

ADVANCING DESPITE ADVERSITIES

A handbook for every champion

BY

ODIMS GREAT

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For invitations to seminars, talk shows and workshops simply call the author on 07065910467.

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DEDICATION

To my 'Baby-Mum', Odinma G 1 (Mrs.), the greatest and most complete woman ever to have walked on planet earth. Her uncensored love, encouragement and support serves as the energy that keeps me going no matter what happens.

Also dedicated to all those who have ever faced adversity plus those going through one at the moment!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is actually my first inspirational book in print. To me, it is a stepping stone to greater achievements. It is a launching pad to a more illustrious literary career. Yet, this great leap would not have been possible without the great assistance of some friends and relations especially my immediate family. Baby-Mum has been an indispensable asset right from the moment I breathed my first breath. Special thanks to my dad for all his wisdom. To my siblings who make the family a complete and all inclusive charm circle. The Uche Obioma family has been so encouraging too. God bless my teachers, Elder Uche Ekeoma, Lolo P.N. Umeh, Mrs. Urum etc. Thanks to all my friends- past and present- indeed, there has never been a friend I met who didn't leave a positive foot print in my life. I must thank Nnamdi Nwankwo, Nwankwo Princemark, Nwankwo Chinelo, Nwachukwu Emmanuel, Ibem Emmanuel, Ndukwe Emmanuel, Ndukwe Amarachi Grace, Ngene Ejike, Dr. The Okwuonus- Joy and Lilian, Egelle Chukwuemeka, Daniel Umunna, Okeke Chioma Success, Blyden Ukem, Edozie Norah, Eche Chinonye, Becks, Okoma Chinedu, Dr. Lukeman Boladale, Iyaro Daniel Tosin, Isaac Ugochukwu Clement Ufomba, Pharm. Idongesit Ekanem, Lt. Ogbuehi Chigozie Chibuzor, Mr. Azariah Ovie Azynwanye, Thank God Dibia, Engr. Ajiboye Precious, Mr. Chinedu, Dr. Kingsley; plus all those whom I worked with at All Saints Chapel of Redemption.

To my ministers and Chaplains I say thank you. God bless Rev. Dr. Miracle Ajah, Rev. Dr. Idowu, Pst C.E Kwakporwe, John C. Maxwell, Pst Dr. Chris Oyakhilomie, Pst. Dr. Samuel Omote, Rev. Dr. A.S. Idowu, Ord. Choice, Ord. Jephrey U.S.A., Bishop Oyedepo David, Pst. David Adekoya, Pst. Daniel Olukoya, Rev. Olusola Areogun, Bob Gass, R.I. Seymour and all those whose ministry has made a profound influence in my life.

I must acknowledge with gratitude the priceless candor of all the men and women whose biographies make up the bulk of this epistle: my Presidents Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Dr. Ebele Goodluck Azikiwe Jonathan, Nelson Mandela (SA), Obama Barrack (USA), George Washington (USA), Lula da Silva (Brazil) and Winston Churchill (UK). Also, Thomas Edison Alva, Isaac Newton, Gen. Odumegwu Ojukwu, Walt Disney, Albert Einstein, Henry Ford, Chief

MichealAdenuga, AllessandroNesta, Mohandas Gandhi, Diego Armando Maradona, Ronaldo De Lima, Warren Buffet, Helen Keller, Carlos Slim Helu etc.

Big thanks also to the owners of Microsoft Encarta premium 2009: it gave me all I ever needed when I needed them. Above all, I thank God for making this publication a dream come true.

ABOUT THE BOOK

This book is not written to give you excuses for your failings but to inspire you to go on and succeed in spite of your past failures. The past has passed. As long as that failure failed to kill you, never fail to rise again. Only trees and dead men keep lying were they were hit down. Bouncing back is the inherent ability of the living. Gain an inspiration to rise again, never an excuse to stay down. Turn your defeat into a deafening feat. Ask Churchill, the moment when enemies and failures surround you and it seems you have kissed your last hope of success goodbye; that could be your finest moment. This book is filled with such moments, moments when adversity turns advantage, advancing one to ones greatness and stardom. Moments when problems yield progress and past trials birth triumph. A man could still win a war after several losses in battles. Yes, you can still win at the end after your many temporary defeats. A man is only defeated when he quits as victory is always certain for the man who keeps fighting, relentlessly. The truth is, history have shown that great failures are often the prerequisite for great success. There is no great success in life that has never seen failure. Even Jesus had to encounter various failures and heartaches enroute becoming the name above all names. Always remember, those who chickened out in the face of adversity live to work for and serve those who advanced despite theirs.

PREFACE

Only a few are oblivious of the fact that Kenya is the hub of animal and wild life. A tourist to Kenya was once shocked to a frazzle when he saw a little boy controlling elephants. He was startled by the fact that these huge creatures could be tied down with a little rope tied to their front legs. There were neither chains nor cages. Although it was quite obvious that the elephants could break loose from their bonds at will, they didn't. While this tourist gazed in disbelief, the trainer leveled up with him. He walked up to the trainer asking how he came about such magic. "It's not a magic", began the trainer, "when they were very young, and much smaller, we used the same little rope to tie them. At that age, the rope was quite strong enough to hold them. After several fruitless efforts to break away, they gave up. As they grew up, they were conditioned to believe they can never break away. They still believe the rope can hold them. Thus, they never again try to break free again".

We may find the above story very laughable, yet many of us are like those elephants. Many today have permanently packed their bags in inaction just for a little act of opposition they once faced. Many have chickened out at the middle of the road just for a minor obstruction. No one expects a problem but it comes, often without warning. Our role and natural responsibility is to prepare always at all time. God often doesn't shed us from problem but rather gives us the grace to progress through them. Advancing through adversity may sound ridiculous, but it takes the ridiculous word of God to birth the miraculous works of God. He has already assured us that he won't allow a headache bigger than our head to worry us. God give us triumphs through trials, advancement through adversity and his crown in the cross lodge.

King Solomon once complained, "The wise dieth as the fool dieth" (Ecc12:16B). Yes as it happen eth to the sinful fool it happens to the saintly wise. Although he was right, the preacher turned out rightly wrong when he deemed it vanity and a vexation of spirit. What happens to a man is not the end of the story; neither is it as important as what he does with what happens to him. Life is full of actions and its opposite reactions. Both may have the same experience, but what he makes happen with what happened to him is what separates the wise from the foolish. A successful life, said Edison Thomas, is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration. My

Bible says and I believed it, “A righteous man may fall seven times but seven times he shall rise again”. That’s the dividing factor. The wise falleth, just like the fool, but the measure of grace and ability to bounce back is not equal in both. Problem leaves the fool bitter but the wise gets better by it.

Every man’s life history is comprised of two headings: Your challenges and how you handled them. How you handle your challenges determines what it changes you into. Challenges are chances and channels for changes-whether they are positive or negative changes depend on the individual’s approach to them. Real men neither resist changes nor are they resisted by changes. Adversity is an apparatus for advancement. As no skillful workman quarrels with his tools, only failures and indolentmen avoid or complain of adversity. Indeed, there is hardly anyone alive who has not at one point or the other stumbled into adversity. It is like an unwelcomed visitor that forces its self unto our lives. No one wants it, yet no one can merely wish it away. Yet, adversity is a two faceted visitor whose outcome of its visit depends largely on the host. James Russell Lowell captures it best when he said, “Mishaps are like knives that either serves us or cuts us, as we grasp them by the blade or the handle”. Failures and adversities are what you make of them. In the words of William Arthur Ward, “Adversity causes some men to break and others to break records”. Lord Byron in his days called adversity, the first path to truth. Writing on adversity, Horace observed that success in the affairs of life, often serves to hide one’s ability, whereas adversity frequently gives one the opportunity to discover them. The truth remains that nothing advances one like adversity. Like the water test in the days of Gideon, adversity is an acid test that separates those who only wanted to from those who are determined to succeed. Lord Chesterfield once said, “A man of sense is never discouraged by difficulties, he redoubles his industry and his diligence, he perseveres and infallibly prevails at last”. This book will blow open your mind to see how you have been sitting on a well yet wailing of thirst. If well studied and religiously followed, it will advance one from one’s pitiable state of adversity to an envious height of success.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SPIRIT OF EDISON

Many, at different times and place, fashion and style, have chronicled how the great little globe of sunshine was born out of a great fire of adversity. My mum told me this very version. It happened that one day after another day of unsuccessful experiments and attempts to invent the electric bulb, Edison started home, angrily. He asked his lab attendant to pack up and lock the lab for that day. He left. However, later that faithful day, the news began to spread all over the town that Edison's multimillion dollar laboratory was on fire. That was in December 1914. Within minutes, all his packing compounds, celluloid for records and films, electric wires and other flammable goods were in flames. The heat from the inferno was so intense that several different fire service men from eight surrounding towns were unable to put it out. Thus, 67 years old Edison lost everything in just one day! Millions of dollars were roasted. The multimillion dollar "fireproof" building was only insured for \$238,000. Yet what baffles many most about the incident is Edison's attitude towards the disaster and perceived failure. When he saw his son, 24 years old Charles Edison, crying, "Everything is gone", Edison was unfazed. He said to him, "Find your mum; bring her here immediately. She will never see anything like this as long as she lives". My God! It didn't end there. When the press asked him the next day how he felt, he said, "There is a great value in disaster. All of our mistakes are burned up. Thank God we can now start anew". Wow. Three weeks on, Edison managed to deliver the first phonograph. Life goes on, even better. Later, Edison finally found his lab attendant who had been aloof, attempting suicide. Edison inquired of him what exactly happened. The young man wept bitterly. His whole clan put together doesn't worth the laboratory. "What exactly happened?" Edison pressed on. "It was a mistake", the lad replied. "As I packed the apparatuses and equipment at the end of the day's experiment, the big red wire touched the blue one and the lab blew up. I only managed to escape." The lab attendant explained with his last ounce of courage. There was a confused silence at first. Then Edison shouted and hugged the baffled lad. "In that mistake lies the answer to our many months of experiments. In your perceived pit lies our gold mine." Excited, Edison stormed out, leaving his bewildered lab attendant even more confused. Henry Ford gave

Edison a soft loan and, few months later, the world was left in awe at the beauty of the first light bulb.

I have learnt in my course through life that there is no better tool for advancement in the things of life than God ordained adversity. Life's most essential factor, according to James Whitecomb Riley, has always been persistence- the determination never to allow one's energy and enthusiasm to be dampened by the discouragement that must inevitably come. Adversity always becomes an advantage to those who are determined to advance not just despite their adversities but through it. As Thomas Carlyle would say: "Permanence, perseverance and persistence in spite of all obstacles, discouragement and impossibilities; is what in all things distinguishes the strong soul from the weak". Abraham Maslow was on point when he mused, "If I were dropped out of a plane into the ocean and told that the nearest land is a thousand miles away, I would still swim. And I would despise the one who gave up". Successful men are not those who never failed but the ones who never failed to bounce back-by trying again. Catherine Pulsifer advised her students, "Success takes time. First develop persistence, determination and most importantly, believing in yourself to win." Edison never doubted the fact that he would win at last. He persevered. He knew that there is no worse civil war than self doubt. He, who doubts himself, says a writer, is like a man who enlists in the army of his enemy and bears arms against his own self. Alice Foote Mac Dougall (1867-1945) a US business person put it best, "It is the small doubts of timid souls that accomplish their ruin. It is the narrow vision, the fear and trembling hesitation that constitute defeat".

When the press met with Edison after showcasing ‘the little globe of sunshine’, they asked him, “Sir how did you feel when for 999 good times you failed to discover the secret to commercial electricity?” Thomas smiled. He radiated the uncommon warmth, courage and pleasant pleasure known only by brave men. He said to them, “Friends, I never failed. Not even once. I only succeeded in discovering 999 different ways by which a man could try it and would fail to generate electric light” I love that. That’s the way champions talk. Every step they take, whether seen as negative or positive by people, advance them towards their dream and aspiration. Even when they fall, they fell forwards. Then commented the correspondent to the news agency: “Whenever you light a bulb or a radio or even relax to watch a tely, first stop, for a moment and thank God that Thomas Edison never gave up”. I love it! That means, each time you fail to keep on persevering, you deny God an ounce of praise. Each time you fail to try, you make God who has promised, a fool. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:16** “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”. There is no greater irony in life than a failed Christian. Nothing hurts God more than to see us fail. Our success brings Him honour and glory.

My problem is not in your failing but that many people will fail if you fail to rise again. My arithmetical challenge is not that you gave up, but it borders on how many who will give up because you did. In my previous book, LEGACY, I chronicled several kings who failed to please God just because Jeroboam failed. II kg13:6, II kg 10:31, 13:11, 14:24 etc formed a list of different kings with exactly thesame CV with their progenitor, “...and he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, for he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat which he made Israel to sin. Never blaze such a heinous trail. Each time you want to sin or give up, stop to remember posterity. Think of the future. Every action of our lives touches some chord that will vibrate in eternity. I love this poem I learnt in R.I. Seymour’s book:

A careful man I want to be; for a little fellow follows me.

I do not dare to go astray; for fear he will go the self-same way.

I cannot once escape his eyes; whatever he sees me do he tries.

Like me-he says he is going to be; that little chap who follows me
I must remember as I go; through summer sun and winters snow
That I am building for the years to be; that little chap who follows me.

You may not know or see him; but he is there. Invisible but present! What will be the fate of that someone who will one day walk in your shoes? Friend, for his sake, not you again, for the sake of generation to come, please try again. The kid watches while the goat feeds. Jean RitcherPaul captured it better, “The words that a father speak to his children in the privacy of home are not heard by the world, but as in whispering galleries, they are clearly heard at the end and by posterity”. Don’t be a discouragement. I got this same story from the same book-Discover your True potential:

Two frogs fell into a deep, cold cream with shiny and steep sides. One quickly gave up; “It is fate, I must accept it. No help is around,” it said and drowned. The other fought on. “I will swim awhile, at least”, he cried, “It wouldn’t really help the world if one more frog was dead.” It kicked and swam and kicked, until the cream solidified. It hopped out –via butter.

Learn from that second frog. Be tenacious, persistent and determined to make it despite the opposition. Just like the frog, ask yourself, “Will this world be any better if I fail to rise again?” There are many failures in this life who gave up in the face of opposition, don’t join the number. Try and try again. Thomas Edison once said, “Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.” Learn from Abraham Lincoln: “If you try something you don’t succeed, try something harder.” Never ever give up. The cream turned butter only when the frog had kept trying. When one confidently and diligently approaches his dream and aspirations with unreserved tenacity, persistent and determination, unanticipated mighty forces will come to ones aid. You will still win if you persevere. Thomas Edison put it this way: “When a man really desires a thing so deeply that he is willing to stake his entire future on a single turn of the wheel in order to get it, he is sure to win”. Does there seem to be no way? Hear Prophet Isaiah: “I will make a way even where there seems to be no way. I will make water to flow in the desert”. Friend, there are several paved ways even in Norway. Just hang on, God will make a way. “Learn from nature. What

happens when you break a spider's web or disturb a bird's nest, or knock over an anthill, pilfer some honey from a beehive or take the wool off a sheep's back or draw a pail of milk from a cow? Simply, they start afresh and begin production all over again (R.I Seymour). Do likewise. Bill Clinton once told George Bush (Snr.) during their election campaign in 1992, "I may be fat and ugly, but if you push me down, I keep coming back. I don't give up. I keep coming back". Imbibe that spirit. Come back to the game. Be a back bouncer. At the age of 67, when most men in Africa would have retired from active service, Edison Thomas, in his quest to discover commercial electricity, lost millions of dollars to the fire that razed down his factory. The following day, he wrote his wife and colleagues, "Thank God, all of our mistakes have been destroyed. In a new factory, we can start our experiment with a dean slate." I love that. Little wonder his friend, Henry Ford, said that failure is an opportunity to start again more intelligently. Get back to the battle line. The truth is, until your victory comes the battle field remains the safest place to be. Failure, according to Les Brown, leaves one with two choices: get better or get bitter. Choose the former. Get better. In fact, what we call adversity, God calls opportunity (ask Joseph Jacob)! Allow that adversity to advance you. Disraeli once said, "There is no education like adversity". Napoleon Hill puts it best, "Every adversity, every failure, every heartache, carries with it the seed of an equal or greater benefit". Never look backwards. Relegate regrets to the background. You cannot move ahead when you are in reverse. Go forward. Be success conscious. There is no success today who had never failed before. The man you call a resounding success was only a recurring failure who kept trying. Saints they say are sinners who kept going. Ask Jesus of Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter. I love this story about Sir Edmund Hillary (1919-2008), a mountain climber and Antarctic explorer. He was the first to reach the summit of Mount Everest (8850m/29,035H), with the Nepalese Sherpa, Tenzing Norgay. Born in Auckland, New Zealand, Edmund Percial Hillary served in the Royal New Zealand Air force during World War II. He obtained his early mountaineering experience in the southern Alp of New Zealand. At 11:30am in the morning of 29th May, 1953, Sir Edmund Percial Hillary and Tenzing Norgay finally placed the British flag on top of Mount Everest which at 8,850m above sea level is the highest peak o60n earth. Hillary had been on Mount Everest in 1951 and again in 1952 but failed to reach the summit on both occasion. B.C Forbes once bragged, "Obstacles cannot crush me. Every obstacle yields to a stern resolve. He who is focused to be a star does not change

hismind.”Prior to the third attempt before a large audience, Hillary pointed to the picture of Everest and said with a loud voice: “You beat me once, you beat me twice, but, Mount Everest, you will not beat me again, because you have grown all you are going to but I am still growing!” That’s what we call mountain moving faith! My brother calls it the universal language of all champions. Hear Vince Lombardi: “It is not whether you get knocked down; it is whether you get up that count.” After all, what we call failure is not actually the falling down but the staying down. My mum often says to me, “Never lie down where the devil has hit you down. Get up and try again”. You can’t hit back at your opponent when you are still down. Bounce back. That you tried and failed doesn’t mean you will always fail when you try. Don’t be an elephant! You are now bigger, better and more experienced than you were when you first failed. Keep trying. There is surely going to be a brighter day. Stop looking at where you have been, fret not at your present pitiable state, start looking at where you can still be (MIKE MURDOCK). Tomorrow is always going to be better. Advance towards it (tomorrow) despite adversities, past and present. I love Oliver Wendell Holmes where he said, “Greatness is not in where we stand, but in what direction we are moving. We must sail, sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it –but sail we must and not drift nor lie at anchor.” Sail we must! The truth is this, as Herbert Kaufman will put it, “Failure is only postponed success as long as courage coaches ambition. The habit of persistence is a habit of victory”. Be courageous. Persist. I love how Mary Beltrone puts it: “There is a place in God’s sun for the youth, farthest down, who has the vision, the determination and the courage to reach it.”

CHAPTER 2

LIFE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

During my teen years, I bought so many motivational books. I have read the story of several great men. One major thing I learnt from them all is this: those who refused to remain failures made all the great histories in this life. I choose to call them successful failures. They failed but refused to make their place of failing their burial ground. In each of them, I saw a man or woman who advanced despite adversities. They gave life to my dad's maxim, "Adversity makes some men to break and others to break record". Each of them followed the story line of Jesus who passed through shame, failures, defeats and humiliation enroute becoming the name above every other name (Phil 2:1-9). For 27years, Nelson Mandela faced all manners of insults and painful inhuman assaults while in jail. Today, Mandela is a Nobel winning legend. He is arguable the most influential and respected African ever lived.

Many believe that Abraham Lincoln is the greatest president US of America has ever had. Yet I am still waiting to see a man or woman who failed more times than he did. Born and raised in a poor family, life gave him no choice than to enter the labour market at the early age of 7. This was in his bid to help support his starving family. Born February 12, 1809, a humane far-sighted statesman all through his life time, Lincoln would later become a legend and folk hero after his death. He was put to bed in a log cabin at South Fork of the Nolin Creek near what is now Hodgenville, Kentucky. Life gave Lincoln no chance. He seemed bound to fail right from the word go. A symbol of tenacity and die-hard spirit, Abe Lincoln lost his dear mum at the age of nine. That was October 5, 1818. She died of milk sick epidemic. It happened that cows that had eaten the wild snakeroot plant produced poisoned milk which she mistakenly drank and died. His father, Thomas Lincoln, born in Rockingham County in Virginia in 1778, had married his mum, former Nancy Hanks on June 12, 1806. Hanks Nancy lived and died an illiterate. She signed her name with an 'x'. She also had a daughter in 1807, named Sarah, Abraham Lincolns younger sister. Her second son and third child died at infancy. Abraham Lincoln's father, Thomas Lincoln, was a poor carpenter and handyman. His grand dad, a poor farmer, in 1786 was killed by a Native American 1780, while he was at work clearing land for a farm in the forest. In 1811, aged

2yearsold, the Lincolns moved from Nolin Creek to Knob Creek. At knob creek life was almost miserable for the young Abe. Life was both lonely and hard. In 1816 his dad lost both his Nolin and knob creek lands to Mill Creek farm in court. Thus, in the winter of the same year, they all moved to Ohio River, near Pigeon Creek in what is now Gentry Ville Indiana.

In 1819, a year after his mum's demise the family moved to Elizabeth town Kentucky where Thomas Lincoln married Sarah Bush Johnston, a widow with three children. Abraham Lincoln loved both his step siblings and step mother. He would later in life refer to Sarah B. Johnson as 'my angel mother'. Abe grew up a skilled axe man as clearing forest was the most important job on the frontier farms of his days. He only had a less than one year of formal education in his entire life. He proved by his life and time that what matters most in life is grace not grade. Those who acquire grade without grace often end in disgrace. The streets are full of jobless fools with files full of grades. A self thought genius, Lincoln would later give life to my dad's believe that the best grade one can ever acquire is personal upgrade. That's the true grade that thrusts you to the top. Men, who go for grades on the paper, go there to read about those who upgraded the mind. The Wright brothers only managed to complete high school, narrowly. Mark Twain did not even make it though elementary school. Charles Dickens was forced out of school in his early teens in order to feed his family. Most of the great footballers and other sports men never smelled the four walls of even a primary school. Great men, whether formally or informally, upgraded their minds and the great wealth that lies therein. They never took no for an answer nor did they give no education as an alibi for failing. Better part of my days in physics class where spent learning about Faraday and other great physicists. I was forced to memorize their laws, theories and equations. Yet I was stunned to frazzle when on reading his biography in Encarta DVD 2009 I discovered that Faraday never went to school. Famous for his work in electromagnetic induction and his laws of electrolysis, Micheal Faraday was born on the 2ndof September, 1721. His dad, an illiterate blacksmith,bore and bred him in Newington, Surrey, England. With little or no formal education, Faraday who was apprenticed to a London bookbinder read books on scientific subjects and experimented with electricity. His break came in 1512 when he attended a series of lectures by Sir Humphrey Davy, a famous British chemist. Smart Mike would later forward his lecture notes on that day to Davy, with an

additional request for employment. Faraday got the job. He began work as an assistant in Dave's chemical laboratory at the Royal institution. In 1813, aged 22, Faraday followed Dave on an extended tour of Europe. A young famous scientist was born. By 1824 he had already been elected to the royal society and later appointed the director of the laboratory of the Royal institution. He died on the 25th of Aug. 1867 at a place near Hampton Court, Surrey with many discoveries, laurels and awards to his name. Today everyone who passes through the baptismal class of sciences must be forced to learn the laws, theories and discoveries of a man who never went to school. The truth is, when grace speak, grade is relegated to the background. With no real formal education, Abigail Adams (1744 to 1818) emerged the most influential woman of her days. Born in Weymouth, Massachusetts; Abigail lived to be the wife and later mother of two different American presidents. She was the wife and first lady to John Adams, the second president of the US. In 1825, she also became the mother of the 6th American president as John Quincy Adams her son became president. Never forget too that the humble Barbara Bush Pierce was a mere dropout from Smith College, just in her sophomore year. Greatness has more to do with grace than grade. Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, described by Obama as the finest politician ever lived, is very worthy of mention. Born in 1945, Lula attained the Presidency of Brazil in 2002 and again 2006 without a formal education. Luis grew up in an extremely poor background. He was bred as one of the eight malnourished children of a peasant family in Garanhuns, Pernambuco. Lula left home for Santos in 1952 as a migrant alongside many blacks, on the back of a truck! From Port City in 1957, he moved to Sao Paulo where he worked for 10years in a screw factory. He began to cultivate leadership when he turned an active member of the union of metal workers. By 1975 he was already a president elect of the union. By the time adversities and opposition from the military government and Brazil's automobile industries led him into series of strikes between 1978 and 1979; Lula had been thrust up as a national hero. He organized, almost single handed, the workers party. He equally supervised the growth and expansion of the party into the largest and most well organized left of centre party in Brazil. His first shot at candidacy for public office ended in shame and defeat. That was in the year 1982 when he vied for the office of the governor of Sao Paulo. In 1986 he managed to win election into Brazil's parliament. He enrolled among the 20 candidates that in the November of 1989 filed out for Brazil's first direct election since 1960, for Brazil's chief executive.

By the end of the first round of voting, he was head to head with Fernando Affonso Collor de Mello, a candidate of the National Reconstruction Party. However, he was beaten narrowly by Mello at the run-off. However in 1992, Mello resigned amidst corruption charges. In 1994, Fernando Henrique Cardoso was in loggerheads with him at the presidential race with Lula holding a commanding lead. Cardoso was then the finance minister, between 1993 and 1994. But by October election same year, Lula had lost grounds and subsequently lost to Cardoso, disappointingly. But in 2002, hard fighting Lula became the first working-class and leftist president to be elected in Brazil. Persistence pays. He would later go on to win a crucial but easy rerun election against Geraldo A. for a second term in office. Today, the man who was so poor as not to afford a formal education is now Brazil's best ever leader in history.

In his own autobiography, Lincoln writing about his ABC school wrote, "No qualification was ever required of a teacher beyond reading, writing and ciphering, to the rule of three." Yet through avid determination and the assistance of his step mother Lincoln learnt to read, write and do simple arithmetic, at quite early stage. She introduced him to the Bible which Lincoln read cover to cover. Books from Aesop, John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe and Mason Locke's biography of George Washington made a lasting influence in his life.

In 1928, aged 19, Lincoln stood at a towering height 1.93m (6ft 4:0), both lean and muscular with long arms and big hands. Nonetheless, despite his great powerful physique, Lincoln was lazy at farm work. He never had interest in it. He was so lazy that a neighbor recalled of him, "Lincoln was awful lazy, he would laugh and talk and crack jokes and tell stories all the time."

In 1830, Lincoln moved with his family to Decatur, Illinois. There he attended his first ever political rally and also made his first political speech, same day. He was said to have been frightened to his bones at first, but refused to yield to fear. He managed to regain his composure at the middle of his speech. The following year, Abe returned to New Orleans. Here, alongside his cousin, Lincoln was hired by a Kentucky trader and speculator whose name was Denton Offcut. Denton Offcut had been obsessively drawn to Lincoln and his Cousin after the duo's show of bravery on a trip to New Orleans. It happened that Denton hired Lincoln and his step brother, alongside two others, to construct a float boat and to use it in

transporting his load of cargo to Mississippi. They did. \$60 was their agreed fee plus an extra 50cents per day. It was in the course of this business trip that Lincoln saw his first slave auction in New Orleans. Grossly vexed in his spirit, he was quoted to have said: "If I ever get a chance to hit that thing, I will hit it hard." That was what so much spurred his passion to remain so resolute on putting an end to slavery that he didn't mind the civil war. On their return to Illinois, he accepted Denton's offer to work as a clerk in Denton's general store.

While in New Salem, Lincoln devoted his whole self to the growth and success of the general store. His interest was more in the gold in the job rather than in the \$15 in his monthly payback. He earned friendship of the people of the community with his good humor, intelligence and integrity. Ever cheerful, Abe made it a tradition to always make people happy, thus, always leaving people better than he met them. He assisted the less literate citizen of New Salem in drawing up legal papers and reading or writing their letters. While sitting as a clerk, Lincoln read and discussed politics daily with events on national dailies. He studied books on grammar, Shakespeare and Robert Burns' poetry but never for ones finished a novel. My dad thought me: "If today's reader is tomorrows leader, then what you read determines where you lead".

In 1831, Lincoln had his first close shave with failure when he failed in business, aged 20 years. Offcut's general store had gone bankrupt leaving Lincoln without a job. Unfazed, Lincoln joined the army as part of Governor John Reynolds of Illinois' volunteer forced, raised to crack down a rebellion led by Chief Black Hawk. The Native American Sauk and Fox people had started an uprising against John Reynolds government. Popular Lincoln was immediately made the captain of his company. He again enrolled as a private at the end of his term. In all, Lincoln had a brief military career with only three months of service without areal actual fighting.

In 1832, the following year, aged 21, Lincoln, out of the military, joined politics. Lincoln had his first shot at electioneering and subsequently failed in his bid for the post of Illinois State Legislator. Lincoln had joined the race with only two week left for the election. The idea of democrats and republican that have been the main stay of American politics began that year. Followers of the returning incumbent president, Andrew Jackson, called themselves, Democrats. Senator

Henry Clay of Kentucky and his followers adopted the name National Republicans. Despite a well organized and energy sapping campaign, Lincoln lost. In the same year, tenacious Lincoln tried but failed to gain admission into Law school. Yet, in all this, Abe Lincoln refused to give up. He understood that victory is always certain for the man who refuses to stop fighting. He knew that the fact that one failed does not make one a failure. It only means that one is yet to succeed.

In 1833, Lincoln borrowed money and began a new business, opening a general store in New Salem. He employed William F. Berry as his partner. Unfortunately for Lincoln, Berry mismanaged the business, squandering its profit. By 1835 both the business and Berry himself had died leaving Lincoln with a debt of \$1100- a big fortune in those days. The debt would later take him many years to pay. Yet, in all this, Abe refused to give up. He no doubt was of the same spirit with O.G. Mandino who once vowed, “I will persist until I succeed. Always will I take another step. If that is of no avail, I will take another and yet another. In truth, one step at a time is not too difficult...; I know that small attempts, repeated will complete any undertaking.” In his own days, Les Brown advised, “Anytime you suffer a setback or a disappointment, put your head down and plow ahead”. Lincoln did ploy ahead. He knew that the Chinese weren’t stupid when they said, “With time and patience, the mulberry leaf becomes satin, with time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes a silk gown”. That’s why a writer affirmed, “He who does not tire, tires adversity”. Lincoln forged ahead. He again picked up an appointment as the postmaster of New Salem. He was paid \$60 per year with an additional percentage of the receipts on postage. He made the best use of his new office, doing charity by undercharging people. Again, he read virtually every book that crossed the post office and equally worked as a deputy surveyor of Sangamon County to argument his income.

In 1834, Abe doggedly ran for the Illinois State Legislator post again. This time, Abe was already well known throughout the country and with great oratory skill won the Democrats over to vote for him. Thus, Lincoln was elected not just in that 1834 but also reelected in 1836, 1838 and 1840. Margaret Thatcher was indeed right when she said “At times it takes more than two small jumps to cross a great chasm.” Yet, that you failed at a thing today doesn’t mean that you will always fail at that thing. Always dare to try another ‘try’. Robert Brault puts it best,

“Stubbornly persist and you will find that the limits of your stubbornness go well beyond the stubbornness of your limits.” In the words of Billie Jean King, “Champions keep playing until they get it right.” When asked the key to success, my only brother said, “It is to keep getting up or at least, to get up one more time than you fall down.” I love that. Thomas Edison puts it better, “Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.” That is why Christopher Morley thought his followers: “Big shots are only little shots who kept shooting.” Men of success are but a bunch of failures who kept failing forwards. They are like Denis Waitley who affirmed that failure is our tactful teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat it is a temporary detour, not a dead end. Failure is something we can avoid only by saying nothing, doing nothing and being nothing.

Unfortunately, the euphoria of this victory was short lived as Abe Lincoln lost his 19yrs old fiancée, Ann Rutledge the following year, 1835. Lincoln didn't take it lightly. He struggled with the heartbreak until the following year, 1836, when he finally succumbed to a complete nervous breakdown. He remained bedridden for six uninterrupted months. It took the help of faithful friends to dissuade him from committing suicide- a permanent solution to a temporary problem. In all, Lincoln refused to stay down. He no doubt was of same faith with my brother who believes that a breakdown is only a brief moment of lying down to rest in order to acquire the momentum needed for a greater exploit. Bouncing back is an inert ability of every champion it is the life force of all great men. It is this force that separates 'successful' failures from permanent failures. Two friends betrayed their master in one day. One chose suicide and became a perpetual symbol of folly while the other chose to bounce back. Judas hung himself but Peter, determined to right the wrong, pleaded leniency and thence became the foundational head of all those who believe in his master, Jesus. Persistent people in the words of John Mason begin their success where most others quit. They see obstacles as a mere call to strengthen their resolve to achieve worthwhile goals. They know that no matter how painful their failures of yesterday may be, yesterday ended last night and each new day, according to David Elizabeth, holds the possibility for a miracle.

In the year 1837, Lincoln was on his feet again. That same year, Lincoln took his first stand against slavery. He alongside his friends of like mind declared that

slavery was founded on both injustice and bad politics, but the promulgation of abolitionist doctrine tends rather to increase than abate its evil. That same year, Lincoln, who had been studying Law as a part time, became a licensed attorney. He accordingly became a junior partner in John T. Stuarts' Law firm. He thence left New Salem for Springfield. Due to extreme poverty, Lincoln travelled to Springfield on a borrowed horse. He had packed all his belongings in two saddle bags. It took the assistance of Joshua Fry Speed, a store keeper, to save Lincoln the embarrassment of becoming a vagabond. Joshua gave Lincoln a free lodging accommodation. Poor Lincoln would later propose marriage to Mary Owens, a Kentucky girl based in New Salem. Mary turned him down. She later told the press, "I thought Mr. Lincoln was deficient on those little links which make up the chain of a woman's happiness". Undeterred, poor, seemingly ugly Lincoln in 1840 began to date a cultured, high-strung Kentucky woman named Mary Todd. Todd was by then staying with her married sister in Springfield. On November 4, 1842, after a long successful sex free courtship, Mary and Abe were married. History has it that Lincoln on the 13th of November, same year, wrote a fellow lawyer, "Nothing new here, except my marrying which to me is a matter of profound wonder."

Bad enough, between 1838 and 1843 Lincoln stood for many elective positions which included: speaker of the state legislator, municipal legislator and congress. Howbeit, he lost in all. That would have been enough reason for an average man to end it all. Others would have chosen to wallow perpetually in self pity. Nonetheless, Lincoln again refused to be discouraged. He rather chose to oppose his opposition than to die in the position his opposition positioned him. Oswald Avery advised, "Whenever you fall, pick something." I love it where Caleb Colton said, "Times of general calamity and confusion have been productive of the great minds. The purest ores are produced from the hottest furnace and the brightest thunder bolt is the one elicited from the dark storm." Ask John Mason and he will tell you that problems are the price of progress. For, if you have a dream without aggravations, you don't really have a dream. Yes, three straight losses, yet Lincoln refused to bend. Indeed, one who is determined to be great does not change his mind. He knew that the door of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition. It was John Mason who later wrote that obstacles subdue mediocre people, but great leaders rise above them. Undaunted and refusing to give room to

depression, Lincoln in that 1843 moved from the simple rented house he has been living in with his family to a more modest home. He bought the frame house in Springfield, at the rate of \$1500.

