
63	\$0.00	\$1,824,773.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,217,647.00
64	\$0.00	\$2,043,746.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,366,005.00
65	\$0.00	\$2,288,996.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,532,166.00

Table. 1 Compound Interest Source: <https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/how-teens-can-become-millionaires>

Observe closely that both Ben and Arthur are investing \$2000.00 annually. Observe also that while Ben *stops* investing at age 26, Arthur *starts* investing at age 27. Ben *still* ends up richer than Arthur by over \$700,000.00. Take note that Ben never invests another dime after age 26, his money just keeps working for him.

This concept applies to schooling, learning skills, getting married, having children and so on. In the case of having children, we find that life is much easier at age sixty as a grandparent than as the father of a teenager. That easier life can happen when the man gives birth to his first child before age thirty.

Our lives are shorter than we think. If we are ever going to get anything done in the long term, it is wise to start doing it early enough. Once a person crosses age forty, it becomes more and more difficult to dramatically change the course of their lives. Difficult, but definitely possible. So those who are yet to hit forty have a good chance to make

an urgent change. Those who are above forty have to work harder at this.

I listened to a very inspiring piece some time ago delivered by Uncle James Ebo Whyte on Joy FM Radio, Accra. He called it *Ten Things You Will Regret at Age 60*. Apparently it was later documented by a lady called Mawuenam Agbozo on her blog (Agbozo, 2017). The first on the list reads thus:

“Not making the most of time: Time is the raw material of life, when you waste time, you’re wasting your life. There’s the need to live life with a sense of urgency, knowing that time is running ahead each day and it never stops to take a break, neither does it retract to cause any changes to the events that have already passed through its hands. As a young person, it’s important to make time management a personal goal or mission. Don’t just learn to manage your time at work, learn to manage your life ‘time’ and you’ll realize that every other thing fits in perfectly. You don’t want to wait till you’re 60 or weak and feeble before you wish you had taken certain chances and chased certain opportunities. Don’t accept the friend request of ‘had I known?’” (Agbozo, 2017).

Take Action

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead) where you are going.” Ecclesiastes 9:10

- Start investing today! Find an option that has stood the test of time and ask about the best way to start putting money away for the long term today.
- Whatever else you need to do on the long haul, start it today – building, raising children, learning. Start today.

Free Copy

Mastering Time

Most people over forty have one common opinion about life: life is short. I think this is a perception; a perception born out of the experience common to all of us called memory. We remember. And when we do remember, everything seems like not so long ago. We remember what it was like to depend on our parents for everything, we remember when we got married, we remember our first car. We cannot believe all the time that has passed us by and now we are over forty years of age.

In the third quarter of 2018 while I was teaching my Sunday school class, we got into the discussion of daily devotion with the children. One of the children, Nana Ama by name shocked all of us facilitators by asking an interesting question: “What if you don’t have time?” She was asking what to do if one finds that he or she does not have time to read the Bible. This was shocking to us not because it was far-fetched but because she was a child. How could a ten-year-old child complain about not having sufficient time? Well I decided to burst her bubble by demonstrating to her that she must have been wasting a lot of time watching television. Much to my chagrin, this was not the case!


I asked Nana Ama what she did every hour, hour by hour starting at 5:00 AM the previous day, Saturday and she was able to account for every single hour. I managed to wriggle out of this situation by emphasizing she would read the Bible between 7:00 PM and 8:00 PM which was her bed time. I wriggled out of that discussion with a ten-year-old, but the thought never left me that she could account for every hour of her Saturday, but I and many other adults often cannot do that. We cannot even account reasonably for every hour of our work day sometimes.

According to *Kalique Abrasax*, a 14,000-year-old elite from Jupiter, “In your world, people are used to fighting for resources... like oil, or minerals, or land. But when you have access to the vastness of space, you realize there’s only one resource worth fighting over: *More time*. Time is the single most precious commodity in the universe.” She made this statement in the 2015 movie, *Jupiter Ascending* which was essentially about a family which used humans to generate a serum that renewed their youth. Much as this is fiction, the truth expressed in this statement regarding time is something that has stayed with me since I watched the movie. Time is definitely the most precious commodity in the universe and in the case of real life, we do not have a serum to reclaim it. If one loses money in business, there is still chance that he can recoup his loss. On the contrary, time is dramatically different, every second lost is lost forever.

Time is irreversible. Time is a measure of life so anyone wasting your time is invariably wasting your life. Dr. Otobil in his book *Seize Your Kairos Moment* (Otobil, 2012) states that the Greeks had two words for time: *chronos* and *kairos*. While *chronos* refers to the time measured on our clocks and calendars, *kairos* refers to seasons, chunks of clock time in our lives representing windows of opportunity of sorts. Kairos may be a season, but it is based on the underlying principle that we live in a finite amount of time on this planet. As we grow older we realize how finite that amount of time is. How short. We recall all the things we could have done with all the time we don’t have. We regret all the efforts we put into pursuing things that did not add value to our lives. Time is the single most important commodity in the universe.

When speaking about opportunity, we often hear people say, one has to be prepared. Preparation takes time. Preparation cures us of our

ignorance. When we take the time to prepare, we spend less time grappling with surprises. In his book *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent* (Hummel, 1997), Charles E. Hummel discussed the relationship between what is important and what is urgent. Oftentimes, we are caught up fighting urgent fires only because we failed to address important things at the appropriate time. Important things become urgent because we fail to address them on time. We can reduce the frequency of fire-fighting in our lives if we address important things before they become urgent. One great example is learning.



