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To five people who mean so much to me: my wife, Linda, who is priceless and very dear to me; Blossom, Excel, Favor and Noble—our children who are precious blessings from the Lord.

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INTRODUCTION

As I write, my family has lived in London for almost twenty years. And like most Londoners, we find it to be an amazing city. People around the globe have their views about this city. To some, it is the financial capital of the world. It is also known for its red double-decked buses. And we have Buckingham Palace, Big Ben on the Tower, West Minister Abbey, London Eye and other interesting places to visit. But for me, what stands out most about this city is the Tube—the underground rail network. What would living in London be like without the Tube? I wouldn't want to think about that. However, I imagine you could also ask a similar question about the place where you live.

A few years ago, I was on the Tube with a Christian leader who is well-known internationally. It was a mild sunny afternoon in mid-July. And our journey took us from Victoria Train Station in Central London to Stratford Train Station in the eastern part of the city. Dr. Hugh Osgood has served in the ministry for over 55 years—most of that time with his wife Marion. He is widely regarded as a leader of leaders. And those who know him would agree that he is outstanding in the way he has attained success, retained it, and trained many others in the process. Through the years, his level of influence has been quite remarkable—even in the world of media. Yet, as is common with most people with lasting accomplishments, Hugh Osgood rose from an ordinary background.

I was in the process of writing this book while on the journey with him. So, I saw my opportunity to ask him questions that were

on my mind. I asked to know what kept him going; what he thought was the secret to longevity in marriage; and what he considered to be the essentials for accomplishing things of worth and seeing them endure over time. I also enquired to know how he responded to challenges and what his approach to training and equipping others is like. A week after the journey on the Tube, I asked him a few more questions. You will find his answers in some of the chapters in this book under the section *Q & A with Dr. Hugh Osgood*.

We all admire people and organizations with true stories of lasting accomplishments. From great pioneers and innovators to record-breaking performers in the field of sports, their stories inspire and motivate us. We connect easily with them. We learn a lot from them. And one reason for this is that, in many ways, they represent a picture of what we desire for ourselves. I have observed that in all the dreaming, idealizing, vision-casting, planning, setting of goals and strategizing that goes on around the world, people and organizations do not just want to serve well, sell products, and achieve things, they would also like to see the things they accomplish endure over time.

The goal of this book is to use time-tested principles and practical life stories to establish the understanding that there is grace available that could help us to see our ideas, dreams and desires turn to become lasting accomplishments. It is written from a biblical perspective and, as you read on, you will realize that in every area of your life, true, godly success is attainable, retainable, and could become a means of influencing the lives of others and a legacy that is passed on.

In the chapters ahead, you will read about the 10 early signs of progress on the road to lasting accomplishments—as well as 5 quality attitudes of the heart which are essential for the journey. You will also read about the 7 indicators of purpose, the connection between good stewardship and lasting accomplishments, generational thinking, the power in being determined, personal development and sure steps in staying successful. If you are in leadership at any level, or an entrepreneur, or a young person with innovative ideas buzzing in your mind—or someone looking to excel in what you are doing—I think you will find this book to be engaging and valuable. Also,

if you are in a position where your dreams have hit a wall, or you are discouraged because, for all your efforts, you do not have any worthwhile accomplishment to look back on, I think this book will give you hope. It will help you to find the way forward. It will enable you to develop and maintain what I call a progress-minded attitude.

The fact is when there are no worthwhile accomplishments to look back on, people are easily tempted to summarize their life-story prematurely. I will encourage you not to do this. This book will energize you to dream again. It will help you to realize that a turning could occur in the next chapter of your life. You don't have to remain stuck at the foot of the mountain in life and keep pondering over how to get to the peak. You don't have to watch on and get caught between envying those at the top and applauding them. If you can choose to embrace the lessons contained in this book, it will enable you to go beyond rejection, abuse, and other painful issues in your past. You will be able to rise above living in regret over your mistakes, failures and missed opportunities. You will be energized to step up to a position where you can stand boldly in your areas of unique strength, overcome the areas of laxity in your life and stand out by serving well so you can influence your world and leave a lasting story for others to tell.

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PART ONE

**DEVELOPING A PROGRESS-
MINDED ATTITUDE**

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1

HEART FOR THE JOURNEY

We all need to wake up the dreams in our hearts!

Dreams, desires and ideas turn out to become great achievements when they are properly nurtured in the hearts of people with great attitudes.

We need to resist the urge to settle for a self-centered, success-driven, name-making approach to living.

Successful leadership is first of all a heart thing.

The pathway to lasting accomplishments is not paved with gold. It is not littered with great dreams and amazing ideas. Rather, you will find on it people with hearts for the journey. The storylines of most of the achievers we remember today show that they started out from ordinary backgrounds. They seemed like people whose efforts would not amount to much in life. And even while they were living out their dreams, they went through ups and downs. They made mistakes here

and failed there. They faced lots of difficult challenges. Yet through it all, they were able to stand and accomplish things so remarkable people will keep talking about them for generations to come. So, what made the difference for them? One common thread that runs through the stories of these men, women and young people is the quality attitude they had on the inside—they had the kind of heart and mind needed for their journey to significance. They developed the attitudes required for nurturing lasting accomplishments. They had the mindset of achievers.

In the words of Francis Bacon, “All our actions take their hue from the complexion of the heart, as landscapes their variety from light.”¹ It all starts in the heart and mind. Get it right, and you will have a story to tell. Dreams, desires, and ideas turn out to become great achievements when they are properly nurtured in the hearts of people with great attitudes. And in the next three chapters, I would like to introduce you to five heart attitudes which can be life changing. The Scripture tells us in Proverbs 4:23: “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”²

You Need a Heart that Will Not Settle for Less Than Your Potential Could Enable You to Accomplish

For several years into her twenties, Gladys Aylward served as a housemaid in North London. It seemed this was all there was for her in life. Then, while doing some reading, she started learning about China. Missionaries were needed to work there. And she felt concerned. Miss Aylward’s initial reaction was to look for someone she could convince to go to China. She did not picture herself taking up the task—Perhaps because she felt she was unqualified for it. Then a desire came into her heart to travel to China herself and make a difference in that country. With minimal education, little prospect of speaking Chinese—and no organization willing to sponsor her—Gladys worked hard to scramble enough money and start her journey to China in October 1930. The events that unfolded on her way to

China and her accomplishments while there were so remarkable that 20th Century Fox could not resist the urge to make a movie out of it. The film *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* was released in 1958. And it featured the late Swedish-born actress Ingrid Bergman.

Not everyone will wake up with a dream to go to China like Gladys Aylward did. However, we all need to wake up the dreams in our hearts! A good question to ask is “Why would you want to settle for anything less than your potential could enable you to accomplish?” Sometimes people who are doing well tend to settle for *good* when *better* is attainable. And many good-minded people fail to make their good intentions count—because their potential is locked in. In the book *Dictionary of Burning Words of Brilliant Writers*, Josiah Hotchkiss quoted the philosopher Henry David Thoreau who said, “Be not simply good; be good for something!”³ I think this word of challenge is still relevant today.

We all need to be courageous. We need brave hearts, like Miss Aylward had. I hope her story inspires you to break free from limitations and break into your new opportunity for progress. Your heart needs to be brave enough to recognize an opportunity for progress—even when odds are stacked up against you.

You Need a Heart that is Willing to See Destiny in What Caused You So Much Pain

Samuel Morse is recognized as the inventor of the single-wire telegraph system and co-inventor of the Morse code which is used for sending telegraphic messages. At the official demonstration of the invention on May 24, 1844, Morse, the son of Pastor Jedidiah Morse, sent his now famous telegraphic message, “What hath God wrought!” He sent it from the Supreme Court Chamber in Washington D.C. to a station in Baltimore. And truly it could only have been God that gave Morse the idea for his invention because until a painful incident occurred in 1825 there was nothing in his life to suggest he would have anything to do with scientific and technological inventions.

He was into painting portraits and other forms of Arts. But in 1825, while in Washington where he was commissioned to paint a portrait, Morse received a letter from his father which was delivered by a horse messenger. In the letter he was told his wife, who was back home in New Haven, was very ill. He left the portrait he was painting and immediately set out for home. But by the time he arrived, his wife was already dead and buried. This painful incident stirred the heart of Samuel Morse and led him to start thinking about what to do to enhance long distance communication so other people would not have to face what he had experienced. That's what set the stage for him to eventually develop the idea of the single-wire telegraph system.

I don't know what has brought pain to your heart. But I encourage you not to waste your pain. Don't be defeated by it. Rather, channel it. See destiny through it. See the possibilities of helping others through it. Where has life hit you hard and left you low? I encourage you to hit back! Receive a challenge in your heart. Rise up from there. And help as many people as you can to do the same.

You Need a Heart that Genuinely Cares for People

You may have read the book *The Cross and the Switchblade*. And, like me, you may have also watched a movie made in 1969 which was based on it. It tells the story of the late David Wilkerson, and how he got the idea that led to the founding of *Teen Challenge* in 1958. As I write, Teen Challenge is now a world-wide organization. Years ago, while we were at a School in Denmark, my wife Linda and I met people whose lives had been transformed by the work Teen Challenge does. It runs a variety of programs through its affiliates. And these programs—which are also run by many unaffiliated groups—help people with addiction issues and so on to experience recovery and restoration. But at the start of it all, one thing that was not on David Wilkerson's mind was the idea of running a worldwide organization and the fame and fortune that could come with it.

Born in 1931, Rev Wilkerson grew up to become a pastor. By 1958 he, along with Gwen his wife, was leading a small church in rural Pennsylvania in the United States. It was in that year that an incident occurred one evening which changed the course of his life. David Wilkerson was reading an issue of *Life Magazine*. While going through it, he saw a drawing of seven teenage gang members who were on trial for murder in New York. In particular, he got drawn by the eyes of one of them who looked quite young. And immediately Rev Wilkerson's heart was stirred within him. He thought of how to make a difference in the situation; how to help. Then an idea came to his mind to travel to New York and help the teenagers. This was not going to be like a stroll in the park. He hadn't been to New York before. And it would be a journey of about 350 miles. But the idea stuck—it just wouldn't go away from his mind. So, Rev Wilkerson set out from Philipsburg in rural Pennsylvania, on his way to a court room in New York. It turned out to be a journey that would eventually bring him to national prominence and pave the way for him to accomplish things so significant they have impacted the lives of millions around the globe.