Lincoln then decided to take a break from public life. He wanted to invest more of his time on family life. Just like his political life, Lincoln's family life was not all the way a bed of roses. Of all their four sons, only the eldest, Robert Todd Lincoln, who was born in that very year 1843, reached adulthood. He died in 1926. The rest died either at childhood or in their teens. Edward Baxer Lincoln, Abe and Mary's second son, was born in 1846. He died in 1850, aged 4 years old. William Wallace Lincoln, nicknamed Willie was their 3rd son. He lived between 1850 and 1862. Willie died in the presidential white house just before his 12th birthday leaving Lincoln depressed and Mary Todd Lincoln hysterical. Thomas Lincoln, Abe and Mary's favorite son, nicknamed Tad in the white House, died at the age of 18. On the part of his better half, despite the fact that Lincoln by sheer wisdom lived in peace with her, Mary Todd was a far cry from Abe's Ann Rutledge. Mary Todd was spoiled, haughty and temperamental. Her children's death had caused her a great anguish. Thus, she was often upset. Yet Mary Todd's ambitious disposition so much aided Abe's political career that Lincoln often owe his political success to her.

His law practice did not run hitch free either. He was successful at the time of his marriage, earning between \$1200 and \$1500 per year. He had started his practice as assistant to Stuart. In 1841 the firm was dissolved. Luckily for Lincoln, Stephen T. Logan, a highly experience Lawyer, employed him as a junior partner. Again the Firm of Logan and Lincoln was dissolved in 1844. Abe, unperturbed went on to form a lifelong partnership with a young lawyer by name William H. Hemdon. Even while politically silent, Lincoln used his opportunity as a practicing lawyer to meet new people and to advance his political career.

Back to politics, Lincoln decided to look beyond the state house to the United State Congress. He had his break in 1846 when he got the nomination as the Whig's flag bearer of Illinois to the US Congress. Lincoln had made two failed attempts in 1842 and 1844. Lincoln would go on to defeat the Democratic candidate, Peter Cartwright, a Methodist preacher, in that year's November elections.

Tenacity often only pays at the end. In the words of T.S. Elliot, “History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats.” Dr. Joyce later observed that, “Studies indicate that the one quality of all successful people have is persistence. They are willing to spend more time accomplishing a task and to persevere in the face of many difficult odds.” Abe served as a popular, masterful congress man. Yet his career in the congress was riddled with oppositions. First he was a freshman. Again the inner councils of the government were closed to him. Also the great Washington social life he and Mary Todd looked forward to eluded them. Yet in everything, Abe never lost confidence in himself. He even wrote his friend Hemdon, “As you are all so anxious for me to distinguish myself, I have concluded to do so before long.” Despite being a front line politician, honest and pilferage-free Abe lived quietly with his family in a modest boarding house. *Great men greatly delay gratification!*

My brother once observed, “Great budding leaders are often distinguished by their ability to stand alone”. If you want to lead the orchestra, advised a famed writer, you have to be willing to turn your back on the crowd. Being able to stand alone is one characteristic common with all great achievers. Truth is often unpopular. Those who stand by it are rarely found in the popular stand. Following the crowd is easy but according to John Crowe “It takes a strong fish to swim against the current. Even a dead one can float with it.” The Irish business executive, Michael Smurfit wrote, “The entrepreneur (business leader) is like an eagle ...he soars alone, he flies alone and he hunts alone.” German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer puts it this way, “To be alone is the fate of all great minds.” Henrik Ibsen, a Norwegian playwright, is quoted as saying, “The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone.” Abe Lincoln earned himself the name ‘spotty Lincoln’ in December 1847 when he stood out to argue against American war with Mexico. The Mexican war which lasted two years, 1846-1848 had erupted on May 1846 largely due to American President James K. Polk’s inordinate hunger for American territorial expansion. Polk had earlier claimed that the Mexicans had killed an American soldier on US territory, but Lincoln challenged his sincerity. He argued that the spot on which the firing took place was not actually a US territory. He declared the war unnecessary and unconstitutional. Although

unpopular in his argument, Abe was not afraid to stand alone. His Illinois brethren denounced him as a traitor and opposition. The newspaper readily branded him 'spotty Lincoln'. Yet, Lincoln never gave up.

Abraham Lincoln's bid for a second term in Congress readily hit a rock, as it was branded unconstitutional. Now unpopular at home due to his antiwar stand, his attempted move to have his law partner, Stephen Logan, elected equally crashed. His successor at the Whig never had him in his plans. He only managed to appoint him the governor of a far-off Oregon which Lincoln readily turned down. At this juncture, even Lincoln himself doubted the continuance of his political career. He returned to his home town, Springfield, the following year. Back home, Lincoln soon became one of the most respected lawyer in his state. While in Springfield, he applied for the post of a commissioner for the General Land Office. As usual, he was unsuccessful. George Bernard Shaw (1850-1950) may have died some year back, but his philosophy remains a landmark in our generation. He once said, "When I was young, I observed that nine out of every ten things I did were failures so I did ten times more work," Did you get that? He increased his failure rate! That is a coded secret of success.

Indeed failures are never enough excuses for giving up no matter how many of it comes at a time. In the words of King Solomon, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." John Mason himself once said, "In time of adversity, you don't have an obstacle, you have a choice." You decide whether to get bitter or to get better. You decide your future-whether to stay down or to pick up something and go up. The choice is yours- either to die in self pity or to scoop some gold from the pit. Yes, you choose between advancing in adversity and abdicating your dream in face of opposition. Abraham Lincoln chose the former. You too should. John Neal once said, "A certain amount of opposition is a great help to a man. Kites rise not with but against the wind". He was probably of the same school of thought with Melvin Evans who said that, "The men who build the future are those who know that greater things are yet to come and that they themselves will help bring them about. Their minds are illumined by the blazing sun of hope. They never stop to doubt. They haven't time". No time. Real winners never give room for doubts nor regrets. They always refuse to allow their hope of tomorrow to be blighted by the failures of yesterday. They see the so called failures and temporary setback as part of their great success stories. Like Napoleon Hill,

winners understand that, “every adversity, every failure, every heartache comes with it the seed of an equal or greater benefits”. I love the way Lou Holtz puts it, “Adversity is another way to measure the greatest of individuals. I never had a crisis that did not make me stronger”. Real men grow stronger by challenges. A tree planted by a wave-laden ocean grows stronger and taller than the one on the cliff, free from stress and problems of the aggressive sea waves. Fortune, they say favours the bold. Although it took him another five years to bounce back into political lime-lights, Lincoln refused to stay down. He sometime in 1854 shocked the world press and general populace with a statement that would later become the life philosophy of many successful men even in years to come. He said, “If you try something and you don’t succeed, try something harder”. Yes, always aim higher. When you aim at reaching the sun, even if you miss, you will land among the stars. Shun low ambition. Shun mediocrity. No shallow minded man has ever made it to the top. Aim high. If it is impossible to reach the peak, there would be no peak at all. It exists because it is reachable. Lincoln said, ‘try something harder.’ In life, you can never know how far you can go until you go farther than you have ever gone. Almost everything that is today done with ease was once said to be unachievable until someone first achieved it. The impossible is always the untried.

That year, 1854, it was his adversities that stemmed from his stand against the Kansas-Nebraska-Act that once again thrust him into political limelight. He campaigned for the election into congress of Richard Yates, an antislavery Whig. His passion was to make people see the evil of slavery. This earned him a nationwide fame and his reputation as a moralist became even more established.

But Lincoln was not through with failing yet. In 1855, he vied for US senate and failed. Nonetheless, he threw his weight on Lyman Trumbull who later won. Lincoln gave up, but not on his dreams. He decided to look beyond the congress to the presidency- try something harder! During a Republican National convention he was delegated by his people, Illinois, for vice presidency. Although he gained 110 convention votes, Lincoln lost the nomination to William C. Dayton of New Jersey. Untiring, unrelenting, rather than wallow in self pity, Lincoln set eyes once again, on US Senate. He was to unseat Senator Stephen Douglas who was poised for reelection. Although he again lost the election, his series of debate with Senator Douglass earned him even greater national recognition and subsequently a presidential nomination. In May 1860, he was named the Republican Flag bearer.

Division among the Democrats meant his victory was almost assured. Despite his inability to win even a single vote in a whole 10 southern states, Lincoln went on to pull a landslide victory. Thus, the man who went through failure from failure finally became the American president. He was sworn in on the 4th of March 1861 as the 16th president of the United States.

Although even his tenure as president was not void of adversity, Lincoln didn't only conquer all but advanced through them all. No doubt, Sumner Redstone was right when he said, "Success is not built on success. It's built on failure. It is built on frustration. Sometime it is built on catastrophe". Life, observed Samuel Johnson, affords no higher pleasure than that of surmounting difficulties.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEW DEAL

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) is another classic example of a man who not only advanced despite adversities but through it also. A Scottish novelist, essayist and poet, Stevenson contributed several classic works to children's literature. He lived and died a huge blessing to humanity. Born in Edinburgh in 1850, Robert studied law and engineering. But his passion and natural inclination had been toward literature. Robert's true life that would later write his name in gold actually began when he was hit by tuberculosis. He began to travel round the globe in search of warm climate to ease his illness. That marked the birth of his writing career as he began to write descriptions of his journeys. Books like 'An Inland Voyage' (1878) became an immediate hit.

Now let's check out the man behind the NEW DEAL. The man, Franklin Roosevelt fondly remembered for his pet project, THE NEW DEAL, had many failures and adversities throughout his life, yet he was able to overcome them all with fortitude and tenacity. No doubt, few men if not none at all, have made it to the top of their game without severe adversity. Expecting to sail through life without hiccups and set ups is not only unrealistic but also makes failure look too fatal on happening. Born on January 30, 1882 in New York, the 32nd president of the United States of America who ruled between 1933 to 1945 remains America's longest serving president. Adversity has a lot to do with longevity. A tree faced with turbulent wind and harsh weather condition lives longer and stronger than the stress free tree. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's unprecedented election to four great terms in office will probably never be repeated by any being. The current US constitution denies the right of any person to be elected president more than two terms.

Roosevelt was associated virtually with every major problem of American history. Yet, he did not only proffer a workable solution to each but equally advanced through them all. Long before he stormed the White House with his 'New Deal', Roosevelt dealt with adversity decisively. He provided the American populace with both succor and a messianic guide during two of their most devastating crises ever- the great depression of the 1930, followed by World War

II (1898-1945). Born of Sara Delano Roosevelt and James Roosevelt, Frank grew up at his family's Estate at Hyde Park, in Dutchess County, New York. He schooled mostly indoor under his mum's supervision for the first fourteen years of his life. During this period, he mastered both French and German languages. He finally left home in 1896 to school in Croton School in Massachusetts. His dad died in 1898 just a year prior his admission into Harvard. At Harvard, despite being an above average student, his focus on extra curriculum activities grossly affected his grades. In 1904, a year after his graduation, he joined politics as a republican in gusto for his distance cousin (Theodore Roosevelt)'s role at the White House. Same year, he joined Columbia University for a law degree.

Roosevelt formerly entered politics in 1910, aged 28, he ran for the New York State senate and won. Roosevelt the great politician was born. In 1912, after Woodrow Wilson won the US Presidency, he resigned the senate. Wilson had named him the assistant secretary of US navy. It was during his time as No 2 man in US navy that America went into World War I in 1917. He remained in the Navy until August of 1920 when he resigned in order to campaign as a Vice Presidential candidate under the umbrella of the Democrats. He campaigned vigorously alongside James M. Cox, the actual presidential candidate. Unfortunately, they lost to Warren G. Harding. Despite the lost, Roosevelt found comfort in the fact that the exposure afforded him the opportunity to meet and make friends with all big shot Democratic Leaders around the nation. He was still below 40.

More adversities came Roosevelt's way when in August 1921 he was knocked down by Poliomyelitis. Thus, Roosevelt was left in a double agony of both elections lost and complete inability to walk. All thought it was over for the young handsome politician. Even his own mum encouraged him to call it quit and return to his Hyde Park origin as a quiet gentle man. Nonetheless Roosevelt was determined to bounce back. Backed by the support of his wife and his bosom friend, Louis Howe, he fought off depression with great courage. He remained cheerful in spite of all odds. Despite the efforts of many specialists, Roosevelt was never again able to walk unaided till his demise in April 12, 1945. Howbeit, a paralyzed leg does not amount to paralysis of visions and dreams; even the lame can walk tall as one does not need to be a sprinter in order to make it to the top. Roosevelt bounced back to public life in 1922 when he fired up an unschooled

Alfred E. Smith to gubernatorial triumph. He would later go on to succeed Smith as governor on January 1929.

Eight months into gubernatorial rule, the US stock market crashed on October 1929. Roosevelt thus became a depression governor. Yet the young energetic governor never himself crashed. He proved himself an able problem solver. He equally capitalized on the stock market crash to notch the American presidency. Now American president, problem loomed again. Despite being very popular with Voters, Roosevelt became the target of an assassination attempt even before his inauguration. Happily, Joe Zangara missed him by whiskers. By the time he was sworn in on March 5, 1933, the Great depression was at its peak. Several millions were unemployed. Roosevelt was aged 51. He pledged to wage a total war against depression. He did. He won via his New Deal. He took various risks, closed several banks, and changed guards (cabinet) many times, all in hunt of a lasting solution. Just when he had fully conquered Depression, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. Thus, Americans moved from financial depression to its emotional version. Roosevelt went from depression president to war time president.

Amidst several criticism, challenges and opposition, Roosevelt coursed through them all to emerge one of the finest presidents in history.

Never ever allow adversities and challenges to weigh you down. Expect it! The way to success is filled with bumps of delays, adversities and oppositions but therein lays the fuel for victorious advancement. You can learn twice as much from failure than from success. He that holds on soon holds all the trophies. Never forget the admonition of Catherine Pulsifer, "Success takes time. First develop persistence determination and most importantly, believing in yourself to win". As no day is deemed perfect and complete without day and night so also it takes bouts of trials and triumphs, tests and testimonies, defeats and deft feats to make a perfect and fulfilled life. Adversities are the basic ingredients that make the delicacy of success taste sweeter. Sweat, said Heywood Brown, is the cologne of all accomplishments. Little wonder Kenji Miyazowa opined, "We must embrace pain and burn it as fuel for our journey." Christ once gave His disciples a great shock. Just imagine having a highly successful uncle back from abroad with so much wealth and gadgets. With great honesty and undivided loyalty, you have faithfully given him your all, helping so much to make his visit a memorial to him.

For days you rehearsed in your mind how you will thank him for a new laptop, bicycle and all kinds of gadgets he would leave behind for you in appreciation of your loyalty and services to him. Finally comes the d-day for his departure. Just when you were parking his luggage, looking forward to his appreciations and farewell gifts, he hands you this bombshell, “As I go, expect several blows and slaps”. What a shock that would be. Jesus conquered the world. The disciples watched him do diverse miracles. He healed the sick and raised the dead. At a time, they watched the heaven open for Him with Moses and Elijah stepping out to minister to him. Even He himself testified, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given unto me!” Just when His faithful followers expected some remuneration and rewards, when they busily imagined in their minds who would sit closest to Him in His hour of Glory, Jesus dropped for them this mind blowing grenade, “..... In this life, you will have- not wealth, riches, fame nor honor, titles or awards, but- tribulations (John 16:33)!” I wonder how long it took them to recover from that shock. However, I love the second part of that verse where He said, ‘rejoice!’ Yes, you are an over comer. Like Paul in IICor.7:4, be exceedingly joyful in your tribulation. Always remember this: “Tribulation is a sure sign of an impending triumph”. Like it was revealed to John (Rev.2:10), all who endure to the end would surely wear the crown of life.

CHAPTER FOUR

MY HERO

I always call him my hero because when it comes to leadership only few men can boast of being a greater achiever than he. His is a life that sparks off a deep seated inspiration in the hearts of many whenever his name is mentioned. An epitome of humility, resilience and dignity, Obasanjo is one man to emulate when it comes to advancing despite adversities. The man who refused to yield in, OBJ literarily gave life to the words of Russell Davenport who enthused that progress in every age results only from the fact that there were men and women who refused to believe that what they knew to be right cannot be done. The man that refused to yield to early life failures would later remain vehement on his stand against militancy and military dictatorship in Nigeria. Threats of death and inhuman torture in prison were not enough to bend him. Many who counted him out when he was down in prison, later counted on him to pay their salaries in time, on his rise to the presidency. Famous as OBJ, my hero lived never without a strong objective, whether at his top or his low ebb. Born Matthew Olusegun Aremu Okikiola Obasanjo, OBJ is a hero in every sense of that term. Always at the right place at the right time, fortune always smiled at him at the end no matter the extent of adversity he happens to face as a build up to that fortune. Obasanjo twice stepped into the Nigerian presidency each after the sudden death of a previous (Military) head of state. On each occasion he would later step down by handing power over to the civilians. Obasanjo was born in the year 1937, precisely on May 5, into a peasant family in Abeokuta. Although quite intelligent and smart at school, OBJ could not proceed to the university due to his poor background. Not permitting that to be an excuse for a perpetual non-success, OBJ in 1958 joined the military. He began to show his knack for leadership even while in the military. Father of six children, two boys, four girls, OBJ frequently and extensively educated himself in Britain while in military. From Mons officers Cadet School Alder-shot to Royal College of military Engineering and thence to school of survey in Newbury, OBJ gave life to the saying that today's reader is tomorrow's leader. He proceeded to several other schools; thus becoming one of the most well read soldiers in Africa. In 1967, during Nigerian Civil unrest, OBJ's military prowess was brought to glare. He lead a decisive attack on the Biafran forces that is credited to putting an end to the war. He equally received the Biafran

surrender that marked the end of the war. In 1970, at the end of the civil war, Obasanjo served in various capacities as a minister in different military governments. It was at this level of service that his dream of birthing a civilian rule was born. OBJ would later succeed Brigadier Murtala Ramat Mohammed as the Nigerian military Head of State. That was in 1976, February 13, immediately after the assassination of Murtala Mohammed on his way back from the mosque. OBJ was narrowly missed by the coup plotters who bombarded another vehicle that they mistook for his. Col Dimka would later be executed for master-minding the assault. In 1979, OBJ voluntarily handed over power to a civilian leader, Aghaji Shehu Shagari. Never power crazy, yet always in the corridor of power, Obasanjo immediately retired from the military after the successful military to civilian rule transition. He then founded the famous OBJ Farms Nigeria Limited at Otta in Ogun State. A simple man, humble to the core, he was said to have turned down an appointment to become the UNITED NATIONS Secretary General. Unfortunately, his dream for a lasting democracy in his father land did not last long as it was left in the hands of the wrong men. As rampant political killings and untold corruption became the mainstay of Shagari's regime, the military had no choice but to take over power again. But once again the men on khaki proved not to be the genie with the solution to Nigerian problem. As the economy kept deteriorating due to massive looting of national treasury, the masses again cried out. The 'freest and fairest' election in the country's history was held on June 12, 1993 but was quickly annulled by the then president, IBB. Upon untold pressure from the masses, IBB stepped aside for an interim president, Ernest Shonekan. He was vested with the responsibility of restoring the true 'government of the people by the people', democracy. However, Shonekan was shoved aside by the black goggled president, Gen. Abacha. As all these history kept unfolding, OBJ kept crying out, lending his voice on the detriments of military rule. He maintained that any power born from the barrel of a gun is both heinous and oppressive. As a result of his clamor for return to civilian rule, OBJ was jailed by the then Head of State, Gen. Sani Abacha. While in the prison, OBJ escaped death by a whisker as several efforts to poison him proved abortive. He had a date with destiny. No one can finish a man who believes he has not finished yet. While in jail OBJ dreamt daily about his nation's return to democracy. Melvin Evans believes that men who build the future are those who know that greater things are yet to come and they themselves will bring it about. As God will have it, Abacha suddenly died mysteriously in

1998 with OBJ still alive. The new Head of State, Gen AbdusalmiAbubakar granted OBJ a presidential pardon and a release from jail.

In 1999, May 29, OBJ once again, against all odds, was named his country's president. Unlike that of 1976, the then general became a civilian ruler this time despite all opposition. The truth is, men who generally refuse to neither stay down nor give up generally go up. There is no stopping for the man who refuses to be stopped. Life only gives you the tag 'failure' only when you agree to wear one by giving up. He who keeps trying and hoping sooner or later hits his target. Develop resilience to your resistance as you daily take your stand against your opposition. A man who knows how to employ those better than him, OBJ brought the likes of Soludo, El Rufai, Ezekwesili, NgoziOkonjo, Dora Akunyili, etc into prominence among the Nigerian populace. Determined to fight corruption in spite of the overwhelming risks that lies therein, OBJ founded (EFCC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. Through EFCC, many corrupt office holders were brought to book, thus, curbing corruption in Nigeria. He also raised the Nigerian oil reserved from 83.7B in 1999 to 845B in 2007.

His sound leadership secured a debt relief in the tune of \$18B and he equally paid off the remaining \$12B, thus, leaving the giant of Africa debt free for the first time in many years. OBJ was so successful that, the whole nation as one man, voted him once again for the second term. If not for his insistence to return to his birds at Otta, the masses nearly forced him back to the presidency for a third, consecutive term. On handing over to Alhaji Umar' Musa Yaradua, the 1st Nigerian military leader to peacefully achieve military to civilian transition equally became the first civilian president to successfully achieve a civilian to civilian transition.

Adversity causes some men to break, but real men break records through it. Each time I encounter a setback in my academic pursuit my mum will call me and say, 'find in your adversity a tool for your advancement'. Faithless says J.R.R. Tolkien, "is he that says farewell when the road darkens." Joseph Sugarman's words could go for a course of study in the University of Life, where he said, "Not many people are willing to give failure a second opportunity they fail once and it is all over. The bitter pill of failure is often more than most people can handle. If you are willing to accept failure and learn from it, if you are willing to consider failure

as a blessing in disguise and bounce back, you have gotten the essential of harnessing one of the most powerful success forces”.

I so much respect the man Louis Armstrong (1901-1971). Born in New Orleans, Louisiana, the American cornet, jazz and trumpet player, band-leader, singer and popular music icon overcame all sought of adversity en route stamping his name in the music hall of fame. John Edward Hasse would later write in his biography, “Armstrong overcame poverty, a lack of formal education and racism to become one of the most innovative and influential musicians of the 20th century. He is the pioneer of the music style ‘swing,’ plus several other firsts”. Danny Armstrong grew up in dire poverty. He did not attend school beyond the fifth grade. That would have been enough reason for him to turn his nose up at life for being unfair. Yet, ever cheerful Armstrong only saw that as a preparation ground for a greater tomorrow. He envisaged his setbacks to be stepping stones to a glorious future. Life is like a game of cards. We all are the players. Life automatically dishes out to every one of us cards we never chose nor bargained for. We are the ones who decide how to play our cards in order to win the game of life. The man, who was renowned for playing and singing with passionate, joyful feeling and an exuberant tone, had more than enough reasons to die a gloomy man. His father abandoned the family about the time of Armstrong’s birth. Everything was ‘naturally’ against him. Life seemed unfair right from birth. Like the famous Barrack Hussein Obama, even his own dad saw nothing good in him, nothing to either to hope for or to nurture. Armstrong was raised by his mother in the urban slums of New Orleans. Mark Victor Hansen was right where he told the press and of course the rest of the world: “You don’t become enormously successful without encountering and overcoming a number of extremely challenging problems”. The road to success is often full of bumps. The course of true anything never runs smooth”. Frank A Clark rightly wrote, “If you can find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn’t lead anywhere”.

Lance Armstrong, by the time he retired in 2005, had won Tourde France seven consecutive times. A gifted cyclist, Armstrong excelled in both mountain racing and the individual against the clock racing. Lance, against all odds, stood tall in the world most grueling contest of all sports. Asked why he made it, my sister, his number one fan simply said:“DETERMINATION”.

Lance was born in Plano, Texas in the year 1971. Life began to deal with him very early when he lost his father at a tender age. He was raised primarily by his mother. By the age of 13, he was already a standout athlete, competing in and winning triathlons. Soon, he realized that his talent was actually cycling and so decided to make the best of it. In 1990, young Lance got an invitation to try out for the US national team. That year, he finished 11th in the world Amateur Cycling championships in Japan. As his amateur fame rose, he went to Barcelona, Spain, for the 1992 summer Olympic Games as the favourite. He finished a disappointing 14th. Undiscouraged by the defeat, Lance resolved to turn a professional cyclist. His first professional race took place in San Sebastian in Spain. It was the memorable 1992 Classico. Dishearteningly, Lance finished last out of a startling 111 riders. Many encouraged him to try something else as cycling was not his calling. "Destiny differs," a friend told him. But Lance was still determined; he did not give up cycling. He remained resolute on his desire to be atop his game. In an interview with the press, he thought the world populace: "Pain (defeat) is temporary. It may last a minute or an hour, or even a day, months or a year. But eventually it will subside! If I quit, however, it lasts forever". Lance trained night and day. He transcribed all his whole life to it. Thus, in 1993, just a year after his disappointing defeat and shame of being last, Lance emerged the youngest cyclist to win the World Cycling Championship. The same year, he competed in his first Tour de France race but made no attempt to finish it. Now a champion, Lance refused to stop at first success. He set for himself a bigger and a more challenging goal. In 1995 he went back for the Classico San Sebastian in Spain. This time he won. Same year, he clinched the Tour Dupont in USA. In 1996, he again won both the Classico San Sebastian and the Tour Dupont. Unfortunately, tragedy struck later after that victory when in October 1996 Lance was diagnosed of advanced testicular cancer. It was said to have spread even to his lungs and brain. Lance fought back. Doctors declared him to have barely 50% chance of survival. But he fought on so vigorously that he was declared cancer free the next year. By mid 1998 he had already returned to his topmost form as a professional cyclist. He won tour de France convincingly in 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002 a record! Sickness struck again. He was hospitalized most of the late 2002. But in 2003, Lance fought off ill health, on race injuries and several other adversities to win his 5th tour de France. He equally won both the 2004 and 2005 editions, becoming world most decorated cyclist ever lived.

Now, have you ever imagined what it looks like to read your own obituary? Imagine listening to people say all manner of ill reports on celebration of your demise. That no doubt would be horrible. Yet, that is exactly the scenario that birthed the famous NOBEL PEACE PRIZE. It happened that Mr. Alfred Bernard Nobel had invented the infamous dynamite. Nobel was a Swedish chemist, inventor and philanthropist born and bred in Stockholm. He schooled in Saint Petersburg, Russia before proceeding to US of America where he studied mechanical engineering. Upon graduation, he worked under his father in their family factory in Heleneborg, Sweden. Their work was to develop mines, torpedoes and other explosives. In 1864 tragedy struck. Nobel's younger brother was killed alongside four other people in a factory explosion. This incident inspired him to seek a safe way of handling nitroglycerin. He, in 1866, reached his goal, discovering the dynamite in the process. He later produced ballistite, a smokeless powder. Nobel made so much fame and wealth by selling his inventions. By the time of his death, Nobel controlled factories for the manufacture of explosives in several parts of the world. However, many hated him for this. Critics argued that only a devil's incarnate could mastermind an invention that has taken so many lives and still counting. Thus, many went on drinking spree at the announcement of the obituary of his brother which they mistook for his. Nobel was heartbroken. He determined within him to right the wrong and win himself a good name before his actual real death. Before he finally died in 1896, he willed over \$10M to the improvement of knowledge and award of prize money for those who would make their mark in inventions and discoveries in the field of physics, chemistry, medicine/physiology, literature and world peace. Today hundreds of people have had their life and time transformed by their receipt of the Nobel Prize. Millions others like me dream daily of the day they will clinch the award. Nobel is dead, but his good legacy, born in adversity, lives on.

I don't want to ask again what happened to you. What happened to you is not as important as the opportunity you make out of it. What you make happen with what happened to you happens to be far more important than what actually happened. Great men build castles with the bricks life challenges throw at them. The life of Saul cum Paul gave me a mind blowing lesson. Despite his gruesome torture, persecution, challenges and frequent reoccurring jail terms, Paul wrote 1/3 of the Bible's New Testament. Today, with the Bible as the fastest selling book in the

world history, Billions of people have read and are still reading about Paul. His books, long after his demise, have been shaping people's lives aright. Pilgrim's Progress was written while the author languished in prison, and it was during Beethoven's pit of deafness that the world best music maker and his music were born in him. Stop telling people what happened to you, tell us what you made happen with what happened to you. Adversity is a school. Fail all the way to a successful graduation if need be. The problem is not in the failing but in the refusal to keep trying. The truth remains that most great things that last are always born out of great groaning. The name Job is today perpetually famous as the life and time of Mr. Job of Uz occupies 42 whole chapters in the Bible – many thanks to adversity. Will I have written this book if not that I failed MBBS? Is the famous our daily manna not a product of adversity? Friend, polish your determination and trust God again. God turns disappointments, delays, setups and setbacks to a stepping stone to your glorious throne. Always look out for the positive side of every situation. Never forget this: Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional. It all depends on your outlook. Two men saw the same cup, one said it is half filled, the other said it is half empty. A bend in the road is not the end of the road, unless one fails to take the turn. Stepping out of a university after six years without a certificate induced an urge within me to obtain three degrees instead of one. At the end of three years in another region, I did not only obtain three professional degrees, but did so in the three best federal universities in my country. Adversity pays. It is like a divine jetwith which those who understand its intricacies advance to a glorious height.

Life has thought me that God is the best master chef ever- little wonder he promised to provide our daily bread! Best chef. He garnishes our great success stories with a little failure. No wonder you will always pass failure on your way to success. You will. Divine success is like two slices of bread with failure sandwiched in-between. Failures, like sandwiches, make the bread of success so sweet and palatable. A wise man enjoys success as much as failure and he wisely learn greatly from both. I am yet to see a failure or adversity that never left me more successful and better placed for something bigger. Even if you wish life were a bed of roses, do not forget that roses have thorns. It is the rose we focus on and appreciate never the thorns. Yet, there can't be roses without some thorns. That is why all the great men in the world history are those who managed their failures

and adversities effectively. I smirk at those who call me a genius. Imagine a genius who failed university entrance examination three consecutive times and made it only at the fourth attempt. He went ahead to fail the TOEFL exam, thus crashing his dream of schooling in Europe. He goes ahead to fail his pre-degree exam and was bundled home like a used rag after one year in the university. Although he persevered, he went into medicine, but again failed his MBBS after 5 years in medical school and was subsequently shown the door. Hmmm. Yet the world calls him a genius. Indeed, no doubt, big shorts are just but small shots that kept shooting. Saints are sinners that kept going. Often, it takes multiples of failures to give success -ask Mich Ns. To keep trying, that is the secret of success.

One of the history's greatest politicians who went through the eyes of the needle to make it was by name James Polk (1795-1849). Born of very poor parents in a log cabin on November 2, 1795 in Mecklenburg County, Polk lived to become the 11th president of America and one of the nation's most successful presidents. The eldest of the ten children of Samuel and James Knox Polk, James Polk bravely expanded the US of America west ward to include the Pacific Ocean, California, New Mexico Territory and Oregon County. An amiable and extremely hardworking leader, Polk successfully secured territorial and political growth for the then young United States. Yet Polk struggled with abdominal pains almost all his youth. He never led an active life as a child. His lonely pain-riddled childhood made him a poker-faced and unsocial figure. Thus Polk had no close friends. Yet despite his poor health and weak frame, Polk was determined to excel his mates and all around him in wisdom and strong mind. Unfortunately, by the age 18 Polk could barely read or write. During his days, Dr. Ephraim Mc Dowell, father of laparotomy, was the leading surgeon. He had his hospital in Danville Kentucky. In 1812, Polk was taken by his father to Kentucky to see Mc Dowell. Dowell diagnosed Polk's stomach pains as gall stones, recommending an immediate operation. With no anesthetics, strapped on the table, held by his parents, Polk watched in pains as Mc Dowell poke different crude instrument through his abdomen. Thanks to Mother Nature, the operation was successful. At 18 years, while others were looking forward to graduating, Polk began schooling. He was frail and sickly, as if he would die the next minute. Nevertheless, men with great future despite their grave picture, never die young. He managed to enroll at a church school near his home. Determined to succeed, Polk made such an extraordinary progress that he mastered

English, Greek and Latin grammar in just one year. He later changed to another school in Murfreesboro, Tennessee from where he qualified as a sophomore in the University of North Carolina. He graduated in 1818 with a first class in mathematics and classics. The same year, he moved to Nashville, Tennessee to study law under the famed Felix Grundy. His political career began just when America was hit by a severe agricultural depression. He went from a mere Assemblyman to speaker of the house. In 1825 he was elected into the lower house of the congress of the United States. He again became a speaker/president of the house in 1835. Throughout his tenure as speaker, Polk faced constant insults and vituperation. Many called him derogatory names. Some called him menial, others slave, some others petty tyrant and “a cancer on the body politic”. Yet, in all these Polk bore all the abuses daily, with great composure. He resigned from congress in 1839 and in the same year ran for and won the office of the Governor of Tennessee. Bad enough, he lost his re-election bid in 1841 and failed again in 1843. Nonetheless, undiscouraged by his defeats, Polk went on to become a presidential nominee just the following year. He had come as a compromise candidate at the ninth ballot after the former President, Martin van Buren failed to win it in the first seven ballots. On March 4, 1845 alongside George Mifflin Dallas as vice, Polk was sworn in as American democratic president. Today, the then sick Polk has become a legendary folk hero. His early grieves and sorrows molded the great leader he later became. No doubt Marcel Proust (1871-1922), French, novelist, was indeed right when he penned: “Happiness is beneficial for the body, but it is grief that develops the power of the mind”. Never cry over misfortunes lest you miss the fortunes they bring.

CHAPTER FIVE

SMALL BEGINNINGS, GREAT ENDING

It was Albert Leighton who wrote, “Where man sees but withered leaves, God sees sweet flowers growing”. How true. He brings adversity to advance us to the advanced city called destiny. When Goliath appeared with his giant challenge, little did people know he only came to channel the newly anointed David to his throne. It was the adversity called cross that handed Jesus his crown as the current king of kings. Weep not over that challenge so that the tears won’t hinder you from seeing the new channel it is showing you. The story of Lee Kuan Yew inspires me a lot. Famous as the founding father of Singapore, legendary Lee Kuan Yew in 1959 became the Prime minister of Singapore at the age of 35 years. By the year 1965, Lee became the president of a new nation Singapore. Singapore at the time was facing a crucial life threatening adversity as she had just been bundled out of the Malaysian state to become an independent state. Singapore had no natural resource of any sort. People at that time even sang it as a song, “as poor as Singapore”. The whole world waited for her to shrink to death in adversity but Lee Kuan saw only opportunities in poor Singapore. He saw a beautiful butterfly in where people could only see an ugly dying caterpillar. Lee Kuan Yew couldn’t wait to shine to stardom via same adversity. Those who waited to hear the obituary of Singapore waited eternally in vain. What they saw as problem, Kuan Yew saw as opportunity. Today Singapore is the high-tech leader of South East Asia and a leading voice in the world over. How I desire to visit Singapore! Men who were determined to hold on against all odds today hold all the world records. No doubt, the most important factor of success is not intelligence but determination to keep going against all odds. Being smart and prayerful won’t solve the problem of failure. Often the most notable failures I know were prayer warriors. While the opportunity they prayed for came knocking, they were still busy in the bush fasting. They were little like Mary Magdalene who prayed so hard to see Jesus but called him a militant gardener when she saw him. No doubt, history has proven it that all those who achieved notable success did so after confronting delay, pain, failures, adversity, rejection, doubts, criticisms and even disaster, headlong! None made it to the top that was in the habit of giving up. Many of them had highly humble beginnings but proud endings. Check out the small frustrating beginnings of some of the highly notable men you know and probably dream daily to be like.