I remember a discussion I had with a senior colleague in a meeting back in 2009 or so: Martin Nwoga. Martin was an astute professional with a Microsoft background. He was one of those Senior Managers who hadn't forgotten his days as a *techie*. He knew *everything*! We were in a meeting discussing the causes of slowness on the Remedy AR System and I was alluding to the fact that these were most likely related to network problems when he started probing further with questions I did not understand much less have answers to. He asked what kind of servers hosted the Remedy service and someone in the Windows Team answered, "Blades", an expression I learnt in that meeting. He asked how many Network Interface Cards the servers hosting these boxes had but I had never been to the data centre. At some point as I spoke more and more he made a statement I will never forget, "... you are digging a hole and the hole is getting deeper ..." I missed it because I had not taken the time to understand the environment before speaking about it. Time taken to learn at significant levels of depth saves us mistakes in life and embarrassments in public.

Time Consumers

In the 21st century, smart people have devised a variety of fancy things that have the capacity to take up large amounts of our time. Great movies, 24x7 global television, Social Media, sports and so on. A person can have all twenty-four hours of his day taken up by these attractions day after day for many years until he finds that the activities he has been engaged in for a few years are adding nothing to his life's purpose. This was my experience at some point. Consider each day of your life. Analyze the day and determine what each hour was spent doing, is it adding up to your life's goal?

I am not saying these great inventions are completely useless or devilish, I am saying they have to be controlled and aligned with your purpose. We cannot do everything we want with life because our resources, including time, are limited. So we have to manage time effectively and sometimes aggressively. Today I still use Social Media and I still watch television, but I am constantly questioning myself on what contribution each programme, each chat, each post is really making to my life because, let's face it, the time we have is actually the life we have and it is very, very finite; very, very limited.

Time consumers can be things but time consumers are, unfortunately, people. To what extent are the phone calls and conversations you are having contributing anything meaningful to your life, community or nature. Even when we engage in discussions that seem valuable – politics, scriptures, family ... – what is the eventual outcome of such discussions? What are the action points? If nothing comes out of those discussions, then they are mere babbling, an utter waste of time. If our relationships are consumed with all this babbling then we need to review those relationships. Hard but true.

Take Action

"The days of our life are seventy years – Or even, if because of strength, eighty years; Yet their pride [in additional years] is only labor and sorrow, For it is soon gone and we fly away. Who understands the power of Your anger? [Who connects this brevity of life among us with Your judgment of sin?] And Your wrath, [who connects it] with the [reverent] fear that is due You? So teach us to number our days, That we may cultivate and bring to You a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:10-12 (AMP)

- Budget your time in the same way you budget your money. Time as a resource is more valuable than money. When there is no plan for a particular slot, you are more likely to squander it.
- Identify the activities, habits and people that are wasting your time and cut them off. This is much harder to do than how easily I have written it but it must be done if you are going to make significant progress.

Open Shortest Path First

I remember a lady named Tina in NCCF Family house back in 2005 for her candid outspoken nature. She was from Bayelsa state, almost six foot five and very dark. I remember only few things about her but one of the things that made her image stick to my mind was the conversation we had around “the path of least resistance”. We had a programme in the fellowship during which I participated in a section where I was supposed to read the news. She was very impressed with my performance on stage and asked what I studied in school. She was visibly surprised that I studied Electrical/Electronic Engineering. She thought I would make a good journalist, but I didn't think of the arts as a career. She more or less explained to me that people are more successful in life when they “... follow the path of least resistance” I interpreted this to mean people should explore the things that they can do easily if they want to be successful. While I might not have followed her advice strictly, I certainly agree with it and it has stuck with me: the path of least resistance.

However, there are two ways to look at it. One way is to consider this path of least resistance as the way you approach life such that your potential is fully maximized and you succeed faster. The other way is to think of this path of least resistance as the lazy path, the path that requires the least amount of effort. Everyone wants an easy life but often the rewards of hard work outweigh the rewards of easy work but of course we know from experience that this is not always true. We have examples of people who really succeeded because they pursued what they found easy to do as a lifelong career. A great example is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. We also have examples of people who worked hard and long at something that didn't seem to be working but

at last gave a major breakthrough, a breakthrough that outlived them by decades: Thomas Edison.

I had another experience while working for Bharti Airtel in Lagos Nigeria (then called Zain Nigeria) which speaks to this issue. I have always been what some people might call a *workaholic*, putting in extra hours that are in no way accounted for by my take-home pay. I was at it again one Saturday evening, if I remember correctly, at the Call Centre building in Iganmu. I was then what they called a “Temporary Staff” by those who were called “Permanent Staff”. These terms when you really think about it are actually relative. Temporary only meant my contract had to be renewed yearly; permanent staff had the luxury of being around much longer – that is until they were fired or decided to resign. So, one of the Permanent Staffers happened to come around our office area and he was very upset on my behalf, he ranted: “Kenneth, what are you still doing here? Go home ... all the work you have been doing, what has come out of it? They promoted your colleagues and did not promote you!” (Paraphrased).

Now, his statement referred he was referring to the fact that the two ladies who joined the company as temporary staffers at the same time as I had close to two years earlier had been absorbed offered permanent roles by the company. I was hurt by his statement but was encouraged by the insights I got from listening to Bible Teaching I had been hearing from Pastor Poju Oyemade which can be partly summarized by the verse in Colossians 3:23-25:

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for[a] you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality”

I learned from him that the “...reward of the inheritance ...” happens when God gives you what is yours because you have taken care of what was another man’s. I saw work that way, not necessarily something I was doing for immediate or easy rewards. And, it so happened that in 2009, I was also absorbed by a series of events which gave me the equivalent of a Level 5 position in Integrated Turnkey Solutions, a company which took over IT Operations for Bharti Airtel.