What made the difference in David Wilkerson's story? I think it is obvious. He cared for those teenagers from his heart. When you genuinely care for people—when you heart throbs for the progress of your organization, family, community, nation, and people in general—God will not hold back from depositing a good dream or idea in your heart. God cares for people everywhere. And He keeps looking at the largeness of our hearts, seeking for those He can use to show the world how much He cares. So when you can't help saying things like, "There must be a solution to this problem; there must be a way forward; there must be a better way to do this; there must be a way I can best help others in this situation," you will most likely receive an idea from God that will enable you to make a difference in the situation you and others are facing. This is what happened to David Wilkerson.

Q & A with Dr. Hugh Osgood

Q: What keeps you going?

A: Love for God and love for people.

The human tendency is to be self-centered—even when we have good ideas.

So, in all our idealizing, dreaming, desiring, setting of goals and strategizing, we need to resist the urge to settle for a self-centered, success-driven, name-making approach to living. Instead, we should aim to develop and maintain a good caring attitude and a great mind. Otherwise, we may fail to achieve the success we eagerly desire and our accomplishments will either be limited, or they will not last.

People with a Caring Heart often Step into Leadership Roles

Successful leadership is first a heart thing. And the state of your heart will do more to prepare you for a leadership role than any special gift you may have. Jesus is called the Good Shepherd because He cared enough to lay down His life for the sheep. In the Bible we read about how Nehemiah the cupbearer of King Artaxexes of Persia was genuinely concerned about the living conditions of the people in Judah and the state of the city of Jerusalem. He eventually served as governor of Judah for two periods. Nehemiah was bold and passionate in approaching his tasks. Yet he didn't just use the people to achieve his goals—or shout out orders to them while sitting back. Rather he identified with them. He was *in the trenches* with them. He made sacrifices by putting the needs of the people above his. Nehemiah had a listening ear and fought for the poor and oppressed. As a governor, he didn't just sweep issues under the carpet. Instead, he was objective in dealing with them. These are vital signs of a heart for enduring success in leadership.

BUY INTO YOUR DREAM—DON'T END IT

2

Doubt creates room for detours. It can lead to the derailment of a dream. It also opens doors for dream substitutes.

Certain challenges in life could bring you to a position where giving up on a dream that is dear to you seems to be the most likely option on the table.

When you see other people standing in their dreams, it is not because they have never had opportunities to quit or that they have never stumbled.

Any desire for a life of significance must be matched by the willingness to stay on the road to outstanding progress.

Do you have a dream or desire to become something or accomplish something? Is it a good desire and is it the right thing to do? Do you have persistent peace about it? Does it keep buzzing in your mind and stir up passion in you? And does it have the potential of enabling you to serve and enrich the lives of others? Is it an education you are seeking? Or do you desire a change in your career? Would you want to take your business from a local to an international brand?

Or do you have a desire to raise a happy home and see your marriage succeed? Whatever your dream, idea or godly desire may be, I would like to encourage you to embrace it with a believing attitude. Place lasting value on it. Sell other things and buy into it. Believe that it will happen—even if it seems too good to be true or too big to be achievable. Remember, “Anything is possible if a person believes.”⁴

One stand-out quality people with lasting accomplishments possess is that they usually embrace their dreams with a believing heart—either at the start of their journey, or at some turning point in the process.

William Wilberforce and the Abolition of Slavery

William Wilberforce was a politician. And he is well-known because of his persistent campaign that led to the abolition of slavery in most of the British Empire. Born on August 24, 1759, he first became a member of the British Parliament in 1780. In 1785 Wilberforce made the decision to become a committed and passionate Christian. This development marked a turning point in his political career and set the stage for him to agree to head the parliamentary campaign to abolish the slave trade. From the start, it was no easy task for him and those working with him because of the strong opposition they faced. Wilberforce introduced bill after bill, for years, in the House. And he spoke passionately when he had the opportunity. But by 1792 the only achievement was a compromised deal in the House which called for gradual abolition.

Another vote to abolish the slave trade was defeated by eight votes on February 26, 1793. And in the process of time, the war with France became a distraction. Also, public support waned. In June 1804 William Wilberforce thought he had achieved his dream when his bill made remarkable progress in the House. But there was a delay. And by 1805 when the bill was reintroduced, it was defeated. Yet, Wilberforce and those he worked with remained resolute and kept

on campaigning vigorously. Their perseverance was rewarded in 1807 with the passing of the Act that abolished the slave trade.

Even with the passing of the Slave Trade Act Wilberforce and his team realized their dream was only partially achieved. Slave trade may have been abolished. But slaves were still not free. So, they kept on campaigning for several more years. Eventually the Abolition of Slavery Act was passed in 1833. It is remarkable that William Wilberforce died on July 29, 1833—three days after receiving assurances that the Bill would be passed.

Hold On to Your Dream with a Child-like Believing Attitude

This story dates to the early 1960's. And it's about a milkman in Ackerman, Mississippi and the young girl who saw destiny in his words. Most customers will take the nice words of their milkman as nothing more than everyday pleasantries. After all, he wants them to buy his dairy products. However, for a little girl then named Cheryl Prewitt, it seemed there was more to the words she kept hearing. At age 5, her local milkman in Ackerman often told her that one day she was going to be Miss America. Cheryl believed those words as simply as a child would and she grew up expecting it to happen. When at 11 she was involved in a major automobile accident, it seemed the dream was over for her. The accident resulted in injuries to her face and legs. A cast was put over her body and she had to use a wheelchair. But despite all this, Cheryl held on to her dream. It really was a miracle that she recovered.

Her first attempt to win a beauty pageant was not successful. She entered more competitions. And each time she would come close to winning. But it would not quite happen for her. Yet Cheryl refused to quit—because the dream she embraced in her heart had become too real to be doubted or abandoned. When her major breakthroughs came, they happened in quick succession. In 1979 she became Miss Mississippi. Then, following this, her dream came true when she was crowned Miss America 1980 after topping all the other contestants.

Cheryl used the one year of her 'reign' to promote things dear to her heart including her Christian faith.

Whatever your dream may be, I would like to encourage you to hold firmly to it with a believing heart like Cheryl Salem did from age 5. Don't give in to doubt. Doubt opens doors for distractions. It creates room for detours. It can lead to the derailment of a dream. Doubt also opens doors for dream substitutes. It paints alternative pictures to your dream. And these alternative pictures can be attractive to the mind. But you need to be on your guard to say *no* to this.

In the Garden of Eden, the Serpent asked the question, "Did God really say?"⁵ This was the first challenge to the dream of Adam and Eve. It was meant to introduce doubt and confusion about their dream. And they fell for it. After this, they were unable to pass on the pleasure of Eden to their children.

Remember the generation of Israelites who left Egypt around 1447 BC on their way to the Promised Land. Why didn't they see their dream fulfilled? The Bible tells us that they had a heart of unbelief. They doubted so much that they were willing to sell their dream and return to Egypt.

Don't Let Challenges Defy or Define Your Dream

In the history of aviation, the names of two brothers from Dayton, Ohio stand out in gold letters. You may already know a lot about the Wright Brothers—Wilbur and Orville. Their father, Milton Wright, was a Bishop in the Church of the United Brothers in Christ. In 1878, Wilbur and Orville—who were then 11 and 7 years old respectively—experienced what is perhaps the first thing that stirred their interest in building and flying airplanes. Their father brought home a toy helicopter which they played with, toyed around with, and tried to put together on their own. However, twenty-five years later the Wright brothers were no longer toying around. They had moved on to the big stage by inventing the first successful airplane and making

the first controlled, powered and sustained heavier-than air human flight on December 17, 1903.

In sharing the success story of the Wright brothers, it is important to point out that it was not a one-off event which occurred suddenly. In actualizing their dream, they had to endure engine problems in construction, weather-related problems, failures in many of their flight attempts, stalling after takeoff, damages to the aircrafts they flew and opposition from critics who questioned the claims the brothers were making regarding their achievements. A flight attempt they made before news reporters in May 1904 turned out to be unsuccessful. So, how did the Wright Brothers react to these challenges? What was their attitude through it all? Orville and Wilbur held on to their dream with a believing heart. They stayed on the road to success, and they made progress. They worked harder, learnt from their failures, made improvements to their designs, and attempted further flights. And eventually the flights became more successful as the aircraft stayed longer in the air. They also got connected to useful contacts which opened doors for them to become well-known in Europe and the US. Even after Wilbur died in 1912—due to typhoid fever—his brother, Orville, continued the work with their invention.

Don't End your Dream!

Certain challenges in life could bring you to a position where giving up on a dream that is dear to you seems to be the most likely option on the table. This is why a lot of people choose to end their dreams at what they could consider to be dead ends:

- Some abandon their marriages because of challenges.
- Some quit businesses and projects because of initial failure.
- Some give up on amazing ideas because they lack capital.
- Some make mistakes and think God cannot use them anymore.
- Some give up on life because of rejection.

There would be times and situations when—faced with what looks like a dead end—you can believe God for a new beginning. And there could be situations where you may have to abandon one dream and believe God for another. However, in many cases, the truth is people make decisions, use their mouths, and take steps in such a way that they displace the grace that would have helped them to hold on, overcome and make progress in their God-given dreams. Many silent decisions made because of hurt and difficult experiences rob the grace of God of its power.

You don't have to give up on your God-given dream. Remember, there could always be a way forward, even when a sea of problems is staring you in the face. When you see other people standing in their dreams, it is not because they have never had opportunities to quit, or that they have never stumbled. Rather, it is because at the times when abandoning their dreams seemed inevitable, they chose to look to God for a way forward. Consider these scenarios:

- Some couples choose to forgive and continue when they could have ended their marriages.
- Some people choose to begin again after suffering business failures or losing dream jobs.
- Some choose to repeat examinations after failing them more than once.
- Some choose to stand for public office after losing at many elections.
- Some choose to persevere under persecution when they could have quit the faith.

The common thread that links these groups of people together is the choice to hold on to their dreams even while standing before obvious dead ends.

Q & A with Dr. Hugh Osgood

Q: What has been you and Marion's response to challenging times?

A: The tough times we have faced have helped to strengthen us—not hinder us. I know these things could be a hindrance to others.

You Need to Develop and Maintain a
Progress-minded Attitude

Progress is a bridge builder. It is a motivator. It gives people a forward-looking mindset that raises the bar above success, challenges, mistakes, and failure. Progress will build a bridge that will keep you going when you are cut off by the storms of life. It will lift you over when you are facing a wall. It will turn a dead end into a new beginning for you. And it will open new doors of opportunities for you while you are still celebrating the success of yesterday. Any desire for a life of significance must be matched by the willingness to stay on the road to outstanding progress—when success is achieved, when challenges arise, and if failure occurs.