First, Albert Einstein. It was Einstein who wrote that “everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid”. That quite captures his early boyhood. Fondly remembered today as a renowned physicist and famous for his theory of relativity, Einstein was born on March 14, 1879 in Ulm but bred in Munich. He lived and schooled in Munich where his family survived on the proceeds from a small shop that manufactured electric machinery. Despite the fact that he is today remembered worldwide as a great genius, Einstein did not always show such potential. He could not talk until after the age of four. Einstein, although he was schooling, could neither read nor write until he was past the age of seven. All around him including his parents and teachers thought him to be mentally handicapped as he was equally slow and antisocial. Yet, even as a youth, while doing poorly in other fields, solitary Einstein showed a brilliant curiosity about nature and an ability to understand difficult mathematical concepts. At the age of 12, he taught himself Euclidean geometry. Adversity struck again when repeated business failures led his family to leave Munich for Italy’s Milan. Einstein was aged 15. He was without a school for one year, studying on his own. Einstein will later in life say that education is that which remains if one has forgotten everything one learned in school. He later managed to finish secondary school in Aarau, Switzerland and then proceeded to Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich after several failed efforts. Einstein did not enjoy the methods of teaching in SFIT. Out of lack of enthusiasm and sheer dislike for the institute’s technique of instruction, Einstein did cut classes and never had a comprehensive note. He preferred to invest his time in the study of physics on his own and a daily practice of his hobby, violin. In 1900, he graduated by a whisker, passing all his exams narrowly by studying the notes of his classmates. Unlike Roentgen Wilhelm who finished there in 1868, professors did not see any good in Einstein and thus did not recommend him for a university position. Yet he who does not tire, tires adversity. Albert Einstein doggedly worked on to become a legendary physicist, won a Nobel Prize and changed the face of the modern science. Davenport Babcock was much more right than any being can imagine when he wrote: “One of the commonest mistakes and one of the costliest too is thinking that success is due to some genius, some magic, something or other which we do not possess. Success is generally due to holding on, and failure due to letting go. You decide to learn a trade, or a language, study music, take a course of reading, and train yourself physically. Will it be success or

failure? It depends upon how much pluck and perseverance that word ‘decide’ contain. The decision that nothing can overrule, the grip that nothing can detach, will bring success”. Remember the Chinese proverb, “With time and patience, the mulberry leaf becomes a satin”. With time and patience! I love that. When patience jams perseverance, success is certain.

A woman of prodigious energy and determination!” Those were the words a famous historian used to aptly describe Marie Curie (1867-1934). A polish-born French chemist and physicist, Marie Curie lived to become the first woman two times Nobelist after her extensive work on radioactivity. She first shared a Nobel Prize in Physics in 1903 with her husband and colleague before clinching the award again, this time all alone (chemistry) in 1911. Famous as Manya, Maria Curie was born Maria Sklodowka on the 7th of November, 1867. She was born in Warsaw Poland, as the 5th child of two polish teachers. Her background didn’t hold much promise. Poland, then dominated by communist Russia, had no higher education opportunities for women. Shortly after she was born, her parents both fervid polish nationalist, lost their teaching job. Consequently, young Manya was forced into long hours of child labour to augment her parent’s lean resource. Nevertheless, Marie Curie managed to win a medal for excellence at the local high school, where the examinations and most lecture classes were held in a foreign language, Russian! Due to the unavailability of higher education opportunity for polish women in her days, Marie Curie with all her brilliance took a job as a governess. She went from home to home teaching children and earning a living. Most of her earnings were spent sponsoring her big sister who was at that time studying medicine in Paris, France. In 1891, Manya’s sister qualified as a medical doctor and immediately wedded her colleague, both surgeons. By the end of that 1891, Manya joined her sister and her new heartthrob in France. In Paris, she transcribed her name from Manyato Marie. Now a practicing doctor, Marie’s big sister began to sponsor her younger sister who had earlier sponsored her. It was at the University of Paris, the Sorbonne University that Marie studied physics and mathematics graduating at the top of her class. In 1894, Marie Sklodowka met Pierre Curie, a French physicist. Both of them got married the following year, forming the best science research partnership of all time. Marie Curie succeeded simply because she doggedly advanced despite all foreseen and unforeseen

adversities. She would later pen in her book: “Life is not easy for any of us, but what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves”.

What of Walt Disney? A famous US business man and the founder of Walt Disney Company. The Walt Disney Company is today considered the father of the animation industry and it still makes billions of dollars from merchandise, movies and theme park around the world. During his long career Walt Disney was nominated for 64 Academy Awards and won 26 Oscar Awards-both records. Yet had it been the later end of Disney was made public to his acquaintances as prophecy, they all would have rebuffed it with a wave of hand. His start was far away from the term promising and as rough as diamond. Nevertheless, “If you can dream it, you can do it”, remained his guiding philosophy and perseverance its anchor. Disney was born Walter Elias Disney in Chicago Illinois in 1901 but was raised in a farm house near Marceline, Missouri. He fell in love with arts at a very tender age. He even earned money by selling his sketches and drawings to his neighbours. While in grammar school, his parents moved to Kansas where he was able to combine Saturday classes at the Kansas City Art Institute with his regular school work. As at teenager, he moved with his family back to Chicago where he studied art and photography at the McKinley high school. He equally attended night classes at the Chicago Academy of fine arts. In 1917, aged 16, Disney dropped out of high school hoping to fight in the world war (1914-1998). He was turned back as he was still too young to fight. Undeterred, Disney lied about his age and thus was accepted to join the Red Cross. He served as ambulance driver in France. On his return to Kansas City, he formed a long term friendship and business partnership with Ub Iwerks, a famous commercial artist. In 1920, their advertisement and illustration drawing business went bankrupt. But Disney plowed ahead. He decided to try newspaper publishing. Regrettably, Disney got fired by the newspaper editor who said that young Disney lacked imagination and had no good ideas. In 1923, he moved to Hollywood, California where he, Roy O. Disney, his brother and Ub Iwerks, his friend, began to make animation videos. It was here in California that Disney turned into the greatest comic artist we now celebrate today. Success is geographical. It comes naturally and with great ease when you are rightly positioned at the right place and at the right time. No one makes it big in Europe whose niche is in Africa. Reinhard Bonke prayed: “God give me Africa!” Today, the spate of his influence in

Africa is immeasurable. His niche was Africa. Joseph's own was in Egypt. Daniel had to naturalize in Babylon. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Akon had to leave Austria and Senegal respectively for United States. Zinedene Zidane left Algeria for France; Stan Mikita, a Canadian hockey hall of fame, had to leave his birth place and origin, Czechoslovakia, for Canada. Louis B. Mayer, the most powerful producer ever in Hollywood history and the founder of Metro Goldwyn Mayer had to move from Belarius to Canada before he finally naturalized in USA where he succeeded. Albert Einstein left Germany for America, Marie Curie needed to move to France and the list goes on and on.

Prior to his move to California, Disney and friend, Ubiwerks, had started a number of businesses that did not last. Each ended with either bankruptcy or outright failure. Yet, Disney kept forging ahead. He went on persevering until his tenacity paid off at last. John D. Rockefeller, the world first billionaire, once said: "I do not think that there is any other quality so essential to success of any kind as the quality of perseverance. It overcomes almost anything, even nature itself". Rockefeller's words were as true as a day. Even his own life and time stands as a testimony to his words and a confirmation to his efficacy of his belief. Born on July 8, 1839 in Richford, New York, Rockefeller surmounted several adversities prior stamping his name perpetually on the sand of time. As we have seen in the profile of many legends, Rockefeller was also born poor. He never saw a wooden spoon let alone silver. He was scantily educated in cheap public schools in Cleveland Ohio. Unable to further his education, he became a book keeper in Cleveland at the age of 16. Luck smiled on him when, on moving fully into business in 1862, he joined forces with entrepreneur Henry Flagler and an inventor per excellence by name Samuel Andrews. The trio together formed what would later be known as Standard Oil Company of Ohio. By 1882, Standard Oil Company had become so formidable that Rockefeller controlled 90% of the oil refineries in the United States of America. He later merged almost all the businesses in America into his Standard Oil Company. Sadly, in 1892 the Ohio Supreme Court ordered the splitting of the merged SOC into several independent businesses. Devastated, yet undeterred, Rockefeller and friends started all over again from square one to reorganize the SOC. Doggedly, unfailing rock-solid Rockefeller consolidated the Standard Oil Company into 20 businesses. By the time he died on May 23, 1937 at the age of 72, he had founded four charitable

organizations namely: the General Education Board, the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research now Rockefeller University, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial.

Think of Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). A famous scientist, physicist, mathematician and natural philosopher par excellence; Newton till date remains one of the most important scientists of all time. If you don't respect him in mechanics for his work on Universal Gravitation and Motion, you will for his Newton's method, Newtonian mechanics, Optics, Infinitesimal calculus or for his discovery of the first reflecting telescope. Today, everyone knows and reveres Newton. All science students have read and memorized his laws of motion. No doubt, Newton was unarguably a genius when it comes to achievements; however, he had some failings early on. Newton was born precisely on the 25th of December, 1642 at Woolsthorpe, Lincolnshire, in England. His childhood is not something one can wish for oneself. His dad died just before his birth. At the age of three, his mum left him in order to remarry. His maternal grandmother adopted and raised him, single handed. Newton began his formal education at his neighbouring town. At the age of ten, his maternal grandma enrolled him at a grammar school near Grantham. While in Grantham, young Newton squatted with Mr. Clark, a famous pharmacist who would arouse his interest in chemical operations. At school, Newton was a known dullard. Nonetheless, what Newton lacked in academic brilliance, he made up in dexterity. He hand-made a sundial, modeled windmills, a water clock, a mechanical carriage and also flew kites with lanterns attached to their tails. His passion for applied physics had made him inattentive at school. By 1656 Newton's mother got tired of failed marriages. She had lost her second husband to death and was jilted by another. She returned to Woolsthorpe. Hoping to make him 'responsible', she pulled Newton out from school with a bid to turning him into a farmer. On putting him in charge of running the family farm, Newton failed so miserably that his uncle took charge of the farm and, at the request of Newton's former teacher, angrily sent him off to Cambridge. However, at Cambridge University, Isaac Newton finally and excellently blossomed into the scholar we remember and want to be like today. That no doubt calls to mind Joseph Jacob of the holy wreath! The man who was wickedly sold into slavery in Egypt got there to turn their Prime Minister. The early Christians were much like it. The King, Nero, who engineered their persecution, ended up spreading the early

church and engendering their growth. Like Joseph later thought his brothers, what people do to, or see in, us as adversity, is often our finest opportunity for destiny advancement. No doubt, greatness has a price, adversity is currency.

Now recall the man Thomas Edison; a well known business tycoon par excellence. Edison is today immortalized in everyone's mind for his success in the invention of electric bulb. Nonetheless, in his early years, his family got a terrific report from his school teacher that reads: "Too stupid to learn anything". Labour force was no better solace. Edison was so inefficient that he was fired from his first two jobs. Yet, what matters most in life is what we agree to, not what people say about us. The name you answer to is more important than what people call you. Edison's first two inventions cost him far more than he invested en route the inventions. His early inventions never sold, yet his light bulb sold wild enough to make him the world richest man. Little wonder my dad always advice us, his children, "It does not really matter how small and abysmally you start, just end well".

Talk of Henry Ford- a renowned business man of great repute. Ford, who was born in a farm near Dearborn, Michigan on 30th July 1863 pressed steadily onwards to become the sole founder of the famous Ford Motors that outlived him. Although we all today remember him for his highly innovative car assembly line and made-in-America cars, Ford was not an instant success. He was educated shabbily in the district schools. He became a machinist's apprentice at the age of 16 in Detroit. He was soon fired. Between 1888 and 1899, Ford worked in Edison Illuminating Company; first as a mechanical engineer, and later as the Chief engineer. In 1896, after experimenting for years in his leisure hours, encountering series of heart shattering failures and successes too, Ford completed the construction of his first automobile- The Quadricycle. Regrettably, the quadricycle did not sell much, initially. In fact, all Ford's early businesses failed and left him broke five times before he, doggedly, founded the successful Ford Motor Company in 1903.

When the four years old Wilma Rudolph (1918-1994) was hit by double pneumonia, polio and scarlet fever, only a few believed she could at least live to be seven years old. While medical specialists insisted that walking for long was near impossible for the young lass, Wilma was hell bent on becoming an

accomplished athlete. She did! hilariously determined Wilma did not just live but also managed to walk well at the age of eleven. By her high school age, she had already emerged a famous basket ball player. In 1956 Olympics in Melbourne Australia, she won a bronze medal in the 4x100 meter relay race. At the 1960 Olympics in Rome, Wilma dazzled the world, winning the 100 meters and 2000 meters dashes. She equally ran the anchor i.e. last leg on the winning 4x100 meters relay team. By 1961 her country honoured her with the James Sullivan memorial award for top amateur athletes. Today, the then little lame girl, is forever eulogized as the first American woman to win three track and field gold medals at a single Olympic games.

Check out Soichiro Honda. A well known business man remarked for his indelible mark in the automobile industry, Honda founded the Honda Motor Company Limited single handed. Until date, his Honda Motors has remained a leading voice in the automobile manufacturing and the largest manufacturer of motorcycle in the world over. Based in Tokyo Japan, his company equally produces power equipments, such as lawn mowers, snow blowers, outboard motors and portable generators. No doubt, everyone all over the world has seen or used a Honda product at one time or the other. Honda cars remain my choicest model! Yet, the billion-dollar business that is Honda began with a series of failures and a few lucks too. Young Soichiro Honda was a poor mechanical engineer with a passion for automobile racing and motorbikes. He labored so hard until he got his first patent in 1931 for his metal wheel spokes. Despite his practical experience and ingenuity, Honda was turned down by Toyota Motor Cooperation for a job as an engineer after being interviewed for it. Thus, he was practically jobless for a long time. However, ever hopeful Honda persevered. He kept his passion for applied mechanics interminably burning. In 1937 he founded a small company to make piston rings, selling his products to Toyota Motor Corporation for a paltry sum. This trend continued until the onset of the World War II in 1939, a war which left Japan devastated and its two major cities annihilated. At the end of the war, Honda started again from the scratch. All his efforts to land a job proved abortive. Nevertheless, great men are masters in turning disappointments into destiny appointments and misfortunes into mighty fortunes. Honda in 1948, with Takeo Fujisawaas his company manager, began to make the scooters of his own in his own home. Spurred on by his neighbours, Honda soon kicked off his

own business. Today, the rest is history and a great inspiration to all. No one fails who refuses to see adversity as an excuse to throw in the towel. Nothing advances one faster than adversity. I love it where Francis Bacon (1561-1626) preached: “Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New”. Adversity sweetens the cake of victory. In the words of Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672), “If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant. If we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome”. It reveals to us the hidden strength and heroic within us. Theodore Roethke (1905-1963) captures this better when he said: “In a dark time, the eye begins to see”. Yes, the star in you shines brightest at the darkest night. Most great deeds, achievements and ideas are born at the moments of grave adversities. Charles Kettering (1876-1958), a US investor and business executive thus advised: “Teach a highly educated person that it is not a disgrace to fail and he must analyze every failure to find its cause. He must learn how to fail intelligently, for failure is one of the greatest arts in the world”.

Learn from the Wright Brothers- Orville and Wilbur. Sons of a United Brethren Church Bishop, the Wright brothers are today household names in the aviation industry. Wilbur, third of five children, was born on April 16, 1867 near Millville, Indiana. Orville, the younger of the two, was born on August 19, 1871 at Dayton, Ohio. The great duo would be forever remembered for their role in the invention of the first air plane. Both attended the high school in Dayton, but neither of them graduated formally. However, both brothers were ‘mad’ mathematics enthusiasts and had a keen interest in mechanical engineering. Yet, the Wright Brothers battled hunger, depression and family illness all through their youth. On leaving school, they made several attempts at editing and printing small local newspapers; success eluded them. Returning back to their passion, engineering, they in 1892 formed the Wright Cycle Company [WCC]. For the next ten years after the birth of WCC, they only designed, built and sold bicycles. One day, while day dreaming about the possibility of their building the fastest car, it struck them that the focus of all and all speed competition has only been on the road. It dawned on them that the sky was quite empty and free of all machines; and that it is only the ground that was overcrowded. Inspired by the works of the German Otto Lilienthal (1848-1896), the then leading aeronautical engineer, the Wright Brothers ventured into gliders and airplane designs. Otto died young in a glider crash in

1896 but the Wright Brothers refused neither to be discouraged nor to allow the fear of accident to keep them grounded. Instead, they learnt from Lilienthal's mistake to deduce that the stability of the design and the skill of the pilot were equally as important as getting the airplane on the air. After numerous attempts at creating a flying machine, several years of hard work and tons of failed prototypes, the Wright Brothers finally got it right. They created a plane that could get airborne and stay there. Overjoyed, they telegraphed Reverend Milton Wright, their father: "Success! Four flights, Thursday morning. All against twenty-one-mile wind. Started from level with engine power alone. Average speed through air- thirty one miles. Longest fifty-nine seconds. Inform press. Home Christmas!" Napoleon Hill rightly observed, "Before success comes in any man's life, he is sure to meet with much temporary defeats and perhaps some failures. When defeats overtake a man, the easiest and most logical thing to do is to quit. That is exactly what the majority of men do". That is also exactly why it is only a small fraction, or minority, of men succeed. Quitters will never win. Adversity is always temporal, quitting makes it permanent. Everybody, no doubt, can be a champion if we all learn to persist against all overwhelming odds. We all are born with seeds of greatness within us. Yet, we need to nurture this seed through perseverance and patience. It requires you slaying the dragons of delays and discouragements. However, as Sandra Day O'Connor will rightly add, "Slaying the dragon of delay is no sport for the short-winded". There is a need for patience! Hear John Quincy Adams, "Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish". At the root of every enduring success is the ability to advance despite adversities. Never quitting is quite a virtue ever worth imbibing.

Now, you may not have heard of the name Akio Morita, but for sure you are well acquainted with the household name: SONY! Akio Morita is the cofounder of the famous Sony Cooperation- best brand name for every home! There is hardly any modern home today without at least one Sony product. Sony cooperation was founded in 1946 by Akio Morita as Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo Kabushiki Kaisha (Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Corporation). The current name SONY was coined in 1958. However, success did not just come to Akio and his Sony Corporations freely like bread through butter. A Japanese business man, Akio Morita was born in Aichi Prefecture in 1921. Upon graduation from Osaka University, Akio partnered with Ibuka Masaru to establish the Sony

Corporation in 1946, just after WWII. Sony's first product was a rice cooker that unfortunately did not cook rice so much as it burnt it. The cooker sold a paltry less than one hundred units world-wide. Yet, this setback did not hinder Morita and co. from forging ahead. They went on to create a multi-billion dollar company and subsequently becoming the first Japanese company to have its stock listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Claude Bilstol once said and I believe it: "It is the constant and determined effort that breaks down all resistance and sweeps away all obstacles". Determination against all odds detracts all odds- off your way to destiny. Michael Smurfit, an Irish business mogul, once advised the youths, "Never accept failure no matter how often it visits you. Keep on going. Never give up". There is no excuse sound enough to justify you for failing. Opposition is an excuse history never accepts. There is no obstacle today that has never been surmounted in the time past. Many make it big in life because they have the skills, talents and adequate provision to achieve their goals, most make it simply because they are determined to. In fact, Honore de Balzac (1799-1850) put it best when he wrote: "There is no such thing as a great talent without great will power. The willingness to keep trying until you win is often the dividing factor between the successful and the failure". H. Jackson Browe is often remembered for this bombshell: "In the confrontation between the stream and the rock, the stream always wins- not through strength but by perseverance". Hugh Latimer (1485-1555), English clergyman and reformer, said it better, "The drop of rain maketh a hole in the stone, not by violence, but by oft falling". Asked the secret of success, Anna Pavlov (1882-1931), a Russian ballet dancer, simply answered: "To follow without halt, one aim: there's the secret of success". To follow on without halt! There is hardly a successful man who has never failed nor is there any who failed to try again. Each at one time or the other was hit hard by obstacles and challenges. Yet, by persistence and determination, gave out the final winning blow.

"I am not interested in us adopting a posture of victim. I recognize that there are outstanding men doing an outstanding job under the most difficult circumstances. But, I also believe that we cannot use injustice as an excuse (for non success). We cannot use poverty as an excuse (for failure). There are things within our control that we have got to attend to". Those were the marbled words of Obama; not only to the attendees of the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church but to the world at large, even,

generations to come. Today hardly is there any living being who has not heard about Barack Hussein Obama. The Honolulu born democrat against all overwhelming odds made his way to becoming the very first African-American man to become the President of America- thus becoming the first black man in the White House. To many, it is an over five year long malaria-typhoid dream that has refused to end. Obama Barrack Snr. of Luo tribe in Kenya had come to University of Hawaii on government scholarship when he met and later in 1960 married Ann Dunham of Kansas. The first product of that miscegenation marriage turned out to be the first black president of America. Obama's childhood is far from the type that brings sweet memories. His dad abdicated the family when he was barely two years old. Just like Clinton Bill who never saw his father, Obama never had the privilege of a biological father parenting. His dad saw no good in him; nor anything pleasant to look forward in hope for. With his single mother as everything he got and looked up to in life, Obama remained in Hawaii hoping daily that his dad would one day return. He never did. Worst still, Obama Barrack Jnr. would later discover, contrary to what his mum knew, that his dad equally had numerous sons and daughters in his small Luo tribe's village country home in Kenya. His mum's second marriage to an Indonesian would later take a six years old Obama to Jakarta where he came face to face with extreme poverty and all manners of heinous experiences. It was here that his drive to make a difference, through world politics, was born. At the age of ten, he was separated from his mother and step father who sent him off to school in Punahou, Hawaii. He moved on. From Occidental College in California to Columba University in NYC, Obama in 1983 managed to complete his bachelor's degree in political science. His first job was a charity work in the African American area in Chicago. While with the Chicago jobless poor, his passion for law practice and activism erupted. By 1986, he enrolled in the Harvard Law School. In 1990 at the law school, fearless and determined Obama boldly stepped up to become African American to be elected the president and editor-in-chief of the famous Harvard Law Review. The following year, he went on to graduate with great distinction. From a University lecturer in 1993, Obama rose to the office of Illinois State Senator in 1996 and subsequently a US senator in 2004.

Obama's declaration for presidential bid on February 2007 was met with untold criticisms. A journalist wrote concerning him: "The whites in America

discriminated and criticized him from the onset for his race and colour; the blacks said he was not black enough. He happened to be an African American with an unusual last name, no political pedigree, from a battered political party that had lost its hold on a whole section of the country (the south) and had lost more than half of all the presidential elections since the 1950's". Yet Barack Hussein Obama defied all odds and went on not only to win the presidency but also a second term too.

Obama's odyssey en route American presidency reminds me of the very first man who got there. His name? George Washington (1732-1799)! Washington as a soldier lost most of the wars he fought, yet he won the most important of them all- The American Revolution. Born in Westmoreland Count, Virginia on February 22, 1732, George was the eldest son of Augustine Washington and his second wife, Mary Ball Washington of English decent. He was scantily schooled under his father and later his half brother Lawrence. Adversity took over his tutoring quite early in life. First, he lost his father in 1743. He was then forced to leave home for Mount Vernon to live with Lawrence. Bad enough, Lawrence soon died of tuberculosis in 1752 at Barbados. However, he inherited his brother's Mount Vernon Estate. Despite his love for the sea, the mother out of fear that he may drown, enticed him into surveying. In 1753, rivalry between Britain and France over the control of the Ohio valleys led to a French versus Indian war of 1754-1763. George was by then an adjutant of one of Virginia's four major military districts. Thus, he was on October 1753 dispatched by Gov. Robert Dinwiddie on a seemingly fruitless mission to warn the French commander at Fort Le Boeuf against further encroachment on the British claimed territory. A brave British grade one soldier, the dangers and difficulties George weathered in the course of the mission earned him a promotion to Lieutenant Colonel at the young age of 22. On April 1754, George intercepted an advancing French troop, killing its commander- de Suer de Jumonville. Yet, just three months later, on July 1754, Washington's led army, at Fort Necessity, lost an all day non-stop battle that was fought in a drenching rain, against the French. George capitulated. However, he was later lucky to be permitted by the triumphant French army to march his remaining troops back to Williamsburg. Discouraged by his defeat, George resigned from the British army on December that year. However, just the following year, George Washington bounced back to join the British General Edward

Braddock's expedition against the French. That year, 1755, aged 23, he rose to the rank of a Colonel and Commander-in-Chief of the Virginia militia; with responsibility of defending the frontier.

After several other heroics and defeats as a young soldier, George Washington finally left the army a success in 1758 and returned to his estate in Mount Vernon. In January 1759, he married Martha Dandridge Cutis a wealthy and attractive young widow with two small children. He then entered politics through Great Britain's colonial policies. Between 1759 and 1774, he served in Virginia's House of Burgesses. After 1769, he became a leader in Virginia's opposition to Great Britain's Colonial policies. As Americans began to yearn for independence, George Washington was in June 1775 unanimously chosen by the congress as the Commander In Chief of the continental forces. Later, in April 30, 1789 in New York City, George Washington was named the first US president!

Consider George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950). It was Shaw who penned: "You see things and say 'why'? But I dream of things that never were, and say 'why not'?" The famed Irish-born writer would be forever eulogized as the most significant British dramatist since the death of William Shakespeare. Born on July 26, 1856 in Dublin Ireland, Shaw's early life gave him more than enough reasons to remain down in non-success. He would later brand himself a 'social downstart' in reverse of the standard phrase 'social upstart'. His dad, although initially from the Protestant Irish upper class, lived and died a grossly unsuccessful business man. He was equally a diehard alcoholic. His mum was not any better. Shaw later remembered her as a distant and unaffectionate mother. Largely self educated, life forced Shaw into the labour force at 16 years. Life pushed him closer to the wall when his parents ended their miserable marriage. In 1876, aged 20, Shaw joined his mum and sisters to begin a new life in London. By early 1890's, Shaw had gradually turned a famous public speaker and journalist. Unfortunately, his early plays were met with little or no success. His first play, 'Widow's Houses' (1892) was branded confusing. His second, *Warren's Profession* was banned by censors as obscene. Of his first ten plays, *The Devil's Disciple* was the first of his plays to make money. Yet, Shaw was never for once discouraged. His philosophy? "Life does not cease to be funny when people die any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh"-as depicted in his book *The Doctor's Dilemma*. Shaw would go on to author over a hundred plays, published and

unpublished. In 1925, the unschooled son of an alcoholic father and an unaffectionate distant mother won a Nobel Prize in literature. Till today, he leaves the world in awe at how much a resilient man can achieve when he says no to non success.

William Faulkner (1897-1962) was much like him. Faulkner rose from nowhere to emerge the author of twenty famous epic novels with a Nobel laureate award in 1949 to crown his efforts. Born in Mississippi Oxford on September 25, 1895, the now legendary writer coursed through several untold academic, financial, social and emotional challenges en route becoming whom he is today. His formal education became highly irregular and disjointed from the fifth grade. He managed to attend high school but only for few months. Like Steve Jobs, the brain behind the establishment and growth of Apple computer who dropped out of the University after just one semester in Reed College, Faulkner, who describes himself as “just a farmer who likes to tell stories”, left the University of Mississippi without a degree. He instead aspired to join the US army during the WWI but was quickly rejected for being too short. Undaunted by the rejection and still determined to fight, he christened himself “a British born Falkner (no ‘U’)”. Thus, he lied his way into the Royal Canadian Air force in Toronto as a Briton. With war over, Faulkner returned to Oxford Mississippi where he began to do menial jobs. Luck shinned on him when the University of Mississippi Oxford absorbed him as a postmaster. Regrettably, he was fired in 1924. Heartbroken, he resigned to writing and publishing stories just to make ends meet. His friendship with a fellow writer, Sherwood Anderson, gave him the much needed link to blossom. Today, the rest is history.

God bless the soul of Charles Schulz. The man, who refused to allow his early failures and untold adversities to keep him down, rose to become a great inspiration to humanity worldwide. Born in 1922, Charles Munroe Schulz of Minneapolis, Minnesota, at first did not have much going for him. He was a failure in virtually every other thing except drawing. Charles, in high school, failed woefully in Latin, Algebra, English and Physics. He was altogether very poor, quite below average student. He made the school’s gulf team but unfortunately, he lost the only important match he played. Socially, Charles was extremely awkward. He was so shy that he would go for days without conversation except with himself. He never for once asked a girl out! Nevertheless, the academic and

social failure nicknamed Sparky had a talent he was proudly married to- drawing. He remained proud of his artwork even when no one appreciated it. His entries for the cartoon session of his high school's year book were promptly turned down. Yet Charles held on to his aspiration of becoming an artist. After his high school graduation, Charles completed a correspondence course in Minneapolis art school, his only formal art training. He thereafter sent samples of his art work to the Walt Disney studios. He again was rejected. Yet, Charles Munroe refused to quit. He understood that life's most essential factor is persistence- the determination never to allow your energy or enthusiasm to be dampened by the discouragement that must inevitably come (James Whitecomb Riley). Charles Schulz later decided to write his own autobiography in cartoons. This he sold to the St. Paul's Pioneer Press and equally sent to several newspaper companies. In 1948 the Saturday Evening Post published some of Schulz's work. By 1950 the United Feature Syndicate had bought his, "Lilforks" comic strip which they promptly renamed and published as Peanuts. The popularity of peanuts from that 2nd October, 1950 onwards would later lead to over 2000 books; countless television shows many licensing opportunities and translation into more than two dozen languages. It turned out to be one of the most popular comic strips in history. Charles will go on to win several prestigious awards plus a legendary status before his demise in the year 2000. Like his main character in *Peanuts*, Charles Brown, Charles Schulz seemed unable to succeed. He failed at many things yet he made the most of the one thing he had- his drawing talent. By refusing to quit at the face of many failures, Charles Munroe Schulz, famous as Sparky, made it to the top.

CHAPTER SIX

HIT IT LIKE HITLER

Never say never again! One who gives up trying while still breathing, is little like a corpse that is not quite dead. When you exempt yourself from pain, you exclude yourself from gain. Not trying again may immune you from failing again but nothing could be more boring and life wasting. As day and night makes a calendar day, it takes both positive and negative occurrences, wins and losses, to make a fulfilled life. Most often what we call a fulfilled life is one filled with challenges – well handled. By the way, of what use is life without living? Step up and live a life. Risk the occasional failures and adversities. Understand that with the right attitude, both success and failure can be to your advantage. Same is applicable to wrong attitude. Brace up for the challenges of life. Only men who dare brace up blaze trails. Up bracers are trail blazers and vice versa. Overturn the table. Turn that situation around for your good. There are two sides to every coin; one who is focused on the positive never sees the negative. James Lowell rightly observed, “Mishaps are like knives that either serve us or cut us, as we grasp them by the blade or the handle”. Failure well handled turns a success story and adversity adeptly handled turns an added advantage. Always remember that it is only those who dare brace up in the face of obstacles and oppositions come forth as trail blazers. Hear Caleb Colton, “Times of general calamity and confusion have ever been productive of the greatest minds. The purest ore is produced from the hottest furnace and the brightest thunderbolt is the one elicited from the darkest storm”. Baby Mum always emphasize that: “Great testimonies are often a function of great tests. The weight or level of your triumph is a function of the weight of the trial that precedes the triumph. A caterpillar that gives up on life because of its repugnant state never lives to become a beautiful butterfly. No warrior dreads the warfront just as every Christ like storm calmer always looks forward to the next storm.” Never forget, in your weakness lies divine strength and divine wisdom often begins only at your wits end. Greatness is achieved through trials and temptations. The greater the storm, the stronger and better the trees get.

Now, cast your mind back a bit to the era of Hitler. No doubt some will ask, “Why Hitler?” My country once had a president who was infamous as a notorious, unyielding and wicked man. Many hated him with passion. I used to castigate him too, until I drank from my dad’s well of wisdom. It happened that this president was flashed on a national news broadcast where he was cracking jokes in an occasion with his audience. I was dazed on seeing him smile chin to chin. “So this man does smile?” I said in my chagrin. My father was there with me in our sitting room. He smiled at me saying, “uzo di anyanwerendiodinso”. How true! The road/country/state/villa that is far to you, have those to whom it is near. One may be the wicked devil to you but an angel to someone else. Adolf Hitler is such a man. While many Germans saw him as a folk hero, Jews and most blacks saw him as a Satan on human skin. Yet, any man who can spark up and sustain a world war single handed, howbeit, deserve some respect. One of the most inspirational leaders and orators of all time, Hitler by 1938, had amassed the best-equipped; best trained and most dedicated army in the world. A mesmerizing speaker, the 1938 June magazine man of the year had hoped to, and almost did, conquer the entire world. Yet, born in 1889 in Braunau in Austria-Hungary, as the fourth child of Klara and Alois Hitler, young Adolf never showed any early sign of a great future. Even before birth, it took the divine intervention of a Christian doctor to talk his mother out of aborting him. His father, Alois Hitler, rose steadily in the Austrian Customs, thus, giving each of his children a comfortable childhood. In 1900, Hitler started schooling; he turned out to be a just little above average student in school. At the secondary school level, Realschule was billed by his parents to be the best choice for him. His dad wanted him to be a cool civil servant, but Adolf Hitler preferred to be an artist instead. His lack of interest in Realschule, because of his preference for arts, made him to perform so poorly in his first year that he was asked to repeat the class. It was however during his time in Realschule that his desire for politics, nationalism and a gross distaste for Jews and Austria-Hungarian ruling class was born. In 1903, after the death of his father, life for Hitler and family took a sharp nosedive into the negatives. Poverty began to take its toll on them. Hitler turned both nonchalant and restive in school and would rather spend much of his time playing and day-dreaming. His grades in school became extremely poor and by 1905 he left school entirely after the equivalent of the ninth grade.

Now out of school, Hitler decided to face arts. Unfortunately, his application for admission into Vienna Academy of Fine Arts was turned down. That was October 1907. Hitler was deemed unqualified. Disappointment motioned him by name. Life again dealt him an even more devastating blow, just a year later, when his mother passed on. To survive, Hitler pretended to still be in school in Vienna in order to be entitled to an orphan's pension. Conversely, Hitler simply wandered about the city in admiration of its architecturally glamorous buildings and blissful environment. He frequented operas and club halls. Although down, Hitler sought happiness and calm spirit at all cost. He resorted to night life in his bid to fight depression. When all money at hand was exhausted, young Hitler, still determined neither to be an employee nor live in self pity, ended up in a homeless shelter. Exposure to political and racial ideas of Lanz Von Liebenfels at the homeless shelter aroused in Hitler the zeal to make a difference in his political world. The idea of the superiority of the Aryan race over other races worldwide changed Hitler's opinion of himself and nation.

Hitler finally had his break on self employment and dream actualization when between 1910 and 1913 he began to paint and sell postcards and pictures. He also copied famous paintings and drawings of public buildings. Hitler began to sharpen his oratorical ability in the hostel where he lived by engaging mates in debates. In 1913, Hitler's Austria began to draft young men into the military. Fear freak Hitler refused to join. In a way to escape Austrian authorities, he fled to Munich Germany- his first visit to the nation whose greatest leader he would later become. But in Germany, fleeing Hitler was caught and was immediately deported to Austria. Unfortunately, the Austrian military considered Hitler to be unfit to serve in their army. Hitler thus returned to Germany. As a poor jobless youth, he joined the Bavarian unit of the German army at the advent of the 1914 World War I. Yet, despite his bravery and all his exploits for the German army, he was never promoted beyond the rank of corporal. He was only seen as a loner who was only good at doing dirty jobs and carrying messages but never good enough for commanding men. Undiscouraged, he emptied himself in the course of his duty. By the end of the war in 1918, Hitler was seen at the military hospital, blinded, howbeit temporarily, by mustard gas. Back to normal life in Munich, he looked beyond his past onward politics. He blamed the Jews for German's defeat at war I and would use his public speaking talent to woo the German populace into a

violent racial nationalism and anti-Semitism. The National Socialist German Workers Party (aka Nazi Party) turned out to be a perfect haven for young Hitler. By February 24, 1920, Hitler's combined military and oratory might was already drawing over two thousand people per gathering. His star was gradually rising. On leaving the army on March 1920, he worked assiduously enroute being chosen as the Fuhrer (absolute leader) of the Nazi Party on July 29, 1921. He capitalized on German's economic decline to plot a coup to ouster the reigning Gustav Von Kahr's government. Thus, on the 8th of November, 1923, Hitler and other 600 members of the Sturmabteilungen(a Nazi Paramilitary force) marched to Munich beer hall. Gustav Von Kahr was taken hostage, and new national government declared in Hitler's name. Hoping that he had succeeded Hitler released Von Kahr who immediately retracted his words and ordered for the immediate crushing of Hitler's revolution by Bavarian police. Hitler's men were killed; Hitler fled and was later sentenced to five years in prison, for treason. In prison, he wrote several books and reorganized the Nazi Party in absentia. However, he was released after just a year in jail. In 1928 he ran an election and lost. In 1929, he travelled all around Germany speaking against the 'Young Plan' policy of the reigning government. Although the initiative against young plan also failed, Hitler found in both failures the great gain of fame boost and the amassment of willing Nazi financiers. As the fame of the Nazi rose under Hitler, President Hindenburg was forced to appoint Hitler as the chancellor of German with Franz von Papen as vice chancellor. Thus, as Hitler was being sworn in on January 30, 1933, little did elderly Paul Von Hindenburg know that he was turning over power to his sworn enemy. Hitler consolidated his power by crushing the legislative and judicial arms of the German government. He brought everything under the Nazi control, and subsequently became the greatest and most celebrated dictator ever lived.