On to another example. The shortest path could also be defined as the path God choses for one. Sometime in late 2009, I began getting impressions to study SQL Server, strong impressions in my spirit. I dare say that I believe God was telling me to take that route in my career. I procrastinated till September 2010, when I eventually took the *Implementation and Maintenance* exam. In mid-2011, an opportunity came from Accra via a phone call asking for a staffer skilled in SQL Server for employment. A senior executive of Airtel came down from the fifth floor to the fourth floor and asked, “Who knows SQL Server?” Another colleague, Yinka pointed in my direction. From then on, I was introduced to Babatunde Akinode, a former Airtel employee who was then working in Accra and after three telephone interviews I was employed by eProcess International S.A. and resumed work in January, 2012. Let me mention two things in this story: (1) People knew I was studying SQL Server thus Yinka was able to refer to me. (2) I had people who did not think SQL Server was lucrative and I actually had a senior colleague who thought I should rather be studying Oracle Database. Right now, SQL Server has become even a more significant player in the database arena whatever people might think and it was my *Shortest Path First* to both my current database Administrator Career (which includes working with Oracle) and to a good job outside my country of birth.

It is important to note that within the context of our discussion in this book, the shortest path is not a short cut. Rather, it is the path designed for *you*, a path you are equipped for. Each person needs to identify that shortest path as early in life as possible, stick with it, explore it, expand the possibilities provided along that path and eventually become significant. Open Shortest Path *First*. There are cases where after exploring the shortest path, the path opens up opportunities to other paths, giving the person involved an opportunity to diversify. This is more likely to happen if we have opened the shortest path *first* as early as possible in life. In his discussion on *Ten Possible Streams of Income* at the University of Ghana in February 2017 (Ocran, 2017), Rev. Albert Ocran described what he called *Strategic Leveraging*. He spoke of how his only talent was *speaking* but *he was able to use this one talent* to open other avenues. *Speaking was the shortest path to his success*, he opened it first and today based on his gift of speaking, he writes, he works as a pastor, he organizes self-help events, and he is on radio. The first door he opened ended up opening other doors.

Take Action

“But the Lord replied to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered and anxious about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part [that which is to her advantage], which will not be taken away from her” Luke 10:41-42

- Quickly accept the reality that you are not good at everything. Identify what you do easily and pursue it as a career or side business. You have a better chance at success with this.

- Identify the activities, habits and people that are wasting your time and cut them off. This is much harder to do than how easily I have written it but it must be done if you are going to make significant progress.

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Surrounded by Fellows

When I got into Federal University of Technology, Owerri, I encountered a whole new set of difficulties when compared with secondary school. You see, I was very good in O' Levels both in JSS 3 and SSS 3 but then came the UME which I wrote three times for some reason. Eventually, I got into the University a few weeks later than my colleagues and had to share a bed with a great friend of mine Ndubuisi Nwamara. My story is not so different from the majority of Nigerian graduates, but it does affect us differently and we all interpret these experiences differently consciously or subconsciously.

One key factor that came to play was the need to be in class before 7:00 AM if you wanted to be in the first three rows among the over 180 students in class. It became obvious along the line that smart folks stayed in the front rows. A number of advantages came with sitting in this position: the lecturer sees your face regularly and comes to know you as one of his students, you see the chalk board and hear the lecturer clearly, you are safe from the consequences of the misbehaviour of all those 'back benchers'. Though the limited capacity and poor structure of the lecture halls was not your fault, you were considered unserious if you happened to sit at the back especially if you did so consistently.

The story I just told describes the well-known adage: birds of a feather flock together. It is important wherever you are in life to deliberately form and define your relationships. The information you are exposed to, the opportunities that come your way and even the way people perceive you can be determined by your relationships. As such, forming relationships in life should be a very deliberate thing. We must make the effort to choose whom we associate with. That choice happens

in two directions, as someone you choose to associate with must also be willing to choose you in return. Hence, you must be a person of value in order to attract valuable people. This is a good place to talk about the different kinds of relationships that can unfold between two people. Some relationships are “mutualistic” in that both parties benefit from the relationship. Others are “parasitic” where one predominantly benefits from the relationship and harms the other party. The third type is in between, called “commensalism” where one party helps the other with no harm done to the helper. Now these terms are culled from Biology but they are relevant in human relationships. Some people tend to milk you consistently, sapping your resources – time, money and energy without reciprocating in any way while others feel the need to reciprocate. Parasites tend to distract one from one’s vision if you let them.

Often we naturally gravitate towards people who find our typical discussion topics interesting, who listen to us and maybe even those who praise us more than otherwise. I think most people who I have been close to in my life have either been commensals or parasites. This happens because of my willingness and tendency to help at the least opportunity a disposition which certain people love to take advantage of. It happens in many different ways: people trying to get someone else to do things for them, give them money when they already have enough, take risks on behalf of a group and so on. Interestingly, I typically can identify those who want something from me and those who want me as part of their lives but like everyone else, I just let the whole mix of symbiotic relationships carry on.

In our lives we must make sufficient time for and make effort to build sound relationships. Time to talk for extended periods of time, time to stop and look into the eyes of our fellows and listen, time to understand other people’s feelings and struggles, time to both laugh and cry with others. Building real relationships takes deliberate action. On the other

hand, we must also be wise enough to know those who are with us in truth.

"When Jehu left there, he met Jehonadab son of Recab, who was coming to meet him. After they had greeted each other, Jehu said to him, "Are you as loyal to me as I am to you?" "Yes, I am," Jehonadab replied. "If you are," Jehu said, "then give me your hand." So Jehonadab put out his hand, and Jehu helped him into the chariot." II Kings 10:15

The above verse is an eye-opener. Not everyone you are ready to loan money is ready to return the favour in your time of need. Not everyone you are eager to give a call or pay a visit is eager to reciprocate same. Not everyone can stand up for you in the face of danger as you would if roles were reversed. Most of the time we really cannot tell whether our friend is as friendly as we would love them to be. Trust is pricy, loyalty is rare.