There are dimensions of progress. An aspect of it will require that you sail through contrary waves, which curl up to submerge the dreams of even the strongest-minded. It could bring you to a point where all you can respond with is that one determined effort to keep at it no matter the cost, to hold fast no matter the price, to laugh at throwing in the towel even when failure is stirring you in the face. Such dogged determination exhibits the virtue of progress-mindedness. In seemingly impossible situations, progress has a way of saying, "It's not over yet. A comeback is still possible. With God all things are possible." And the truth is if you can avoid dismantling your wheels of progress, you will be able to overcome anything and achieve anything in the will of God for your life.

THE POWER IN STAYING DETERMINED

3

Things have a way of falling in place to reward those who stay determined to reach their goal.

Destiny beckons. Purpose is calling. But who are those determined to lay down their plans and embrace their true calling in life?

Who said life has to be easy because you are in the right place doing the right thing?

Never magnify problems, challenges and opposition. Don't see them as too big for a solution to be found

There have been close races in athletics. But I don't think I have witnessed a closer finish than what I saw live on TV in the summer of 2013. It was the finals of the 400m event for women at the World Athletics Championship. And in that race Christine Ohurugo of Great Britain won with only 4000th of a second separating her and her rival Amantle Montsho of Botswana.

Before the race started, Amantle Montsho was favored to win.

And as the race progressed, she showed why. With 50 meters to the end of the race, it looked certain that Christine was not going to win. Amantle had a comfortable lead, and she was on her way to clinching the gold medal. But what happened next caught everyone off-guard. Unexpectedly, Christine began her determined push to clinch a first-place finish that seemed totally beyond her. The way she went about it was remarkable. She wasn't just playing catch-up; she was determined to win. You could tell she had broken through the pain barrier. Determination was written all over her face, and all over her strides, as she ran what could be called the race of her life. And each stride brought her closer to Amantle.

With 20m to go, she hadn't yet caught up with Amantle. 10m to go, she wasn't there either. However, she was getting closer and closer. By this time the TV commentators could barely hold their breath as they screamed and shouted in the heat of the momentous occasion that was unfolding before the eyes of all who were watching. With 3m to go, it was obvious Christine hadn't yet caught up with her rival. But she refused to settle for silver. And as she approached the finish line, she made one last dip and gutsy forward-push of the head. In the end it was a photo-finish—too close to call. Then the suspense began. Everyone, including the athletes, waited, and kept looking at the screens as the officials scanned through the pictures to come up with a winner. Yet even before they announced the winner, it seemed it had to be Christine Ohurugo. Things have a way of falling in place to reward those who stay determined to reach their goal and fulfill their purpose.

After it all, Christine, who was in dreamland about her victory couldn't come up with many words. She said what she could and simply gave God the glory. Her victory—especially the way it was achieved—touched the hearts of British people, including her teammates. As captain of the British team at the Championship, Christine had initially challenged every athlete not to give anything away; not to leave room for excuses; rather to give it their all. And through her victory she led by example on the track. It's also remarkable that Christine's determined effort paid off in another

way: It enabled her to set a new British national record in the 400m event—beating a former record set by Kathy Smallwood-Cook which had stood for 29 years.

You Need to Develop a Determined Attitude

Determination will enable you to break through the pain barrier—the point at which everything around you seem to be saying it's time to quit and give up on your dream or something worthwhile you are into. It's not enough to start something. It's more important to finish what you have started, and to finish it well. It takes courage and perseverance to do this. It takes staying determined. You will not be able to accomplish anything of worth and stay successful in doing it without developing a determined attitude.

Q & A with Dr. Hugh Osgood

Q: What is essential for accomplishing things worthwhile and seeing them last?

A: The important thing is not to give in to discouragement.

From 1787 William Wilberforce put up a determined fight in the British parliament for the abolition of slave trade and slavery. This lasted several years. And because of the strong opposition he faced, it seemed it would not happen in his lifetime. But thank God his determination was rewarded. On December 1, 1955, four people were asked to give up their seats on a Cleveland Avenue bus in Montgomery, Alabama. It was an unfair and racist act. Three of the four complied. But one of them, a woman named Rosa Parks, was determined not to give up hers. And because of the aftermath of her determined attitude, *Time Magazine*—in 1999—named her as one of the 20 most influential people of the 20th century.

There is grace from God which can take you beyond your point of pain in your dream. But this grace is only accessible to those who continue to trust God; those who choose to stay courageous and determined; those who have made a quality decision not to throw in the towel—even if it seems like quitting is the only option on the table. Such people are not only able to press past the pain-barrier facing them; they will also be able to bless many people in the process and bring glory to God. In his book *Ever Increasing Faith* Smith Wigglesworth said, “Hard things are always opportunities to get to the Lord more glory when He manifests His power. Every trial is a blessing. There have been times when I have pressed through circumstances and it seemed as if a dozen road engines were going over me, but I have found that the hardest things are just lifting places into the grace of God.”⁶

Determination Will Help You to Make Progress on the Road to Lasting Accomplishments

Destiny beckons. Purpose is calling. But who are those determined to defy their ego, lay down their plans, and embrace their true calling in life? How many are determined enough to continue beyond their hurt feelings, disappointments, rejections, and discouragement? Who is willing to say *no* to the dream thief called fear? Who is determined to keep pushing forward for real gold unlike Lot’s wife who looked back because she missed the glitters she left behind in Sodom? These are real challenges that need to be dealt with on the road to lasting accomplishments.

Do you remember the story of Ruth in the Bible? She was a determined woman. Why would a widowed Moabite woman accompany her mother-in-law back to Israel to face a bleak future? Yet Ruth chose to shrug off this fact and put her faith in the God of Israel. The Bible tells us, “When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.”⁷ As it turned out, Ruth’s determination to continue paid off beautifully in the end. It led her

to an amazing divine destiny—a destiny that gave her a place in the list of the genealogy of Jesus.

Who said life must be easy because you are in the right place doing the right thing? Who said because you have a dream from God—a purpose to accomplish for Him—that there won't be difficulties to face? James Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission said, "There are three stages in work for God: First impossible, then difficult, then done."⁸ To see God take you through these three stages in anything you are doing, you need to stay determined all the way.

David Livingstone the great Scottish missionary and explorer was a man who recognized there was a divine design for lasting accomplishments. But he also knew success didn't come easily. Dr. Livingstone knew the power of determination and the importance of turning to God for a way forward even in the face of extremely difficult challenges. In a letter he wrote to his father and other relatives in September 1853, he said, "I am trying now to establish the Lord's kingdom in a region wider by far than Scotland. Fever seems to forbid; but I shall work for the glory of Christ's kingdom—fever or no fever."⁹ On another occasion, David Livingstone and other passengers experienced continued rough weather while aboard a ship. And they feared for their lives. But he had the courage to make this entry in his journal on May 20, 1864: "Have I not labored in vain? Am I to be cutoff before I do anything to effect permanent improvement in Africa? If spared, God grant that I may be more faithful than I have been, and may He open up the way for me!"¹⁰ With God's help, Dr. Livingstone outlived the storm and went on to achieve more remarkable things in Africa.

Yes, God spoke to you about something. You have his promise about it. You even have it written down. But you could be asking, "Why am I facing so many enemies? Why is there so much opposition along the way?" A point to consider is that the presence of enemies and opposition may not be the problem. The real problem may be your lack of quality determination. The Bible says, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."¹¹

Are You Sure the Opposition Is Not More Determined Than You Are?

People lose a lot in life when the opposition they face turns out to be more determined than they are. We see a picture of this from the story of the Israelites in the books of Joshua and Judges. Even after conquering the Promised Land, inhabiting it was not a stroll in the park for the Israelites. They faced determined opposition which they still had to overcome to take their allotted land. And some of the tribes succumbed to the opposition because they were not determined enough to overcome them. For example, Judges 1:27 tells us, “The tribe of Manasseh failed to drive out the people living in Beth-shan, Taanach, Dor, Iblean, Megiddo, and all their surrounding settlements, because the Canaanites were determined to stay in that region.”

Never magnify problems, challenges, and opposition. Don't see them as too big for a solution to be found. Even when they look defiant, continue to confront them with a determined attitude. Your determination to press past them by the wisdom and power of God will enable you to dislodge them and find a way forward.

My Personal Experience with Moving a Sofa

Some years ago, I had to move a sofa from one room to another all by myself. No one else was home to help me. And it was urgent because a piece of furniture was to be brought into the room where the sofa was. I had only a short time to make the room ready before the delivery of the piece of furniture. As I got about the task, I found it more difficult than I had anticipated. However, with some effort, I succeeded in getting the sofa out of the room where it was. But all the subsequent effort I made to get it through the door of the second room proved unsuccessful. I did all I could for over half an hour, by which time I had run out of ideas and was sweating profusely. To compound matters, I had pushed the sofa in such a way that it got

stuck and ended up blocking the door. I couldn't even get out of the room! At that point, one could say that the task I had taken up seemed determined to defy my every effort. Then the last thing I would have desired at that time happened. There was a knock on the gate, and I knew it was the delivery I was expecting. But I couldn't get past the sofa to open the gate.

It was in this seemingly impossible situation that a sudden ability came over me. I found my mind declaring, "You, sofa, must give way and go into the room!" Then I pulled it with a dimension of zeal I had never experienced before, and the sofa went through the door in a few seconds. I walked out to answer the knock. But the thought of what had happened occupied my mind. It was quite sobering. However, I learnt an important lesson from it about the power of determination.

I am grateful that God used this incident to bring me to a point where I could not give up or go back. The only option was to go forward. But to do this, I had to get past the sofa which was blocking the door. God helped me to understand that my determination to do whatever needs to be done—even in seemly impossible situations—will speedily attract His help, wisdom, and grace. Jesus said, "Anything is possible if a person believes."¹²

TEN EARLY SIGNS OF PROGRESS ON THE ROAD TO LASTING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Many people may be making progress without realizing it. Some signs of progress do not paint a picture of success.

When people have only eyes for the huge successes they desire, they easily despise and talk down on the little results they are achieving.

Undiscovered purpose robs life of its power.

The deeper the pit a person finds himself or herself in, the stronger the foundation that could be developed for further progress.