Where and how you begin is not as important as where and how you finish. Jesus was born in the manger but lived to become a name above all names. How you came into the world is not your fault but whatever you become is your responsibility. No one would blame you for how and where you were born, but you can blame no one if you fail. How you finish/die is totally up to you. Booker T. Washington was born a slave by slaves on April 5, 1856, on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia. Yet, unrelenting Washington rose to become one of America's greatest educators and the founder of Tuskegee Institute now Tuskegee

University. Hear what he taught posterity towards the end of his life, “I have learnt that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has to overcome while trying to succeed”.

Perhaps, one of the most amazing proves of ability in disability is the American author and lecturer, Helen Keller. She was born on June 27, 1880 in Tuscumbia, Alabama. Her parents, Arthur Keller and former Kate Adams were well to do. Helen was growing up a happy bouncing baby girl until her 19th month in life. That month, an acute strange ailment left her both deaf and blind. In a short time, she forgot the few words she knew and thus became silent. Hence, Helen was literarily deaf, blind and dumb-talk of a walking corpse! Worst still, in her days, people who were both deaf and blind were classified in law as idiots! Alexandra Graham Bell happened to have lived at the time of Keller’s childhood. He advised her parents to send for a teacher from the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston, Massachusetts. One Anne Mansfield Sullivan (nee Macy) was chosen for the task. Anne would later spend her next 50 years of service with Helen. Until her death in 1936, Anne remained Helen’s dedicated teacher, coach, motivator, interpreter plus a countless lot of other things. Anne Sullivan’s first task was to break through the barrier of darkness and silence that surrounded Helen. She used finger alphabets to ‘spell’ on Helen’s hand the names of familiar things around her. Two years on, the girl Helen was already writing and reading fluently via the use of Braille system. At age ten, by placing her fingers on her teacher’s larynx and sensing the vibrations, Helen re-learnt how to speak. Helen Keller would later go on to bag admission into Radcliffe College in 1900.

At the college, Anne Sullivan ‘spelled’ the lectures into Helen’s hand. Helen would later graduate in 1904 with honours. Thus, earning herself a worldwide acclaim. Through public speaking, book publishing, write-ups in newspapers and magazines plus speaking tours across the US, Helen Keller wrote her name in gold and became so endeared to the world populace. Her missionary and charitable deeds drew her to the hearts of legends like Andrew Carnegie who paid her annual income, Mark Twain and Robert Louis Stevenson who wrote extensively in her praise plus several US Presidents who always invited her to the White House.

If Helen can make it, you too can!

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOW TO ADVANCE DESPITE ADVERSITIES

One now may begin to ask, how then do we advance through adversity?

#1.FACE REALITY

First, just face reality. Whatever has happened has happened. The question now is “what next?” You have failed? Yes, you failed but “what next?” Life is a test. The events of life daily examine you to see what you would do. Face it. The truth is: You cannot change the past! The best you can do is to change your attitude and perception towards it. Collect the blows in its full weight and then decide on how to react. Anytime she sees me worrying, Baby Mum would remind me, “You can’t affect the past anymore but you can determine the future by how you live at the present.” Stop looking at where you have been, advised Mike Murdock, fret not at where you are and start looking at where you can be. For according to Philip Ruskin, “The man who wastes today lamenting yesterday will waste tomorrow lamenting today”. Stop day dreaming and rehearsing what you should have done. Begin to think of what next to do. While Joshua mourned Moses, God appeared to him saying: “Moses my servant is dead!” He is dead, period! A gone man is a gone man. Stop wishing that something may just happen and bring him back. His rod may have had the power to divide the gates of hell but it can no longer divide the barrier that separates the living from the dead. He is dead. That very chapter is closed. That very incident has passed. That yesterday is gone. That lost opportunity is lost. Then God continued, saying: “Therefore arise!” Don’t dwell too long on that mountain. Arise and move forward. Stop looking back in regrets. Remember Lot’s wife! If where you were were better than where God is taking you, He would have left you in your past. His plan for you is that of good not evil, to give you a FUTURE! Arise and move forward. Hear Eileen Caddy, “Dwell not on the past. Use it to illustrate a point, and then leave it behind. Nothing really matters except what you do now in this instant time. From this moment onwards, you can

be an entirely different person, filled with love and understanding, ready with an outstretched hand, uplifted and positive in every thought and deed". Joshua was sitting on a great opportunity but he never knew. His tears and emotional attachment to the past never allowed him to see the opportunity his problem birthed. For years he was a faithful servant to Moses. However, God's divine agenda for his life at that moment was to make him in an entirely different person who would accomplish the task his boss began. Don't miss divine agenda for your life through self consumption. Arise. Get up from your mourning mat and move forward. What lies ahead is highly greater than what you have left behind. His word says, "Eyes have not seen. Ears have not heard what He has in stock for you".

Face it. See life as a game of cards: accept what is and then play to win. Ignoring your problems and adversities is not the best solution. Facing them is. Don't live in the fool's paradise by thinking that the problems would just fade away. Problems only fade when you face them. Don't waste your time wishing that the adversity never happened at all; you can't abort the pregnancy of a born child. Faith is calling things that be not as if they be; Foolishness is calling things that be as if they be not! The only right question is not "why me?" ...but "what next?" Think solution. Always remind yourself that there is no problem on earth without solution. NnamdiChibor will always tell me, "Every problem has a solution. No solution, no problem!" Yes, if it has no solution it is not a problem at all. Don't waste your time and energy on things that can no longer be changed. Your most important assignment at every point in time remains your choice of attitude. Your attitude will determine whether it will be a stopping or a stepping stone. Crying over spilt milk will do you more harm than good. Facing reality and planning your next step is always the best choice. The past is over. Look upward and forward. God announced through Jeremiah (29:11); "The plan I have for you are good not evil; to give you a future!" Thus, it is all in the future not past. The best is yet to come and the better days are still ahead.

Concentrate on the now. Not even the greatest magician can change the past. Live in the present (and build a great future). It was Dennis Waitly who observed that, "The winners in life think constantly in terms of I can, I will and I am. Losers, on the other hand, concentrate their waking thoughts on what they should have or would have done, or what they can't do". Stop looking backward. The truth is: You

cannot move ahead when you are in reverse! Be like Thomas Jefferson who said that he prefers the dreams of the future better to the history of the past. Get caught day dreaming not worrying. Worrying wastes the bone and destroys the spirit; day dreaming supplies the energy that keeps you going. Stop brooding over that spilt milk. Even if you fill the bottle with tears, it is still but tears. William Shakespeare wrote, "Things without remedy should be without regard; what is done, is done!" You can't abort the pregnancy of a born child. Crying over it is not the best option; running from it is not better either, but looking it deep into the eyes and discovering its beauty, opportunities and the great potentials it carry. Build on your failures to achieve a greater tomorrow. Seethe tripping stone as a stepping stone. Bewarned, the past is a smarter thief than you possibly imagine. Don't let it steal your present! Hear John Maxwell, "You must learn to say goodbye to yesterday's hurts, tragedies and baggage. You can't build a monument to past problems and fail forward".

Saul Bellow (1915-2005), a Nobel and Pulitzer Prize Winner, has this to say, "The real universe, that's the present moment. The past is no good to us. The future is full of anxiety. Only the present is real-the here-and-now. Seize the day!" Always remind yourself that all that has happened happened in the yesterdays. Every new day comes with its new package, blessings and challenges alike. Lam, 3:20 says "The steadfastness of the Lord never ceaseth. They are new every morning!" Wow that means, despite missing that of yesterday, there is a new fresh package available today! Seize it and forge ahead.

Don't waste your time and energy worrying about the past. Don't abuse the power of your creative imagination rehearsing what you should have done. The past has passed. Live in the present and create an unregrettable future. Writing on the dangers and futility of worry, US physician, Charles Horace Mayo (1865-1939) wrote, "Worry affect circulation, the heart and the gland, the whole nervous system and profoundly affect the heart. I have never known a man who died from overwork, but many who died from doubt." Worry is like a rocking chair; it gives you a stressful work to do but gets you nowhere. Cut yourself off from the past. Severing the chains to your bygones restores your options for the future. Do everything necessary to uphold this severance. Develop the right attitudes and mindset. One major force that keeps people stuck in their past is unforgiveness. Forgiveness is a two way act. Forgive yourself and others. You can't go forward if

your mind is ridden with guilt. You must receive God's forgiveness to free up yourself from the long term immobilization that guilty conscience brings. Receive divine forgiveness for things you have done that hurts and the ones you have not done that morality demands you should have done. Then forgive others. This is often the hard part but it shouldn't be so. Forgiveness is like setting a prisoner free and then discovering that the prisoner was you. You must forgive those that have failed you or caused you to fail. Adam never divorced Eve. Stephen never cursed Saul. I so much love Job 42:10 where it says, "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends..." Don't dwell in unforgiveness, there is no place more uncomfortable! Let bygones be bygones. Forgive and forget. Encouraging black Americans to forgive their white counterparts, Civil Right leader, Rev. Dr Martin Luther told them, "The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind". Learn to overlook errors. No one is 100% perfect. Even your best friend with the best intention for you may err and hurt you in error. Forgive.

When you fail an exam in the University, it is mandatory to carry it over to the next session. But it is not so with life. Bad enough, most people who experience failure often make the mistake of carrying it over. Avoid this. Live in the present. Carefully avoid living in the past. You can never move forward with a reverse gear. Facing reality opens your doors of opportunity and allows creativity and innovative drive to blossom. Most people who return to face reality after a great failure came to the realization that what they thought was pain was actually a great gain. Borrow a leaf from Carlos Slim. The great business tycoon is today the world's richest man. In the early 80's, Mexico was in huge trouble. The economy failed and business ventures followed. Many including Slim, almost went bankrupt. Mexicans and non Mexicans alike fled the country. Stocky Carlos Slim remained in the country and bought up assets from people at 20c on the dollar. Today the rest is history. Any fool can spot problems, but it takes a genius (of which you are one) to spot opportunity in the midst of chaos. Face reality. Every opportune failure has a hidden opportunity for greatness behind it. Until you face it squarely, you can never be able to see the gain behind the pain. The truth is, you can't run away from your past-there aren't a place more far. The reality you fail to embrace will really tie you down. When you embrace the reality of your past you free yourself from its control. Failing to face reality makes you forfeit the driving seat of your life to people and fate when you would still bear the full weight of its

consequences if anything goes wrong the more. Refuse to be defeated. Always remember that it was in the past that you failed not in the present. You can still win big today!

D.L. Moody narrated this in his article, 'cut the chords.' Two heavily intoxicated men, on one night, went down to their boat to return to their homes across the bay. They got in and began to row. They rowed hard all night, wondering why it was taking them so long to get to the other side of the bay. When the sun came up and as the two became more sober, they discovered that their mooring-line had never been loosened and that their anchor had not been raised." Quite funny; right? The truth is: Many today are like those drunken dudes! They are trying to move on in life in a similar fashion. Unfortunately, they cannot because they are still tied to their past. They are weighed down and immobilized by many hurts and things to forgive and forget. Cut the cord! Set yourself free from the dogging weight of past hurts and failures. A man can never run as fast with a bag of stone as he would without such.

The truth remains that it is grossly impossible to succeed in life without overcoming your past. Don't cling to people's hurts and opinions of yesterday. It was in the past that they said you cannot make it, not today. When the famous Paderewski began to learn piano, everyone's honest opinion, including that of his teacher, was that his hands were too small to master the keyboard. Too passionate to stay down because of yesterday talks, Paderewski fired on to become a world renowned pianist. Always remember that you are a newer and better person than you were yesterday. Every new day makes you at least 24 hours/times older, better and more experienced than you were yesterday. Today, the man Enrico Caruso is remembered as one of the world's greatest tenors. Yet, when he began to learn singing, his teacher told him that he sounded like the wind whistling through the window. Never allow the discouragement of yesterday dampen your today's courage. Men's opinions change. Don't let it change you for bad. Consistently do what you have chosen to do. Like Paul and his observers, at the Island of Malta, people will change their mind and opinion about you suddenly. Shun the past. Move on without it. Keep going despite the past experiences.

Next, take responsibility. Avoid the blame game bug. The truth is, at the middle of every success or failure in your life is 'U'. No one failed you. It was

Albert Ellis who said, “The best years of your life are the ones in which you decide your problems are your own. You don’t blame them on your parents, the ecology or the president. You realize that you control your own destiny”.

CHAPTER 8

#2.RECOGNISE THAT SOMETHING BETTER IS AVAILABLE

Recognize that something better is still available. Losing hundreds of thousands doesn’t disqualify you from still being a potential millionaire. When my friend, Achy Kelz, was kicked out of the University unjustly, little did we know that he was being kicked into his place of destiny. For two years, just like Joseph Jacobs, His words tried him. Kelz started out as a pre-degree student. He then gained admission to do optometry the following year. While in Optometry, he was made the Course Rep. due to his reputable charisma and high moral standard. I was his closest friend, neighbour, course mate and confidant. We were always together in either person’s room: eating, cracking jokes or even doing school assignments together. However, just after one year in Optometry, I moved over to Medicine and Surgery with Kelz still in Optometry. Unfortunately, later that same year, Optometry was scrapped out from the school and its students disbanded. The school had lost Optometry after its failure to win accreditation to run it. All those who were still in either first or second year were asked to withdraw and join any of physical and biological science courses. They protested. “Give us medicine or nursing at least”, they all demanded. Kelz, the able Course Rep. was the leading voice in all their protests. Each student vowed to remain in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences come what may. Conversely, while Kelz busied himself moving from one office to another, rallying the support and pity of the Dean, Registrar and VC himself, others spit him at the back and changed department. By the time he knew it, he had become a lone voice in the wilderness. Worst still, Kelz was made a scape-goat and subsequently lost it all as neither Medicine nor any other department in the school agreed to accept him. He was devastated. He felt like suicide. I breezed in into my ministry of encouragement. Daily, I spent quality time with him, assuring and reassuring him that God has a better plan for him and would soon turn it all for his good. Like it is with many in their valley experience, my words seemed too abstract and even annoying. Yet, I pressed on. Kelz managed to write another matriculation exam, but he failed, woefully! There was

no spirit left in him. However, I still encouraged him, even more. By then, his younger sister was already a graduate. Kelz, the first born of the family was completely devastated. “Son, I am ashamed of you”, became his dad’s favourite poem. Nonetheless, we kept praying together. By the time his mates entered 300L, Kelz wrote another University Matriculation Exam. Although he passed this time, he failed the school’s Post-UME aptitude test.

However, that same year, he got a connection to school in Poland. Guess what? On scholarship! I was reading all night at home during one of our usual protracted ASUU strikes when my phone rang. It was Kels. “Aruba m!” He hailed me. “My mannest man!” He added. I was thrilled by the great joy in his voice. He had never been that happy since I knew him. I immediately trimmed my ear to receive the great good news. However, the news turned out to be too good for my imagination. “Odims, pray for me oh. I’m just about to board a plane en route Poland”. He said. I was shocked. For several seconds, I was too dazed to talk. Seven months after, Kelz called me again. It happened that I was moving from Okigwe to Uturu, two villages in two different states that are only separated by a 5mins bus drive, when my phone rang. It was Kelz. He began with an apology that he had been too busy since arriving Poland. He then gave me a palatable shocker. When I asked him how his studies had been, “We are now on holiday”, came the sharp reply. “I’m currently in Russia now, just about to take a train ride to London”. He added. I was dumbfounded. Shame gripped me. I was happy to travel from one local village to another while my once next door neighbour toured Europe. That was a guy whom barely few months earlier there seemed to be no hope left for him at all.

God is not man. His assurances are sure. His word says, “Eyes have not seen (ie it is not here yet), ears have not heard (i.e. it is not a super story, fairy tale or mere narrative of what happened in the past), nor has any mind (including yours) imagined what God has in plan for your life [1Cor.2:9]. I love that. Paul wrote of Him to the Ephesians (Eph.3:20) that God is mightily able to do more than we can ever ask or think. If you can think it, then it is too small for God to do. If you can imagine it, simply expect more. When Kelz and I first went to read in the medical block as optometry students, he prophetically told me that we were in our new department. He dreamt of his state university’s substandard medicine but God preferred Poland. My dad once warned me, “God is committed to His plan for

your life not yours”. It is only our role to dream and plan but only His purpose that He would bring to pass. His will is to give you, not the good you think, but the best He has in stock for you. As every night births a new day, so also every test births a testimony. A man who spent the night complaining all through that it is dark, won’t have the strength to enjoy the light at the break of dawn. Violeta Parra puts it best, “Don’t cry when the sun is gone, because the tears won’t let you see the stars”. Repudiate all forms of self condemnation and blame. The truth is, adversity is not a direct result of past sin; God’s idea for adversity is to better you and not to barter you. Ask Henry Ward Beecher, “God uses suffering as a whetstone to make men sharper”. Most great ministries were born out of mysteries. Every bad, well managed, births something good. In the words of Sampson, “From the eater, comes something to eat” (Judges 14:14). It was Samuel Butler that gave us this timeless revelation, “The course of true anything never does run smooth”. Simply put, nothing good comes easy. Expect obstacles! Trials and temptations must surely come. Satan will never fold his unholy hands to watch you succeed when he knows that your success would become a source of inspiration and blessing to many. So, as he fights, fight back with persistence and perseverance. A Yiddish proverb says, “God gave burdens, also shoulders”. He knows that it is only the way of the cross that leads to the crown you crave for. Whenever He allows you to lose the good, be rest assured that the best is near. When David lost the fruit of his sin with Bethsheba, the merciful Lord gave them Solomon. Saul’s family’s missing ass led him to the kingship of Israel. Daniel lost his freedom in Israel but God gave him royalty in Babylon. When Joseph lost his place in his father’s heart and house, God made him a prime minister in Egypt. For lost of one professional career, God gave me three in the western part of my country. The truth is, for every allowed loss, lots are set loose for your good. Losing is often an evidence of an impending victory. Mignon McLaughlin once observed, “When suffering comes, we yearn for signs from God, forgetting that we have just had one”. The very week I left my state’s University, I reached a book deal with a publishing firm that will later land my novel in every home, nationwide. Just few months after that devastating disappointment, I bagged another admission into a far much better, cheaper, calmer and more equipped medical school. Indeed, the best won’t come until the good is either lost or better still sown as a seed. When you fail at a thing after giving it your all, it doesn’t mean that God is unjust; it simply means that He is hatching a better plan. He is an unfathomable God. Don’t waste time trying to figure it out

how he would do it. In a dream one day, I was faced with the challenge of crossing a collapsed bridge. Many alongside me were stranded too. While I was in a deep thought on what to do and at the same time at the verge of falling off the cliff, an unknown fellow suddenly grew into a giant, spreading his legs to stand on the two sides of the cliff, he carried me to the other side, into safety. As I woke up, the lord laid a word on my heart saying: “Stop trying to figure me out”. That day was Thursday December 5,2013.

For years, ‘my boy’ as he calls himself, met with several adversities, delays and obstacles en route becoming a reputable Indian trained Surgeon. Born Isaac Clement on the 9th of October, 1989; ‘My boy’ so much encountered untold hardship and heart tearing failures that almost all his acquaintances gave up on him. Life has always seemed a bed of roses for Isaac until he left secondary school. He was hitherto the best student in our state. Regrettably, Isaac’s first three attempts to enter the higher institution all did hit a rock. The first one was withheld. He failed the second. At the third attempt, he passed the university matriculation exam (UME) but failed to gain admission having failed the post-UME. He immediately turned to an object of mockery and ridicule among his peers and neighbours. All discussed him like a term paper. Just when it seemed that his CV would end as a mere secondary school leaver, his Auntie restored hope by suggesting a one year remedial program. He then proceeded to our State owned University. It was in this state university that he met me. Unfazed by the fact that his secondary school mates were in their finals in the same school while he himself was yet to enter 100L, Isaac worked assiduously hard. He read like one who has decided to die by reading. Unfortunately, just beyond human explanation, Isaac failed pre science. He was therefore bundled home. It took the divine intervention and high spirited efforts of his parents to dissuade Isaac from committing suicide. He cried and wept, but solace was nowhere to be found. I called him on phone almost every night encouraging him not to give up. I kept reassuring him that although he now sees me as a success and source of inspiration to him, I also once failed my remedial. That did the magic. He picked a fresh form for another university matriculation exam. With a new fresh hope, he proceeded to do the exam for the fourth consecutive time. Disappointedly, he failed, woefully. His parents and relatives finally gave up on him. His auntie encouraged him to go into business or learn a trade as those does not require a

university degree. Academic career seemed 100% over for Isaac. Tears wet his bed nightly. Praying became a burden as he equally gave up on God. He began to avoid me and to ignore my ‘pestering’ calls. The situation became even more disheartening the following year when on his visit to a Federal University in his city, he ran into an ex-secondary school mate of his. The guy introduced himself as a new lecturer in the school. Isaac was heartbroken. He frequented the hospital for check-ups but on each occasion would return home even more depressed, having ran into a former classmate on internship there. Luck finally smiled at him when on surfing the internet one day, Isaac came across an advert on a foreign scholarship grant for citizens from poor developing countries. He filled the form. Later that month, his email alert heralded his invitation to a scholarship exam. Isaac went, passed the exam by a whisker and was flown abroad six months after, to study medicine – 100% free. Today, Isaac is one of the best medics in his citadel of learning.

Don’t give up on yourself even when others do. The good always come before the better. Clinging to the good denies you the opportunity of getting the best. The good is an enemy of the best. Even when there seems to be no hope at all, don’t opt out. Life is a book; it takes several pages and chapters to make a good book. Each page is a phase in life with its own lessons. Learn it all. Forge ahead and get ahead. Good life is actually promised to no one except the one who promises oneself to make good his life however it turns. Keep the hope alive. Hinton once hinted: “Never be afraid of giving up your best, God will give you His better”

Hinton’s words above came quite alive to me on one memorable Easter Sunday. That day, I was on my way back from church, fasting. My friend and I sited an attractive cashew fruit hanging loosely on a tree. I was to break my fast in an hour time. Thus, I decided to use the fruit as an appetizer. My friend did not object. He held my Bible while I began to hull stones at the cashew. All my efforts proved abortive. Discouraged, I decided to make just one last effort before leaving. I did. Unfortunately, I missed. But, surprisingly, the stick, missing the targeted cashew, went, right inside the umbrella shaped branches and brought down two heads of highly attractive healthy cashew fruits whose presence we never noticed. Just when I collected my Bible beckoning my friend to lead the way, he offered to help me bring down the particular cashew fruit I wasted time and energy to pluck,

without success. At one hit, he brought it down. Lo and behold, it was spoilt! As I thought about the incident that day, the Lord told me that he took me out of my former school in order to give me two better professions in two better schools! He did. When disaster strikes, we readily think God has deserted us when on the contrary; He only stepped in to our case. When God of covenant visited Jacob for good, his honest confession was, "...all these things are against me". (Gen. 42:36). Rebecca prayed earnestly for the fruit of the womb. Yet, when God so much embarrassed her with blessings, planting two great nations in her womb, she lamented, "Why am I like this?" Believe me; two great nation shaking testimonies are coming out of that your situation. It may not seem likely, but remember that no one is like the God who will do it. Believe.

CHAPTER 9

#3.REBEL AGAINST YOUR CONDITION

Freedom is never freely granted, it is demanded. Until you are tired of where you are, you cannot get to where you want to be. Until Jabez cried over his condition, greatness eluded him. When Hannah refused to remain content with barrenness, she became a mother of six. As long as you are still willing to tolerate it, it remains so. Almost everyone was comfortable with segregation in America, but not same with Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968). The brave American clergyman and Nobel Prize winner once said that anyone who has not discovered what to die for is not fit to live. A symbol of racial justice, the Atlanta Georgia born clergy lived and died a civil rights movement principal leader. Today, due to his unrelenting efforts in the years past, segregation did not only end after him, a black man became an American president. Don't stay down where the devil hit you down. Get back, up. Dare to become so successful after your failings that the devil will regret your ever failing in the first place.

Be like Jeffrey Archer, a parliament member cum publisher. In 1974, Archer faced a financial ruin as a result of a bad investment. He subsequently resigned from a promising career as a conservative member of the parliament. Almost immediately Archer became an object of ridicule in his country. People began to discuss him like a term paper. "Look at this Archer" became a common abuse in the cities. One day, while drinking and thinking in a pub, he overheard a conversation in which he was referred to as, "a bloody fool who had made a bad investment". The gossips ended their discussion by saying, "We are never goanna hear of or from him again". Archer became extremely restive of the fact that he had turned a nationwide symbol of folly. He jumped up and leaving his lunch behind, swore to himself, "You will hear from me again" and left. Of course they all did hear of him and better still, for good. He immediately became a rebel of his condition. The madness drove him to become one of the top-selling novelists of all

time. His secret: Driven to write books to beat off the creditors and right his reputation, his career as a successful and inspirational writer was born. Remember the novel 'The Promise'? It was written when people gossiped the author for failing out of university due to wrong decisions.

Until you are tired of here, you won't get there. There must be a desperate desire to birth a fresh new ease of life. My brother will always say: "Until you rebel, you cannot regain" In the words of Merger N. (1925-1963) "Freedom has never been free." Almost every South African revere the great iconMandiba! Born Nelson Mandela in July 1918, the 1993 Nobel peace prize recipient and first black president of South Africa defied all odds in his fight against apartheid. Mandela was born in Umtata in what is now Eastern Province, South Africa at a time when racial segregation was the main stay of South African Polity. In 1910, eight years before his birth, a decree was passed, restricting parliamentary membership to whites only. By 1913, the House passed a legislation restricting black land ownership to 13% of South African's total land area. Nelson Mandela,son of a Xhosa speaking Thembu Chief was born and bred under these bizarre laws. However, Mandela understood well that although it was not his decision concerning when and how he was born, he would blame no one on how he dies. His battle against his condition and those of his people began in the University of Fort Hare in Alice, South Africa. Mandela became a known rebel against Apartheid. He completely refused to believe that, that thing he knew to be wrong and oppressive can neither be stopped nor changed. From his very first week in school, Mandela became wholly involved in the political struggle against the racial discrimination against his South African blacks. He promised to end apartheid at all cost. Although he would later be expelled in 1940 for rioting, Mandela never for once considered reneging. He proceeded to Johannesburg where he obtained a bachelor's degree via correspondence through the University of South Africa. He then studied law in the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. All his education and efforts towards learning was geared towards the destruction of apartheid. He joined the African National congress for the same purpose becoming its president in 1951. The following year, upon becoming one of the four (4) vice presidentsof ANC, Mandela was huddled into the front line of the 1952 South African Defiance campaign. He inspired black Africans to turn down the position of a second class citizen in their own country. As boycotts failed to serve the

purpose, he alongside his friend and colleague in the law firm, Oliver Tambo turned ANC into a militant group. They were ready to fight and die rather than fold their arms and be killed like goats. They termed their rebel group umkhonto we Sizwe, meaning: the spear of the nation, in December 1961. Mandela and friends endured several beatings, imprisonment and diverse inhuman tortures. Yet, until they gained their freedom in 1993, they remained resolute on their principles and ideals. The following year, 1994, South Africa held her first multiracial election and Mandela was named the President.

No one can keep you down without your permission. Likewise, no situation or adversity remains a resident evil without your consent. Until you rise to fight, even nature will assume you love it. Rebel against your condition! Freedom is not given to the oppressed until it is demanded and fought for. Make it your goal and consuming passion never to remain down even when circumstances try to prove that you can never rise again. Rebel. Say no to non success. Make failure completely uncomfortable near you. Be a threat to its existence. Rebel. Whatever you tolerate stays.

I so much love the spirit of Dalai Lama. He was said to have led an unsuccessful rebellion against the Chinese communists who invaded and occupied Tibet in the 1950s. He said in Oslo, Norway: “It is my dream that the entire Tibetan plateau should become a free refuge where humanity and nature can live in peace and in harmonious balance. It would be a place where people from all over the world could come to seek the true meaning of peace within themselves, away from the lessons and pressures of much of the rest of the world”. That was his life goal and dominant desire – to see a free Tibet. The great Tibetan leader later wrote in his book, ‘My Tibet’: “All six million Tibetans should be on the list of endangered peoples. This struggle is thus my first responsibility”. Did he just fold his hands and wish it into reality? No; he didn’t. Rather he fought hard for it. Even the world was so impressed especially for his non violence approach, that they honored him with a Nobel peace prize.

Say no to evil and the good will come. Say no to complacency and the best will fall on your lap. Don’t say that you will get used to it lest you become useless. Hear Micheal Smurfit “Never accept failure, no matter how often it visits you”. Until you get tired and restive about where you are, you won’t get to where you

should be. Until Jacob became tired of being a servant in another man's home, he worked as paid shepherd to Laban for many years. When the prodigalson got tired of sharing meal with pigs, his heart yearned after his father and the luxury at home. Jabez at a time cried with passion: "Enlarge my coast oh Lord". He got tired of his comfort zone. He loathed smallness. He craved for something different. He rebelled against his condition.

It was Denis Waitley who observed "There are two primary choices in life: to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them," A strong successful man, says Orisen Marsden, is not the victim of his environment. He creates favorable conditions." Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928), a famed Scottish suffrage leader, was born at a time when women were not allowed to vote in Britain. She devoted her life and time to fights for women rights. Founder of women's social and political Union (WSPU), Pankhurst led several protest marches and boycotts. Several times she was beaten and jailed, yet she defied all odds. By the time she died in London on June 14, 1928, Britain had granted full voting rights to British women. Fifty years after, the hard fighting "Iron Lady" Margaret Hilda Thatcher became the first female and later longest serving British Prime Minister of the 21st century, thanks to Emmeline's efforts.

Fredrick Douglass was much like her. It was Douglass who wrote in THE NORTH STAR that: "A man, who will not labour (rebel) to gain his rights, is a man who would not, if he had them, prize and defend them". He told a civil right gathering: "The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle". In a West Indian Emancipation speech, Canandaigua, New York, Douglass stated emphatically, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress". Born of a slave in Talbot County, Maryland of a slave mother, Harriet Bailey, and an unknown white father, Douglass was separated from his mother while still a toddler. He was raised by a woman, Aunty Katy, whose job was to raise slave children on the plantation of colonial Edward Lloyd. Bought over by Thomas Auld, Frederick Douglass, who was adjudged too independent, was at 17 sent to work for a slave breaker, by name Edward Covey. He had at 13 years bought a book titled "The Columbian Orator" which alongside his Bible convinced him of the injustice of slavery and the right of all people to be free. From that moment of truth onwards, Douglass turned an anti-slavery rebel and a great orator. At Covey's house, the famed 'slave breaker' who

specialized in shattering the spirit of rebellious slaves had Frederick beaten everyday. Six months on, Frederick grew restive and resisted Covey, wrestling him to a draw in a fight. Startled, Covey never again attempted to beat or maltreat him in any way again. Instead Covey sent him back to Auld, who then sent him back to Baltimore as an apprentice in a shipyard. Frederick's duel with Covey became an eye opener to him, bringing him to the conviction that no one remains oppressed who is truly tired of oppression. He dedicated himself to a life time war against slavery. However, knowing full well that he won't be able to free others with as himself bound, he planned his escape. In September 1838, Frederick dressed himself as a sailor that is just back from a sea duty and took a train from Baltimore to a slave free New York. At New York, Douglass visited a black abolitionist, David Ruggles who helped him to adjust to the life of a free man and also to marry his fiancée, Anna Murray. Upon meeting William Lloyd Garrison in 1841 at New Bedford, Douglass, who was born Frederick Augustus Bailey, gradually worked his way into becoming the most prominent African American orator, Journalist and antislavery leader of the 19th century.

I often lack words to describe the great Nobel Laureate, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Born on January 15, 1929, the life and mission of Dr. King could be summed in his own words: "I will not be satisfied until segregation is dead in America". A born rebel; as at the age of 26 years he was already a famous preacher of peaceful protest, demonstration and passive resistance to segregation. The eldest son of a Baptist Minister, Martin Luther King, and his wife, Alberta Williams King, King Jr was ordained as a Baptist Minister at the age 18. An excellent product of a local segregated school, King schooled in nearby Morehouse College where he emerged in 1948 with an excellent bachelor's degree in Sociology. He then moved to Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania in 1951 to further his studies. While in Crozer, he made his mark as a powerful orator and public speaker. He began to study about several people's struggle to freedom and Gandhi's non-violent approach to public protest. His aim? To end segregation in America! He gave his whole life to it. In 1953, he got wedded to a music student by name Coretta Scott and in the following year accepted his first pastorate at the Dexter Avenue Baptist church in Montgomery, Alabama. He was opportune to head a church of scholars who were passionate about bringing an end to segregation at all cost. His passion grew even more as he watched Montgomery white bus drivers

maltreat blacks and abuse 'coloured' ladies. His break finally came when Rosa Park, a leading lady member of the National Association for the Advancement of the Coloured People (NAACP) was arrested for refusing to give up her seat in the bus to a white passenger. That was December 1, 1955, just one year into pastoral ministry in Alabama. Fellow passionate black enthusiast gathered and made him the president of Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) with the peaceful organization of a bus boycott as first task. By the time the Alabama buses were desegregated in November 1956, Rev. King had become a national hero. The following year, 1957, he rallied all the black churches and their ministers to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). By early 1960's, fellow black ministers began to sabotage his work forcing him to write the famous 'letter from Birmingham jail' published on 12 April, 1963. Tortured, beaten, humiliated and rough handled in jail, Rev King never reneged on his promise to end segregation. He led an army of black civilians from city to city, marching on for complete black freedom. On August 28, 1963, Kings and his SCLC leaders led the famous 1963 March on Washington D.C. for jobs and civil rights. Here he delivered his famous "I HAVE A DREAM" speech before a crowd of over 200,000 peaceful protesters. His struggles finally paid forth when the Civil Right Acts of 1964 was enacted, prohibiting the segregation in all public accommodation, education and employment. Rev. Martins was rewarded with the Nobel Peace prize of 1964.

However, blacks were still unpermitted to vote in Alabama. Another peaceful protest was organized. Unfortunately, police interference and brutal resistance led to the death of over 300 people with countless others wounded. That was March 7, 1965 at Selma. It was later tagged Bloody Sunday. Nonetheless, Rev. King and friends never gave up. Five days later, they marched with their unhealed wounds to Montgomery with a court injunction barring the state police from interfering. King addressed the rally in front of the capitol building with over 30,000 protesters present. The march and the speech again yielded fruit as the President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965 on August that year.