My mother had an interesting mantra regarding my friends who always seem to be getting more out of the relationship than myself. I will break it down to three points:

1. We are not yet in Heaven
2. Deal with fellow humans with wisdom
3. Don't give opportunity to people to sin

When dealing with fellow humans, you must be aware of our common weaknesses and the natural tendency to see to our own safety first – survival of the fittest. This is the case even among believers in Jesus Christ. When resources are scarce or danger is in the air, it typically becomes *'every man for himself, God for us all'*. In reading Dave Ramesey's Complete Guide to Money one of the scriptural things he pointed out was that a Christian who cannot feed his family is worse than an infidel. This discussion of his had a strong impact on me not because I cannot

fend for my family – nuclear and extended – but because I have been in situations where I had to put a family need on hold because I had met the need of some stranger or loaned money to a brother!

Lest I make friendships seem more dangerous than they actually are, I should talk about other kinds of people. I have found in my life that there are certain people who do not make excessive effort to keep in touch. They hardly ask for anything or expect anything but whenever we are in touch, we feel the connection. In fact, for some of them, the connection shows up at the first encounter. Such people are real fellows. No matter how long you are away from them, once you meet again, you feel like siblings. There is no pressure to impress or perform, no competition, no badgering about needs, no flattery. Surround yourself with such fellows.

Take Action

“Many a man proclaims his own loyalty and goodness, But who can find a faithful and trustworthy man?” Proverbs 20:6 (AMP)

- Identify the friends that inspire you to make progress in your life and develop ways to deliberately grow the relationship – planned visits, exchange of value, joint activities and heart to heart talk.
- Identify the friends who exhaust your resources consistently and gradually pull away from them – politely refuse incessant requests, avoid meetings that don’t add value.
- Desist from any tendency in you to take advantage of your relationships unduly. Endeavour to be more of a *giver* than a *receiver*.

Between God and Men

Who gets the praise for everything? Who gets the blame for everything? The typical Christian worldview posits that we should ascribe the glory for all that happens in our lives to God. When people say this they are often speaking about positive events and achievements. Should we also blame Him for every evil that occurs in our lives and the world? This is the common question the atheist would ask: if there is a God why does he allow evil to happen?

When I was in the University, my fourth year, my younger brother made an effort to get admission to study Chemistry. The system back then was such that it was easier to gain admission by paying a certain amount of money or knowing one professor or the other than by achieving a passing score. During that period, we happened to be hanging around in school for one reason or another. A younger fellow, one year my junior asked me whether I wasn't going to lobby to make sure my brother got into our school. I declined. I declined not because I was laid back or timid but because I felt God was in control of the situation and would work out the admission in his own way. Incidentally, my brother never got admitted to my school.

A similar story would be when I had the opportunity to get a job at Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG). It was a very lucrative offer and I have gone through two written test which I passed. I received communication that I had been selected to participate in an interview of sorts at their assessment centre, the last stage before the decision would be taken whether to employ me or not. The dilemma was that I had been employed as a contract staff just a week or two before I got this invitation and the date of this assessment was my second day of work at Airtel Nigeria as a contract staff. I called my contact at the

employment agency and let her in on it but she was at a loss as to what to do too. I never went for the session with NLNG.

In both stories there were certain aspects of my Faith that were at play. In my brother's case I did not believe it was necessary to interfere with the process God was allowing to unfold especially in such a life-impacting decision as the university he would attend. I believed that if God wanted to have him in my school, he would get it done as long as we did what was expected of us officially and avoided lobbying. In the second case there was a bit more complexity around the situation but one key aspect was that I didn't want to have to take an excuse on my second day of work. In fact, I actually got a follow up call from NLNG on the same day reminding me of the invitation but I mentioned that I had gotten another offer already. Many people I tell this story say I missed a huge opportunity but who can really tell whether one path could have been better off than the other. I certainly cannot tell: we are not allowed to know *what could have happened*.

The point of the two stories I have shared in this chapter is the dilemma of where our efforts must stop and God must work. It is a dilemma many people have not been able to actually decipher. Back in school, folks would tell you to study as if it all depended on studying and pray as if it all depended on praying when dealing with one's academics. The disturbing thing was that no one was willing to explain why those who were not praying at all were passing or why some who both prayed and studied failed. In life after school we are also unable to explain why those who seem to have been faithful to God in their youth do not always land the biggest jobs or contracts. We are quick to highlight the successes of those popular people who commit to such doctrines as tithing but we cannot prove that the results are consistent without fail or that the results we see in the lives of consistent people are purely as a result of spirituality.

I once listened to an audio book titled *The Personal MBA* by Josh Kaufman. One of the points he tried to drive home was that some so called Ivy League schools simply picked already successful people, took them through their programmes and then advertised those same people as products of their education. I dare say I see a similar pattern in church: we try very hard to identify successful people within the church even when those successful people are not so enthusiastic about identifying with the church or with Jesus Christ. We invite them to worship and give them prominent seats, we repeat their quotes and tell 'testimonies' emphasizing how close we are to them. Did their success really come from their relationship with God or did they just do their own thing along the way and then we started trying to make them the 'face of the church'?

Where is the border between the sovereignty of God and the effect of the effort of man? Can I guarantee that my efforts would yield results in this life as long as I do the right thing? Can I guarantee that if I 'leave everything to God' things would turn out right? Can I assume there is a mid-point and simply do my part?

When I was in SSS 2, I began ironing my school uniform every day. Before then I used to do so on a weekly basis and carry it through the week! I hear your stomach churning. Well, during a certain discussion, one fellow who was known for always keeping his school uniform perfectly clean told me he thought I had carried on such a relationship with my school uniform because I was born again! What! What happened to my mind at that moment was like when the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn in the temple at Jerusalem. He actually attributed my bad habit to spirituality. Who knows how many other things people attribute to spirituality that are in fact bad habits or even, on the flip side, proper home training. Wealth earned by hard work as wealth resulting from merely giving, health resulting from good eating habits as 'divine health'. The list goes on.