Driving can be so pleasurable when you know where you are going and how to get there. Just ignore for a minute the navigational tools we have today and imagine what it would be like driving through a big town for the first time. But if the town has road signs, you will agree with me there is no need to worry—because you will still be able to find your way through. A road sign is not a destination. However, it

points towards the desired destination. And it gives you the assurance that you are on course. This is what the ten early signs of progress do. Some of them don't even paint a picture of success. Rather they help you to know you are on the path that would eventually lead to the attainment of lasting success. Writing about his work in Africa in March 1847 Dr. David Livingstone said, "We have been a little more than a year with the Bakwains. No conversions have taken place, but real progress has been made." ¹³

My expectation is that as you read this chapter, you will see a light in what looks like a tunnel and your confidence will be boosted. I say this because many people may be making progress without realizing it. In the words of James Freeman Clarke, "Progress, in the sense of acquisition, is something; but progress in the sense of being, is a great deal more. To grow higher, deeper, wider, as the years go on; to conquer difficulties, and acquire more and more power; to feel all one's faculties unfolding, and truth descending into the soul—this makes life worth living." ¹⁴

Progress Is Not Always Visible

Can a woman be pregnant without anyone else realizing it? Obviously, yes! And is it possible for the same woman to be unaware she is pregnant? We all know this happens to a lot of women, especially in the first few weeks of pregnancy. I think this example clarifies the nature of progress. Progress is in levels. And you may be in the early seasons of your life or in the early stages of whatever you are called to do. So don't expect the progress you are making to be immediately visible to people around you. However, you need to be aware of it yourself—no matter how insignificant it may seem to be.

When people have only eyes for the huge successes they desire, they easily despise and talk down on the little results and successes they are achieving. You should avoid doing this. The wise thing to do is to embrace such small successes—for what they are—as a sign of progress. As you read on you will find that the ten early signs of

progress in this chapter are so definite they shouldn't really be seen as small in any way.

The signs of progress are also progressive. They reflect the fact that as people move up in life, the demands of progress will be more. What represents progress for a person at one level may not be considered as such for another person at a different level. Like Paul told Timothy in the Bible, "Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress."¹⁵ By the time Paul wrote this Epistle around A.D. 64, Timothy was no longer a beginner in Christian service. He had become the pastor of the church in Ephesus. Therefore, Paul was challenging him not to settle in performing his tasks but to step up so everyone could see the remarkable progress he was making as a leader.

The Sign of Potential

Everyone has it. However, many don't take it seriously because they have eyes only for gold. They see the gold in other people's lives and keep desiring it while despising what they see as the impure metal they have. They keep asking, "Can this raw ability I have make any difference in a world that seems glutted with achievers?" But they forget that gold first exists as an impure metal—with the potential of being mined and refined.

If you want your progress to become visible, you need to recognize your gifts and abilities as a definite sign you have hidden treasure in you. And this treasure can be mined, refined, and put to good use to bless the world and glorify God. It's a joy for me to hear how people are being blessed by reading books written by my wife Linda. However, as I look back, I wonder at the fact that this unique ability remained unrecognized for quite a while until something remarkable happened. Later in the book I will share the story about this eye opener which got Linda to start writing her first book. You will find that the potential was already there. But it took an elderly lady who

saw the gold that could come out of it to get her to put the potential to work.

The Sign of Purpose

The discovery of purpose is a definite sign of progress. I once asked a man some questions about his vision in life. At that time, he was homeless and used to roam round a neighborhood in London looking for what to eat. He also wasn't in a healthy state of mind. Before the day I asked him the questions, I had reached out to him for a period and helped him in other ways. But now I felt it was time to encourage him to think and see a new horizon of possibilities ahead of him. So, I asked to know if he would like to get a job, get good housing, get married, have children, and live a decent life. And his answer was, "I don't know." As I look back at this incident, I can't help thinking how blessed people are who know what they want in life and know what they are divinely-called to do—even if they may not yet be doing it or getting the kind of results they desire from doing it.

There is nothing like waking up each morning and knowing you have clarity of purpose. It gives meaning to everyday living. A measure of confusion will usually surround the mind of a person who goes on living without grasping what he or she has been placed here on the earth to do. Undiscovered purpose robs life of its power. So, if you have found out what your purpose in life is, you need to embrace it as a definite sign of progress. It means you have a mandate from heaven—a divine task to accomplish that has the potential of blessing countless lives and making the world a better place to live in. More will be said about how to discover and fulfill purpose later in the book.

The Sign of God's Presence and Peace

This is obviously the most important sign of progress. But sometimes we take it for granted. Never reach a point as a Christian where you

think you know enough to take the assurance of God's presence and peace for granted. That's not the kind of wisdom you need if you want to keep experiencing progress. Any decision to disregard God and keep going, anyway, will take away purpose from life and hinder progress. If God is with you, it is a definite sign you are on course. So, do you have a specific word from God about what you are doing which will anchor your soul through thick and thin? Do you have the assurance of God's peace in and around you? Can you really say that you are being led by the Holy Spirit? If yes, then this is evidence of divine involvement in your steps. And the implication is that you will not grope about like someone in the dark. Rather, you will have light on your path, and your path will shine brighter and brighter.

The Sign of Preparation

There are seasons in life. And one of them is the season of training and preparation. Preparation is not just a period to mark time. Rather it is proof there is a baton of authority and responsibility which will soon be handed to you. Joshua was making progress all the while he was being prepared to receive the baton and lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. In his book *The Way into the Holiest*, Frederick B. Meyer said, "Squander the moments of preparation, and you may have to rue their loss through all the coming years!"¹⁶

Do your best to ensure you are making progress during your season of preparation. Don't sit idly with your potential and watch time go by—otherwise you may be disqualified from progressing further. You need to recognize that while you are serving in the dreams of others, you are also in training. You should see their success as your success. If you can stay faithful and diligent, you could one day step out from your training ground to serve in ways that are beyond your wildest dreams.

The Sign of the Pit

A dimension of divine preparation and training that is often talked about is what is commonly referred to as the pit. The *pit* is not designed to be a destination. Rather it is a foundation laying stage for another level. It is a stop-point, in preparation for a start at a higher level. It is the womb of the night where a new day for new things is made. It is like a wilderness experience that helps to prepare and usher a person into a new season. And the deeper the *pit* a person finds himself or herself in, the stronger the foundation that could be developed for further progress. David was already anointed as king designate for Israel. So, he had the promise of God. He knew God's presence. He had a sense of purpose. However, all the while King Saul was after him, it was like David had found himself in a pit. And he kept crying out for deliverance. Yet throughout this lengthy season in the *pit*, he kept making progress. He experienced growth in his understanding of God's ways and his total dependence on the Lord who alone could save him. His spiritual muscles were built up thereby enhancing his capacity to endure and outlast difficult challenges. He also gained wisdom that helped him to make sound judgments. And he learned how to forgive, go past his mistakes, and move on.

During his time in the *pit*, David saw growth in his immediate family. He witnessed the development of his military base as a king-in-waiting. He also saw the formation of his inner circle. It was within this period that four hundred men joined David for training. Some of them later became part of his leadership team, and most became part of his all-conquering army. With all these growth and development in place, it's no surprise that when the throne of Israel was vacant, David was ready to lead.

So, don't faint if you find yourself in what could be called a pit. Remember that God's plan is not for you to end up there. His plan is to use it to prepare you for the fulfillment of His promises to you. There is power in waiting on God and trusting in Him during difficult seasons. Those who do experience a renewal of their strength. Like eagles, they will arise with wings and glide to higher altitudes.

The Sign of Provision

Provision accompanies purposeful living. It usually backs up every dream, vision or idea that has God as its source. Wherever your divine mission takes you—and whatever circumstances it might take you through—you will find divine provision there. Even if it is in the desert, like the children of Israel experienced. Even if it is at a time of famine, like Elijah experienced while serving as a prophet. God rained down manna from heaven for the Israelites in the desert. And He used a raven and an impoverished woman to provide for Elijah. Whatever it takes, God provides for those who are in His will and who trust Him to provide for them.

Availability of needed provision can be a definite sign of progress especially when a person may not seem to be making progress. I remember how God provided for my wife and me several years ago when I was very sick and holding on to the Lord for life. Think also of Paul. He was provided for even while in prison for preaching the gospel. And is it not probable that the symbolic gifts the wise men brought when they came to worship the Child Jesus in Bethlehem eventually became God's way of meeting the needs of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus during their stay in Egypt? Escaping to Egypt didn't look like progress. But it was in God's will. And one way or the other, God backed it up with His provision.

The Sign of Promotion

The Bible tells us in Psalm 75, “No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man. But it is God who judges: he brings one down, he exalts another.”¹⁷ Promotion comes from God. And it is another sign of progress. Whoever is faithful in what is little will be given more responsibilities. A competent person will eventually stand before kings. And those with diligent hands will be made leaders. All this is scriptural—and they represent forms of promotion. Can you identify the root of a problem which has gone unnoticed to others

around you? And are you willing to challenge your mind to find a solution to it? If you can, you may have a promotion waiting in the wings for you. Are you willing to be trained? Can you make the effort to acquire a new skill or sharpen the skills you have? Do you bring a touch of excellence to the way you do what you do? And can you inconvenience yourself sometimes by giving that extra bit to your work, even though you might not be paid for it? These are all door openers for promotion.

Promotion is not always equivalent to position. It doesn't follow that each time a person is promoted it will be evidenced by a new position. For some people, their position or office could remain the same for decades. But their commitment to duty and quality service would mean they would keep rising to new levels in life. They will find more grace and become more innovative in performing their tasks. They will impact more people and become more influential. These things point to a person who is making progress.

The Sign of Persecution

In the book *Dictionary of Burning Words of Brilliant Writers*, Josiah Hotchkiss quotes Newman Hall who said, "The opposition which assails us in the course of obedience is no evidence that we are mistaken."¹⁸ Sometimes people misunderstand persecution. They can't understand why the good work they are doing is being opposed instead of appreciated. They wonder why the remarkable influence they are having is so distasteful to some people that they will do whatever they can to curtail it. I will say a lot more about persecution in another chapter. But if you are experiencing persecution in any way, I encourage you to cheer up. You are not going backwards. You are making progress. In the plan of God, persecution ends up working out a lot of good things for you. When people try to stop the good work that you are doing, they end up setting a stage for you to rise to a new level.

So, what is the background for persecution? The story of the

children of Israel in Egypt will make this clear. At a time, the authorities in Egypt became extremely concerned about the explosive growth of the Israelites who were living among them. And their response was to come up with ideas on how to oppress them and curtail their growth. They ignored the fact that they were being blessed by the presence of the children of Israel. They couldn't care to learn lessons from them on how to become prosperous. Rather their envy and hatred—which was being instigated by the devil—pushed them into becoming threatened by what they should have celebrated. They opposed what they should have supported. But what was the result of their actions? The Bible tells us that, “The more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and spread, and the more alarmed the Egyptians became.”¹⁹ Yes, the oppression continued even after this. However, we already know the end of the story. Persecution will result in continued progress for you—unless you concede to it.