Done with segregation, discrimination and voting right, King shifted his focus towards economic empowerment. He craved for national wealth redistribution as a means to end poverty among blacks. This new ideology took him to Memphis,

Tennessee where black garbage workers had embarked on strike. However, while in Memphis, King was on April 4, 1968 shot in the neck by a sniper, James Earl Ray. He died at the St Joseph's Hospital Memphis later that day. His death sparked up violent riots in over 100 American cities plus a strong emotional reaction from around the globe. Today, the man who would rather die a rebel to injustice than to fold hands and do nothing is now a world acclaimed cult hero and a symbol of black courage, achievement and high moral leadership. His January 15th birthday remains an important public holiday in America. Barely 50years after, his seed turned a precious fruit as Barrack Obama, an African American, became the American President.

You hate where and how you are now? Rebel. Whatever you tolerate remains.

CHAPTER 10

#4. DEVELOP A FIGHTING SPIRIT

It was Jackie Robinson who said “Above anything, I hate to lose”. Having signed up as a rebel against your condition, the next step naturally is to develop a fighting spirit. Jesus warned His disciples that His spirit is never happy with the one who places his hands upon a plough and goes back. Same it is with life. There are no more miserable lives than those who are in the habit of giving up. Develop a fighting spirit. Build up in yourself a resilient mental attitude. Every form of failure can be salvaged; the one that cannot becomes a veritable learning experience. So, refuse the urge to stay down when you are hit down. Always fight one more round. Be determined within yourself to win the battle of the mind-nature’s greatest and foremost battle field. Fight. The truth is, the man who refuses to let the mishaps of life to keep him down too long cannot be kept down by any man.

A fighting spirit is the spirit that won’t let go. It is the spirit that defies all odds. Hiram Revels (1822-1901) in 1870 fought his way to becoming the first black US senator. Ralph Bunche (1904-1971) in 1950 became the first black Nobel Laureate. History is full of names who through insatiable determination and a dogged fighting spirit withstood all overwhelming odds to achieve that which was hitherto impossible. Despite her constant battle with racial segregation and abuse, Condoleezza Rice doggedly rose to become America’s first female National security Adviser and later the first black female American Secretary of state. Determined to convince the difficult and unyielding medical board that local anesthesia is better than the general anesthesia, Dr. Evan O’Neill Kane on Feb. 15, 1921 in New York City became the first doctor to do himself appendectomy. A fighting spirit pushes you on even when situation seems hopeless. It gets the best out of every worst. Carr Moseley Braun, against all impossible odds, fought her way towards becoming the first black woman elected to the US senate. Victoria Woodhull (1838-1927) on May 1872 became the first woman to run for the US presidency. Corazon Aquino, despite the political assassination of her husband, fought on to become Philippines’ first female president.

I remember Nelson Mandela telling the South Africans, “The struggle is my life, I will continue fighting (for freedom) until the end of my days”. Indeed, there is no battle free age group, gender, profession, race nor nation. It’s a hard world. Fight to finish. One man said. “Life is a daring adventure or nothing.” Only them that dares wins. Resolve to remain resolute come what may. Avow never to bow out. It is only in the cemeteries that I have seen people without problems or adversity. Indeed adversity as Lord Byron will always say “is the first path to truth”. Be stubborn to obstacles, rugged to challenges and hug patience with all tenacity. Never say quit, keep hope alive and the light of passion ever burning. Hear Conrad Hilton, “Achievement seems to be connected with action. Successful men and women keep moving. They make mistakes, but they don’t quit.” What oxygen is to the lungs, observed Emil Brunner, such is hope to the meaning of life. Never, ever quit. The Persians have a regular poem: “In the hour of adversity be not without hope”. Refuse to be discouraged. Never call it quit. Hear Hendotus, “Some give up their design when they have almost reached their goal while others on the contrary, obtain a victory by exerting at the last moment, more vigorous efforts than ever before”.

Strive on. Always remember what made you start in the first place. Quitting wastes previous efforts. Be determined to reach the finishing line. Don Quixote wrote, “One man scorned and covered with scars still strove with his last ounce of courage to reach the unreachable stars, and the world was better for it”. Be that man. Keep fighting until you win. The tide will turn if you refuse to be tired of trying. James Corbett wrote this timeless line, “Fight one more round. When your arms are so tired that you can hardly lift your hands to come on guard, fight one more round. When your nose is bleeding and your eyes are black and you are so tired that you wish your opponent would crack you on the jaw and put you to sleep, fight one more round-remembering that the man who always fights one more round is never whipped”.

During my teen years, I so much enjoyed the WWF wrestling mania. My favorite superstar then was Shaun Michael. Lean, fragile and yet grossly tenacious, Michael was the toast of all WWF faithfuls. Each time he faces an opponent, he would be at the receiving end of over 90% of the blows. You would so much beat him until it seems he will bleed to death. But the ex-soldier, Michael, never gives up. Each time you are about to win him, he would wait till the referee is about to

hit the floor of the ring the third and last time before raising a weak hand. Then the fight continues. He will keep doing as if he is dying meanwhile he is only resting. Just when his opponent is getting tired of beating him, Michael would summon the last iota of strength in him and give his opponent a blow that would unfailingly send him to the floor. Then, Michael would stand, hold the ring and start stamping his foot repeatedly on the floor while waiting for his opponent to get up. Immediately he gets up, Michael will give him a superb kick in the underside of the jaw and win the duel.

In 1962, not even the state Governor of Mississippi nor the oppressive law guiding the state could stop the hard fighting James Meredith from gaining admission into the University of Chicago. The University had attempted to obstruct Meredith's admission based on the fact that he was black. Infuriated, Meredith filed a suit and won. However, Ross Barnett, the governor of Mississippi refused the court's injunction to desegregate the school and allow Meredith to enroll. The matter got to President Kennedy who immediately intervened and sustained the court order. He sent Federal Marshal to Meredith who escorted him to University of Chicago for his enrollment. Mighty forces always come to the aid of those who are resolute to fight on despite all odds. As Napoleon Hill would put it, "What we do not see, what most of us never suspect of existing is the silent but irresistible power which comes to the rescue of those who fight on in the face of discouragement".

However, don't just fight a blind bull-fight. To fight-to-win, know exactly what you are up against. A good doctor identifies the actual problem and then treats it. Find the root cause of your failings. What are the exact factors militating against your progress? Fighting without wisdom is often a little like hitting your head against the wall.

CHAPTER 11

#5.DAILY RE-COMMEND AND RE-AFFIRM YOURSELF

Never allow failure to make you lose your self-worth. Failure does not change your looks, how then can it change your worth? Stop every feeling of inferiority. You are still a qualified candidate for divine success. Don't feel unqualified. No one, no matter one's title, is really qualified enough for His blessing. Sir William D'Avanant once wrote, "If mercy were not mingled with His power, this wretched world could not subsist one hour". As no man is better qualified for divine blessings than the other; also no one is more qualified, by birth or skin colour, to succeed than the others. As the world wisest man will put it, "Times and chance happens to them all". God's blessing to us is independent of what we are but on whom we are in Him. A father still plays his role – of feeding and training his ward, irrespective of the ward's indiscipline, disrespect and ill-repute. Prophet Isaiah described our self righteousness before God to be as filthy rag. I don't encourage sin; neither do I condemn the sinner. The heavily demon possessed Mary Magdalene, once caught red-handed in adultery, was the first to see the risen Lord, Jesus. The Samaritan (harlot) woman is forever remembered as the first evangelist in Samaria. What of Rahab? She didn't only become the savior of her family but equally booked her name in the genealogy of our Lord, Jesus. Spare me that your doctrine, I am yet to see a sinless man who never sinned. Even God has always preferred the imperfect men to the perfect angels. Moses was not perfect, but God still used him perfectly well. Moses was not only a stammerer, but one with a very bad temper. Yet he remains, till date, the only human that came closest to seeing God, howbeit His back. We always pray to God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. How perfect we would all readily believe this triad was. But the man of faith, Abraham, once lost faith in Sarah and God's promise to them. Abraham did not only impregnate his house girl but also fathered the terror-prone Arab world. The friend of God, the father of faith and patriarch of world's three major religions- Christianity, Judaism and Islam, was once a sugar daddy. Likes of Obama, Clinton etc complain of having a bad father that abandoned them with their mums. Yet, both parents being his descendants could have claimed Abraham as their model. Abraham kicked out Ishmael and his mother. Isaac almost followed the same trend as a father. He married a woman who began her matrimonial career as a barren woman. Later, after a divine

intervention, he went on to father a set of twins that were enemies and staunch rivals right from the womb. Fear freak Isaac, who lost most of his inheritance to the herdsmen of Gerar (Gen.26:18-20) failed as a family man. Just as his father who lied before Abimelech that Sarah was his sister, not wife, Isaac denied Rebecca before men of Gerar (Gen. 26:7-9). What of Jacob? The Greatest Supplanter; he was a cheat from the cradle to the grave. None of the trio lived a spotless life, yet God so much used them that all the three major religions of the world Christianity, Islamic and Judaism revere them as great patriarchs. I always tell my friends: God doesn't remember the past except to heal it and make something great out of it. He will remain ever faithful despite our unfaithfulness. He will always prefer the penitent publicans to the tithe paying, holy living Pharisees. In the days of the Apostles, God bypassed all the tongues speaking converts with rich spiritual experience and records, but rather chose Saul of Tarsus, the highly sinful persecutor of Christians. Let God be God and every man be man. His ways are not our ways. The one who sees the end from the beginning often works from end to the beginning. When God begins to be fathomed by human wisdom, he would cease to be omniscient. God is more interested in your ability to bounce back than he is in your frequenterring. Jesus was always addressed as the son of David, but just how perfect was David? Just as no armor in Israel fitted/marched him during his combat with Goliath, no divine blessing would have fitted him if holiness were to be the criteria for success. Little wonder he himself wrote in Psalms, "If you are to count iniquity, who will stand?" My God; that solo solely summarizes this subject. David fornicated with the wife of Uriah, his committed soldier. He again took a step further to kill Uriah in order to marry his wife, Bathsheba. Yet, surprisingly, it was still this same Bathsheba God gave Solomon, David's successor, as son. Again, just for the sake of food, David was ready to wipe a whole family if not that Abigail intervened. Although I will always respond to the greeting; "how are you?" with, "I am perfect" I still know that am not really perfect. I rather press, daily, towards the mark. Meaning? I am not yet there. There is always a better me to work towards becoming.

Let us talk about Solomon. How perfect was the man who got an open cheque from God? Each time I pray for the Wisdom of Solomon, I pause to ask: "What of his sins?" Till today, King Solomon remains the all-time world record holder in Polygamy and the best professor of Lust Science and Technology. God did not

reverse His blessings on Solomon after he sinned nor did God call it quit with Abraham after his escapade with Hagar. When God decided to destroy the world, the Bible said in Gen 6:8, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord”. One now begins to ask, “What exactly qualified Noah for this grace?” Nothing was known of Noah prior to that verse, yet I can rightly vouch at any time that Noah was not the most righteous and holy living fellow on earth then. His end of stay in the ark was marked by a drinking spree that led to his cursing his own grandchildren, to thousands of generations. What of the great prophet Jonah? The great man of God was grossly ethnocentric and tribalistic. Despite his initial stubbornness and sheer disobedience to God’s command, the Almighty still stuck to Jonah. Even while in the belly of the fish, God heard and answered his prayer. What will you say of your pastor if you see him chasing a prostitute? Prophet Hosea didn’t only chase one but also married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim! God so much hates fear and doubts that He authored a whopping 365 “thou shall not fear-s” in the Bible. Yet the Christian Holy wreath recorded in Job 1:8 that God boasted of the fear-freak Job. Shun self-condemnation! God never condemns you except you do. He sees you not as a failure but a learner. You are like the eaglet learning to fly. The day you perfectly master the art of flying, you will fly to heaven to be with Him...and that means death! Yeah, that is why we say that in the University of Life, there are no graduates.

I still insist that you don’t need to be perfect for God to bless you perfectly well. Living right is not solely the criteria to be blessed rightly. God will always extend to us a right hand of fellowship even when we fail to live right. He said through Isaiah, “Come let us reason together. Even if your sins are as red as scarlet...” That is, even if you are the worst sinner on earth! Mark it ‘even if’; meaning that your sin is not the issue here but your willingness to come actually is. Many who were so sin conscious that they failed to appear before God left all the blessings for the sinners who did. God said, “come and I will make you”. Jesus followed the same principle when He told sinful Peter and his twin friends, James and John, “follow me and I will make you...” Stop waiting to make yourself first! Don’t wait until you get to your sin-free state. There is no place that far! God sees beyond the now. He saw a champion in the chaff called Gideon. Although in the eyes of men, Peter, James and John who failed to catch a fish all night were mere failures, Christ saw in them men that would emerge as world shakers to thousands

of generations. Dare to see yourself the way God sees you. If he says you are qualified, then you are...no matter how many people that refutes that fact. God is no respecter of persons let alone their spiteful opinions about you.

Three views about 'you' are paramount in life – Gods opinion, your opinion and people's opinion about you. The third is the least important, that is if it is important at all. Nobody in life knows you well enough as to know what you would be tomorrow. Many who made significant difference in life were first written off by people before they became accomplished. David was advised that he did not have what it takes to face Goliath. Rudyard Kipling was fired as a reporter for San Francisco Examiner. His dismissal letter was reported to have read; "I am sorry, Mr. Kipling, but you just don't know how to use English language. This is not a kindergarten for amateur writers". Wow. Yet Kipling went on to become one of the world's most famous writers. Beethoven was advised to shun music as his voice was like an ugly wind blowing through a window. One day a partially deaf four year old kid came home with a note in his pocket from his teacher, "Your Tommy is too stupid to learn, get him out of the school. His mother read the note and replied "My Tommy is not stupid to learn, I will teach him myself". Guess whom Tommy is... Thomas Edison! Edison only had three months of formal schooling, yet...the rest is history. Amos was rejected simply because he was not from the family of prophets. Sarah and Elizabeth were once famous as barren women and the list goes on and on. Yet these people are still being celebrated hundreds and thousands of generations after their demise, as great champions.

The second is your opinion about yourself. No man has successfully made it beyond the boundary he set for himself. David though without a sword or even a pen knife, told Goliath that he would cut off his head... and he did. Mandela told the whites that he would one day rule South Africa against all odds- he did. Joseph announced to his family that he would one day become the world greatest and.... he did. Young boyish Clinton told his shocked teacher that he would one day be like the American President, Robert F Kennedy that on that faithful day visited his school...he did. Obama over looked his skin color and poor background when he set his eyes on the White House ...he got there! Yet despite how important your opinion about yourself may be, it is not the most paramount. You can be wrong, very wrong. When Jacob was told his last son was withheld in a strange land, his honest opinion was that things had turned against him. Yet, although he was quite

sincere, he was sincerely wrong. Many who thought theirs were finished never knew they were only rebutting. Gideon sincerely told God he did not have the necessary qualities required to lead an army against the Midianites. Jeremiah sincerely told God he did not have the necessary qualities for the role of a prophet. He even went as far as beginning his book by listing the few good people in comparison with the many bad people in his background. Peter pleaded with Jesus to depart from him a sinful man. When NnamdiAzikiwe lay on a rail track to be crushed to death, he sincerely thought he was of no use again. Yet, our turn out in life is not always dependent upon our personal opinion. No matter how sincere we are, we are often sincerely wrong. Sampson said, "I will go out as other days and shake myself off". He was equally wrong as the Philistines captured him this time. Let God be God and every man remain a man. Only the manufacturer of a product knows the true potential of his product. That brings us to the third and most paramount opinion-Gods!

God can never be wrong! He always has the final say. He formed each and every one of us and destined us for a specific purpose. He told Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee...and I ordained thee a prophet unto nations" (Jere.1.5). God ordained you a champion ever before you were born. He endorsed you a success long before you were conceived in your mother's womb. You may not look like it now but all round success is in you. Success, said Baby Mum, is God's tonic wine to His people just as healing is His bread to his children. He told Jeremiah, "I knew you!" Although most of us may not have this privilege of a direct one on one communication with Him, the truth remains that it is the same with all of us. He knows you by name. Your destiny is inscribed in His palms. Doubts may set in when adversity strikes, yet adversity is God's propellant for his children's advancement. As, according to physicists, neither car nor human can move effectively without friction; no one can successfully progress without the friction of adversity. God is not man! He neither has a Bsc, Msc nor PhD to think like the most learned of men. That is why you cannot fully comprehend Him with your flesh and blood without a divine revelation. True. We all need a revelation of our own true self. No one no matter how old has fully known oneself well enough save by divine revelation of one's maker. Elisha prayed concerning his servant, "God open his eyes". Hagar sat near a well of water, yet she and her son Ishmael almost died of thirst until God opened her eyes. No one fully knows one's ability

and capability except revealed to one by the creator. At the end of creation, the Holy Wreath said that God saw that you are good. That fact hasn't changed. You are the best of your kind. You have in you all that it takes to stand out-even among the outstanding. Even when his own parent saw no good in him, God saw a king in David. If God said it, that settles it. Check out His verdict: You are the head, not the tail, above only, not beneath. You are the best. Whatever you set your mind to do shall prosper. He said through Zephaniah (3: 20), I'll give you honor and praise among all the people of the earth. Yes, we don't need to join illuminati in order to illuminate God's glory. Unlike the cultists, the blessing of the lord brings wealth, and He adds no trouble to it (Prov. 10:12). I love it where He pledged through Isaiah (41:10) "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand". Are you passing through trials? God says 'Be strong and courageous. I will never leave you nor forsake you' (Deut 31:6). Maybe what you need is wisdom? He said through James (1:5) He giveth such freely. Just ask! He said through Isaiah (60:15b), "I will make thee an eternal Excellency, a joy of many generations". In verse three He gave this assurance, "Kings shall come to the brightness of thy rising". You are good enough to be sought after by royalties, Presidents and Governors. You are the best. You legally bear my own image. Like Jacob who was labeled a supplanter and die hard cheat, God has called you a prince. In Isaiah 62:3, He affirmed: "You shall be a crown of glory and a royal diadem in the hands of your God". Wow! Like Rahab, many may see you as a prostitute, yet He only sees a little savior in you and a potential great grandmother of the Lord Jesus. God said concerning you, "It is well with you and you shall eat the fruit of your labour" (Isa.3:10).

Know this for sure, God never sees us as losers. He in whose image you were made has never lost, so you can't. Rather, God sees us as potential winners who only need to be shown the way (Jn.14:6). When a crowd of sinners, beggars, destitutes, cheats etc gathered to him in the desert, the Bible says, "He had compassion on them..." (Mark 6:34). He never condemned them nor did He see them as weeds only good for burning in hell. No; rather He saw them as roses and potential champions, good enough to form a mass choir in heaven. He was just like His father who looked beyond a fear freak, error prone, complaint ridden Gideon, to see a potential conqueror of the Midianites. He sees us differently (from how

others do). Where people saw but a checkered woman with five failed marriages, Christ saw a restored sinner who could restore Samaria for God. People reviled and put away Matthew as a despicable tax collector but the Lord looked unto him and saw an apostle to the nations. In the blind He saw the sighted, in the lame He saw a sprinter and in the dumb a preacher. He sees the best in us when every other person could see the worst. He sees a friend in the public foe and a victor in the villain. When Zacchaeus climbed the sycamore tree, every other person saw a crook and a gold digger but Christ saw a searching heart. In the days of Peter others saw an impulsive fisherman, but Christ called him the rock upon whom He would build the church.

You are qualified. God doesn't ask the opinion of men before pin pointing one for His blessing. As healing is bread for His children, success is His tonic wine for His loved ones. His will is that you prosper and be in health while your soul prospereth. Stop disqualifying yourself. If sin were to be a prerequisite for failure, the whole earth would have been a failed state. Let's begin again with this question: "Have you ever felt so depressed that you willingly opted for suicide?" Two among the Major Prophets in the Bible did. Being often depressed and suicidal is not a good credential to be found in the CV of a prefect man. Yet that aptly describes Prophet Jeremiah. Elijah did not only chicken out at the threat of Jezebel, he also employed God to kill him. However, we still revere them as great prophets of old. A man who denied his master three times because of a little slave girl is not even worthy to be called a servant. Yet, God so much used Simon Peter that even his shadow healed the sick. Just few days after denying Jesus, the now risen Lord appeared to him, personally employing him, "feed my sheep!" (John 21:15-17). Stop the 'unworthy' excuse. Only the Lord God has the power to judge you. What is His verdict? His judgment reads "qualified and fitted." If God says you are qualified, then you are-no matter how many men who try to prove otherwise. God knows you more than you know yourself. He understands your faults more than you do. Yet he loves you even more than you love yourself. He is your father. Ohafia people will say, "obinwaadighiagba." If your past still keeps you unqualified, then Christ's death on the cross was a mere formality.

Maybe your own excuse is not really past sins and failures but failed health. You are not alone. The great Saul cum Paul was sick most of his life. Timothy, his son, had severe ulcers and was permanently placed on drugs. Beethoven lived to

become the greatest musician, yet he was deaf most of his life. He composed most of his music as a deaf man-imagine.Alexandra the Great and Julius Caesar were both epileptic. Both Napoleon Bonarparte and Hitler lived with only one testis each. Helen Keller was born blind. Odims was born asthmatic. Laughs.Check it; no modern player has had more reoccurring injury problems than Ronaldo Luis Nazarro de Lima. Yet the Rio de Janeiro, Brazil born striker retired in 2011 as the greatest 'pure' striker in the history of modern football- If not in history of football in its entirety .Greatmen are those who not only endured great adversities but advanced through them. Many today would love to be likeKanuNwankwo, PapilloYet, just how many would stand the ordeal of a heart transplant? Oscar Plitorius, the famed South African blade runner, is a double amputee. He never allowed feeling inferior before those who have two legs to kill his dream of becoming a prized sprinter. Job shouted, "I am not inferior to you!" (Job 13:2). Despite my adversities, disabilities and failures, I still know all you know plus more; I can still do what you can do. God can still use or bless me. I am not inferior!

Our problem is praying for great testimonies without great tests. It just doesn't work. No one makes an omelet without breaking an egg. Great triumphs are products of great trials. No one becomes a great champion without the trauma of great battles. Always remember, it is the coral on the ocean side that is constantly being tested by wind waves and storms that grows healthier, stronger and more re-productive. Why? The Kite rises against, not with the wind. Challenges change us for the better. No wood becomes a King's table until it courses through the ordeal of the carpenter's workshop. It is the coral's continuous battle for survival that produces its alluring changes that men admire. A muscle strained is a muscle developed. You can't become a macho without a strenuous exercise. Challenges are simply channels for positive changes. Adversity triggers one to one's next level. Like the coral on the ocean side, man is designed to grow by pain and pressure. This reminds me of my childhood. Each time I fall sick, my family and I observe that every sickness leaves me taller; and the more severe the sickness is, the taller I grew. Thus, from that moment of self-discovery up till today, whenever one observe and comments that I am sick, I would immediately refute, "no, I am just adding height". Be positive about it. It is not mere adversity but God's little way of advancing and advertising you. He works on mysterious ways His wonders

to perform. You are not sick but just growing. Yes it's not that you are bankrupt, rather your divine account is about to erupt. See it the way God sees it.

Affirm yourself. Never allow failures to make you lose yourself worth. Always remember that you are still unique and very important too-people will still mourn you at your demise, no matter how many times you fail-Laugh. Each time I am faced with a challenge, failure or depression, I always write it boldly in every nook and cranny of my environment, including all social networks in the internet saying: "ODIMS-still the world Greatest!" I have never for once lost sight of that fact. Imbibe that. There is no force great enough to keep you down except you choose to stay down. There is no temptation or adversity that comes your way today that is uncommon to man. Someone somewhere at some time faced an even worse situation and turned it for good. If you still see poverty as an excuse for non-success, then you are yet to read about the man called Jimmy Carter. A onetime American president and a former governor of Georgia, James Earl Carter, Jr was born on October 1, 1924 as the oldest of four children. At the time of his birth, his poor parents lived in the plains of Georgia, a farming community of a paltry 600 people. Jimmy's father lived and died a peanut farmer and storekeeper. Yet Jimmy managed to become the first member of his clan to graduate from college (in 1946) and subsequently became American president in 1977. Oprah Winfrey's family was so poor that even the poor in her neighborhood prayed earnestly that God would remember Oprah's family. One day, a waitress confronted Bill Gates for giving her a \$1 tip when his (Bill's) son always gives her \$100 and above. Bill Gates simply answered, "My son is the only son of the world richest man. I am the son of a wood cutter!" John Logie Baird (1888-1946), a Scottish engineer and television pioneer, wrestled with both poverty and poor health. By 1925 he was still living from hand to mouth, supporting himself as a shoe shiner and a razor blade salesman. Yet, through relentless effort and a strong determination to succeed, he invented the first commercially viable apparatus to transmit and receive visual moving images. What of Elvis Presley (1935-1977)? The great Tupelo Mississippi born entertainer was a mere truck driver until Sam Philips signed him up. African richest man and industrialist, Aliko Dangote was so poor that he could not initially afford a formal education. He had the brains but his background kept him barred from school gates. He started his very first business with a little sum he borrowed from his uncle. Joe DiMaggio (1914-1999), the

greatest hitter and center fielder in baseball history, was born and raised by a poor, immigrant fisherman. Sylvester Stallone, the 1946 New York City born actor, famous as Rambo, was once a mere cleaner in the lion cage of a zoo. He met with little success as a prize-fighter and later authored many film scripts that impressed no one except himself-until 1975. Stallone will later tell the press: "I am not the smartest or most talented person in the world, but I succeeded because I kept going and going and going". That's the spirit. Refuse to be stopped. Never allow temporary lack to shove you from seeing the big picture of your great destiny. What of the great Olympic champion Abebe Bikila (1972-1973)? The Ethiopian born athlete was so poor that he couldn't afford a canvas. He ran and won the 1960 Olympic game marathon in Rome, bare footed! Boris Yeltsin (1931-2007) was the man who signed for the breakup of the USSR and also led the famous transition from Communism to a Capitalist democracy in Russia. Born in Sverdlovst Oblast, Boris was a poor son of a poor peasant farmer. His grandfather, a once prosperous peasant farmer, had lost almost everything during the reign of Joseph Stalin. Yet, Yeltsin found purpose from what his father and grandfather went through under communism. Poverty shaped his political thoughts. His overriding passion and lifelong aspiration became to put an end to communism. This landmark he finally achieved on December 1991 despite a long battle with ill health and heart diseases plus political oppositions.

Mao Zedong (1893-1976) was much like him. The foremost Chinese communist leader of the 20th century was so poor that the poor called them poor. Yet Mao rose to become the principal founder of the People's Republic of China. Saddam Hussein (1937-2006), a former president of Iraq (1979-2003) was not only born poor, in a poor farming family near Tikrit, Saddam was raised by his widowed mother single-handed. Heard of Amadeo Peter Giannini (1870-1949)? I'm sure you well know of Bank of America. Amadeo is its founder. Born in San Jose California, extreme poverty forced Deo to leave school at the age of 13! Having no true real parents, Deo joined his step father's wholesale food business to make ends meet. Yet by the age 19, Deo had worked so hard that he became a partner in the firm and made it so big that he was quite wealthy enough to retire at age 31. Three years into retirement, he lost his father-in-law and subsequently inherited a seat on the board of directors of a local bank. Thus, Deo developed a

mounting interest in banking. Shortly after, once poor Deolater birthed the renowned Bank of Italy which metamorphosed into Bank of America.

Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969) lived to become an American military leader and later the 34th president of the United States of America (1953-1961). Yet, Dwight was born by a poor unaffectionate road side mechanic. As a child, he worked assiduously alongside his brothers, to feign for their large house hold on a family garden. Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, wrote in his autobiography: “I am a poor high school dropout. I never had opportunity to live the luxurious life my peers lived. I always cry every night for I am financially and emotionally down. Emotionally down because nobody want to talk to a pauper!”

As Denis Whitley will put it, “Simply accept yourself as you are right now- an imperfect, changing, growing and worthy person”. Weep not for you are a WIP (work in Progress). You are qualified. There is still just nothing good you can’t become.

CHAPTER 12

#6 BELIEVE IN THE GOD FACTOR

Prior to my being kicked out of the university, I spent a record sixteen months in the anatomical laboratory, reading, night and day. I knew no pleasure but continuous pressure. There was neither fun nor porn but work only. Yet, no matter how long and how committedly you walk on the wrong road, it will never become the right one. Your working so assiduously hard on your heart desire is not enough reason to make God change His purpose for your life. God is not intimidated by your hard work. His agenda can never be manipulated by man's propaganda. Only His purpose for your life will come true at the end. Imagine Mikel Obi studying so hard as to become a medical doctor or say Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe training night and day, in the tracks and field, to become Olympic gold medalists!

One major thing I have learnt in this life is that hard work is not the sole secret of success. Just as Solomon complained, of beggars ridding on horses while princes trek, it baffles me how the nonchalant often succeeds more than the assiduous and hardworking. Hard work is good but without some doses of God's grace, all our efforts would end in regrets and disgrace. The wise teacher rightly thought, "The race is not for the swift not the battle for the strong". God's will must always prevail. Absalom worked so hard trying to succeed David, but what he died trying to get, was given to his brother Solomon on a platter of Gold-seamlessly. There is an irrefutable "God factor" in every venture. Only a fool, whether rich fool or absolute fool, forgets or out rightly says that there is no God.

Divine intervention and involvement has been part of man's history from time immemorial. History is full of occasions when God turned a mess into message and a painful trial into gainful triumph. Peter, Paul and Silas experienced this divine rescue from both imprisonment and death. When all thought it was over for Daniel God showed up in the lion's den. His friends-Shedrach, Meshach and Abednego found themselves in a similar situation. They were thrown into a fire that was so hot that it consumed the men that threw them in. However, God sent a fourth man into the furnace who turned the heat into an AC. Like He did in Babylon, God often wait until when every human factor is exhausted before He

intervenes lest you think it was your own wit. He waited until Lazarus was dead and buried. He waited until Gideon cut down his army to 300 devoted men. He waited until Jehoshaphat was completely stranded and void of every possible military strategy, and turned to Him. He is waiting for you too. He wasn't joking when He said, "call unto me in your days of adversity and I will answer you". Paul and Silas did and He mysteriously freed them from jail. When Nero thought he had gotten the better of Peter, jailing him and leaving him with no hope save for execution, God intervened. Intercessory prayers made by his fans on behalf of Peter unleashed the miraculous. God is willing to intervene in your situation only if you will let Him. When that leper confronted him, "if you will, you can make me clean," His simple honest response was, "I will, be clean". He has not changed till today. He still longs to say 'I will' to your "will you...?" He will readily show up and, just in time, turn things around for you. He makes your problems His own and often turns thing around so perfectly that it seems the problem never existed. Life becomes easier, and its journey more joyful. When Paul was faced with a shipwreck, God showed up. What used to be a stormy odyssey turned a fan fair of testimonies and the miraculous. Most often, adversity does not just happen, God plans it. I found this story in Bob Gods' Word for Today. On a chilly March afternoon, just before going home for dinner, Pastor Walter Klempel fired up the church furnace in preparation for choir practice. When it was time to return to church with his family, they were delayed because his daughter changed cloths. At the same time student LadonaVadergrif was struggling with a geometry problem and stayed home to work on it. Sister Rowena and Sadie Estes' car would not start. Herbert Kipf lingered over a letter he had put off writing. Joyce Black was feeling "plain lazy" and so stayed home till the last minute. Pianists Marilyn Paul fell asleep after dinner and her mum, the choir director, had trouble waking her. Pals Lucille Jones and Dorothy Wood were late because of a radio broadcast. Every single choir member was late; something that has never happened before nor since. Just an accidental occurrence? Hell no! At 7:30 that night, the West Side church was flattened by an explosion from a gas leak ignited by the furnace directly below the empty choir loft! God factor. God knows the best and has promised to give you the best.

Believe him. God is working out a great plan for your life. His is a plan for good not for evil. He can intervene in your situation. He often begins his work

where your strength fails. When it seems all hope is lost, summon your last courage to believe God. He is still in the business of turning lives around. Give room for the supernatural. Widely open your mind for miracles. If you must give up, give it up to God. Resign to faith not fate. Lift up your eyes towards heaven for from thence cometh your help. (Ps.121:1). God will step in and intervene. Bob Gas advised, “when your resources are depleted and you think you’re going under for the last time, God has provided a refuge that is higher than your circumstance (Ps. 61:2), a place where you are under divine protection (Job 2:6) and the enemy has no jurisdiction (Isaiah 59:19)” All you need to do is to believe and trust Him again. ‘All things are possible to them that believe (Mark 9:23)’. The truth is, as Charles Swindoll puts it, “Life is not about you! It is about God!” Tired and worn out? Remember your maker. The Bible says, ‘submit your plans to God and it shall be established (Prov.16:3)’. Helen Keller wrote, “If we relinquish our will and yield to the Divine will then we find that we are afloat on a buoyant sea of peace and under us are His everlasting arms”. Quit struggling and start yielding. He warned enthusiastic Saul: “you can’t kick against the pricks” [Acts 9:5 NKJV]. At the end it will still be His purpose that will be established.

Always do all you can to hook up with divine grace. As the absence of light means pitch darkness so also the absence of His grace inevitably yields disgrace. Grace is that supernatural contribution of God to a man’s life that you neither paid nor worked for. It is that touch of divinity that is beyond human comprehension. Grace is simply that which makes great without much effort. It makes a naturally difficult task seem so seamless and easy. It was grace that gave Solomon on a platter of gold the crown which his big and more qualified brothers fought and died for. The tithe paying Rockefeller became the first millionaire worldwide. It was grace that made the whole nation of the Philistine to envy Isaac Abrahams who enjoyed bumper harvest in the time of famine. Grace will make you succeed where others failed. Carlos Helu Slim made it big in the same Mexico his country men ran from. In the same Nigeria where all complain, ‘things are hard’, Aliko Dangote rose from nothing to become the richest man in Africa today. Prophet Zechariah (12:10) calls it a spirit which makes a man count on his maker that has the manual to his true greatness. God’s grace is the most important virtue any man can crave for. It is God’s greatest gift to mankind (Eph.4:7). It brings out the best in you (1Cor.15:10). Old Elijah on foot outran young Ahab on a royal

chariot (1Kgs.18:46). Some fearful illiterate folks who abandoned their master in His time of need suddenly became world shakers. People said of Christ's disciples: "Here are the men who have turned the world Upside Down" (Act 17:6). Grace is the greatest expression of God's love (Eph.2:4-7). It reveals in the carrier hidden talents and treasures one never knew exists (1Cor.1:4-7). You can't just carry grace and come behind in anything. It makes you stand out even among the outstanding. Almost all the magicians in Egypt were able to turn their staff into a snake. They were all outstanding men. However, Moses' rod cum snake swallowed them all. It makes its carrier to reign, seamlessly, in any sphere of life he chooses. Even in the land of slavery, Joseph was a leader in just everywhere he found himself. At home, he was a supervisor and leader. He wore a royal robe of many colours (Gen.37:3). While others went to tend for the flock, his dad sent him much later to just go find out how his siblings were faring (Gen.37:12). On being sold to Portiphar, his master handed over his house to Joseph. While in prison, the prison warden handed over the affairs of the jail to him (Gen.39:21-23). Out of prison, Pharaoh immediately handed the whole nation over to him (Gen.41:37-41). Not long after, Pharaoh handed himself over to Joseph too (Gen.45:8). Talk of grace! It is a love provoked favour of God towards any man. Great works and unexplainable acts becomes a common place for one who is in touch with grace. Like it was in the days of Moses, people would be so much in awe of your deeds that they will say of you, "This is the finger of God". Not even the Queen of Sheba could explain the wealth and Wisdom of Solomon. Only grace can.