In the larger scheme of things, we have certain thinkers who often leverage on the errors and excesses of men of God to arrive at conclusions they had already arrived at regarding the Church as a fraud or God as a figment of our imagination or both. When sex or financial scandals which are quite rampant in the Word of Faith and Pentecostal Movements show up in the press, they are quick to say 'Here we go again! We have been talking about this!' Men's errors attributed to all of their kind or even to God himself.

We see well educated and very successful people in Church. We even see some kind of *Caste System* separating the upwardly mobile folks from the not so successful in Church. We then use the successful as examples to the rest of the masses, urging them to inculcate the habits of the successful which many endlessly try to emulate without the same measure of massive success. Could it be that God simply chose to give those people a push in life in order to align with *His purpose for them*? Let's ponder on this.

In the late 2000s I developed the habit of giving a very large amount of money yearly to someone who wasn't expecting it. Somewhere on the inside of me I believed I was sowing seeds that would yield fruit and thus give me a big unprecedented breakthrough. I wrote confessions along the line that matched what I was desiring. I confessed regarding my house, my book sales and so on. Major breakthroughs definitely came my way particularly between 2011 and 2012 as I have written earlier but not really in the way that I thought they would. Now I do question myself whether I needed to give away those large amounts of money to get the attention of God or whether God had already planned this course for my life. Did I need to initiate transactions with God for Him to bring to bear His purpose for my life? Was there something else I could have done to make certain things happen in my life besides giving and waiting? There could have been. Maybe some education, formal and informal regarding marketing for my books. Maybe some investment decisions that would yield enough to give and still prepare

for the future. Maybe some long term financial planning with the windfalls I was getting could have put me in a better financial position now.

You may have heard of churches that place a lot of emphasis on giving the first salary of the year as a first fruit offering. Many testimonies appear to emanate from these efforts but I also think the efficacy of the practice may not have been scientifically tested. Besides, in many cases where it doesn't seem to work for everyone, there are explanations given. The point is it simply doesn't work in a consistent manner for everyone and we should question why. Where does the natural stop and the supernatural resume? Where is it necessary to take practical steps rather than simply believing God? The point being made here is not that we discard the reality of the influence of the spiritual over the natural, the point is being able to know where the line lies between the things that God does, the things that can be achieved by divine intervention and the things that require human effort. This apparently blurred line is one that I personally will keep trying to isolate probably for the rest of my life.

Take Action

"May you be blessed of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, But the earth He has given to the children of men." Psalm 115:15-16 (AMP)

- Exert every possible effort to achieve the goals you define which require human effort – strategic thinking, training, external help etc. Work with the systems God has created for our normal life.

- Expect miracles from God but let that be His decision not your plan 'A'. A miracle is a miracle because it is not a regular every day experience in our world.

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Focus: The First Law

It must have been the year 2009 or thereabout, Pastor Poju Oyemade was speaking at the Yaba centre of Covenant Christian Centre and I was seated. Suddenly he stopped and stared at someone. He spoke loudly in a strong tone of voice that caught everyone's attention: "Focus, focus. Focus is the first law of success". The words are not the exact words he spoke but that was the crux of what he said. I deduced that he must have observed someone who was being distracted by something while he was preaching and stopped to address the issue. I knew about focus as a necessary factor in life but naming this singular concept as *the first law of success* was particularly interesting to me. It gave me the impression that without focus, one could not even begin to succeed. One had no chance at success.

When we were young, we had a game we used to play with a magnifying glass. We would place a piece of paper or dry grass on the floor and then position the magnifying glass such that the Sun would shine through it and have its rays focused on one spot on the paper. The paper was supposed to light up. It didn't always light up but it always got hot. We focused the sun's energy on one spot and got the best out of it. In the same way, we can focus our mental and physical energies on one task or one goal for the period of time required and we are more likely to succeed on that one task than when we dissipate energy on a large number of tasks within the same period of time.

One of the burdens of being able to do a lot of things is that one actually attempts to do a lot of things at the same time or within the same period. It does not really work for most people. The typical results are that each task being attempted is completed only half way. Well, this is true in my experience and it is very much open to review. In the year

2015 or so, I shared with my Aunt Cecilia a number of targets I had for the coming year – exams I wanted to write, a language I wanted to learn, and so on. She softly asked me a simple question: “Why don’t you do them one at a time?” She was right. Most years I set out to accomplish several ambitions all at once I end up accomplishing all of them ... half way. On the other hand, effort directed at a single goal for a prolonged period of time always yields results.

The concept of focus means there will always be factors that try to take your attention away from your primary goal assuming you have one. You see it’s much worse and a lot easier to get distracted if you do not have a focus to start with. Distractors could be very well-meaning people. They could be family members who want the “best” for you, marketers who have an excellent product to sell to you or even friends who have their own personal goals which they want you to help them with.

I have always been very enthusiastic about helping others achieve their goals. I could abandon my tasks upon someone else’s request, or take on too many tasks so as not to offend any of the requesters. I would loan money out till I needed a loan myself or end up in a situation where I had nothing to fall back on in case of any eventuality. Thankfully, eventualities I wasn’t prepared for never really materialized to the point where I was completely handicapped.

Let me try to illustrate focus in financial terms. Assuming your target is to purchase a household appliance for \$500 with a monthly salary of \$100 a month. You are likely to achieve this target by saving \$25 monthly for twenty months. If on the other hand you give away \$10 out of that budget or get into bad loans, the target will be further away. This happened to me in a manner of speaking over a longer period of time with respect to a more serious target than a home appliance. When we earn a lot of money as supposedly “upper middle class folks” we think we are rich since part of our monthly salary can easily meet our

needs, buy our household appliances and even support other people. Because the money is so much we do not realize that we are actually living from pay cheque to pay cheque, unable to raise significant capital over the long term. Raising significant capital requires discipline and focus.

Everyone has a limited amount of time and to get anything done, we must stay on a particular task, finish it and then move on to the next. That's focus. Focus doesn't mean you do only one thing and one thing alone all the time (though there are cases where it means exactly that). It means you prioritize, do one task at a time that adds up collectively to your eventual goal.