The Sign of the Platform

The platform is where you would most likely want to be—because it is where your progress could become accelerated and easily visible to the people in your world. From there you can spread out your network of influence without struggling and sweating in the process. Sometimes people may be doing the right thing, in the right place, without seeing the kind of progress they desire—because they don't yet have the platform for it.

Platform can be a function of season. It is also a function of the grace of God on a person's life. So be patient. Stay in the process and keep making progress here and progress there. God will eventually give you the platform you need to express your uniqueness. And when you step up on it, your remarkable progress will affect a lot of people and bring glory to God.

The Sign of the Process

Life is not an event. There is a process to it. And this process takes you from one event to another; from one season to another; from one level of success to another. You may not be where you desire to be. But if you can tell that the process is on, it will motivate you to keep going. This is a definite sign of progress. Don't avoid the process. Let it run its course. Don't leave the right path and look for short cuts. This could lead you to a dead end. Just stay in the process. Stay in your lane. Receive grace from God to practice contentment. And keep doing the right things. By the time you do a review after a few years, you will be surprised at the level of progress you would have made.

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PART TWO

KNOWING YOUR PURPOSE
AND FULFILLING IT

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5

**RECOGNIZE YOUR DIVINE
CONNECTION INTO DESTINY**

One of the greatest choices a person could make is to lay down his good desires so that he can walk in God's destiny for his life.

Most people would like to be relevant in life. And the best way to see this happen is to desire to be relevant in God's will whatever it might be.

Destiny does not run on a straight line. Turnings could occur along the way. And seasons will change.

In the opening chapter of this book, I shared the story of Samuel Finley Morse who is the inventor of the single-wire telegraph system. Knowing the things he achieved, one would think Samuel Morse studied science at a high level and spent his early years in an inventor's workshop. But this is far from the case. Even into his 30's Morse had such a desire to excel in the Arts! He studied Arts

in different countries—including attending the Royal Academy of Arts, London in 1811. He went on to pursue a career as an Arts painter. And remarkably enough, it was while he was painting a portrait of Marquis de Lafayette which he was commissioned to do in Washington that a painful and undesired turn in events became his steppingstone from desire into destiny. The year was 1825, and after the experience—which you can read about in the opening chapter—a new desire developed in the heart of Samuel Morse to do whatever he could to enhance long distance communication between people. Then, in 1832, something else happened. Morse ran into a scientist named Charles Thomas Jackson while aboard a ship. And as they discussed, Charles Jackson gave him helpful information about how to actualize the desire on his heart. This chance meeting was unplanned. However, it became like the activator of Morse's connection with destiny.

What Is the Lesson Here?

In all your desiring, idealizing, dreaming and pursuits, you need to keep your heart open—and challenge your mind to be prepared—to recognize and receive whatever would become your divine connection into your specific destiny. Your mind could be running over with wishes and desires. You could have ideas about your dream future. You could be pursuing a line of education or career. You could even be experiencing a level of success in what you are doing presently. And do wishes come true? Sometimes they do. Do our personal dreams come true? Often, they do. Is achieving goals and experiencing success not what it is all about? Not quite. Not when you bring the issue of a person's specific divine destiny into the equation. A study of the lives of great achievers and Bible heroes reveals a trend where God, at some point, usually interrupts the direction people are going in life and the things they are doing to introduce them to the route of their specific divine destiny.

Destiny brings you into God's predetermined plans and purpose for

your life. Divine interruptions that introduce us to divine destiny could take place because of an opportunity to meet a need, a season of crisis, a turn in events, a connection with someone, a visit to a place, or a dream or vision. And you need to be sensitive enough to discover and embrace the desires and dreams God would deposit in your heart at such a time.

What was it that got Samuel Morse to lay aside his desire to excel in the arts and focus on enhancing long distance communication between people? No doubt, destiny was calling! What was it that got Rev. David Wilkerson to leave his base in rural Pennsylvania and start out on a journey of 350 miles to a city he had not been to before? I would say that for him also, destiny was calling. So, one of the greatest choices a person could make is to lay down his good desires so that he can walk in God's destiny for his life. Mark Hopkins said, "There are moments...when destiny trembles in the balance, and the preponderance of either scale is by our own choice."²⁰

The English lady Florence Nightingale could in a sense have turned out to be anything in her lifetime. She was from a well-to-do family that had ideas about the kind of future she should have. And to show how gifted she was, Miss Nightingale eventually wrote several books on a variety of issues. But when a turn in events, the Crimean War that began in March of 1854 set a stage for her to excel in what would become her life-calling, she opened her heart and willingly received the opportunity from her Maker. It was a call to care for the wounded and hurt; to speak up and campaign for improvements in hygiene and to lay a good ground for better hospital management. And what a destiny Miss Nightingale ended up fulfilling! She was the first woman to be awarded the Order of Merit for distinguished service by the British monarch in 1907. Today she is recognized as the founder of modern-day nursing. The point being made about Florence Nightingale could also be made about the woman who became known as Mother Teresa, and so many others.

Doesn't God Recognize All the Good You Could Accomplish by Doing What You Want to Do?

He does. However, He is not impressed—if what you are doing is not what He would want you to be doing now. For anyone who is a Christian, what pleases God is your desire to do whatever He desires for you to do. This is proof of your devotion to Him. And, in this way, He will snap you out of living for yourself—living just to pursue your own dreams and desires—into living for Jesus and living to fulfill His purpose for your life. Ephesians 2:10 tells us, “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

Q & A with Dr. Hugh Osgood

Q: What was your response like when you had to abandon your dream of going to serve in Zambia as a missionary?

A: It was not easy at first. They told us we had to wait 4 years. This did not make sense. But later I realized God was at work.

Most people would like to be relevant in life. And the best way to see this happen is to desire to be relevant in God’s will—whatever it might be. A genuine search for relevance in God’s plan will find you saying things like, “Lord, have your way in my life! Use me anyway and anywhere you want to. I want to be a blessing to the people around me, and to the world. Use me to make a positive difference in my place of work, in my relationships, in my community, and in my nation.” This is a search for relevance. It is the springboard for all kinds of positive innovations, entrepreneurial activities, society-transforming accomplishments, fruitful Christian service, and so on. At some stage in the process of your search for relevance, a good

thought could come to your mind; a desire could be deposited in your heart; you could receive an idea; you could conceive a divine dream, which will point towards the direction of the destiny God has for you. This divine desire, idea or dream—like Joseph had in the Bible—may not be detailed enough to reveal a lot of things about your destiny. However, it will point in that direction.

There is a process involved when it comes to discovering destiny, understanding it, and fulfilling it. So, it is important that you hold on to your God-given dreams and desires. Dreams from God give you the wings you need to soar like someone expecting great things in the future. They will help you to know you are not just like everyone else—there is purpose to your life which you will understand better as you stay on track.

Divine dreams are an essential anchor for the soul as you go through the process of preparation for the fulfillment of your destiny. They help you not to despise your small beginning. They motivate you to be faithful in small things. They energize you to give your best in the dreams of others; to serve well where you are now, knowing that you are sowing the seeds that will produce the future you are looking forward to. Dreams give you something to keep your focus on, until the right season when your search for relevance will enable you to have a clearer understanding of the specific purpose why God put you here on the earth.

Watch Out for the Turning That Occurs in Later Years—The Story of Margaret and Verner

In the plan of God, fulfillment of destiny is a life-long journey. This means that a person's destiny on the earth is not over until he or she reaches the finish line. However, it is important to keep in mind that destiny does not run on a straight line. Turnings could occur along the way. And seasons will change—especially in the later years of a person's life.

If you are going up in years, I will encourage you not to see old

age as a setback to the fulfillment of your destiny. Do your best not to approach it with a sit-back-and-watch attitude. Rather you need to recognize that it is a different season in life. And an appropriate response at such a time would be to receive a dream from God that is tailor-made for that season in your life. This is the divinely designed process that will enable you to keep longing for more, remain useful, and stay relevant as you move up in years. The Bible tells us the old will dream dreams.²¹

My wife and I continue to remember an amazing couple who opened their home to us during the early period of our stay in the Danish city of Herning. Verner and Margaret Madsen are up in their ages and have mixed Danish and Canadian background. While staying with them in 1999, we were blessed to witness how they faced up to a time of transition in their lives. At that time, Verner worked for a construction firm. But their longing was to fulfill the dream on their hearts which was to serve as missionaries in Africa. They had been there previously. And as we watched them, we saw their readiness to embrace the new season God had for them. You could tell from their words that the challenges ahead were no match for their courage, passion, and resolve. It was not long before they left everything else and returned to a mission field in Africa. Verner and Margaret have been there now for several years. And I can testify that their regular mission updates bring joy to my heart and do a lot to encourage me. Along with their team, they are running a Bible School, farm projects and outreaches to several communities. Their dream is being fulfilled and they are truly making a remarkable difference!

SEVEN THINGS THAT WILL HELP YOU TO KNOW YOUR PURPOSE

When you get on the platform for your purpose, you can tell the difference. There will be that overwhelming sense of, “This is more like it! Now let’s get on with it.”

There are seasons of transition from one level to another in purpose.

People who are fulfilling purpose are gifted to do it, motivated to do it, good at doing it, get results from doing it, and enjoy doing it.

In late summer of 2014, I visited a friend and his family who lived in Lodz, Poland at the time. I spent four memorable and fulfilling days with them. On the evening before my departure something lying on top of the center table in their lounge caught my attention. It happened to be a book. And, on seeing it, I felt the urge to read it. As I picked up the book to have a closer glance at it, my friend, John

Godson, observed what I did and went on to share a remarkable story about how the book had travelled a long distance to get to him. One of his daughters had visited Canada, and while there she ran into a pastor who knew about the difference John had been making as a Member of Parliament in the nation of Poland. The pastor thought about how to get home his greetings and word of appreciation to John Godson. That is how he got the idea to give him the book through his daughter. And she brought it home on her return from Canada.

Well, I heard the story. However, my eyes remained on the book. So, what was it that kept my eyes on the book? Why was I very keen on reading it? The answer is a simple one: It was the author. And his name happened to be Myles Munroe. I went ahead and asked for permission to read and return the book in the short time I had left before travelling back to London. Less than three months after this, the painful news came through that Dr. Munroe had passed away, along with Ruth his wife and seven others, in a private airplane crash in Bahamas.

Myles Munroe lived to be sixty years of age. And one thing I think many people who knew him around the world would agree on is that he was a man on a divine mission. He rose from his poor background in Bahamas to embrace his purpose in life and in the process of living it out he wrote dozens of books and travelled extensively motivating others. I believe Dr. Munroe achieved his dreams and was outstanding in fulfilling his purpose. His legacy of achievements is still speaking for him even though he has moved on into eternity.