Never run without grace!(Ex.33:12-19). It carries so many virtues that it becomes indispensable in any man's life. Go for grace. When you get it, hold strong to it. Never let go of God's grace in your life. The truth is, the virtue you carry determines the value you manifest. Grace is like a price tag, it establishes the value people place on you. A graceless man readily turns a disgrace in life. When the divine grace was torn from Saul, he quickly went from a mad man to a fallen man. David wept concerning him, "How are the mighty fallen" (II Sam.1:19b). Never lose your grip on grace. Its importance can never be over emphasized. It will make you a savior among men. It makes you go from praying to becoming an answer to others prayer. You suddenly carry the answer people seek. Grace will make you go from seeking opportunities to becoming the opportunity others seek. I love this; it makes you someone else' breakthrough.

Again, grace gives relevance to its carrier. Presidents of nations travel from far and wide to giant of Africa to see a man who without dropping a single sweat graciously enlisted himself among the 50 most influential men of our time. Pst. Enoch Adeboye is one perfect example of one walking in divine grace. Seemingly not a great preacher like his counterparts as he hardly shouts like an average preacher in Africa; yet, Daddy G.O as he is fondly called remains about the most successful man in the history of Nigeria. From nothing, he transformed the Redeemed Christian Church of God to the largest church or religious group in Africa. What makes Adeboye so seamlessly successful? It is spelt G-R-A-C-E! For 65 uninterrupted years, the man of grace Daniel remained relevant in the government of Babylon. Jerry Gana, until he opted for a retirement remained relevant to just every government that assumed power in Nigeria. Untiring, honest and unrelenting, smooth tongue Gana was the toast of every President and highly endeared by the entire populace.

You desire to make your life count? Count on grace.

CHAPTER 13

#7 BE DETERMINED TO FINISH WHAT YOU HAVE STARTED

Never say quit! Persistence does pay off but only at the end. The beauty of a begun project is to finish it. The crown of success is not for the mere starters but the finishers. Keep getting up no matter how many times you go down. Persist. Dale Carnegie was so right when he wrote: "Persistence helps develop success from failures. Discouragement and failure are two of the surest stepping stones to success". There are no over-night successes on earth. Deep inside every success story are many failures that are not often made public. Don't be dispirited by your failings. Congratulate yourself on the bravado courage to have tried in the first place. Never give up. Finish the race. It is better to finish last than not to get to the finishing line at all. Francis Drake (1540-1596) once said: "There must be a beginning of any great matter, but the continuing unto the end until it be thoroughly finished yields the true glory". Emulate the artist Vincent van Gogh (1853-1896) when he said "In spite of everything, I shall rise again. I will take up my pencil, which I have forsaken in my great discouragement, and I will go on with my drawing". Hear F.W. Nichol: "When you get right down to the root of the meaning of the word 'succeed', you find it simply means to follow through."

Be like the Ox. Tireless, zealous and never giving up on any venture; an ox will readily plough from sunrise to sunset without calling it quit until the task at hand is completed! No doubt there are times when it gets so bad that it seems it would never again be good. I know that too well; been there too. Yet, hear David Ben – Gurion: "Courage is a special kind of knowledge of how to fear what ought to be feared and how not to fear what ought not to be feared. From this knowledge comes an inner strength that inspires us to push on in the face of great difficulty. What can seem impossible is often possible with courage". Like the Ox, courageously persist till you reach your end. Like Edison, keep trying until you get it right. Keep keeping on no matter the nature of the difficulties. Mountains only seem so high from the valley; it gets shorter on climbing. The more you try, the easier it gets. Keep going. Unlike most road maps you have studied, the road to true success runs steadily uphill. You have to keep climbing step after step. As my mentor, Bob Gass, would write: "The only thing to cry when all else fails is: Begin Again". Yes, not 'why me' but 'begin again!' Start all over. Begin again and again. Don't be stopped by a thousand failures or a million words of discouragement. Finish the task. William James said and I believe it: "Nothing is so fatiguing as the eternal hanging on of an uncompleted task".

Everybody who has been to New York, USA would forever be in awe of the famous Brooklyn Bridge. The great architectural master piece spans over the East River, New York City; between the boroughs of Brooklyn and Manhattan. Designed by Roebling, John Augustus [1806-1869], an American civil engineer of great repute and constructed by his son Washington, the Brooklyn Bridge was opened for use on 24th of May 1883 as the longest suspension bridge in the then world [1595 ft long, 133ft high and 6775ft in overall length]. Today, what thrills me most about the famed Brooklyn bridge is not its awesome beauty but the story behind it. The die-hard spirit of the father and son and their commendable ability to forge ahead despite adversity and nay sayers' searing criticism will forever be a lesson to humanity. John Roebling had a dream – to build a spectacular bridge connecting New York with the Long Island. Experts of his days thought his bizarre idea unrealistic. Impossibility thinkers encouraged him to 'wake up' and stop dreaming. Yet tenacious Roebling would not back off. He held to his vision. He built the bridge over and over in his mind coming to a greater and clearer conviction of its possibility on daily basis. Yet, no one saw reasons with him. Everyone still insisted that such a long bridge would be impossible. Nevertheless, John Augustus Roebling managed to convince his son Washington, a budding engineer, on the bridge's possibility. Soon, father and son defied all oppositions, criticisms and discouragement to begin the fulfillment of their dream. The work began well. Several crew men were hired. Funds were raised and history was on its way to be made. Father and son were in high hopes but nay sayers held on to their opinion, "it's impossible". They made a great start to the project. Unfortunately, just when the work was only a few months underway, a terrible accident occurred. Many on the site were left either dead or badly injured. John Roebling himself died. Washington, his son, was so much injured that he was permanently disabled, having damaged a certain amount of his brain. Both talking and walking, to Washington, became impossible.

"We warned them sternly. Didn't we?"

"Crazy men and their crazy dream! I am sure they've seen the side effect of their being unnecessarily stubborn".

Just everyone had a negative comment to make. There was neither sympathy nor words of encouragement for the "crazy" engineers. People were 'happy' as they

considered it the end of the bizarre project. Although dead, John Roebling's dream did not die with him. The son was highly determined to completely finish what they both started. Regrettably, his speech and locomotive disability served as deterrent to his goal. Nonetheless, Washington won't give up. He knew exactly how right Joseph Sugarman was when he opined, "Each problem has hidden in it an opportunity so powerful that it literally dwarfs the problem. The greatest success stories were created by people who recognized a problem and turned it into an opportunity". Determined to finish the project despite the huge problem at hand, young Washington refused to be discouraged. Many advised him that what happened was a divine sign to make him know that God snubs at the projects. Others encouraged him to bury the dream with its first dreamer, his father. His best friend advised him thus: "What killed your great father will not struggle to kill you. It would do so effortlessly. Quit!" But men of success are not of them that quit. Washington's mind was not only sharp but sharply inclined to finishing the project.

By now, due to the accident, all that Washington could do with his body was to move one finger. Every other part of his body was dead. Yet, undeterred, he determined to make the best use of that one finger. He formed a strong partnership with his dotting wife with whom he developed a rare mode of communication. Like Helen Keller's teacher, Washington would use the finger to spell words on the arm of his wife. First he instructed her to assemble the engineers again. Work re-began in earnest. Again, through the same rare mode of communication, through the wife, he taught the engineers what to do. For thirteen good years, Washington daily wrote out his instructions with his fingers on his wife's arm, until the bridge was finally completed. Today the spectacular Brooklyn Bridge leaves the world in awe as a tribute to the triumph of one man's indomitable spirit and his resolve not to be kicked aside by the vicissitudes of life. Ross Perot, a US business executive and Politician, once complained, "Most people give up just when they are about to achieve success. They quit on the one yard line. They give up at the last minute of the game, one foot away from a winning touchdown. The true test of character is the ability to carry on and carry out an assignment or a decision to its completion long after the enthusiasm with which you took it has waned. Finish the task. As Ralph Waldo Emerson would say, "The invariable mark of a dream is to see it come true". Don't leave it half way. One writer wrote something chagrined: "Since all of us would win or die at the end, why stop at the middle?" We all know that the Wright Brothers finished and flew the first air plane. Yet, only a handful may know the man who first began the project. Langley started out well in life. A symbol determination resilience and hard work, Langley defied all odds to become a university professor with only a high school education. Born Samuel Pierpont

Langley (1834-1906) on Roxbury Massachusetts, the American astronomer acquired most of his education by self-help in Boston Library. Between 1867 and 1887, Langley served as professor of physics at the University of Pennsylvania-now University of Pittsburgh. While there, better part of his research works was in astronomy. He studied Radiation, invented bolometer and in 1891 wrote a treatise on the aerodynamics of heavier than air craft. He equally achieved a land mark, when for the first time in the world history; his pilotless airplane achieved a flight-first of 300ft and later again 4200ft. The whole world was in awe of the great genius. His next goal was to so much develop this pilotless mechanically propelled heavier than air machines that it would revolutionalize the transport industry. All initial attempts failed but Langley persisted. He read all the books in his disposal; did all the research and daily experimented on his pet project. Experts told him it was impossible. His family and friends encouraged him to back off. Unfortunately, Langley yielded. Just few years after, what a professor could not achieve was accomplished by two seemingly illiterate school drop outs. Langley began it but the Wright Brothers who finished it got the patency. John Woods writes: "It is not so important who starts the game but who finishes it". You will be judged by what you finished and not by what you started. As my father will always say, to endure is greater than to dare. "Finish it," Advised Donald Trump, "In the end you are measured not by how much you undertake but by what you finally accomplished". The greatest joy lies in seeing the task completed. Genghis khan (1167-1227), the great Mongol conqueror and founder of the Mongol Empire is of the opinion that "The merit in action lies in finishing it to the end". Imbibe the spirit of Ted Turner, founder of CNN. Speaking of CNNTV one day, Turner said, "We are gonna stay on until the end of the world. And when that day comes, we will cover it, play Nearer My God to Thee and sign off". Jesus said 'it is finished'. He never gave oppositions and people's unbelief as an excuse. In 2Chron 5:1, the Bible says, "...and Solomon finished all..." I love that. Paul affirmed, "I have fought the good fight. I have FINISHED the race" (IITim.4:7). Paul was severely opposed yet he finished. When faced with torture and adversities, he said: "None of these things move me [Acts 20:24]. Never allow obstacles and oppositions move you away from your God ordained dreams and aspirations. If it is dream able, it is actualizable.

CHAPTER 14

#8

TAKE A PERSONAL STOCK AND INVENTORY

Thus said the Lord of hosts, “consider your ways” [Hag 1:7]. Check yourself. Make a detailed analysis of your walk thus far. To brace up and prepare to make good the opportunity your current problem bears, take a stock of your past adversities and how you handled them. Fill a personal inventory about yourself. What have been your wins and woes, blows and blasts? Look for the areas that need improvement- ones you can do better and those that requires a completely different approach. You can implore a friend to help you do this. Look for one who knows you too well. Never fear change. That the old approach did not work often means there was something wrong with it. If you must stick to your old plan, change your approach. When I was given a repeat year in school, my teacher advised me, “Your old notes, not your brains, have failed you. Burn it up and start again”. If you keep doing what you have been doing, you will keep getting the same results as before. Take a stock. Find out when and how you slipped off. Find out when and how you slipped off. As there is no problem without a solution, every problem has a cause. Events of life can be summed up under causes and effects. Find out the causes of your dilemma. Get to it its roots. Consider exactly where you hit the rock and fish out the stump. It was Nelson Mandela who wrote in his autobiography (The struggle is my Life) that “The past is a rich resource on which we can draw in order to make decisions for the future but it does not dictate our choices. We should look back at the past and select what is good and leave what is bad”.

Two major things are paramount in every man’s life- How you spend your life and whom you spend it with (company). A man’s passion is known by how he spends his time but it is the company he keeps that defines him. Now let’s take the two apiece.

First, HOW? It was Captain Jean Picard who rightly observed that, “Time is a companion that goes with us on a journey. It reminds us to cherish each moment because it will never come again! What we leave behind is not as important as how we have lived”. Time travels along with us in our journey through life. Daily we spend it, either wastefully or gainfully. The truth remains that there is no better or more important manager in life than he who manages his own time well. God gave

us all an equal portion of time; how each manages his determines what becomes of him. Take charge of your time. Stop frequently and reconsider and analyze how you have been investing your own time. There is nothing so stupid as doing well what ought not to have been done at all. We all must have heard of Charles Schwab (1862-1939). Schwab was the president of Bethlehem Steel from 1905 until his death. An American industrialist par excellence, Schwab was born in Williamsburg Pennsylvania. He graduated from Francis College in Loretta, Pennsylvania at the age of 16. By 1881 he was already working. Eleven years on, in 1892 he rose to the position of a general superintendent of the homestead works in Pennsylvania. In 1897 he was made the president of the Carnegie Steel Company and by 1901 had effected the merger of Carnegie Steel Company Limited with the US Steel Corps. He then became the president of this enlarged US Steel Corps from 1901 to 1903. Quite a successful life and career you will say. Yet, Schwab owes his great success to the great public relations practitioner by name Ivy L. Lee. Schwab once gave Lee an unusual assignment: "Show me a way to get more things done with my time". Both then agreed that Schwab would pay the brave consultant 'anything within reason' if Lee's plan works. After some time, Lee sent the industrialist a sheet of paper with the following plan; "Write down the most important task you have to do tomorrow; number them in order of importance. When you arrive in the morning, begin at once on number one and then stay on it until it is completed. Recheck your priorities; then begin with number two; then number three. Make this a habit every working day. Pass it on to those under you. Try it as long as you like. Then send me your cheque for what you think it is worth". That singular plan turned the magic wand that in less than 5 years turned a struggling Bethlehem Steel company into the largest steel producer in the world. Time management! For his therapy, Lee got a cheque of \$25,000 with a note of appreciation, "The most profitable lesson I have ever learned..."

Be an effective time manager. A time wasted is forever lost. Retrieve the time you waste on people or things that adds nothing to your life and put it in more useful ventures. Learn to believe in yourself. A thousand advices do not guarantee success. One right advice does. Mark McCormack, a US lawyer, sports promoter and agent told Harvard Business School student: "To manage time well, you have to believe in your own knowledge". Stop running about. Attach yourself to one life coach and mentor if need be. Set priorities. You can't be everywhere and please

everybody at the same time. At each juncture of your life, ask yourself, “What is the best and most important thing for me to do at this particular time?” Hear John Harvey Jones (1924-2008), “No amount of ‘tricks of the trade’ will avoid the need to set some sort of priorities when allocating one’s time”. Shun procrastination. An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening. Gallivanting never makes a gallant achiever.

Next, your relationships! It is a common saying today that the company you keep determines the company that keeps you. Miguel de Cervantes (547-1616) a Spanish novelist and dramatist once wrote in his *Don Quixote*: “Tell me what company thou keepest, and I will tell thee what thou art. Charles Tremendous Jones opined, “You are the same today that you are going to be in five years from now except for two things: the people with whom you associate and the books you read”. Something happened to a friend of mine. He was on a fast track enroute success. Everything he touched turned gold. But one day he met a fellow student that went by the accolade, Pastor. The young man, Dozy by name, spoke in tongues like most Pastors but little did my friend and his likes know that Dozy was only possessed by an evil spirit, not Holy Ghost. When sin freak Dozy visited my friend, they both held hands together in prayer. Soon Dozy began to speak in an unknown tongue and to vibrate. As he did, he held firm my friend’s hand. My friend in no time began to feel something like an electric current being transferred from Dozy’s hand to his. This friend of mine was so excited, believing that he had tapped into the Holy Ghost baptism. Unfortunately, it was the spirit of failure. Two years on, my friend failed out of the university after five years in medicine. Have a detailed stock of people you have been spending your time with. Whom and whom contributed to your failure? Did any of them give the push? Who cushioned the fall for you? Analyze your relationships. Know who should remain in your list of acquaintances and who should be shown the eraser. Not all in your past have a role in your future. Which of the relationships must you nurture? In this life there is nothing like a casual friend. Every relationship takes you to or away from your destiny. As an associate professor soon becomes a professor, so also a man becomes like those he associate with. The Arabians have a proverb, “A wise man associating with the viscous becomes an idiot; a dog travelling with good men becomes a rational being”. John C. Maxwell made this more lucid where he wrote, “You will acquire the vices and virtues of your closest associates. The fragrance of

their lives will pervade your life”. Thus, Maxwell went on to advice, “If you want to grow up, go up. Associate with people whose achievement exceeds your own and model the growth you desire”. For, as it goes in a Latin Proverb, “He that lies down with dogs shall rise up with flies.” Choose them rightly lest they wrongly choose you. Study each closely lest you mistake a fiend for a friend.

Mark Twain once advised, “Keep away from small people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you too can become great.” Often, I wonder what Abel would have become had it been Cain didn’t kill him. Rev. Dr. Chris Kwakpovwe wrote, “There is a Brutus for every born star.” Brutus was Julius Caesar’s most trusted friend who plotted his being stabbed to death. The Great General is quoted as saying “Et tu Brute? Then fall, Caesar”. Keep off from the Eliabs of your life. Life is too short to be wasted with haters and stoppers. David walked out on Eliab. TufacIdibia left the Plantation Boys. Micheal Jackson separated from Jackson Five.

Also, taking stock and inventory well goes beyond the time and people management. It gives you the tact, energy and courage to face the present problem. When faced with the adversity of Goliath’s challenge, David told Saul, “I have killed a lion and bear...” Meaning? “If I could kill the strongest and largest of carnivores, this Goliath won’t be a problem”. We all need to establish some memorable land marks in our lives. Such land marks would serve as a remainder of a time in your life when God intervened on your behalf, when perseverance paid fourth and when you came fourth successful and better from a situation in which there seemed not be hope at all. A writer once quipped, “We are not slow learners, just quick forgetters.” Each time God does a great thing for his people, He would instruct them, “Raise a memorial!” We all need a past to face the future. God asked the Israelites to build a monument of twelve stones after parting the River Jordan. He saw other minor challenges ahead of them that eluded their eyes. Thus he prepared for them something to fall back on and have hope. Monuments serve to remind us that we once conquered or surmounted similar or even worst adversity than the present. Each time discouragement and doubts come knocking, always send past victories to open the door. Past victories and divine interventions in past adversities were what kept Jeremiah going throughout his period of adversities and daily lamentations [Lam.3:21-23] “This I recall and therefore I have hope”. What you recall about your past determines how you will handle your present condition.

What you think and hope for in any present crisis will be determined by the experiences you have had in the past. David's killing of lion and bear gave him a track record to fall back on. A child who has experienced the divine provision of #200 could easily believe God for a £200 pounds bill than one who has never known divine provision. There are no insignificant battles in life. Learn to stand on your 'God moments' in order to withstand your dull moments. The little victories of the past gingers and prepares us to make happen the huge ones that shapes our destiny.

One day, I was so discouraged that I felt like ending it all. I was out of school, no degree, no job, no money, no food and yet very sick. Then the Lord whispered to me, "I made you an essayist, write on about your past in comparison with your present condition". I began. I wrote about my childhood: Asthma passed, this too shall pass! I wrote about my early teens: Poor grade in GCU passed, this too shall pass! I wrote about my mid-teens: The pains of ghastly motor accident and scorpion bite passed; this too shall pass! I wrote about my late teens: failing out of NnamdiAzikiwe University plus wrong arrest by the police passed, this too shall pass! It then dawned on me that I have been through even worse times than the present and all of them turned big testimonies. "That God cannot just change now," I concluded, "this too will surely turn a big testimony". Whenever you recall God's faithfulness to you, it causes hope to rise once more in your soul. Facing the future with confidence again becomes easy. When it comes to testimonies and past victories, looking back and remembering becomes scriptural provided you don't "dwell so long on that mountain". Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of Jordan (John 4:9), Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He encountered God (Gen. 35:14). When God used Samuel to deliver Israel from the Philistines, the Bible says, "Samuel took a stone...Set it up and called it Ebenezer, saying, "... thus far the Lord has helped us" (I Samuel 7:12). At a time in David's life he was so discouraged that he began to see God as one who fails to answer, when called (Ps. 22:2). Yet his perspective changed all of a sudden when he suddenly recalled of God's faithfulness in the time past. He then wrote "Our ancestors trusted you and you saved them. They who called on you for help were not disappointed" (Ps. 22:4-5). He who did it for Lazarus can do much more for you. He who intervened when in the past you were completely hopeless and helpless has not changed a bit.

Today, it is a common knowledge that those who fail to learn from their past mistakes often repeat them. Taking an inventory helps you to check mate repetition of your past errors. Dr. Michael Okpara, a famous Nigerian politician, is ascribed as saying, “First fool no be fool, second fool nahhim be proper foolish” The Chinese put it better, “When mistakes become habitual in a man’s life, failure becomes inevitable”. Take stocks. When I was young, my mother taught me early in life to set goals, listing all the goals in a sheet of paper and pasting in on any part of the wall where I can peruse it always. “Go through the list every day and mark asterisks on whichever one you achieve.” She instructed. Years later, my father taught me that achieving one’s goal is not the ultimate in life but the experiences you had along the way and what you become by it. With a proper and well detailed inventory, one can learn as much from failure as one learns from success. Don’t just write the vision, write the experiences too!

The story of Florence May Chadwick (1918-1995) gives one something to chew on. Florence was the first woman to swim the English channels in both directions. Born in San Diego, California, Florence swam in her first race at a startling age of six. She schooled in San Diego State College, Southwestern University of Law and Balboa Law School. Her swimming career plummeted when she went from directing and producing aquatic shows to taking a job with an oil company in Saudi Arabia. It was while in Saudi Arabia that Florence trained in the Persian Gulf, planning her English Channel crossing. She finally conquered the English Channel on August 8, 1950. She swam from France to England in a record 13hrs, 20mins. The following year, she swam from England to France, thus, fully conquering the English channels through and fro.

With the English Channel conquered, Florence was spurred to set her eyes on the Catalina Channel. By July 4, 1954, she was on her way to becoming the first woman to swim the Catalina Channel. That day, with the entire world watching, Florence fought off the dense fog, bone chilling cold and on several occasions the sharks! She was striving to reach the shore but each time she looked through her goggle, all she saw was dense fog. The mist won’t let her see the shores! Thus, Chadwick May Florence gave up. Unfortunately, she was even more disappointed when she later found out that she was only half a mile away from the coast when she gave up. All efforts wasted, Florence did quit only because her goal was not in sight anywhere. Later that year, hunted by the press, Florence told the world, “I am not making excuses. If only I had seen the land, I could have made it”. Barely two

months later, she went back and swam the Catalina Channel. This time, in spite of the bad weather, she had her goal in mind. She kept on seeing the shores in her mind irrespective of the weather. Gracefully, Florence did not only reach the shores, but equally broke the existing men's record by two hours! How was Chadwick able to make it, howbeit at her second attempt? She learnt from her mistakes in her first attempt. Had she failed to take correction by taking a stock after the first attempt, she would have repeated that on the second attempt.

Take stock. Keep a detailed diary of lessons from your past failures and successes in juxtaposition with your future goals. If it will pay you, pen it. Don't say you will always remember. The truth is, the sharpest brain is never half as sharp as the faintest pen. Daily review the lessons your past failures and victories have taught you. This will always put you one inch closer to your goal each time you do so. Every failure serves as a lesson for future endeavor. Every success serves as an inspiration for future victories. It was rising up to the challenges of lions and bears that prepared David to face Goliath. Reviewing lessons from your past failures helps bring into perspective the actual weight of the failure. The initial shock might have made you to exaggerate things. A cup that is half empty (failure) is equally half full (success). Pen down all the success stories buried within the failure and build on them. This would go a long way to lessen the pain of having failed. You can even 'commercialize' your experience by publishing it for people to learn from your mistakes while amassing wealth for yourself. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), author of *THE PRINCE* made so much name, fame and wealth through this means. My very first book was on why and how I failed Remedial (Pre Degree).

Since all of us must one day give account of how we spent our lives here on earth, it won't be a bad idea to begin now to master that act. Take an inventory at each point on how you have lived thus far. The prophet wrote, "Consider your ways." Dissipating energy does not amount to work. I once read of Fable's famous experiment. The French scientist named Fable (not real name), conducted an experiment with processionary caterpillars. Caterpillars usually follow the one in front of them blindly. Fable arranged them in a circle in a flower-pot so that the lead caterpillar was thus behind the last one. That way, they formed a perfect circle. Fable then put pine needles (food for the caterpillars) in the center of the flowerpot. The caterpillars kept going in a circle in the pot. Eventually, after a week of circling around, they all dropped dead out of exhaustion and starvation

despite having much food just few inches away from them. Learn from those caterpillars. That you have been working hard on a thing does not mean you are making progress. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) put it more explicitly where he wrote, “It is not enough to be busy, so are the ants. The question is: What are we busy about?” No matter how persistently and committedly you walk on a wrong road it can never become the right one. A log of wood faithfully lying in a river for years does not turn it to a crocodile. One of the most frustrating paradoxes of life is doing so well what does not suppose to be done at all.

As a rule, always put your experience on paper. Whether it pays or pains you, pen it. He who does not know when the rain began to beat him would not know when it stopped nor dries. Even God Almighty always tells his people “write it down”. All the prophet plus John at Patmos, received this same injunction, “write it down(Exo.17:14, Exo.34:27, Deut.27:8, Deut.31:19, Isa.8:1, Jer.30:2, Jer.36:2-3, Ezekiel 24:2 and Rev.1:11, 19)!” Write the vision.Document all the lessons and experiences. God Himself in Deuteronomy²³ wrote the Ten Commandments by Himself!

Again, take stock of every word that proceeds out of your mouth. Many have dug their own graves with their own mouths. Nothing destroys a man like what comes out of his own mouth. Jesus reported, it is not what goes in through a man’s mouth that destroys him but what comes out of it. Preview every word that has ever come out of your mouth. Think it thoroughly, before voicing it out. There are no mere confessions or words. Every spoken word is a powerful force and spirit sent on an errand. Jesus said “the words that speak to you, they are spirit and life” (John 6:63). They never return void. He went further to say in Matthew 12:37, “For by thy words, thou shall be justified, and by thy words, thou shall be condemned”. As God created the world with spoken words, we daily recreate and reshuffle our own Worlds with our own words. Your confession determines your possessions. He who talks carelessly lives and dies carelessly. A life lived talking anyhow, ends anyhow. Watch what comes out of your mouth for that is the fountain of life. Do not talk yourself into defeat – I once did. How has your confessions brought you to your present situation?

CHAPTER 15

#9AUTHOR YOUR OWN DECISIONS

Polonius is quoted in William Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' as saying: "Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice. Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment!" Give everyone a listening ear but take your own decision. Your mind is like your personal bed where you lie; always make it up, to your own taste. The truth is this; you will always be the one responsible for how your life turns out, not your advisers. Many seem to have great ideas for others, never for themselves. I believe we all should have the same mind set with my mother who believes that the person who has the greatest idea required for her own success dwells in her own mind. When asked for the formula for success, Herbert B. Swope, replied, "I cannot give you the formula for success, but I can give you the formula for failure which is: 'trying to please everybody.'" It is Bernie Marcus opinion that most of the problems people incur stems from their not trusting their own judgment. Be an active listener to people's advice but solely author your own decision. The Chinese has a proverb, "A wise man makes his own decisions, an ignorant man follows the public opinion". "The ideal committee" writes Donald Gresham Stokes, "is the committee of one".

As a rule, never make people's opinion your priority. One day I was discussing my dream with a guy who came to pass the night in my neighborhood. I was so discouraged by his opinion that I almost decided to re-write my vision from square one. While bathing that night, it struck me that I never knew the guy before that night and probably may never meet him again. He, who begins to sing or learn a new song from the middle of it, will always sing it out of tune. The man who says, "If I were in your shoe" almost always doesn't wear your shoe size. The man who knows how best to score the goal is often the one who watches from the television, who probably has never ran round the field before. Since you will be the only one that would give the account of your life at the very end of it, wisdom demands that you make it count exactly the way you can easily account for it. One day, I stopped my little niece telling her that her colour combination doesn't match. "Please, change it, I don't like it that way," I pleaded. With a fetching smile she said to me, "I am the one putting it on. I like it that way. I'm the one people will ask, "Why are you dressed this way?" How right she was.

Give them all a listening ear, but take the final decision for yourself. Never allow someone talk you out of your dream, who does not buy your idea – of course great dreams and ideas are too expensive to be affordable by cheap minds! Imagine what the world would have been had it been all those who did not witness the burning bush experience were able to talk Moses out of his God given dream. The truth remains that you are the only one who fully understands the vision as God allowed no eye witness at the venue where and when your vision was born. I have an only brother who is quite perfect at giving one a listening ear no matter one's status or ebb. The day I asked why, his response startled me: "Grant people their rightful opportunity to be heard. It is their legal right. But always bear in mind that the right to be heard does not cover the right to be taken serious." Author of *One Door Closes, Another Door Opens*, Arthur Pine, once told the story about how the film producer Mervyn Leroy lost *Gone With The Wind*. On his return home from a business in New York, Mervyns Leroy was to course between California and New York on a three day rail road train trip, with his beautiful wife. He gave the manuscript of *Gone With The Wind* to his wife to proof-read in the course of the journey. She accepted. On getting to Los Angeles, he asked for her opinion about the book. Her response was both petrifying and dispiriting. "Just another civil war story, you're seen dozens of them and read dozens of them too", came her sharp reply. After listening to his wife, discouraged, Mervyn Leroy sent the manuscript back to the agent and his rival, David O. Selznick, ended up with one of the greatest money making movies of all time: *Gone With The Wind*! No doubt, that incident marked the very last time Leroy gave his wife, Kitty, a manuscript to read.

Never allow your dreams and aspiration to be forever GONE WITH THE WIND because of someone else's opinion. It will no doubt be great if everyone else sees what you see but that is not always the case. The worthwhile dream you cherish so much may not worth a while in the eyes of your family and friends. Don't always allow their comments influence your feelings. What people call dry barren land may hold your own Acres ofDiamond. Always remember that it was the infamous barren womb of Sarah that bought forth Abraham's Isaac (Laughter). The truth is not a function of population census, even if a million people believe or do something stupid, it is still something stupid. A million people backing the wrong thing won't make that thing right. Be like Honda who said that once his

decision is taken, he accepts no one's advice except his own. Always be your own boss no matter who bosses you around. Pat Riley once advised, "Never allow other people to tell you what you really want." God, according to John Mason, rarely uses those whose main concern is what others are saying. Many must have tried to talk Noah out of his assignment of building an ark. A friend lovingly encouraged Henry Ford to do away with his idea of wasting his time on automobiles and to do something worthwhile with his time. Learn to ignore the naysayers. Shut your ears against all discouragements. A famous poet captured it best in the following line, "Beware of those who stand aloof and greet each venture with reproof. The world would stop if things were run by those who say, 'It Can't Be Done.'" The story of the bubble bee often keeps me at the edge of my seat. Many scientists said it. Writers wrote about it. The press discussed it, and in every school and college, students were taught the fact that and the reason why the bubble bee cannot fly. It sounded so real. Yet, the bumble bee is not a scientist. Since it never went to school, the bubble bee does not even know how to read let alone reading. Again, having no satellite dish of his own or an access to his neighbour's; the Bubble Bee never watched Discovery Channel. Thus, while the scientists, writers, press, gossips and educationist were busy with their facts, laws, theories and analysis the bubble bee goes on flying, everywhere. Mary Ash reported this story thus, "Aerodynamically, the bumble bee should not be able to fly, but the bumble bee does not know it, so it goes on flying anyway." It does not know. It does not even care to know. It is so busy flying around that it does not have time for impossibility thinkers and Nay Sayers. It simply keeps flying every day.

Be like Mohammed Ali. The great boxer once said, "I don't have to be what nobody else wants me to be and I am not afraid to be what I want to be." An astute and highly outspoken boxer, Mohammed Ali remains one of the greatest fighters the boxing world has ever known. Ali entertained his fans and intimidated his opponents with his colourful, talented and often controversial disposition – dubbed "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee". Born Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr in Louisville, Kentucky, many questioned why such a great boxer would in 1964 suddenly change his name and swap to Islam. He had won the world heavy weight championship that year and was poised to defend it the following year. Despite so much uproars and challenges, Clay cum Ali held to his decision. In 1967, as a Black Muslim minister, Mohammed Ali refused to be inducted into the United

State Army. America at that time was at the middle of the Vietnam War. Ali chose to remain a conscientious objector. If you are in the habit of going around trying to please everybody, you will sooner or later grow lame in both feet. In the words of Charles Schwab, “The man who trims himself to suit everybody will soon whittle himself away”.

Don't be a people pleaser. Remember David! His family (Eliab) called him derogatory names. His enemy belittled him that he is nothing. His own people led by his king told him that he was too little and inexperienced to make it. Did David back off? Hell No. He remained resolute, “I will cut off his (Goliath's) head and feed his carcass to the birds of the air. Yes, David well understood that it does not matter what people say about you but what God says and what you choose to believe. Blessed is the man who can never be swayed by people's opinion. As Alan Ashley-Pitt would put it, “The man who follows the crowd will usually get no further than the crowd. The man who walks alone is likely to find himself in places no one has ever been”. Confidently believe in yourself. If you are truly God's own image, then you have a measure of his omniscience nature. Robert Schuler once testified, “Every achiever I have ever met says, ‘My life turned around when I began to believe in me’.” They say your ideas are unconventional and odd? Hear Bertrand Russell “Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric”. As Sylvester Stallone will put it, “Winners are the ones who really listen to the truth of their own hearts”. Yes, just as Swami Vivekananda will say: “The history of the world is the history of a few people who had faith in themselves.” Asked his secret to stardom, American boxer, Sugar Ray Robinson (1921-1989) who is considered one of the greatest boxers in history, simply said, “To be a champion, you have to believe in yourself when nobody else will”. Little wonder Norman Vincent Peale later penned: “People become really quite remarkable when they start thinking that they can do things. When they believe in themselves, they have the first secret of success.”

To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment (Ralph Waldo Emerson). Work towards your own goal not the one others set for you by others. In the words of Pat Riley, “Never let other people tell you what you want”; and just as Jacqueline Briskin will put it, “Don't take anybody else's definition of success as your own.” Be like Ralph Waldo Emerson who resolved, “What I must do is all that concerns me not

what the people think. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own, but the great person is one who in the midst of the crowd keeps within perfect sweetness the independence of solitude". In his days, many cajoled Martin Luther (1483-1546) to shift grounds on his beliefs. But the German theologian and religious reformer remained resolute on his stand. In one of his famous speeches he affirmed: "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen". "I am not bound by the opinion of men". He later wrote, "Unstable men, easily swerved by men's diverse opinions, never succeed".

Finally, take control of your destiny. Believe in yourself to win. Ignore all those who try to discourage you. Avoid all negative sources, people, places, things and habits. Don't give up and don't give in (Wanda Carter). In times of crises, temptation and trials, always remember the words of Youseffibb: "You are stronger than any situation. You are stronger than any doubt. You are stronger than everyone else thinks you are; you are stronger than you were yesterday. You can do whatever it is you want, whatever you decide you are going to do. Now, what are you waiting for?"

CHAPTER 16

#10 NEVER YOU COMPARE YOURSELF WITH OTHERS

No comparisons! That's my brother's first rule. Never allow yourself to get caught up in the web of comparisons. Nobody is good at everything, and I bet you are not good for nothing. Each of us has a special God given destiny. As our finger prints are different so also is our endowment. The man who could repair just about any sick body at all may be ignorant of how to change the car plug of his own jeep. No one has been equipped to do everything. Jealous no man! Envy nobody. The man who can do what you cannot do; cannot do what you can – at least not the way you will. Comparison rubs you of your God given joy. It makes you jealous of people you are actually better than. It inculcates into your spirit a strong weight of envy that saps your strength. The truth is, no matter how good you are, you will never be good at being somebody else. There is nothing frustrating as winning a race, only to miss out at the prize stand for running on someone else's lane. Don't fall into the trap of trying to live up to the reputation of another person. Even the smallest substance is greater than the biggest shadow. As B.C Forbes would say, "There is more credit and satisfaction in being a first rate truck driver than a tenth-rate executive".