Our generation is probably the most distracted generation so far because of the influence of the Internet, Social Media and Mobile technology. To pay attention to a task for even an hour, one often needs to put away his phone entirely. And when you do, you find people telling you they were trying to reach you on WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and so on. Your five thousand friends on Social Media all expect that whenever they buzz you, you will respond, members of your fifty groups on WhatsApp, Telegram and Facebook all expect you to be an active participant. How can you ever get anything done other than what you get paid every month to do?

Distractions rob us of depth. Distractions limit the scope of our output particularly in our personal development. When one works for a company, one is compelled to deliver or else risk losing their livelihood. It is more or less discipline under duress. But to achieve anything meaningful personally, one has to work much harder at overcoming the distractions and staying focused. Focus is the *first* law of success.

Take Action

“Let your eyes look directly ahead [toward the path of moral courage] And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you [toward the path of integrity]. Consider well and watch carefully the path of your feet, And all your ways will be steadfast and sure.” Proverbs 4:25-26

- Define a long term goal in each area of your life that will determine how you piece together your daily, weekly and monthly engagements as well as your resources – time, money etc.
- Define short term goals that help you explore your interests and capability in twos or threes within short to medium term bases. Focus on one short term goal at a time and once it is achieved, move to the next.

Grace, Truth & Morality

I have come to believe that morality and Christianity are not the same. Over the years I have been involved with diverse sects of the Christian Faith – Presbyterian Church, NIFES, FECA, Victory Christian Church, Catholic Church, Deeper Life, Scripture Union, Christ Embassy, House on the Rock, Salvation Ministries, Lighthouse Chapel, ICGC etc. I have found that many things we previously considered important fade away with time. I have also come to believe that the Holy Spirit does not tell us the truth, He guides us into all truth as we study or else every notable man of God we listen to would be saying exactly the same thing on every subject. The Word of God is timeless, the traditions of men are transient.

I have had many experiences with young ladies of the faith that drew my attention to the difference being moral and being Christian, between being like a Pharisee and being like Jesus. Back in the university, some of us had the habit of preaching in lecture halls early in the mornings before lectures resumed. After one of such sessions in the year 2003, while on my way out from the first floor, I noticed one of the members of our fellowship and she happened to be wearing a pair of jeans. I went down to her to let her know she was violating the fellowship rules. She listened very carefully, and I was proud of myself for having made such an impact in her life. When I was done speaking she asked a simple question: "So that's all you came down here to tell me". The first thing that question said to me was that I had known her for quite a while but had never actually spoken to her for more than a few seconds. I was embarrassed and took a second look. In my heart of hearts, I didn't think she was indecently dressed, I just felt the need to uphold the fellowship rules.

We often find ourselves in such dilemmas as leaders in a variety of environments. Cases where we need to defend a belief that we do not really believe - defending our position rather than our faith. When push comes to shove, we find that though our position may change, our faith may change, the Truth itself never really changes. This means what God said in the Scriptures has always been the same, the problem is through what lenses we read what is written. And that is why it is written: so, we do not somehow promote the assumption that God changed His opinion. He cannot change His opinion, He knows the end from the beginning.

Back to the matter of dressing and comportment. A lot of the beliefs we held unto with a lot of passion during our school days have been discarded by most people including the ladies who vehemently promoted them. The 'restrictions' have been abandoned. What changed? People moved abroad to other cultures, people got high profile jobs, people were pressured by the need to appear suitable for marriage to a modern man. Were we being dishonest? I believe that each person has to answer for himself or herself. Bottom-line is that when a belief does not stand the test of time, either we are blatantly opposing God in our practice or the belief was never from God in the first place. An extreme example would be William Tyndale. He was burned at the stake by the Church as were many other fathers of the reformation for translating the Bible into English. We look back at it with horror in our generation, but I wonder whether in two hundred years or so someone will not look back at horror on us for excommunicating a church member for having more than one wife, drinking and selling alcohol or asking poor people to sow seeds and get rich or drinking olive oil for health. I simply wonder.

Sometime in 1993, during the period when a lot of Igbos returned to their villages in fear of what might happen after the election of Moshood Abiola was annulled, we were sent by my father to our village for a few months. A lot of things happened during that period which made staying in the village quite interesting for us. Among them was the way the culture of the people conflicted with their Faith. Traditionally, quite a number of the Igbos became “Christians” following the influence of the colonial masters and my village was not left out. Most elderly people faithfully attended church on Sunday mornings and believed in one God as far as we knew. They could sing the hymns off heart and they frowned on evil and immorality. But further probing often showed certain strong beliefs had not left them despite their “Christianity”! One of those beliefs was known as *Iluu Uwa* or *Ilu’uwa* which is transliterated as “To return to the world”. *Ilu’uwa* is the Igbo expression for what is known as *reincarnation*. Reincarnation is a common belief in many cultures of the world and the Igbos have their version. During this stay of ours in the village, I got into an argument with certain members of my church then, the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria on this subject and my position was that reincarnation was not a valid experience and thus should not be a belief upheld by Christians. According to Hebrews “*And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,*” (Hebrews 9:27).

However, my opposing debaters had another view, a view not based on the Bible but based on their experience and their folklore. They told me about people who had been born with scars in exactly the same spot on their body as their grandfathers or other ancestors. When I asked how they would account for increasing population of the world, the answer was that human being could be likened to Yam, when you plant one, more than one are likely to grow. Interesting. I must say some of their experiences were probably valid and maybe I cannot even explain them completely. But the point of the story is that even in church, what

we say we believe is often not really what we believe to be true if we care to probe deeper. We simply agree as we are supposed to but in real life, our true beliefs show up.

During a certain period in Nigeria's history when secession was resurrected as a hot topic by the efforts of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, I had a chat with a close brother on whether joining the army was a Christian thing to do. He affirmed that it was not a problem for him. Then I asked, “

“If Nigeria were to split and you fought for Nigeria while I fought for Biafra, would you shoot me on the battle field?”