This chapter is an important one. In it, you will find seven key things that will help you to determine if you have stepped into God's purpose for your life. You will read about some essential factors that are crucial for becoming established in your purpose. You will also find out why the words *devotion* and *balance* cannot be overlooked in fulfilling purpose. However, before going into all this, I think it is helpful to point out that discovering and fulfilling purpose does not necessarily imply you have to start something new you could call your own—it's not about becoming your own boss and doing your

own thing. Often, people find purpose in serving with others or serving under what could be called another person's dream.

Knowing Your Purpose—Seven Things to Consider

How can you tell you are at the heart of the very thing God put you here on the earth to do? I will suggest you should not be quick to be conclusive about this. Just when you think you know it all, a divine interruption could occur in your life and introduce you to something you had no clue you would get to do. Yet, in saying that, I want to point out seven things that could help a person to know his or her purpose. They are the picture of purpose, platform for purpose, posture for purpose, phases of purpose, product of purpose, pressures of purpose and pleasure of purpose.

Picture of Purpose

A helpful clue in knowing your purpose is to answer the question, "What do you see?" There is what I call a picture of purpose. And this picture can take quite some time to emerge in a person's life. For seasons in your life, you could serve here and serve there. You could have dreams to run with. You could have opportunities to use your gifts. You could also experience success in the things you do. However, one proof that you have entered your God-ordained purpose is that you will reach a point where the small and fuzzy pictures you had about your future come together as one big clearer picture. A lot of puzzles will come together enabling you to see destiny in the divine picture that would emerge. And this picture of purpose is so defining because it will take you away from standing on a crossroad. It will help to dissolve a lot of doubt in your mind about the direction of your life and what you are specifically assigned to do.

Platform for Purpose

Do not confuse dreams with purpose. The dreams Joseph had about his brothers bowing to him did not represent a picture of purpose. The dreams only helped to energize him and keep him going on the road that would lead him to the discovery of his purpose. So, what was the major turning point that ushered Joseph into what could be called his divine purpose? It was the platform he received to function as a prime minister in Egypt. Yes, Joseph had his two remarkable dreams in Canaan. But the platform for his purpose was not there. It was in Egypt. After years of being a prime minister in Egypt, it finally dawned on Joseph that God had given him a platform to serve and preserve the lives of so many people—including the lives of his brothers who bowed to him in his dreams. So, one important factor that will make it easier for you to see a clear picture of purpose is having the platform needed to fulfill it. Keep in mind that your season of preparation in life may hold clues about your purpose. But it may not reveal how the purpose will evolve or where it will take you to. However, when you get on the platform for your purpose in life, you can tell the difference. There will be that overwhelming sense of, “This is more like it! Now let’s get on with it.”

Posture for Purpose

Another factor in determining purpose is seen in the posture people adopt in the pursuit of whatever is their purpose. It’s a posture or position where you really won’t think of anything better you would rather be doing as a career. You will not only have grace to do what you do; you will also enjoy doing it. There will of course be challenges in doing it. However, you won’t struggle and sweat to do it. And you won’t be doing it out of compulsion. Instead, you will find delight in doing it—not just for the money it provides, but for the fulfillment it brings to you as a person.

Phases of Purpose

There are exit doors in purpose. However, they are not for quitting. Rather, they lead from one phase to another as the different dimensions or seasons of a person's purpose unfold over time. Purpose will not keep you stuck at the same point—doing the same thing endlessly in the same way. Purpose allows for the full expression of a person's potential. It allows for new dreams, skills acquisition, and development as well as capacity enhancement. It recognizes the need to continually embrace and adapt to positive changes occurring in your world. There are seasons of transition from one level to another in purpose. Promotion accompanies fulfillment of purpose. Also, in fulfilling purpose, people can go from just making limited short-term plans to making 10-year, 20-year or 50-year plans—as the platform for it emerges. All this can represent different phases of purpose.

Product of Purpose

You can also tell a person's purpose from the fulfillment of that purpose. There is a unique type of fruit that manifests when purpose is being fulfilled. Being in your purpose will enable you to meet specific needs in your world and solve problems in a unique way. It helps to bring out the best in you. As you keep doing it, you will observe that what you are doing is making a remarkable difference, and it is bringing delight to people who are being impacted by it. It will also bring delight to God because he will be glorified by what you are doing.

Pressure of Purpose

Accomplishment of purpose is not without its challenges. It usually comes with a form of pressure. However, the grace to overcome the pressure will be available—if a person remains in his or her purpose. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians said, “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted,

but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”²² Pressure has a way of energizing and pushing forward those who are doing what they are divinely wired to do. Yes, pressure can wear out a person. But it can also stir up passion. Great men and women have a way of thriving under pressure. That’s what Sir Winston Churchill did during the Second World War. That’s also what William Booth, founder of Salvation Army, did in his days. When the pressure mounts, the wisdom that rings out loudest for people in their purpose is not ‘try, fail, then quit and try something else’. Rather it is, ‘try, try, and try again’. Like Winston Churchill said, “This is the lesson: Never give in, never give in; never, never, never, never—in nothing great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.”²³

Pleasure of Purpose

A way to tell if a person is in his purpose is to observe the passion and enthusiasm he invests into it. Indeed, there is a kind of healthy pleasure that is derived from fulfilling divine purpose. You don’t need to look too closely to see that people who are fulfilling a purpose are gifted to do it, motivated to do it, good at doing it, get results from doing it, and enjoy doing it. Doing the very thing they are uniquely positioned to do seems to be the one thing that often makes their day worthwhile. It is as if they can’t get themselves to stop talking about it. It can truly be a thing of delight for them. This level at which you get delight from what you are doing, other people get delight from it, and God is being glorified through it, is the level where the treasure in your purpose is no longer hidden—rather it is being unearthed. And to reach this level in fulfilling your purpose, you need to bring into play the factors that produce a devoted attitude.

Q & A with Dr. Hugh Osgood

Q: Could you give us two indicators of a person's purpose?

A: It is possible to strive your way into something. But when it comes to purpose, there is no striving because God will give you peace about it and the energy to do it.

Approach the Fulfillment of Your Purpose with a Balanced Attitude of Devotion

Employers expect devotion to duty from their employees. Marriage demands devotion to the relationship from those who want to enjoy it and see it last a lifetime. Even the activities you do for leisure will crave devotion from you. Watch the people who stand out in life, and you will observe they are devoted to whatever they are doing. So, if you can wrap your idea, desire, dream, or purpose with what I call a balanced devoted attitude, you will experience progress on your way to accomplishing it. I will explain later why the word *balanced* is important. However, I would like to, first, outline certain terms which I think will help to bring home the message about having dreams and desires, understanding purpose, and developing a devoted attitude:

- *Desire* stirs up a longing in you about something.
- *Discovery* enables you to birth dreams and understand destiny and purpose.
- *Dreams* point towards your destiny and give you wings to soar into it.
- *Dreams* also enable you to accomplish different aspects of your purpose.
- *Destiny* is God's pathway into your specific purpose.

- *Dedication* to small things and other people's dreams help to prepare you for your purpose.
- *Decision* establishes your desire, dream or purpose as a priority worth going for.
- *Duty* develops in you a true sense of purpose and responsibility.
- *Depth* reveals the level of knowledge and passion you bring into accomplishing your purpose.
- *Determination* establishes your purpose.
- *Discipline* brings order and character to your purpose.
- *Diligence* brings excellence to your purpose.
- *Delight* confirms that the treasure in your purpose is being unearthed.
- *Development* enables you to remain on the cutting edge in what you do.
- *Direction* helps you to stay on the right track as you fulfill your purpose.
- *Distraction* is a potential game-changer to avoid along the way.

There Is a Treasure in Every God-given Purpose

There is a treasure of immense value to people waiting to be unearthed and unveiled as you dig into accomplishing your specific purpose. This treasure needs to be diligently worked out with determination. You need to stay disciplined. You need to follow the right direction and avoid distractions. You need to keep developing personally as you continue in the process. These qualities reveal how much you believe in what you have been assigned to do. They also reveal how well you are performing. By displaying them you are communicating that your purpose is something worth living for, worth selling everything to hold on to and, sometimes, worth laying down your life for. This is what enables the treasure in it to be unearthed. And it brings delight to people, to God, and to you as well. When people fail to bring these qualities into play, they easily get stuck on the road to fulfilling their purpose.

Discipline is essential. George Washington, the first President of America, talked about discipline. He said, “Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all.”²⁴ In First Corinthians 9:25-27 the Apostle Paul said, “All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So, I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.”

Work Is Meant to Be Enjoyed—Not Endured

When you are in the center of God’s purpose for your life, you will enjoy the work you do. After William Wilberforce became a devoted Christian in 1785, I think it led him to begin a Christ-centered search for relevance as a politician. And when he was asked to lead the cause for the abolition of slavery Wilberforce took up the task. It eventually became the work that defined his purpose in life. William Wilberforce had this to say about work: “The moment that a man begins to do his work for his Savior’s sake, he feels that the most ordinary employments are full of sweetness and dignity, and that the most difficult are not impossible.”²⁵

Bringing Balance to Your Devotion

In concluding this chapter, I would like to bring up the question, ‘Who, or what, is at the center of your purpose?’ This question needs to remain fresh on our minds in all our pursuits. The passionate pursuit of purpose and dreams can lead people to become success driven. And for Christians, our priority should not be the desire for personal success. Rather it should be the desire for Jesus—the desire to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him. This will obligate us to ensure that Jesus is at the center of every other desire we have. In this way all other desires will flow from Him and revolve around Him.

That's what having a balanced attitude of devotion is about. It will enable you to bring godly order to your devotion by ensuring Jesus is at the center of it all. Why is this important? I think the answer should be obvious: Without Jesus remaining at the center of our devotion, everything we pursue and accomplish will have no eternal value.

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7

DISCOVER THE PLACE CONDUCTIVE FOR YOUR PROGRESS

You may already be in the place conducive for your progress. However if you are not, you need to be there!

When you get there, you will know. You could be there for a season. Or you could even be there for a life-time.

There is a workplace where you are the answer to a need. There, you are at your best and can improve on it. This workplace is not everywhere. You have to search it out.

If you are a follower of Jesus, you just can't be a freelance Christian. You have to discover the local church where you belong and take your place there.