Be yourself. Discipline yourself to remain within the bounds of your own assignment. Comparisons are odious. No matter how high you climb, you'll always find someone who seems to be higher than you or one seemingly more successful. Then, you will become discouraged. On the other hand, you may find someone who does not seem to be as successful as you, and you will become conceited. Either way, you have completely lost out. True champions loathe comparison. Be like Usain Bolt who annually beats his own record. Better your own record daily. No one will ever ask you "Why were you not Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan or Michael Phelps?" No. Rather it would be, "Why were you not the best you?" Be the best you that you ever can. There is something unique about you the world is waiting to celebrate. Within you lies the world next breaking news. Shun the idea of a little to the north and a little to the south. Imitation is a killer of originality. Be that one unique person only you can be-You! There is nothing more satisfying as finishing the race of life with full conviction that you were yourself to the fullest. The man who famously wrote, "I have fought the good fight I have finished the race, what awaits me is the crown," was nothing more than an evangelist. He never

aspired to be the president of a country nor did he go to Rome to compete in Olympics. He simply preached! What comes to your mind whenever the name Pele is mentioned? Football of course. Yet that is not even his full name. TheTresCoracoes born striker was so good at the round leather game that his name almost became synonymous with football. But hear the shocker, Pele was not good in Mathematics – he never compared himself with Chike Obi; nor does he measure up in literature – his nickname is not William Shakespeare. Pele only played football and even in that football, Pele only played a particular position in his entire career- the top 9! Richard Evans once advised, “May we never let the things we cannot have or do not have spoil our enjoyment of the things we do have and can have”.

Dare to be the best you that you can be. Never compare yourself to others. The big shots you wish to be like were once small shots who refused to be discouraged by bigger shots nor become complacent by the sight of smaller ones. Theirs was an inner drive to better their best. Daily build up your confidence in yourself- and in your God too. Comparisons will do you one of these two things: Either it takes you to the bosom of self pity and doubt or the abattoir of pride. When you compare yourself with people seemingly better than you, doubt sets in; and, in the words of William Shakespeare, “Our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good that we oft may win by fearing to attempt.” FranklinRoosevelt was of the opinion: “The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today”. Always remember the words of Alexander Dumas who said, “A person who doubts himself is like a man who enlists in the ranks of his enemy and bear arms against himself”. Hmm, nothing could be more disastrous than that. The bloodiest wars have always been civil wars. Pride is not any kinder. When youkeepcomparing yourself to those you think you are better than, pride sets in. Never forget, God hates pride! Apostle Peter wrote in his epistle, “God resists the proud (1Pet.5:5). King Solomon said, “When pride cometh, then cometh shame (Prov.11:2KJV). He went further to observe: “Pride goeth before destruction (Prov.16:18KJV). Jeremiah himself prophesied, “The proud shall stumble and fall; and none shall raise him up (Jer.50:32).

One thing I will never cease to thank God for is the fact that He made me unique, special, different and outstanding in all ramification. Same goes with you. You are special. Your case is always different. Being unique attracts unique challenges and victories too. If your problem is different, its solution too would be.

What works for others may not necessarily work for you; just as what works for you may not work for them either. Always look within the unique you for that which serves as antidote for your relatively unique problems. Abraham Lincoln once told the US congress during the American civil war, “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the storm present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew...” How wise. Never use the formula for differential calculus to crack integral calculus. What works for others may not necessary work for you and vice versa. When you use product rule to tackle a problem that requires quotient rule, you are bound to fail.

Teresa of Lisieux while addressing the issue of comparison said something striking, “If all flowers wanted to be roses, nature would lose herspring time beauty and the fields would no longer be decked out with little wild flowers”. Friend, say no to envy. Believe always in yourself. Appreciate where you are now while believing God to lead you to where you are going. He who always appreciates (God), never depreciates in life. You are born for a purpose; not a biological accident. No one was created a failure-only that you are yet to start playing your own game. You’ve been failing just because you have been playing another man’s game. I used to wonder what would have become of Micheal Jordan had it been he joined his fellow black American and name sake, Micheal Jackson, to do break-dance. No one would ever have known him let alone buy his album. “Find your own Calcutta” (Mother Theresa)! Locate your own niche. The assignment you are born to carry out is only unique to you. Those who made it big in life are those who discovered theirs in time and sticked to it. At the age of 5, Michael Jackson was already the leader of Jackson Five; Ronaldinho, Iniesta, Nesta, Messi, Ronaldo etc all world champions were enrolled into football academies at the age of Four. They lived all their life bettering their talents daily. They never left their own Calcutta!

Locate your niche. Find your own Calcutta. Maradona said he was so surprise to find out that people were willing to pay him heavily to do what he loved doing. Did you get that? Diego Maradona never struggled to write UTME nor did he burn midnight candles for a Cambridge exam. He, a shortman, never even wished for once to grow taller like the basket ball stars nor to build muscles like wrestlers. Rather, Maradona remained himself. Just imagine the kind of failure he

would have been had it been Jay Jay Okocha chose to be a medical doctor. Be your own true self. Shun comparisons. Comparisons, they say, are odious. Your today's failures may be God's little way of redirecting you to His master plan. There is a purpose for which you were born. Find it. There are no little or insignificant destinies nor purpose. Rahab may have been a harlot most of her life, yet her name entered the Bible hall of fame (Heb. 11) for just doing one thing- hiding the spies! The ever famous Tiger Woods never did more than playing golf. When I heard of Usain Bolt wanting to join Manchester United FC, I laughed. Thank God he never did! What is your own Calcutta? No doubt, the Bible was talking about you when it reported, "The whole world is waiting in earnest expectation for the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom.8:19). Manifest. Show the world that true unique you. Carry out that your unique assignment no matter how small it seems.

Hear Eileen Caddy, "Never be afraid to tread the path alone. Know which is your path and follow it wherever it may lead you; do not feel you have to follow someone else's footsteps." Rather follow the suggestion of Ralph Waldo Emerson who said, "Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail". Be a trail blazer. You may seem slow but there is nothing more fun than that. No comparison. Let your only companion that you always compare yourself with be your ownself. If you will keep doing better what you did before, the best will hit the stage in no time. Washington Allston affirmed this, "The only competition worthy of a wise mind is within himself". Envy no one; deride not another. "There are many roads to an unsuccessful life", observed John Mason, "but envy is the shortest of them all". In the words of Saint Chrysostom, "Envy consumes a man just as a moth gnaws a garment". Do you still jealous Isaac Newton's record? Hear Aldous Huxley's shocker, "If we evolve a race of Isaac Newtons, that would not be progress. For the price Newton had to pay for being a supreme intellect was that he was incapable of friendship, love, fatherhood and many other desirable things. As a man, he was a failure, as a monster, he was superb!"

CHAPTER 17

#11

CONQUER FEAR

Face your Goliath. The truth is: Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is (German Proverb). Fear, they say, magnify a problem but understanding diminishes it. First understand that you are not the only one that has a challenge or adversity. It is universal. It is also two faceted. It can either make you or mar you depending on how you handle it. Men of Israel were together faced with Goliath's gigantic challenge. Every other person, including the king of Israel, ran back. It was the David who faced Goliath that became great by that adversity. How you handle your problem more than anything determines its outcome. Hear Marie Curie, "Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood." Understand that adversity is not always an insignia that something is wrong with you. On the contrary, it is often because something is right with you. Rebecca in Gen. 25:21-26 was faced with several adversities not because she sinned but because she carried two powerful destinies in her womb. Job was described as a perfect and upright man, who feared God and eschewed evil. Yet, Job so much suffered that it now almost seems like a curse to name your son Job. Understanding! Understand that even what you fear fears you. That nature has placed the keys to dominion in your hands; that it takes only one more step to win. Yes, understanding that those who tenaciously advance despite their adversities have made all the great alluring histories in this world.

When adversity hits so strongly, we often think that is the end of the world. We crumble and pack up in self-pity in the face of what could have been our finest moment. Opportunity for greatness comes to each and every one of us always. The only pathetic aspect of it is that they come dressed as adversity. The Goliath you run from holds your passport to the throne. Joseph Campbell wrote: "The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek." Gideon would have remained a nonentity had it been he kept fearing the Midianites. Moses had to conquer the fear of Pharaoh and people's rejection while Elijah ended up replaced because of the fear of Jezebel. If the four lepers in I Kings 7 had allowed fear to cripple them, history would have remembered them as four losers. Satan's strong weapon against men of destiny is fear. Deep rotten fear! It rots, it destroys. Fear is a sickness. It will

crawl into ones soul when it is given the slightest chance. It would taint your peace and make you ashadow of your own true self. Don't live with fear. Strike it out of your life in record time. Give it no breathing space lest it becomes the landlord of your life. Remember the Moorish proverb that says: "He who fears something gives it power over him."

That van Beethoven died deaf surprised many but not him. The great German composer lived in fear of deafness for most of his adult life. It is no doubt an irrefutable spiritual law that whatever you fear most will often happen to you eventually. Consider God's servant, Job. The great man once exclaimed, "...For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me and that which I was afraid of is come unto me". From the moment I was named my university's student chaplain, I feared it would cost me my medical pursuit in that school. It did. Why? You will either birth your faith or your fear depending on the one your mind adapts to. Fear not fear. God knew so much about the would-be effect of fear in your life, that is why He self authored a whopping 365 "fear nots" in the Bible. That stands for one for each day of the year! Rabindranath Tagore told his faithful listeners, "Let me not pray to be sheltered from danger but to be fearless in facing them." Fight off fear. Give no room to doubts. Let the strength of your faith overshadow your fears. Eleanor Roosevelt puts it best: "You gain courage strength and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face". How true. Betty Bender confessed, "Anything I have ever done that ultimately was worthwhile initially scared me to death." Confront your fears. Take the bull by the horn and bully it if need be. Hear Jill Rendley, "We are not defined by our trails, but how we face them. We are all afraid; bravery is a choice that though you may lose, you shall never be defeated". I love it. To fail bravely is often more honorable than to win timidly. Conquer your fears. I am yet to see a coward that made it big in life. Paulo Coelho once advised, "When you find your path, you must not be afraid. You need to have sufficient courage to make mistakes. Disappointments, defeats and despair are the tools God uses to show us the way". Abraham Lincoln was of like mind when he said, "Having chosen our course, without guile and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God without fear and with a manly heart".

Do not be like the famous fear freak farmer in northern Nigeria. One day someone asked the farmer if he had planted wheat for the season. The farmer said: "No, I was afraid rain won't fall." Then the man asked, 'Did you plant corn then?'

The farmer again replied, “No. I was afraid of insects eating them up” Quite taken aback, the man pressed on, “What did you now plant”? The farmer answered “Nothing. I played it safe!”

Stop fear before it stops you. Fear will slow you down, confuse and confound you. Hear Mary Morrissey, “You block your dream when you allow your fear to grow bigger than your faith”. Brazen up your confidence. Believe in yourself. A fear brazen heart is a failed heart. Fear brays one’s future and only those who advance with sheer bravura make it big in life. Life is a daring adventure or nothing. Kill that fear. Bury it in the thick sands of radical faith. “The men who have done big things”, observed B.C. Forbes, “are those who were not afraid to attempt big things, who were not afraid to risk failure in order to gain success.” Fear is a stopper. It has denied many of their most glorious opportunity and finest hour. Don’t let it stop you! Even when left unconquered, still courageously go on despite the fear. Someone said that courage is not really the absence of fear but going on despite the fear. Don’t let it stop you. Don’t let it scare you! The truth is: Your fears are not real! It’s only False Evidence Appearing Real. Ninety percent of the things we fear never happened. Calvin Coolidge, a former American president wrote: “If you see ten troubles coming down the road, you can be sure that nine will run into the ditch before they reach you”. Asked why the words “fear not” appeared in the Bible all the way from Genesis to Revelation, Bob Gass replied “Because God understands that fear is not only our biggest enemy but our constant companion and he wants to help us overcome it”. Starve that fear to death. Never grant it space in your heart. There is this popular maxim in America I love so much. A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt. He said, “I feel as if I have two lions fighting inside my heart. One lion is the vengeful, violent one; the other is the loving, compassionate one” The little boy then asked, “which one will win the fight in your heart?” The old sage said “well, the one I feed” (Black hawk). It was Peace Pilgrim who wrote, “If you realized how powerful your thoughts are, you would never think a negative thought”. Fears and its thought do more damage to your destiny than the very thing you fear. As our fathers will say, “Fear of death is worse than death itself”. Elbert Hubbard would say, “The greatest mistake you can make in life is to continually fear you will make one”. Condition your mind to think positively at all times. As Stephen Covey once said, “Effective people are not

problem minded; they are opportunity minded. They feed opportunities and starve problems”. Jonas Salk was much like him. He said: “I have had dreams and I have had nightmares, but I have conquered my nightmares because of my dreams”.

One may now begin to ask, “How do I conquer this fear?” It is very simple. My dad gave me this formula: “Repeatedly do the very things you think you cannot do! Fear is what we conquer by practice. You don’t just overcome fear overnight. It is a gradual process. Daily build on your faith. Always be certain who is backing you up. As long as you are in sync with God, be rest assured that He has got your back. He will always provide what you need and fight for you at all time. He said through Prophet Isaiah (41:10):

“Fear not, for I *am* with you;
Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

In Haggai 1:13 and 2:4 he repeated Himself: “...I am with you’, says the Lord.” Jesus later followed suit, saying, “Lo, I am with you, even to the close of the ages” (Matt.28:20).

Get to know Him better. Make your relationship with Him your priority. David testified in Psalm 34:4-5, “I sought the Lord...He delivered me from all my fears”. Daily feed on His word and always ensure that your communication line with Him never goes out of service. The more you fix your eyes on His word, the less you see danger and anxiousness that characterize the world.

Again, never forget that even what you fear fears you. During my days in Pace Lodge as a student, I had an encounter! One hot afternoon, I was urinating against the wall of our fence when a huge python fell from the fence. The beast was about to land on me when I docked. Large, tall and yellow in colour, the snake happened to be the most ferocious thing that I have ever seen. I ran; as fast as my leg could carry me, with urine dripping in my trousers. As I ran, the Lord ministered to me to look back. Like lots wife, I did. Then I saw that the snake was running faster than I- in the opposite direction. That night as I pondered over the incident, the Lord whispered to me, “Son, those you are afraid of, are afraid of you!” How true! Nature has placed the keys to dominion in your hand. If you believe it, you can achieve it. It takes only one more bold-step to win. Take that step. Always

remember that those who tenaciously advanced through adversity made all the great alluring histories in the world. As Dorothea Brande would advice, “To guarantee success, act if it were impossible to fail. You can always do it if you believe you can” (Napoleon Hill).

CHAPTER 18

#12SHUN CRITICISM AND NAY SAYERS

Note this: If nobody criticizes you, then you are nobody. Criticism is a sign that you have conquered mediocrity. When you make your mark, you always attract erasers. Flying eagles get the hunter's notice. Fear of criticism has condemned many would-have-been champions to settle for the less. Never allow people's criticisms and cynical statements to discourage you from continuing. Do not bother over what they say; always remember that their criticism often reflects their own inadequacies. Every today failure soon becomes yesterday's stale news. Look neither left nor right in hunt of people's opinion but simply right the wrong. The truth is, everyone has his or her own share of adversities and thus it won't be long before your critics become too busy worrying about their own failures.

Never allow anyone's ignorance, hate, drama or negativity stop you from being the best person God wants you to be. The truth is this, you can never be good enough not to have enemies and critics nor too bad not to have an admirer. The very first day I pilloried my then president, my great dad sternly warned me: "Uzodiana, nwerendiodinso." Yes, no matter how distant a place is to you, there are those to whom it is near. Ndilbeohafia is very far for people in London but not so far for people in Ufiele Aku, Asaga or Amuma. There is no gain saying the fact that everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion. You can't control that. You can't actually determine what people say at your back. No matter how hard you try to be good, there always will be someone, somewhere, somewhat uncertified. Simply hold strong to the one opinion you have absolute control over-what you say about yourself and your future. Jesus was never moved by people's opinion: Beelzebub, Prince of demons, Elijah, Jeremiah, Disrupter of peace, John the Baptist incarnate etc. People gave Him all sought of names. Good enough, it does not really matter what people call you. What matters most is what you choose to answer to. He chose Peter's revelation: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God". When Caiaphas, the Chief Priest, asked Him: "Are you the Christ, the son of God?" Jesus did not just say "I am," rather Jesus also added, "...and you will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of the power, and coming with the clouds of

heaven!” Yes! Tell them whom you are! To be honest and outspoken is not pride. Force your own opinion upon them –not vice versa. Make them tear their robes if need be. Frustrate those who mean to frustrate you. Confound your critics.

Let’s take it this way; you as a child of God is a spirit man. Christ said, those who worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). Paul in his days observed, “The carnal man cannot understand the things of the spirit” (1Cor.2:14). How then do you expect the carnal minds out there to understand you? While the majority misunderstand and killed Jesus, there were apostles and a handful of women who were ready to die for him. Don’t waste time explaining. Your true fans do not need it and your critics would not believe it. Make the emphasis on whom you are to be louder than your enemy’s opinion. Always remember that believing or accepting your enemy’s opinion about you and your destiny is much like borrowing a rope from your enemy in order to hang yourself. Refusing to keep trying is the easiest way of fulfilling your enemy’s prophesy about your life. The outcome of the 2003 European Champions League final between Liverpool and A.C Milan is to me one of the seven wonders of the modern football. By the end of the first half, Liverpool stars left the field head bent in shame. They were embarrassingly 3:0 goals down. Maldini’s header and Crespo’s brace seemed to have destroyed everything left of Liverpool’s hope of winning a champions league trophy. Even their own fans booed them. Sports analysts all concluded that their case was beyond miracle. Many blamed Benitez while few criticized Captain Steven Gerard. A.C Milan was then the best team in the world with the most formidable defense in that Era. With the likes of Nesta, Maldini, Gattuso, Shevchenko, Crespo, Kaka etc. in the Rossoneri line-up, every hope of a comeback for Liverpool was just but a mirage. Yet Rafa Benitez and friends would not allow their critics to have the last laugh. They knew so well that the trophy does not go to the ones who won the first half but the ones who emerged victorious by the end of the second half. Having lost the first half, Liverpool concentrated on winning the second half. By the end of the second half, the perceived invincible Forza Milan faithful had lost their three goals lead, Liverpool won on penalties. John Mason wrote: “The first and great commandment about critics is: Don’t let them scare you!”

Everything is possible for the man who gives deaf ears to critics and all those in the class called ‘impossibility thinkers’. Learn from the folk here,

‘champion frog’. We all can definitely achieve more if we tailor ourselves not to listen to critics and the general crowd. A lot have missed what would have been their finest hour simply because they went with popular opinion. Many more have abandoned their God ordained dreams and aspiration at the altar of discouragement due to people’s critical remarks. Story has it that a bunch of tiny athletic frogs once arranged a grueling competition. A high prize was set. The goal was to reach the top of a very high tower. A big crowd had gathered around the tower to see the race and to cheer the contestants. As the race began, every one began to analyze the possibility of an even one frog making it to the top of the tower. “It is just impossible”, they all reasoned. They even encouraged the competitors who cared to listen to back off, out of the bizarre competition. Each yelled from his/her small corner, “Oh, way too difficult!” “Mission impossible”; “None will ever make it to the tower.” “Not even an iota of chance of succeeding, tower far too high.” Gradually, the tiny frogs began to collapse in turns. Only a hand full kept on climbing. The crowd kept yelling, supporting the ones who gave up. “It is far too difficult; no one can ever make it!” They insisted. More tiny frogs got tired and gave up. Only but one frog continued climbing and climbing until it finally made it. On reaching the finishing line, everyone cheered in utter dismay. As every other frog, both competitors and spectators alike, gathered to hear his secret, they were shocked at their findings. When a ‘press reporter’ asked the tiny frog how he had found the strength to succeed and reach the goal, they all found out that the winner was deaf!

No one could be more right than Douglas Bader where he advised a leg amputee, “Don’t listen to anyone who tells you that you cannot do this or that. That is nonsense. Make up your mind that you will never use crutches or stick, then have a go at everything... Never ever let them persuade you that things are too difficult or impossible”. “How amazing what ordinary people can do”, observed Charles Kettering, “if they set out without preconceived notions”.

Writing about critics, Fred Allen said: “If criticisms had any real power to harm, the skunk would have been extinct by now”. Be like the gold filled caravan that keeps moving even while the dogs bark at it. Christopher Morley captures it best, “A critic is like a gong at a rail road crossing, clanging loudly and vainly as the train goes by.” Don’t let them scare you. Don’t let them discourage you. Never submit the driver’s seat of your life to those who are so idle as to do nothing other

than to criticize them who try. Look well, the man criticizing you is not any better. John mason sees them as those who know the way but cannot drive the car. Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) put it better, “A critic is a legless man who teaches running”

Remember, that men talk about you at the back is a sure proof that you are some steps ahead. Those who idle away with critical comments against you at your back will never get ahead of you except you stop to listen. Always remember that your being criticized does not mean you are wrong or a failure. Being right and successful does not shield you either. There is absolutely nothing you do that people won't find fault with. Dennis Wholey once commented, “Expecting the world to treat you fairly because you are a good person is a little like expecting a bull not to attack you because you are a vegetarian.” My dad once warned me, “If you must achieve that kind of success and fame you desire, you must learn to put up with criticisms. Your prosperity, for sure, will attract envy”. The so called critics are only envious of you; that is why criticisms and cutting edge remarks only comes to those who dare leap over mediocrity. The Philistines troubled Isaac because of envy. Immediately Joseph announced his vision of greatness, his brother envied him and began to call him names- here comes the dreamer! Gideon lived peacefully free of envy and criticism, until his triumph over the Midianites made him a national hero. In Judges 8:1, the Ephraimites pilloried him. Whenever you soar high like an eagle, be sure to attract the hunter's bullet. When you are making a mark in life, expect erasers. No one throws stones and sticks at trees that bear no fruit. Erasers are never seen nor needed where there is no mark, nor does criticism arise where there is no achievement whatsoever. Thus opposition and criticisms is a sure sign that you are in the progress lane. In the word of Kenneth Tryan, “Ingratitude and criticisms are part of the price you pay for leaping past mediocrity.” Always expect criticism. When no one is criticizing you, when all that you see around you is applause and praise, watch it; you are not making any mark. No one has ever been more criticized than my Lord Jesus. Even the dumb, whom he opened their mouth shouted in unison: “Crucify him, crucify him!” Those whose paralyzed hands he healed nailed him to the cross while the lame he made to walk walked him to Golgotha, abusing and clamouring for his crucifixion. Do you feel betrayed and about to give up because of the criticisms of even your most trusted friends? Remember Jesus. Every Christian, bonafide Christian, is like

Christ. “Greater works than I did”, He assured us, “shall you do!” Yes greater works come with greater criticism. Those who cannot do generally try to shout down the ones who try. Everyone asked Blind Bartimeous to keep quiet. They had nothing to ask from Christ and so pledged to stop him that does. The man who always know exactly where and how to kick the ball never leaves the spectators stand.

Shun your critics and nay-sayers. Like the farmer who observes the weather, one who listens to critics will never accomplish anything in life. Do you still remember the Fulton’s folly? The story of Robert Fulton (1795-1815) once gave me a cud to chew. An American inventor and engineer of repute, Fulton designed the very first efficient steamboat, thus initiating a new era of power-driven navigation.

On November 14, 1765, Fulton was born in a farm in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He began as a professional artist, had his failings and then turned to mechanics and engineering. He began to design canal systems, replacing locks with inclined planes. Sadly, Fulton found little acceptance. Undiscouraged, he went on to build submarines. In 1800, Fulton attempted to sell to the French government a submarine to sink British ships. He demonstrated the efficacy of his invention in Rouen. Named *Nautilus*, Fulton, on board, folded *Nautilus*’ mast and sailed flat on the deck and, with three crew members cranking a screw, dove to a depth of 7.6m (25ft). The French however showed no interest. He turned to the British who equally turned him down, immediately. All he got were mind shattering criticisms. Yet, Fulton refused to be discouraged. He went into partnership with Robert R. Livingstone, the then US minister to France. With Robert’s sponsorship, Fulton invented the steamboat. On the banks of the Hudson River, Fulton was to display his invention before thousands of inquisitive eyes and whining mouths. No one till that time had ever imagined the possibility of a steam powered boat. The pessimists and the skeptics were much around to observe. First, they argued that the steamboat won’t start. However, it did! As Fulton’s steamboat made its way down the river, the pessimist who earlier said it would never go started shouting that it would never stop. People! Napoleon Hill was no doubt right when he wrote: “Fortunate is the person who has developed the self control to steer a straight course towards his objectives in life, without being swayed from his purpose by either commendation or condemnation.” George Robin Collingwood

may have put it better where he said, “The seat of freedom is reserved for the man who lives by his own work, and in that work, does what he wants to do”. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them.”

Never take your critics to heart. Always remember that their criticism often reflects their own inadequacies. Every today’s failure soon becomes forgotten stale news. Look neither right nor left in hunt of what people are saying—simply right the wrong. The truth is: Everyone will sooner or later have his or her own share of adversities. Thus, it won’t be long before your critics become too busy worrying about their own failures. I know of two friends, Mr. A and Mr. B who left secondary school the same day. Both equally started working on the same day, same place and same pay pack in the same establishment and level. One thing striking about these two men is that Mr. A got admission into the university immediately after his secondary school education but waited idly for five years for employment opportunity. But Mr. B stayed at home for 5 years after secondary school; failing and rewriting the university matriculation examination yearly but on graduation from university he got an employment immediately. Now ask yourself, among Mr. A and Mr. B who is more lucky and blessed? Shun criticisms. At the long run, no one is better than you. Always allow your failures to serve as an opportunity to strengthen your resolve to succeed. Be that great man who built a castle with the bricks critics threw at him.

Are you still under criticism? Rise above it. Criticism is like a heavy slab. When you remain under it, it weighs you down and kills you. If you put it down, it serves as a solid standing ground for a lasting accomplishment. Don’t waste your time trying to change someone else’s opinion about you. Most heavy men you know today surmounted heavy criticisms before they made it to where they are. Harry Truman today remains the only American president, in history, without a college degree. When Harry was thrust into the presidency by the death of Franklin Roosevelt, Sam Rayburn, the then speaker of the house, confronted him with these words. “You are going to have lots of people around you. And they will tell you what a great man you are. But you and I both know you are not”. Did H.S Truman

take that to heart and chicken out into oblivion? Hell No. Truman served two terms as one of Americans greatest leaders. The truth is this, if you continue to agree with your critics and keep regurgitating and bowing to remarks that cripple you emotionally, you will die in a self-imposed prison sentence. By making other's derogatory remarks about you your own opinion about yourself, you will inevitably become a prison warden inside your soul, with you as the sole prisoner.

During my days as the head of my university protestant chapel, one preacher preached a sermon that gave me a license to FREE FALL. He said: "I died with Jesus. It is no longer I that live but him in me. As a dead man, I feel neither shame nor anxiety; neither do I give a damn to what people say about me". See, each time you ignore what the world thinks about you or your aspirations, you inch closer to a record breaking achievement. It was Marel Bich who wrote, "My success is due to my refusal to listen to almost no one's opinion, but my own". Today Marcel Bich is the founder of the BIC Corporation which as at 2005 had produced a record 100 BILLION ball pens. Shun criticism and Nay Sayers. Believe in yourself and in what the future holds for you. The future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious. Be dead to obstacles and discouragements. Always remember that there was no great man in the world who got a complete unanimous nod to succeed. Sorchiro Honda was advised to ignore his idea of manufacturing a motorcycle. Today, many years after, people like me dream to own a Honda. Socrates, many know today as a great legendary scholar, academic and philosopher, was once infamous as an immoral corrupter of youths. No one attends music school today without encountering the name Beethoven. Yet the man Beethoven was called a hopeless man by his teacher. Lionel Messi, four times ballond'or winner, was called a hopeless athlete without a future in soccer, the very year he was diagnosed with a growth hormone deficiency. What has the world called you? They called my Jesus, 'The prince of Beelzebub'. Moses they called a murderer, and the very first person to see the risen Lord, Mary Magdalene, was called a heinous sinner and a prostitute. Listen, any label people give you is simply what they want to remember you with – not what you are! Until you are prepared for heavy criticism, heavy success won't come. Only men with high sounding criticism attain resounding success.

One day my friend visited me on a black T-shirt with an inscription: I don't mind your discussing meat my back, after all am a celebrity." That's the spirit. I

love the story of Paul at the island of Malta. When a group of barbarians saw a venomous beast hanging on his hand, they pilloried him. At his back, discussing him, they called him a murderer, caught up by nemeses. Yet, when they look and saw no harm on him, they changed their minds! The same people that called him an evil murderer turned around to call him a god. Are people criticizing you at your back? Welcome to the world of celebs! While watching a football match one day, between Tottenham FC and Real Madrid FC, C. Ronaldo made mistake. Everyone in the gathering, watching from the TV, began to criticize him. They called him “OWO”; fool, etc. Meanwhile, Real Madrid fans were busy criticizing Gareth Bale; they all called him a waste pipe. However, C. Ronaldo was the reigning world most expensive player with his employers, Real Madrid, planning a E100Million pounds swoop for Gareth Bale. Yet, hungry fools watching from a free to air viewing centre called them ‘owo’ (stupid person). That day, I bent down and whispered to God a question cum prayer, “Lord, when will people call me ‘Owo’ this way?” Sound like a stupid prayer right? But I became the most famous name in the history of my school, barely two semesters after.

NotaBene, most often, those whom you call your critics and your enemies, God call elevators. They have been ordained to bring out the best in you. There would be no famous David without Goliath. It was Haman who announced Modecai and Penninah’s penetrating mockery of Hannah brought fought the mighty Samuel. Criticism and mockery pain but pays. Pharaoh’s mockery of Moses’ God, brought out the best in Moses, just as the “wild beasts of Ephesus” helped make Paul the best evangelist ever lived. Those you call adversaries are actually your destiny advancers. Thank them.

CHAPTER 19

#13

BEAR OTHERS' BURDEN

The story is told of two Princes, twin sons of a renowned king. Prior to the king's death, he decided to pick his successor from among them. Prince Charles happened to be barely 5mins older than Prince Edwards although Edwards's right leg came out first. Two extremely heavy loads were left in the forest for them. The king, who believed that leadership is burdensome wanted to know who among his two sons would have the patience and perseverance to carry on till the end come what may. Hence, the competition. Both loads were quite heavy. The journey to the forest itself was quite far and tiring. That faithful day, the young men set out in great excitement. Each was desirous for the crown. Few miles away from home, an old man shouted for help. Charles turned his nose up; focused on the load ahead, he move on. But kindhearted Edward stopped to help. Next, it was an old woman who had a load to carry. The load that was too heavy for her happened to be nothing to the young vibrant Edward. Charles walked on. Edward rushed to help since the woman was going the same way with him, enroute her farm near the forest. Edwards smiled on with her all the way to the forest. On dropping the woman's load, he helped a young lady to put her burden on her head. Then, he carried the lady's tired 10 years old daughter on his shoulder. Charles was already at the forest. He had a little rest, regaining strength; he lifted up the lighter of the two loads and headed home. Edward went on to help even one more person before taking up his own load. On his way home he thought of abandoning the heavy load but hereminded himself that he once had the same feelings while carrying the 10 years old but changed his mind as the little girl could not walk. "This load too can't walk". He thought. Again and again, Edward felt like giving up. He remembered how happy and accomplished he felt on reaching his goal on each occasion of assisting people with burdens. He thought of the joy in people's faces as they thanked and praised him. He persevered. Yet, the burden was far too much. Few miles away from home, his brother not in sight, Edward decided to abandon the load. "No need," He said, "my brother already has the crown." Yet, once again, he encouraged himself. He preserved. He decided not to do it for the crown but for the joy of accomplishment. He moved on. He saw it as a sacrifice, "A prince is a prince even if he never becomes the king. No kingdom reveres a cowardice prince." He thought. His mind was bedeviled with thoughts of giving up. Yet in the

midst of all the topsy-turvy, he marched on. Finally, Edwards got to the palace. His brother was already there. The king was ready to crown Prince Charles for getting home first if Edward equally returns empty from the impossible mission. But the whole arena was brought down with applause when Edwards brought forward his load. Charles fainted. He had already convinced all that no human could bear such a load for such a distance. People shouted and praised Edward for his great spirit.

After Edward's crowning as the new king, Prince Charles came up to ask how he made it. "By carrying other people's burden, I gained strength and experience to carry mine." He said.

No doubt, what you make happen for others, God will make happen for you. Whatever good we do, completes a circle and hits back on us. As Brian Tracy will say, "Successful people are always looking for opportunities to help others. Unsuccessful people are always asking, "What's in it for me?" In the words of Danny Thomas: "Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It is what you do for others". Eric Fromm puts it better: "Not he who has much is rich, but he who gives much." Be an ardent burden bearer. The great German theologian, philosopher, physician and musicologist, Albert Schweitzer (1875- 1965) once remarked: "The purpose of human life is to serve and to show compassion and the will to help others." The same man later told his protégés, "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve". You can't make others happy without becoming happy yourself. Happiness, wrote Gretta Palmer, is the direct by-product of an effort to make someone else happy. The fragrance will always remain in the hands that give the rose. No one remains unsuccessful who habitually help others succeed. Ask Robert J. Lumsden, "A good criterion for measuring success in life is the number of people you have made happy". Little wonder a famous rat in our village enthused: "The greatest farmer I know is the one whose yam I have tasted." Sidney Powell therefore advised: "Try to forget yourself in the service of others. For when we think too much of ourselves and our own interests, we easily become despondent. But when we work for others our efforts return to bless us."

ZigZigar wrote, "You will always have everything in life that you want if you will help enough other people get what they want." Norman Vincent Pearle was of this opinion, "The man who lives for himself is a failure. Even if he gains much wealth, or position, he is still a failure." Look beyond you and your immediate needs once in a while. Hear Charles Elliot, "Don't think too much of

yourself. Try to cultivate the habit of thinking of others, this will reward you. Selfishness always brings its own revenge.” Only the life lived for others, according to Albert Einstein, is worth living. Jackie Robinson put it better, “A life is not significant except for its impact on other lives”. Tears of benefactors brought back the dead Dorcas. God was forced to grant a heathen Cornelius revelation thanks to his kindheartedness. Always go out of your way to be a blessing to someone else’s life. As Flora Edward observed, “In helping others, we shall help ourselves, for whatever good we give out completes the circle and come back to us”. You want a happy and fulfilled life? Make someone else happy and help another to fulfill his or her dream. No one is useless, observed Charles Dickens, who lightens the burden of another. I pray that in the course of my life time people will testify of me Thomas Jefferson’s testimony of Tsar Alexander I. Thomas wrote to William Duane concerning the Great Russian emperor, Tsar: “A more virtuous man, I believe, does not exist, nor one who is more enthusiastically devoted to better the condition of mankind.”

The German theologian, physician and musicologist, Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) said and exemplified this, “The purpose of human life is to serve and to show compassion and the will to help others.” In 1993, Pope John Paul II beatified a woman known as Mother Angela. Born Miss Sophia in 1825 at a place in Central Poland, the woman who submitted his life and time to God all through her life lived through pain and suffering. As a young girl, she contracted tuberculosis. She turned her forced period of convalescence into time for reflections. That was when it dawned on her that she has been destined to bring hope, succor and solution to the world’s poor, sick and destitute as a service unto God. Immediately after recuperating she began to work with the poor, including street children and the elderly homeless in Warsaw’s slum. Soon, she convinced her cousin to join her in the work. In 1855, the two women made a private vow and consecrated themselves to the Blessed Mother. Before long, many new followers joined them. In less than two years, a new congregation was formed. This they named the Felician Sisters. As their number grew, so did their work and the pressure on Mother Angela. She was the superior and the founder of the order. However, at age 44, ill health forced Mother Angela to resign. She thus watched from the sidelines as the order grew and expanded with missions, stretching it to the USA among the sons and daughters of Polish immigrants.