“First to shoot *na!*” He answered without hesitating.

I was a little taken aback by this. However, I was not even sure whether he was joking with the issue or not. What is the real difference between shooting someone on the battle field and outright murder in the city in the context of “Thou shalt not kill”? What do we really believe? A similar example would be if an armed robber invaded your house and you had a gun (for whatever reason). Would you shoot him? I used to contemplate on this on the premise that if we really believed in Heaven and Hell, shooting him would amount to sending him to Hell forever. Letting him shoot me would amount to going to Heaven myself. What do you think?

Every now and then, I think about the contributions that people have made to my life by things they taught me. The word *taught* in this context could be slightly misleading because when it is used in our part of the world, people's minds often gravitate towards a classroom setting. Some of the vital lessons we learn in life often come from simple statements that people make in passing without much thinking. One of

such lessons was what I learnt from a man called Ibraheem Salau. He was a senior Windows Administrator in Airtel Nigeria back in the late 2000s. The premise to the statement I am about to share is that in IT Support functions it is not uncommon for professionals to mislead management in the reports through blatant lies, misinformation or deliberate omissions in official reports regarding such issues as work done on a project or incidents. It was in the context of one of these that Mr. Salau made a profound statement – “When you always tell the truth, you do not have to remember what you said last...”

One of the thoughts that hit me when he said this back then was that he was a Muslim. At the risk of being considered a religious bigot, I must say that more often than not Pentecostal Christians often think of themselves as superior to all others. Yet this Muslim gentleman showed me a certain level of moral rectitude that I found rare even in Pentecostal circles. And this was his candid opinion, it was not something he was saying because he felt he needed this mindset in order to “escape Hell” or “make Heaven”. I don’t even think he said it because it was something he had read in the Quran or Haddith.

There was another elderly gentleman I met while performing the mandatory one year service to my country after graduating from the university. I served with the NYSC Office in Ekiti state and met quite a number of characters. I do not remember this particular man’s name but he was a very senior officer and the perception we had of him based on his often obscene remarks was that he was a womanizer. On a certain occasion, I went out with my fellow Corps members who were both ladies to pluck mangoes at the back of the NYSC premises. We kept attempting many techniques to get those mangoes until he told me personally that I should climb the mango tree and get the mangoes for them. I remember his closing remarks on that discussion: “...that is

how you earn their respect ... and love.” He showed me something I didn’t know existed: How to treat a woman.

The last experience I just described affected me deeply because I knew how to treat my sisters and I had an idea of what would happen in a relationship with my wife but I didn’t know fully what it meant to relate with a person of the opposite sex who was neither my sister nor my wife. Where was that line that I shouldn’t cross? What was that expectation that I needed to meet? This brings me to two more stories.

I was in my third year in the university and I believe we were getting close to rounding off our tenure as NIFES executive committee. I decided to make all the ladies in Exco happy by buying them earrings. I had no motives, I was not exactly targeting any of them at that time but I just felt to do something like that. I had just finished presenting one set of earrings publicly in the Fellowship Secretariat when the then president called me aside and explained to me in graphic detail the possible implications of my gesture. He told me that the lady I had just given earrings could easily think I was saying something through the earrings. When I “grew up”, I did not outgrow this behavior. I would typically give lifts every now and then to ladies from church in my car as a single person. Sometimes total strangers.

On a certain occasion while waiting for VISAs at the South African Embassy in Labone, Accra, a middle-aged lady whom I had never met before asked for a lift to a nearby Business Centre to get some documents printed. All the others looked the other way but I obliged. She was heavy and somewhat older so I was not particularly attracted to her but it felt good to be able to do something for a lady in need. When we got back one of my colleagues warned me about the *nature of women* – when something starts, they don’t want it to stop. I don’t know whether he was right or not. It just felt good to be able to help but looking back, I noticed that these gestures typically would narrow

down to one or two ladies eventually over a certain period of time till it was noticeable.

Ladies are relationship-oriented. This means in part that they like you, the man, to finish what you started. *Finish* has a wide range of definitions and for a lady it could mean eventually propose marriage! When you don't intend to *finish*, it is often better not to start or to stop when the gestures haven't become too noticeable.

Take Action

“As for the [a]one whose faith is weak, accept him [into your fellowship], but not for [the purpose of] quarreling over his opinions. One man's faith permits him to eat everything, while the weak believer eats only vegetables [to avoid eating ritually unclean meat or something previously considered unclean]. The one who eats [everything] is not to look down on the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat must not criticize or pass judgment on the one who eats [everything], for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? Before his own master he stands [approved] or falls [out of favor]. And he [who serves the Master – the Lord] will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.” Romans 14:1-4

- Relate with everyone on the basis of God's love and God's truth as revealed in the Bible. Major on what God majors on and be silent about what He is silent about.
- Define for yourself what you are absolutely sure to be true based on your personal relationship with God. Avoid advancing a collective belief system simply because the group you belong to believes same. Search the Scriptures for yourself.

You Can Live Again

There is an adage in my tribe that says “Whenever a person wakes up is his morning”. There is some truth in this. Many of the concepts I have written about in this book are already well known to some. They started out early or were guided properly at an early age, they discovered their gifts and pursued them; they learnt to use money wisely and so on. We can either choose to spend our time wishing we had known better or wishing we could be like someone else or we can pick up the pieces and wake up, declaring our own morning. The founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken was said to have birthed the vision in his seventies, after he had retired. He woke up and embraced his morning. At whatever stage of life or age we find ourselves when certain things dawn on us, we had better wake up because we are already late. But better late than never.