The Great Chicago Fire of October 1871 affected a lot of people including Dwight L. Moody who lost the house his family was living in to the fire. D. L. Moody was very influential as an evangelist especially in the last 30 years of the nineteenth century. And as his influence grew across the United States and beyond, he was faced with the challenge of discovering the place where he should reside

and operate from. A wealthy man from Chicago named John Farwell offered to build a new house in Chicago for evangelist Moody and his family. However, the offer was made in a bid to persuade the evangelist to make Chicago his permanent home. I imagine D. L. Moody would have prayed about it because he declined the offer. In the end, he opted for a farmhouse he bought in his birthplace of Northfield, Massachusetts. Eventually, Northfield became a prominent place in evangelical circles. It was there that Evangelist Moody organized his summer conferences which were attended by Christian leaders from around the world.

You may already be in a place conducive for your progress. However, if you are not, you need to be there! Not everywhere in the world is conducive to your progress. There is a prepared place where you should stay—where you should live, work, or do business. It's the place where you belong. It's where you need to be. It's where the best in you will come out. And it's where your efforts will bring the best returns. To help set a stage for your efforts to result in lasting accomplishments, it is important that you are doing the right thing, with the right motives, at the right time, with the right people, and in the right place or from the right place.

What Makes the Place Unique?

I listened to a boxer several years ago as he answered a question that sought to know his views about a place he was visiting for a professional fight. I observed that he could not hide his feeling of disappointment. He expected to see skyscrapers all over the major city but felt let down when this was not the case. As genuine as his feeling was, it was not difficult to tell he didn't belong to that city—It was not his prepared place.

It is not about how beautiful the place conducive for your progress is. It's not about its proximity to beaches, tourist havens, and world-class transport facilities. It certainly cannot just be because of its name. More than all these, the primary thing is the assurance of

God's special blessing that will come on you when you are doing the right thing, at the right time, and in the right place or from the right place. Your prepared place is your operational base from where you will accomplish your purpose. You don't have to be everywhere to touch lives and affect the world. You only need to operate from the right place. From there, your impact can be felt all around the globe.

Your prepared place is God-designed, to enable you to be at your best, achieve your best, and have the best experience possible. When you are there, it will seem as if the place is custom-made—with you in mind—to create the right environment you require to flourish and accomplish your destiny. It is the place where you can exercise godly authority. It is where you can fulfill your dreams. It is where you can excel and prosper. It is where you can experience lasting growth. If you seek, you will find. If you enquire about it, you will receive the understanding you need. You could have an opportunity to go there—or you could hear a voice or have a witness saying, “Go there.” When you get there, you will know. You could be there for a season. Or you could even be there for a lifetime. I will share a personal story to illustrate this later in the chapter.

Take Your Place There

The principle of discovering where you belong runs through many issues in life. For example, if you are a follower of Jesus, you just can't be a freelance Christian. You need to discover the local church where you belong and take your place there.

There is a place of work where you are the answer to a need and the solution to a problem. There, you are at your best and can improve on it. You give value for money, and you are paid and promoted with a smile because your contribution is appreciated. This workplace cannot be everywhere. You need to search it out.

Years back when I was searching for a job, I saw an advert in a newspaper for a good position with a company. I quickly dashed to their business place for an application form. As I stepped into the

reception room I was welcomed by a receptionist and a picture of Jesus on the wall. It all looked very inviting. I took the form and was on my way to fill it out when it dawned on me that I had not found out what the business was into. This was not disclosed in the newspaper advert. So, I asked someone close by about this. What I heard drew the curtain on that search. I knew immediately I did not belong there. And without really thinking about it, I excused myself, left the person I was talking with, headed back to the receptionist, and returned the empty application form in a nice manner.

Doing business has become more global. In fact, the *World Wide Web* has made this a lot easier and faster. Yet not every person, or every organization, is able to do business everywhere or go global from day one. There is a place and environment where your business ideas will be nurtured to bear fruit. Therefore, if you intend to start a business—if you want to enter a market—it would be wise for you to enquire from God and discover where your business is called to create or fill a gap. Take your place there, settle there, and flourish there.

From the Bible we see that Isaac would have desired to relocate to Egypt at a time of famine. This seemed the logical thing to do. The natural conditions there suited his business better. But God spoke to him in a dream and said something like, “Remain where you are in Gerar. Do business there. Sow there. Invest there.” Isaac agreed with God, and what a return he got! Genesis 26:12-14 tells us, “When Isaac planted his crops that year, he harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the LORD blessed him. He became a very rich man, and his wealth continued to grow. He acquired so many flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and servants that the Philistines became jealous of him.”

From Denmark to England

Your stay in a particular place could be for a season. And you need to know when to move on. In the case of Isaac, he was only in Gerar for a season. After a while he recognized when his season there was

over and moved on. Some years ago, my family experienced a major relocation which I think can serve as an illustration here—that relocation took us from Denmark to England.

Denmark is a beautiful country. My wife Linda and I lived there for more than six years. During that period, we were trained, we were mentored, we were challenged, and we were blessed. Two of our children were born there. We were warmly received by a church in a town called Herning. We served as missionaries and helped to pastor the international arm of the church. The senior pastors, Allan and Trine Funk-Hansen are wonderful people. They cared passionately for us. And it was our joy and privilege to serve under them. However, by late 2003, there was no denying the witness in our hearts that our season there was ending. This was confirmed when a visiting preacher spoke specifically over Linda and me during a church service. Part of what he said was, “Father, they have said to themselves in their hearts we want to serve the Lord; we want to follow the Lord; we want to do anything the Lord says to us. This morning, Father, I ask for a renewed and stronger spirit of revelation. I ask for eyes that will see the unseen. I ask for spiritual discernment.” He went on to say, “I ask for clarity; telling them this is the way. And boldness and faith to walk this way and see your blessing multiplied out of their lives in the wonderful name of Jesus.”

Prior to this, we had not said anything about the witness in our hearts to anyone. So, we had full assurance that this confirmation was from the Lord. We continued to pray for our future even though the specific direction we needed remained a mystery. It took some months and a visit to London for the mystery to be revealed.

We were in London to attend a conference. One night, as it was just past midnight, we were about to enter the elevator to the apartment where we stayed when the voice of the Lord rang out on my inside. It was clear. It was definite. And He said, “...You will serve me in this city and take my gospel to other places. I am your God. I am the one speaking to you. You have been waiting to hear from Me and now I have spoken to you. I will prove it to you...” As soon as

we got into the apartment, I wrote down all that the Lord said. The fulfillment of this word was swift and it still amazes us today. In the process we got connected to Rev. Herbert Palm, a pastor in London. And within a few months, the church in Denmark released us with blessings and we were on our way to London, England.

Where You Will Experience the Peace of God and His Blessing

The benefits of the place conducive for your progress are enormous. For a start, your boundary lines will be marked and you will find yourself in a pleasant place. The psalmist in Psalm 16 said, “The land you have given me is a pleasant land. What a wonderful inheritance!”²⁶ You will experience real peace inside you about where you are. The Lord’s face will shine over you. His voice will be clear to you. His favor will go before you. You will witness angels ascending and descending for your good. You will enjoy regular rain of blessing. You will bear fruit in due season. God will cause your struggles to cease after a while. He will give you rest on every side. Your progress will be accelerated.

Your provision is also there. No one wants to be eastbound on an aircraft while his luggage is westbound on another aircraft. God’s provision awaits your arrival at the place He instructs you to go. So it’s important that you are in your prepared place because your provision is there. Elijah proved this to be true. Firstly, when he received a divine instruction to go to the brook Kerith, God said to him, “You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.”²⁷ When another instruction came to close the season at the brook, it included an assurance of provision: “Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food.”²⁸ The message here is simple: The instruction you need for your next move is incomplete without the Lord’s assurance of His presence and provision.

Finally, I want to encourage you to press on into your pleasant

place. God has promised that after you have suffered a while, He will strengthen and establish you. He has prepared a place to establish you which is a pleasant place—a place of true peace, fruitful service, fulfillment and all-round success. And you need to press on into it and enjoy your stay there.

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8

THE POWER OF RIGHT DECISIONS

When you make wrong decisions, you lose influence quickly.

The longer indecision lingers, the more likely it is that compromise will be inevitable.

If you aim to walk in excellence, you must train your mind to bar out unwelcome thoughts.

I am alive today because God gave a young teenager the wisdom to make the right decision in a very challenging situation. It happened several years ago while, as a teenager, I was learning how to swim in a pool owned by a private club. On this particular day, after observing some progress in my swimming lessons, I tried out an adventure to the deep end. In the process, I lost control and began to drown. This

teenager—who came often to the club to swim and who is younger than me—was the only one nearby at the time.

After losing control, I was still conscious enough to know I was drowning, but I couldn't do anything to help myself. Then, just when it seemed like it was all over for me, I suddenly saw an outstretched foot sticking out to me down in the water and I grabbed it to bring me to safety.

The outstretched foot belonged to the young teenager and after I was out of the water, he shared his side of the story. He told me he was thrown into a panic when he realized I was drowning. His first thought was to run and call for help. But on second thought, he considered the option of doing something to help me. That's when he got the idea to hold firmly to the rail running along the side of the pool and stretch out his foot to me. He decided to give it a try.

He had only seconds to do something to save my life. There were options on his mind on how to help, and he could have yielded to indecision. Faced with such a panicky situation—and being as young as he was then—he could have taken some time out to think over, ponder, analyze, and list out the lines of action open to him, and to weigh them to see if he could or could not. The truth is that not all life situations are kind enough to allow such luxury.

If he had gone to call for help, it would have been too late for me. That would have been a wrong decision. If he had taken out more time to stand and watch, panic and scream, and analyze the options open to him, it would also have been too late for me. That would have been indecision. But I am ever grateful to God, and to him, that he made a right and timely decision in such a challenging situation. In the words of J. L. Cuyler, "For a few brief days the orchards are white with blossoms. They soon turn to fruit, or else float away, useless and wasted, upon the idle breeze. So will it be with present feelings. They must be deepened into decision, or be entirely dissipated by delay."²⁹

Lessons from the Life of John Wesley

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Movement, was born in Epworth, England in the month of June, 1703. Few Christian leaders have affected the world like Wesley did. A general overview of the high points and challenging times of the life of this great achiever reveals the power of making right decisions. For a start, his story could have ended at the young age of five. In February 1709, a fire swept through the Rectory at Epworth where the family lived. It was late in the evening, and Samuel and Susanna Wesley—who were taken unawares by the fire—did their best to scramble all their children to safety. But their best efforts turned out not to be good enough. While safely outside, with the fire raging on, they soon realized John was still in the house. The immediate reaction was to give up and hand John's soul over to God. Then on looking up, they saw John standing at one of the upper windows. It was at this point that two of the men who were watching on made the brave decision to do what they could to get John out. One of them climbed on top of the other and stood on his shoulders. He then reached out his hands through the window and grabbed the boy to safety—just in time, before the roof of the house was razed down by the fire. This timely and courageous decision not only spared the Wesley family grieve on a difficult night; it also gained for the world a great achiever who on growing up saw himself as, “a brand plucked out of the fire.”³⁰

In his early thirties, John Wesley received an invitation to move from England to Savannah, Georgia in order to serve as parish minister for Savannah. John accepted the invitation and sailed from Kent in mid-October 1735 with his brother Charles. While aboard the ship, they met a group of Moravian Christians from Germany who were also on their way to the American colonies/ John observed how the Moravians prayed, sang, and stayed calm and assured during a storm that damaged the ship—while he and others with him were clearly unsettled. And he concluded the Moravians had a quality of faith and strength of spirit which he lacked. This incident aboard a

ship would end up having a telling impact few years later on John's decision-making and the fulfillment of his destiny.