Ever wondered why those who help others never lack help themselves? David wrote in Psalms 41:1-3, “Blessed is the man that considereth the poor...” Speaking to a group of young leaders, Swiss educational reformer, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) remarked: “He who bears the interest of humanity in his breast, that man is blessed”.

CHAPTER 20

#14. ASK WHY

This may come as a shock as most of us grew up with John Mason's book, *Why Ask why?* Ask why. Those who fail to learn from history often repeat it. Find out the reason for the adversity and make the most of it. When purpose is not clear, abuse is clearly inevitable. Ask why. Know for sure exactly why you go through what you are going through. Many pray away their cross not knowing that it is the only route to their crown. The truth is: God will often open a shut door only when you understand why it was shut in the first place. In the Holy wreath, God wanted a prophet when His daughter Hannah needed a son. Until she understood this in the place of prayer and thus offered to provide the prophet (Sam 1:11), her womb remained shut. When her prayer moved from "Give me a son that Peninnah won't mock me again"; to "... I will give him back to you all his life"; God not only gave her Samuel, but also six more children as well (1 Sam 2:5). Often, what we call adversity is God collecting the little seed we have in order to multiply it into the bountiful harvest we want.

Ask why. Be certain about it. He who does not know when the rain began to beat him won't know when it dries. Find out. God never allow things to happen save for our good. Jesus endured the cross because He knew why He must pass through it and was certain on its gain (Heb.12:2). Ask why. Rebecca almost died of misery over her mysterious pregnancy until she asked why. When she yelled: "Why am I like this?" She found the answer: "Two nations are in your womb!" Thus she moved from the mystery of her misery to the ministry of raising two nations for God. All great inventions and achievements began with one right question. Isaac Newton asked, "Why do things that go up never do stay up but come down?" Few days later, Gravitational Theory was born. The Wright brothers asked, "Why can't we just fly rather than flock the crowded road?" Months Later, the airplane was born. NnamdiAzikiwe, Awolowo, ErnestEnahoro and friends asked, "Why can't we rule our own nation? Giant of Africa became an independent nation. When Obama asked why a black man never ruled America, he became US president. Ask why. When it occurred to GulonBluford that no black man has ever been to space; he asked why. Today he is the first African-American to go into space. Almost everyone was content with British rule in Kenya; until

JomoKenyatta asked why. Kenyatta became Kenya's founding father, first Prime Minister and first President of the Independent Kenya. Jimmy Dean once gave this inexplicable advice: "For true success, ask yourself these four questions: Why? Why not? Why not me? Why not now?"

Ask why. In my depressed and downtrodden state of MBBS exam failure aftermath, I asked, 'why me?' So passionate was I about serving God in the University chapel that I sacrificed all including my career. I looked up to God to work in my own vineyard as I worked assiduously in His vineyard. I did marathon fasting and reading while others only read. Everything, time strength and finances were laid at the altar of sacrificial service. So it happened, when I saw myself in that pit of shame, failure and disgrace, I asked why. I sought for encouragement but I found none. I looked both left and right, but all I could see were mockery faces that sank me deeper into an adverse emotional torture. Yet, despite the fact that encouragement eluded me, with share determination, I ensured that my spirit was equally void of discouragement. Nothing could be more confusing. Worst still, one Sunday morning, everyone looked up to me as the leader and preacher, for encouragement. Imagine. They sought from me the very same motivation my spirit actively lacked. Even the ones who understood my dilemma, looked on, eager to know what I would do. All night, I had asked God for a word but never heard a perky bird. Thus, seemingly stranded; as I stood there, transfixed, before a mammal crowd of mixed students and staff; my heart was heavy. Just when I was about to crack, to give up and give in to depression, His voice came loud and clear. He had never spoken so clear to me since I began my walk with Him. Without a prior preparation, rehearsal and appraisal, my mouth was opened, filled with His words: "When you see yourself in a pit, do not ask for a ladder (to climb out), rather, ask for a shovel. Every pit is a gold mine, if you can scoop out some few sands of delay, disappointments, and impatience, frustrations and depressions, you will hit your gold!" As I spoke that cold morning, my zeal, faith and joy were restored. I saw in my face the kind of joy and gladness that is phenomenal, beyond human comprehension. The congregation beamed with smile as their many unanswered questions received a most coherent answer. That was the best sermon that I ever preached there. No longer as it were- HolySpirit giving me a word for His people but the spirit speaking to my needs through His word for them. From that moment onwards, my mentality towards that disappointment completely

changed. On getting home, while reminiscing His morning rhema during my private devotion, He drooped more. ‘I sent you there as a missionary not just to go and pass exams’. Then, I thought of all His wonders, plus His mighty hand of healing and deliverance in my life; I smiled! I laughed at my ignorance. It dawned on me that in my five years in the medical school, I only wrote two exams – first and second MBBS. I passed one with distinctions, I failed the other. As I thought about all His miraculous deeds and my own heroics via His grace, I vowed never to regret again. From that moment thenceforth, I began to seek for the gold in the mine. First, a book was born, next a better medical school came calling and many hitherto unimaginable doors of opportunity were thrown open.

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is to not stop questioning (Albert Einstein). I love the final prayer of Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) who prayed: “O my body, make me always a man who questions!” Be like Rudyard Kipling who wrote, in his children’s book, *The Elephant’s Child*:

I keep six honest men,

They taught me all I knew,

Their names are what and why and when

And How and Where and Who.

What caused my fall or failure? Is it pride or indecision? Is it a character flaw or wrong attitude in its entirety? What? Rebecca wept, “Why am I like this?” Why must I go through what am going through? He said He would be with me when I pass through the fire not that He would make the fire my permanent abode. Why me? Why not me? Charles Kettering once advised, “Once you have failed, analyze the problem and find out why, because each failure is one more step leading up to the cathedral of success”. Ask why.

Until you ask, answers won’t come. Some common reasons why we face adversity could be highlighted under the acronym ADVERSITY.

A – Alone with God. God will do just anything to get the attention of His beloved. When Jacob was faced with the trauma of meeting Esau, he was left alone. The

Bible says, that night, he had an encounter with God that changed his life and name forever.

D – Divine will of God. Most often, what we call adversity is simply God working out His plan for us. Divine presence often begins where man's strength and influence ends.

V – Verification of your will to succeed. Fire is the test of gold, adversity is the test of mankind. He, who has the will to succeed, can endure just anything. Adversity proves you. It tests you. It confirms your will to succeed.

E – Extracts the best in you. Nothing brings out the best in us like adversity. Nothing advances like adversity.

R – Removes Pride and trust in self from you. Adversity comes to murder pride. It makes one to humbly trust God as the architect of all accomplishments.

S – Strengthens your resolve to succeed. When adversity strikes, one brings to remembrance why one has always wanted that particular thing in the first place. Adversity exposes your priority and strengthens your decision to accomplish a thing. It also develops in you both endurance and stamina.

I – It introduces you to you. How true. Adversity reveals to all what one is truly made of. When a tube of paste is squeezed, its content is let out. When a glass cup is shaken, its content spills. What comes out of a man at the times of adversity shows whom he really is.

T – Trains you to manage and maintain upcoming success. The Israelites spent 40 years preparing for a life in the promise land. A success you storm into may kill you without proper training. The school of Hard knocks is said to produce the best of scholars. Guess whom the teacher is? Adversity!

Y – You are being prepared for a bigger test. It is like an immunization vaccine. It inoculates you before hand as a preparation to succeed when a more severe test comes.

Other common reasons for adversity include:

Adversity brings out the best in you. You can never know how much you can endure until you plunge into adversity.

Adversity advertises your grace for perseverance to the world. It reveals to all your ability to take risk and how bold enough you are to go beyond what you know into what you don't know.

Adversity brings to you the opportunity to take risk and discover new talents. It was my leaving medicine that drove me into mastering Geology, Law and Engineering.

Adversity and failures would help you establish mastery. The more time you spend learning a trade, the more you master that trade. Most of the famous surgeons and legal icons I know are those who spent more than enough time studying before they began practice. Adversity builds your will power, persistence, self-discipline and the virtue of hard work.

Even the most painful adversity is of great benefit. Just like a pain sensation, adversity: Gives one a warning signal about the existence of a problem or threat one never knew was there. It may be a character flaw or bad habit you never knew exist or is fatal. Adversity like pain will make you aware of an injury – moral or otherwise, which if unattended to will become a cancer that will wreck your life completely.

Again just like pain, adversity will help you prevent further damage by causing a reflex withdrawal of the body, this time your destiny, from the source of injury.

It also forces one to rest or to minimize activities thus enabling the rapid healing of the injured part.

CHAPTER 21

#15. BEGIN AGAIN

Having done all and known why, start up again. Defy those bumps; pick up the pieces and move on. The game is not over until you win. The journey is not over until you reach your goal. Failure is only a road you cross enroute success, not your final destination. Count every trial as an act of courage. Begin again. The various jobs you lost appears on your CV as job experience. Don't let that failure announce your end, try again. All great men are bundle of beginners. The only thing to cry when all else fails is "Begin Again". Buddha said, "No matter how hard the past, you can always begin again". Start afresh. Every failed adventure is an opportunity to make a fresh start. Every fresh start is an opportunity to do better than you did the last time. All great achievers are men who were neither afraid nor ashamed to re begin from the scratch. Dare to bounce back. The earlier, the better. Ask boxers: the longer you stay down the harder it is to rise again. He who fights and runs away will live the rest of his life in shame and regrets. It is not about what happened to you. That adversity is only a test of nature to know what you would do. Don't disappoint. Do exactly what you would love your son to do if he finds himself in your present shoe- you may pass it on.

Asked his yard stick for success, George Patton (185 - 1945), a Legendary American army officer, said, "I don't measure a man's success by how high he climbs but how high he bounces when he hits the bottom". According to Dale Carnegie, "A successful man will profit from his mistakes and try again in a different way". Tony Alfonso told his fans, "When you miss a shot, never think of what you did wrong. Take the next shot thinking of what you must do right" Micheal Jordan is believed to be the greatest player in basketball history. Hear what he gave as his life philosophy, "I can accept failure, but I can't accept not trying again". He later told his fans; 'I have failed over and ova again – that is why I succeeded'. Hear Nelson Mandela: "The greatest glory in living liesnot in never failing, but in rising every time we fall". Paul Harvey, a US journalist and author, wrote in his book, "Someday, I hope to enjoy enough of what the world calls success so that someone will ask me, "What is the secret of it? I shall say simply this: 'I get up when I fall down". There is indeed no better exercise than rising and falling. Nothing builds a man so fast and so well like the diet of success with

failure sandwiched in between. “Our greatest glory,” said Ralph Waldo Emerson, “is not in never failing but in rising up every time we fail” Always remember, the call is higher than the fall. Get back up when you get knocked down.

Start small if need be. For according to Henry David Thoreau, “It matters not how small the beginning may seem to be. What is once well done is well done forever”. The Wright brothers, Orville Wright (1871 - 1948) and Wilbur Wright (1867 - 1912) in 1892 formed the Wright Cycle Company and for ten years, they designed, built and sold bicycles. The glamorous American movie star actor Brad Pitt (1963) once had a summer job, posting warning signs at coal mine entrances. The Shawnee, Oklahoma born actor, grew up in Springfield Missouri. He studied in the University of Missouri but in 1986 was forced to leave the college without a degree – just two credits shy of graduating with an advertising degree. After 5 years of merry-go-rounding the movie world, he became a star. What of Demi Moore? The man who today earns up to \$20 million per movie first found work as a bill collector. Legendary Elvis Presley was a truck driver. Julia Morgan (1872 - 1957) advised her fans, “Never turn down a job because you think it is too small, you don’t know where it can lead”. A group of three men, George Washington, Robert Morris and Col. George Ross in 1776 walked up to a busy middle class widow with a bizarre job cum assignment. She was asked to sew together pieces of white stars and red stripes that would later become her country’s flag. She gave it her all. Thus Betsy Ross, a poor country-side seamstress, made the very first American flag. Betsy Ross, who married and out lived three different husbands, had showed an aptitude for fine needlework from an early age. She was born Elizabeth Griscom on January 1, 1752 in Philadelphia. Today, her home in Philadelphia is preserved as the birth place of the American flag.

Begin where you are with all you have. Whatever you have left will reproduce all you have lost- with much interest. Remember the Shunamite woman. Her little pot of oil made her a great merchant. As Hamilton Mabie once said, “The question for each man to settle is not what he would do if he had the means, time, influence and education advantages, but what he will do with the things he have now”. Don’t be like the German Billionaire who committed suicide after losing 1/3 of his wealth during the recent world economic meltdown. Teddy Roosevelt advised, “Do what you can, with what you have where you are.” Always remember Henri Arnie where he said, “Almost everything comes from almost nothing.” As

Christ gathered twelve baskets of the broken pieces of fish and bread, tactfully gather all that remains of your talents and grace; then begin again from there. Epicurus wrote, “Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; but remember that what you now have was once among the things you only hoped for”. Just begin. What you have left will reproduce all you have lost and much more. Nothing is too small nor a position too low. A mountaineer who gets to the peak of Everest began climbing from the foot of the mountain. By the time James Cash Penney died on February 12, 1971, aged 95, his retail company, J.C Penney Company was the fifth largest retail firm in the United States, with 1660 stores and annual sales of \$4.1billion. However James Cash Penney began business as a stock room worker. After his first retail store business- a butcher shop in Longmont, Colorado, failed, life seemed to hold no promise at all for young Penney. That was 1890. However, Penney gathered all that he had left, moved to Kemmerer, Wyoming where he opened his first Golden Rule dry goods store that turned out to be an immediate success. Today, the rest is history.

Your beginning may be small, but always remember that the mighty oak tree began as tiny mustard seed. Robert Lee Frost rose to become one of the greatest poets of his time. However, in 1902 the poetry editor of Atlantic monthly returned his poem with a note that reads. “Our magazine has no room for your vigorous verse”-what a way to begin! Winston Churchill did not start greatly either. At boyhood, he was known to all, in the words of his teacher, as “a conspicuous lack of success”. We all remember Napoleon Bonaparte as one of the greatest military generals of all time. However, Napoleon graduated 42nd in a class of 58 at military school in Lucaire. Prof. Wole Soyinka, the first African Nobel Laureate, left school with a third class! Bildad the Shuhite reminded Job (8:7), “Though thy beginning may be small, yet your latter end would greatly increase.” The truth is: Everything great began with something small. One who is not willing to start small never starts at all. All great harvests began as a small seed sown. What Elijah’s servant down played as, “Just a tiny cloud”; produced a mighty downpour.

Be like Douglass Mac Arthur (1880 - 1964). When the brave soldier, famous for his retirement speech (old soldier never dies...), was leaving Corregidor Island having lost the Philippines to the advancing Japanese forces in WWII, he assured the then world, “I shall return”. He did. America didn’t only reclaim the Philippines but also defeated Japan and helped crush the Nazi forces; thus ending

the war. Joseph Sugarman made this powerful observation, “Not many people are willing to give failure a second opportunity. They fail once and it is all over. The bitter pill of failure is often more than most people can handle. If you are willing to accept failure and learn from it, if you are willing to consider failure as a blessing in disguise and bounce back, you have got the essential of harnessing one of the most powerful success forces”

Begin again. Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do. (Pope John XXIII). Success is ever possible for the man who keeps trying. Starting all over gives you the opportunity to rise again with a better firmer foundation. Conquer that discouragement. Load your gun again and start shooting. Dican rightly observed, “Learning how to stand up is easy, learning how to stand up after you have fallen down, that is tough.” It shouldn’t be. Don’t let that failure keep you down. The key to success is to keep getting up or, at least, to get up one more time than you fall down. Vince Lombardi told his players, “It is not whether you get knocked down; it is whether you get up that count”. A famous poet wrote these lines:

But what if I fail of my purpose here?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,

To dry one’s eyes and laugh at a fall,

And, baffled, get up and begin again.

The truth is, in life being knocked down by adversity is not always an option; it can happen to anybody; but staying down is. Life is full of choices but often, the choice of sudden failure is not ours to make. A child dies suddenly. A business premise or company is razed down by fire. A boss, trying to cut down the number of staff under him, decides to fire you. Accidents happen! However, the choice to stay down or to get up is always ours to make. You decide either to surrender to the feeling of being powerless over the situation and by getting frustrated, deepen the rut. However you can as well decide to think and act

yourself out of the situation. Tough times and things announce tough people. Toughness is not genetic; we train ourselves for it.

The good news is, you still retain the inherent ability to rise again no matter how long you have been down. Always remember, you don't have to get it right always, you only need to get it going always.

CHAPTER 22

#16.

MAY GOD GIVE US MAD MEN

Finally, all said and done, develop a strong passion and an unswerving determination to reach your goal. Rebuild your passion. Refuse to be robbed of your God given dream. Watch out for fresh new open doors of opportunity. Develop a strong emotional attachment to your dreams. Imbibe the spirit that won't let go. Keep yourself excited and hopeful no matter what you have been through. Turn your dream to a desperate desire. As Napoleon would say "Desire is the starting point of all achievement, not hope, not a wish, but a keen pulsating desire, which transcends everything". Always remember the admonitions of Abraham Lincoln who said: "You can have anything you want, if you want it badly enough. You can be anything you want to be, do anything you set out to accomplish if you hold to that desire with singleness of purpose". Yes you can still make it. No dream is too big to be actualized. Maybe it is difficult, but for sure it isn't impossible. Impossible is nothing. As Napoleon Bonaparte will put it: "Impossible is a word to be found only in the dictionary of fools". It only seems impossible because you have not tried enough. Be like the USA army corps of engineers who always say: "The difficult we do immediately. The impossible takes a little longer".

Get mad about it. Get so mad that no amount of failure and adversity can stop your desire. There is this true life story about the irrefutable prayer of one of Africa's great legends and warlord, Gen. Odumegwu Ojukwu. It happened that men of God gathered in a prayer quake conference. Gen. Ojukwu happened to be a special guest of honor at the occasion. At the tail end of the programme, the organizers of the conference decided to honor Gen. Ojukwu's presence by having him lead in the closing prayers. People chorused 'amen' after every of his sentence. After speaking of courage, determination and perseverance, Ojukwu rounded off the prayer by shouting in a loud voice, "May God give us mad men in the name of Jesus!" At this juncture, even the organizers of the programme were too scared to say 'Amen'.

Mad men! Insanity often comes to mind of many whenever that word is mentioned. Yet, there is lot more to that word than that reach the ordinary eye. A

mad man is one who is so enthusiastic about a thing that he is very ready to die for that course. Ojukwu was willing to die for Biafra. Rev Martin Luther King Jnr. died for the emancipation of blacks in America and Nelson Mandela ‘happily’ graced the four walls of the prison yard for 27years in his bid to erase the foot prints of apartheid from his dear nation. Until you get so mad about a thing that you are willing to stake your last breathe to it, true success that inspires many won’t come. It was Rev. Martin Luther King who first said: “He who has not discovered what he can die for is not fit to live. Martin was so mad about his mission that one day in 1962 after shots were fired into nearby negro houses near his church in Albany, Dr King said: ‘It may get me crucified. I may even die. But I want it said even if I die in the struggle that he died to make men free!’” A mad man is always frenzied and frantic about what he believes. He pursues what he is mad about with great intensity and energy. He never stops until he reaches his goal. He has so much lost his mind that he can’t just mind people’s opinion. Saul cum Paul was so passionate about the Gospel that his Governor, Festus, called him a mad man. Men who took a sabbatical leave of their senses and boldly tried the impossible have made all the landmark achievements in this world. They were so mad about their life goals that they put up deaf ears to reason and status quo.

Each time I hear the name Hussein Barrack Obama, something tickles my mind. In a nation where people commit suicide for being black; where discrimination and segregation is the order of the day, a man rose above all adds to prove to the world that bravery and intelligence has nothing to do with skin color. Like most great men in history, many laughed Obama to scorn when he made his intention known to the world. The day he told his friends he wanted to change his office address to the famous Presidential White House, all shouted at him in unison: ‘are you mad’? Maybe he was, little wonder he is the most powerful man in the world today. What of the 18years old damsel by name Mary Slessor? Her family counted her mad when she announced her intention to leave Scotland for Africain order to stop the killing of twins in the black continent. I can imagine her mum screaming at her ‘are you mad?’ Today ‘Mad Mary’ did not only stop the killing of twins and cannibalism in Africa, her face now graces the currency notes of Scotland. Churches all over Africa still celebrate her birthday long after her demise while her statue adores the streets of many African cities. No one saw reasons with the crazy Saint Joan of Arc; famous as maid of Orleans, when she at

the age of 18 years told a shocked French world that ‘a still small voice’ was asking her to lead the assault against their colonial masters-Great Britain. However, despite their initial objection and oppositions little Joan went on to inspire her country men to revolt against the British and won. Today the second Sunday of May every year is **observed** as a national festival in France in honour of ‘mad’ Joan. As if that is not enough, Joan of Arc was sainted on the 16th of May 1920 by the then Pope, Benedict. What is that ‘impossible’ dream and height you wish to attain? Get mad about it. People saw reasons with King Saul not to fight the great Champion Goliath. He even advised David, “Guy use your brain. No Israelite can face that man. He has been a champion and a great warrior from his youth”. Indeed nothing has destroyed great youths more in this generation than the heartfelt advice of those whose generation and relevance has long passed. But thank God David was a real mad man. He was not only willing to fight Goliath but also prepared to do so with just a sling and stone. Mad man! A man without even a pen knife boldly threatened a giant with a long sword that he will cut off his head. Imagine, with bare hands? Listening to reasons has been the major reason why many destined youths with great potentials never made it beyond square one. A true mad man is willing to keep pace with his pursuits no matter people’s opinion. They are never ashamed or scared of failing. They understand that every failure they encounter puts them one step towards their goal. They never back off, always illumined with hope. David never allowed his king’s wise advice to deter him from facing Goliath. Unlike the large crowd of Saul’s army who stood analyzing Goliath’s threat, David turned his nose up at remaining in the crowd. He rose to the occasion and consequently to the throne.

We all today celebrate the era of wireless technology. Yet, the man whose invention it is narrowly escaped being dumped in a psychiatric hospital the first day he made the idea public. Guglielmo Marconi was an electrical engineer, yet, when he told his generation that he could transmit sound and signals to people from one distant city to the other without the use of telephone cables, all asked him with mouth agape, “Are you mad?” Born on April 25, 1874, Marconi was already working fanatically in his family’s Bologna Italy home by the time he was 20 years old. His aim? To transmit signals, via electromagnetic waves, from one end of the attic to the other. Marconi’s mesmerizing passion for gadgets and research gave him the backbone to withstand all adversities. He was rejected by the

University of Bologna where he sought admission. His father was so opposed to his perceived madness that on one occasion, he smashed every piece of his son's equipment he could lay hold on in the house. Still, till today, the world is left in awe of Marconi's accomplishments. At his death in 1937, all radio stations worldwide stopped broadcasting for two minutes as a tribute to a 'mad man'.

Colonel Ojukwu prayed, "May God give us mad men!" Men who always give heed to reasons find many reasons to give up. Bernard Shaw wrote, "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world, the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man". I love that. A mad man has no time to consider all the obstacles challenging his goals. A man, passionate about his goal, who tenaciously pursues his dreams against all overwhelming odds is readily seen as a mad man by all at least until the great impossible dream is accomplished. Noah was called a mad man by all for over 300 years until the flood came. If you are still easily swayed by people's opinion, you are still far from being celebrated. Jesus was not only unaccepted by the general populace, but in John 10:20 he was said to be mad. A mad man is evidently unique and outstanding. His difference from all is always well known to all. He is like the shining sun that can never be hidden. Often, people disassociate from them simply because no one sees what they see, neither think they the way they do nor is any going the same direction as they. Understanding them is often the toughest task one can ever embark upon. Mad men are men like the Gideon of the Holy Wreath. They are ever willing to make excuses for others but never one for themselves. The same Gideon who was ready to work and make it anyhow even to the extent of threshing wheat in a winepress, (Judges 6:11) was later seen encouraging people to go on and desert a war for a flimsy excuse of being afraid (Judges 7:3). He was also so mad about his divine assignment that he was very willing to face the densely populated brave soldiers of Midian with just 300 men. Didn't he later emerge the champion? Even when it takes time, a mad man always wins at the end. At the age of 99, Abraham still madly believed that his 89 years old heartthrob would bear him a child. What of the man King Jehoshaphat? He crazily converted his outnumbered Army of fearful soldiers to an emergency Jerusalem mass choir while five heathen kings waited to annihilate him. Every true legend had a tincture of madness in him. Not most of them, but all of them. It is the seed of madness, well groomed and nurtured that

blossom into radical success. Prophet Hosea himself confessed, "...the spiritual man is a mad man..." (Hosea 9:7). You can't just understand their thing (1Cor.2:14). John the Baptist, according to my role model, Jesus, was the greatest man born of a woman. Yet, John was nothing short of a demon possessed mad man in the sight of his people. Why won't they tag him 'mad' when he was completely different from them all in all ramifications. First, he was given an absurd name never heard of in his lineage. Later, his dumb dad who went mute at his conception suddenly began to speak just after his naming ceremony. On growing up, he became so mad about his divine assignment that he ran into the wilderness away from people and society. His passion for his vision made him abnormal. Never forget, abnormal is a compound word comprising 'Above+Normal'. Thus, an abnormal person is simply one who lives, thinks and acts above the normal way or standard. John understood this well. He knew that men of purpose neither eat nor dress anyhow. His foods were only fruits and wild honey. His custom-made designers' clothes were strictly of animal skin. Little wonder, Jesus called him, "The Greatest". Catch a vision, pursue it with all vigour and men shall see you as mad; but shall go far in life.

Colonel Ojukwu prayed, "May God give us mad men!" Give us men who shall stare opposition at the face and say with confidence: "It shall be done". Give us men who see the impossible as nothing but merely the untried. Yes, men whom neither fear nor criticism can derail. Mad men! Men who will stop at nothing until OND (Obstacles and Deterrents) turns to MA (Mission Accomplished). Paul was such a man. At a point, Governor Cletus could not hold it any longer but exclaimed "...too much learning has made you mad (Acts 26:24)!" Festus was right to an extent. Paul was mad but not of too much learning. His was too much fervor. He suffered a kind of madness common to all champions- Excess Load of Passion! His zeal for his Master's work consumed him. Radical Paul was ever ready to die for his mission. He carried a special kind of passion that could neither be chained by the prison fetters of the Philippian (Acts 16:12) nor be crushed by the stones of the Lycaonians (Acts 14:19). Even while in jail, Paul never asked for a lawyer to bail him out or a gourmet meal to supplement the prison's scrap food. No, he only asked for books and writing materials (1Tim.4:13) so he could keep on with his work of evangelism through writing! In fact, Paul wrote all the way to the end of his life, authoring almost half of the New

Testament. Until you are called a mad man for and because of your never quitting spirit, the success that inspires many will elude you. Charles Kettering wrote, “No one would have crossed the ocean if he got off the ship in the storm!” Mad men stay put even when it pains them. They fully understand that injury is only skin deep but never deep enough to injure their visions and aspirations. Only a mad man will keep persevering even when there is no hope at all. Yes, only a mad a man will lose over 15 elections woefully in one country and still keep trying. Thus, it takes a mad man, Abe Lincoln, to become the greatest President of the world greatest nation. The Biafran War Lord prayed, “May God give us mad men!”

Be passionate about it. Let your world revolve around your work. Prophet Isaiah said, “I have set my face like a flint..!” (Isa.50:7) His determination to fulfill his destiny was unflinching. Watch it; you will never have a real success in any field of endeavor or anything whatsoever until you become madly passionate about it. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm”. Asked the secret of his prowess, Mohammed Ali said: “Champions are not made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them- a (desperate) desire, a dream, and a vision”. Madly pursue your set goal. Put your all into it. I strongly believe Paul J.Meyer was right where he said: “Whatever you vividly imagine, ardently desire, sincerely believe, and enthusiastically act upon must inevitably come to pass”. Enthusiasm, says Napoleon Hill, is the steam that drives the engine of success. Put your whole life into it. In the words of Cecil B. DeMille, “The person who makes a success of living is the one who sees his goal steadily and aims for it unswervingly. That is dedication”. Asked the price of success, Frank Lloyd Wright, the famous architect replied, “Dedication, hard work and an unremitting devotion to the things you want to see happen”. Hear Harry S. Truman, “I studied the lives of great men and women; and I found out that the men and women who got to the top were those who did the jobs they had in hand, with everything they had of energy and enthusiasm and hard work”. Dale Carnegie opined, “Flaming enthusiasm, backed by horse-sense and persistence, is the quality that most frequently makes for success”. I love it where Edward Bulwer-Lytton wrote, “Nothing is so contagious as enthusiasm. It moves stones, it charms brutes. Enthusiasm is the genius of sincerity; and truth accomplishes no victory without it”.

David wrote in his Psalms (57:7), “My heart is steadfast! Unshaken, immovable, resolute and madly committed! No one in his days was more passionate about automobiles than Henry Ford. Isaac Newton was so mad about sciences that he would unknowingly go for days without eating. Thomas Edison was passionate about light. Thales of Miletus was said to have been so mad about philosophy that he one day fell inside well while thinking. Charles Darwin was said to have ran out naked from the bathroom straight to his study room when he suddenly came up with the idea of evolution that revolutionalized people’s general thinking in his days. John Wesley was so passionate about evangelism that he never remembered to marry until he clocked 48. Even after his marriage, he was so busy saving souls that he never had time to raise children of his own. A man who did quit not just medical school but schooling entirely just to toy with computers will go for a ‘computerized mad man’. Yet that was the price great Bill Gates had to pay to emerge the world richest man at a young age. The Wright Brothers were passionate about flying. Odims has always been passionate about politics and writing. Never forget, the second most influential man ever in world history and Christianity’s first ever theologian, the Apostle Paul, was solely mad about evangelism. Nota Bene, at the end, you will only be remembered for what you were passionate about. Bob Gass wrote concerning Jesus, “Standing before Pilate, Jesus said, “...for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world...” (John18:37NIV). Eight inches of thorns would crush his brow but not his passion. A spear would puncture His side but not His mission. Spikes would be driven into His hands and thirty-nine stripes would tear His back to shreds but not His ministry. What He felt most passionate about could only be achieved through pain”. Same is true in every one’s life. That is why the great role of passion which yields persistence can never be over-emphasized. Ignore what you are passionate about, and you ignore one of the greatest potentials inside you.

I so much love Nicholas Tesla. One always ought to do what one is most passionate about. If you have ever come across the magnetic flux density in PHYSICS, the International System of Units of its measurement is called Tesla. With magnetic flux measured in Webers, a tesla is defined as 1weber of magnetic flux per square meter. It corresponds also to 10^4 gauss. This unit, Tesla, was named after the Serbian-American electrical engineer by name Nikola Tesla. He was born in 1856 to Serbian parents in Smiljan, Croatia, then in Austria Hungary. Tesla from

childhood was mad about sciences, poetry and experiments. Yet, despite his unhidden enthusiasm for sciences and scientific pursuits, which he developed while at Real Gymnasium in Karlovac from 1871 to 1877, Tesla would have lived and died as an unknown priest save for passion. His father, who was a priest in their LOCAL orthodox church wanted Tesla to be like him. His family only saw a make-shift preacher in him. Despite all their persistence and resistance to his scientific pursuits, mad Tesla went on to pursue his dreams at the Technical University in Graz, southeastern Austria. He remained there between 1877 and 1880 as an engineering student. No doubt, the most difficult person to talk out of his dreams and aspiration is a mad man. There are always more reasons not to than reasons to go on. Life is full of men with great tart for calculation; but as John Newman would say, "Calculations has never made a great man". Life has produced more cowards than heroes, thus, the advice to chicken out pours out much too soon and in more enticing words than the admonition to keep trying. Determined to make a difference in his world, Nicola Tesla in 1880 went on to the University of Prague. Unfortunately, he lost his father at this point. The news of his dad's demise plus its subsequent effects was so devastating that Tesla did leave school without graduating. With his passion undegraded by lack of a degree, Tesla in 1881 went to Budapest as an engineer for a telephone company. In 1884, he moved to USA where he worked for Thomas Edison. A year after, in 1885, Tesla kicked off his own workshop there in USA. He later became so successful that he gained a nomination for Nobel Prize in 1912- which he turned down!

Let your enthusiasm be known to all men. As Walter Chrysler (1875-1940) will say, "The real secret to success is enthusiasm". In the words of Charles Schwab (1862-1939), "A man can succeed at almost anything for which he has unlimited enthusiasm". Enthusiasm is always the first step towards success in just any venture. William Ward drew this comparison, "Enthusiasm and persistence can make an average person superior; indifference and lethargy can make a superior person average". Be enthusiastic about it. Let your passion towards it burn all through your bones and nerves. Successful people are not necessarily more gifted, they are just more passionate. Find out exactly what you pray, cry and dream about always. What is that one thing you are willing to risk everything for? Give your all to it and never relent nor renege.

Lastly, pursuing what you are passionate about opens you up to more, bigger successes. In the words of the legendary Chinese military theorist, General Sun Tzu, “Opportunities multiply as they are seized”. Alexandra Graham Bell, born on March 3, 1847 in Edinburgh, Scotland, was famously enthusiastic as a teacher of the deaf. He was so passionate about the education of the deaf that, at age 18, he began a serious nonstop research on the idea of transmitting speech. Bells, who schooled in the University of Edinburgh and later in London, immigrated to Canada in 1870 and thence to USA the following year. His dad, Alexander Melville Bell, a famous Scottish educator had developed a learning process, known as visible speech, for teaching deaf people. The system showed how the lips, tongue and throat are used in the articulation of sound. Thus, while in the US as a deaf-mutes’ teacher, young Bell publicized the visible speech system while teaching the deaf in Boston, Massachusetts. He was said to have founded the school himself in 1872. The school later became part of Boston University and Bell himself was appointed Professor of vocal Physiology. While developing his speech transmission idea, Bell stumbled into the basic ideas of the telephone. On March 10, 1876, Bell introduced the telephone to the world. He would later go on to establish the Bell Telephone Company in 1877. France in 1880 named him the recipient of the Volta prize. Using its 50,000 franc prize money, Bell built the Volta Laboratory in Washington DC. In the new Lab, Bell and friends invented the Photophone. Photo phone was used in transmitting speech by light rays. He later invented the audiometer for measuring hearing acuity.

EPILOGUE

I still have many other things to write to you about making a success out of your failure. Nevertheless, only these few were written that the book **ADVANCING DESPITE ADVERSITIES** would not become too voluminous and subsequently boring. Success is so easy that I often wonder why it is not everyone that attains it. Like a famous preacher would pray, “It is my earnest desire that no youth should die unaccomplished”. No matter how many times you have failed in the past, success is still in-tagged to your bones. Zero in on your failures and birth the champion in you. There is still a hero in every zero. Like Joseph, what men see as failure is God’s divine agenda to announce the Prime Minister in you. The devil may have meant it for bad, people may have seen it as failure, but God will turn it for your good. Like Edison, Churchill, Lincoln, Mandela etc, I see God turning your disappointment into destiny appointment. Shalom.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Famous as “World Greatest”, OdimsGreat is an internationally renowned motivational speaker and writer. He is a great intellectual and an inspiration to youths. He has authored several books and has served as an editor to numerous firms. He currently sits as the CEO and founder of Glads Foundations- an organization that aims at gladdening the heart of youths and aged worldwide. Advancing Despite Adversities is his first published book. The inspiration to write this book came while he served as his University’s student chaplain.