I will further buttress this point by telling two more stories. The first occurred in the year 2006. I was then working for an Internet Service Provider in Ikeja, Lagos called Mobilenet Tech Limited. I was at a potential client’s office to install or fix a WiFi device. He must have noticed something about me that made him engage me on my plans for the future. I told him I had previously intended to study core Electronic Engineering and be able to design circuits in the future but I had changed plans and decided to go into Wireless Networks and Routing. He wondered why I didn’t pursue studying further abroad. The reason was my perception of this. At that time, I just didn’t see the possibility of studying abroad. I was limited by my mindset which had been shaped by my experiences and my financial limitations at that time.

When I went to South Africa in 2013 on a professional training. During our pass-through at Johannesburg Airport, the immigration officer

stopped me and his countenance changed when he noticed my Nigerian passport. He began drilling me with questions such as why my VISA read “Visitor” and I mentioned I had come on a training. When I mentioned my colleagues had been allowed to proceed already he raised his voice and asked me to show him which officer allowed them to pass so he could discipline them. He even went as far as threatening that he could take me into the interrogation room. He went on and on for up to ten minutes till I stopped responding. He was limited by his mindset: *all Nigerians are fraudsters!*

Our perception of life can limit our ability to recognize alternatives when we find that we have certain limitations. Our perception of life can slow us down or even stall our progress completely. If other people think we are good enough and we do not think so ourselves, we are still limited. If other people think we are not good enough and we are able to surmount that external opposition to set our own minds right, then the entire world cannot stop our progress. No matter how old you are, no matter what has happened in the past, no matter where you are from, you can choose today to live again!

This book is not a book of regrets, it is a contemplation on the experiences and errors, if you wish, that I feel I have made in my personal life and the things I feel I could have done better; the things I think could have turned out better and so on. The reason I chose to write is that those who are younger than I am can learn and make the required adjustments in their own lives and those who are older than me or my age mates can also contemplate their own lives and begin again. It is my opinion.

Martha was busy doing something good. She exerted so much physical and mental energy trying to make all her guests comfortable. Among the guests was Jesus and she must have thought He was impressed with all her efforts. She was convinced that what she was doing was profoundly important. But when she needed Jesus to recruit her sister

to her labour force she discovered that Jesus was not as interested in all her serving as she was. He didn't think it was all that important. I cannot even imagine the look on her face when He told her that Mary was doing what was really important. The disappointment, the feeling of wasted effort. Even Jesus was not impressed with her running around. But did you notice Jesus did not talk about her running around until she called His attention to Mary's sitting at His feet. This is probably the most confusing part of the whole episode. Why did the Lord Jesus not intervene all the while? Why did He just let Martha go on wasting time and effort?

Maybe Jesus is not impressed with our running around either. Awake at 5:00 AM, at work at 8:00 AM, ten to twelve hours labouring, giving to great causes with all the money we are making, helping the poor, solving problems, becoming famous.... Maybe He is not impressed with all that. It is like writing an exam and you have five questions to choose four then you decide to create five new questions and choose three. You may answer the questions you chose absolutely perfectly but you would still fail the course. You would fail because you are NOT the examiner! Answering your own questions doesn't count, you must answer the questions you were given.

But then do we care what the Examiner thinks about our answers, about our running around? Do we bother to check at intervals in our lives whether we are actually on the right track or whether we are just exerting energy unnecessarily? I think that if we take time to reflect at key intervals in our lives we will discover those things we are working hard at that do not count. Some people discuss this matter as the subject of purpose. "Why am I here?" Dr. Myles Monroe of blessed memory would typically ask.

I think one of the most rewarding things we can spend our lives doing is discovering why God put us here. I use the word "discovering" because I have found that for most of us, God does not appear to us

covered with dazzling light and earth-shattering thunder to reveal to us why He put us here. We often have to grope for it. For most people like me, we are not quite sure what exactly it is but we have indications at each season if we have positioned our hearts correctly. Seeking purpose helps turn our attention away from worthless pursuits and vanity. What will really matter among all the things I have achieved on earth when all is said and done? Is the *Absolute Examiner* impressed?

Take Action

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life]." II Corinthians 5:17 (AMP)

- No matter where you are now, no matter what mistakes you have made, decide now to make corrections where you can. Change the outcome of days to come.
- Focus on making sure the Absolute Examiner is pleased with your life achievements.

Become a Follower of Jesus Christ

Pray with me:

Almighty God, creator of the Universe I call out to You now. I have heard that You reached out to me through Your Son Jesus Christ who gave His life as the complete payment for my sins, past present and future. Today, I believe and accept the finished work of Jesus Christ on my behalf which reconciled me to You. I commit to following You all the days of my life from today. Run my life from now on and let my life be meaningful to You. I boldly declare that I am now a child of God in Jesus Name I pray. Amen.

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About the Book

If I Were to Live Again is Kenneth's first non-fiction book. It can be interpreted as a motivational book, a book of personal reflection or maybe even something philosophical. In this book he picks lessons from his life and from those he has met along his journey. Young people who are just starting out will find this book useful as part of their guiding light as they step out to achieve their life goals. Older folk will find encouragement in this book to try again things they may have given up on as well as help their own children to chart their course in life. Kenneth touches on many areas of such as Faith, money, relationships, career and purpose. People of all walks of life will find it a thought-provoking piece.

About the Author

Kenneth Igiri is an IT Professional who makes time to write Faith-based fiction as well as create online content. He has produced four self-published works since 2010 and he keeps writing. Kenneth also enjoys promoting startups and small businesses through informal advisory services and adverts via his online presence.

Kenneth was born in Abia State Nigeria about four decades ago. He currently lives and works in Ghana with his enchanting wife Joycelyn and two brilliant kids. Most of his online content is available on his

website www.scribblingsage.com as well as on Social Media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube.

Other Books by Kenneth Igiri

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|----------------------------|------|
| 1. Njansi | 2011 |
| 2. Till Death | 2015 |
| 3. Osimiri & Other Stories | 2017 |
| 4. Entangled | 2017 |