Moving to Savannah, Georgia seemed like the opportunity of a life-time for John Wesley. But it turned out to be a season that—though not entirely unfruitful—he would rather forget. As the challenges mounted after just over a year in Savannah, John made the decision to retrace his steps and return back to England. By the time he arrived back in late 1737, he was heartbroken and in a depressed state of mind. Things generally remained this way until the spring of 1738 when he was encouraged to attend a meeting being held by Moravian Christians in Aldersgate Street, London. At first Wesley was reluctant to go—most likely because of his church background. But the incident aboard the ship on his journey to Savannah and the influence Peter Boehler, a Moravian Christian friend was having on his life could have both weighed positively on Wesley's mind. He decided to go. And the meeting which he attended on May 24, 1738 turned out to be a life-transforming experience. About this, Wesley wrote in his journal that as someone was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, "I felt my heart strangely warmed." He also said he received an assurance that Christ had taken away his sins and saved him from the law of sin and death.

John Wesley went on to develop a passionate heart for God and a passion for the salvation of souls. Among other things, he is remembered for his diligent attitude to work, his organizational abilities, as well as his courageous decisions and innovative approach to evangelism which, often, did not go down well with the leaders of the established church of his time. Wesley also stood up for social justice in the society. In particular, he decided to be outspoken about his opposition to slavery. He kept close contacts with John Newton—the ex-slave trader who wrote the hymn *Amazing Grace*—as well as William Wilberforce who fought tirelessly in the British Parliament for the abolition of slave trade and slavery.

John Wesley did not always get his decisions right—It certainly was not smooth-sailing for him in the area of marriage. But by the time he died in London at age 87 on March 2, 1791, he had made

many quality decisions which enabled him to end up on the side of greatness in life. And since then, his legacy of lasting accomplishments continues to influence people around the world.

Decisions Draw Borderlines

Most people easily recognize the existence of physical borders and their implications. But many are unaware that borders run through other aspects of life. There are spiritual borders, financial borders, emotional borders, marital borders, and educational borders, to name a few. And, in the long run, most borders are created by our choices and decisions. Decisions draw borderlines between success and failure, stagnation and growth, the rich and the poor, achievers and non-achievers, and those who exercise influence and those who do not. The level of influence you will exercise over people—and over situations—will be enhanced by your ability to make right and timely decisions. When you make wrong decisions, you lose influence quickly.

Decisions can create a borderline between safety and disaster. In the book of Acts, chapter 27, we see how Paul analyzed a situation that developed as they were on a journey to Rome, and he concluded that the journey was shaping up to be a disaster at sea. To stay on top of the situation, he believed a decision had to be made to discontinue the journey. However, it was not in his power to make the decision. So he made a polite case for such a decision to be considered. “Men,” he said, “I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on—shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to our lives as well.”³¹

Instead of seeing the wisdom in what Paul suggested, those responsible for leading the journey thought otherwise because they had other things on their minds. Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, who was also on the ship, tells us, “The majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there.”³² But their decision to continue with the journey led them away from the borderline of safety. As a result, they lost every influence they had

over the situation. It took God's miraculous intervention for their lives to be spared.

Wrong decisions can be costly. They can lead people away from safe borders into undesired territories—and the resulting damage could be widespread, especially when many people are under the influence of the decision.

Indecision Can Also Be Costly

It can cost you in loss of opportunities, it can cost you in achieving the best, and it can cost you in your ability to make sound judgments. The longer indecision lingers, the more likely it is that compromise will be inevitable. Jesus was under enormous pressure in the garden of Gethsemane about going to the cross. But He refused to yield to indecision. Rather, He made the right judgment and submitted to the Father's will by deciding to go for it. Hours later, He stood before Pontius Pilate—the then governor of Judea. Pilate had a lot of low-level and selfish thoughts going on in his mind and he let indecision linger long enough until he compromised on sound judgment by sentencing an innocent man to death by crucifixion.

Q & A with Dr. Hugh Osgood

Q: What are some crucial factors that aid longevity in marriage?

A: Making the right choice at the beginning, and resolving issues on time and amicably

Fill Your Mind with the Best

Your mind is a harbor and all manner of thoughts come in shiploads, desiring to rest in its comfort. If you aim to walk in excellence, you

must train your mind to bar out unwelcome thoughts. It must display a sign that reads, “Fully booked,” to keep out low level thoughts.

Fill your mind with the best. It must be an inaccessible zone to negative and low level thoughts. Paul tells us more about this in his letter to the Philippians: “Summing it all up, friends, I’d say you’ll do best by filling up your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, and gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.”³³

It Will Affect the Quality of Your Decision-making

Your mind has to stay on the best because what goes on in your mind will affect your decision-making. Decision-making is a lifelong activity and there is a link between quality thoughts and quality decisions. This link also leads to quality rewards: Quality thoughts lead to quality decisions. Quality decisions lead to quality actions. Quality actions produce quality results. And quality results bring quality rewards.

The quality, or otherwise, of the results and rewards people get in life can be traced back to the decisions they made or didn’t make—the right decisions they made, the wrong decisions they made, and their indecision. And this is primarily influenced by what goes on in the mind. A person’s decisions could be influenced by others. However, anyone aiming for excellence in life will have to take responsibility for his or her decisions. In this regard, it is important that you do two things: build up your knowledge and information base, and develop a decision-making mechanism.

Build Up Your Knowledge and Information Base

The packaging of a great product starts well before the outward wrapping is done. The outward wrapping creates an important image, which can get the buyer hooked. But remember, the product will be

unwrapped and the fascination about it will move to questions like: What's gone into making it? How was it put together? How good is it? This shows that raw materials and how they are processed count a great deal in the making of quality products. Likewise, the making of quality decisions will require a good raw material base in the form of knowledge and relevant information. You just can't wrap up an ignorant mind with glitter and expect it to turn out quality decisions.

What you know and the information at your disposal will affect your judgment of situations, your choices, and the quality of your decision-making. So keep the learning process going. Broaden your knowledge base. Challenge your mind to give you the best output by filling it with the best input. Get acquainted with the changes taking place in your field of operation and in the world around you. Keep abreast of relevant information that could assist your mind to exercise itself at a level of excellence. Don't remain stuck in the past, or keep bragging about *the good old days*. Why decide to settle for good when better is available?

Develop a Decision-making Mechanism

Nothing clogs the wheel of progress in an organization like the absence of a functional decision-making mechanism that promotes excellence. The same applies at the individual level. The essence of a decision-making mechanism is to ensure that decisions are made on a timely basis and they pass a quality test. When it is properly set up and functional, such a mechanism will enhance the ability to attain goals and deal with issues as they arise. It will boost overall effectiveness and create a healthy environment for sustained growth.

As a Christian, your decisions will pass the quality test if the standard of your decision-making is the Word of God, you have the relevant information required in the situation you face, and you are open to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in analyzing issues. Also, you need to be open to wisdom from godly counsel and other helpful

sources, and you need to be able to interpret and understand the presence or absence of inward peace in judging matters.

Quality thoughts lead to quality decisions. The deposit of God's Word and other relevant information in your mind, and your access to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and wisdom from godly counsel, will enable you to make timely decisions that are right. Also, let peace guard your mind and guide your decision-making. You can judge situations, decide matters, and settle issues by allowing the peace of God within you to be your guide.

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APPLY THE FORCE OF PASSION

The force of passion will ensure that a vision becomes a mission accomplished.

Without grace, your passion will ultimately go dry without knowledge, it could lead you into a ditch.

Passion is not an exclusive preserve of the young.

Your passion has a way of revealing your area of uniqueness. Even those who may not like you will recognize the difference you bring to the table

William Booth died on August 12, 1912. Yet, Salvation Army, the organization he founded with Catherine his wife still thrives around the world today. After his conversion experience in 1844 William Booth committed his all to serving God. He started out in Nottingham, England and later moved to London. His primary passion was for the salvation of sinners. That's why his motto in life was, "Go for souls and go for the worst!" William Booth said that if

he thought he could win one more soul to the Lord by walking on his head and playing the tambourine with his toes, he would learn how to do it.

General Booth was also deeply concerned about the social issues of his day and the difficulties faced by the poor in the society. It was really a dark period in many ways. But he was not intimidated by it. He strongly believed there was a solution to it. And part of his response was to mobilize the Salvation Army to rise up to the task. Another response was to write a book in 1890 titled, "In Darkest England and the Way Out." The book became a bestseller. Before his death, General Booth showed the extent of his passion in these words contained in what is considered to be his last public address: "While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight; while little children go hungry, I'll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight. While there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, where there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight! I'll fight to the very end!"³⁴

Unleashing the Force of Passion

Passion is a force. It gets you going for something. So be wise: Don't waste your passion. Use it for the right cause. Invest it in the things that matter most to you. Jesus was passionate about the house of God. He couldn't keep Himself from challenging those who were merchandising in the Temple. It was a day to remember for many. While the merchants were counting their losses, the disciples of Jesus were observing the force of passion on display. John, one of His disciples, tells us, "Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from Scriptures: 'Passion for God's house will consume me.'"³⁵

The force of passion will ensure that a vision becomes a mission accomplished. When you are passionate about your purpose, everything in you will be in it. It will be on your mind when you wake up, and you will be on the edge for it. You will gladly pour your resources into it, and no one will be able to talk you out of it. You

will be willing to miss meals and some friends for it. And most times this is a price worth paying for those who want to stay successful and make a significant impact on people in their world.

The force of passion will ensure that the option of quitting is not often considered and will not be easily embraced. Look again at the words of William Booth. He was approaching his last days on the earth, yet he kept saying, “I’ll fight.” From his speech we see that passionate people don’t throw in the towel easily. There is something about them that tells you not to expect to see them counted out even when they are laying flat-out on the canvass. That’s also what happened to the apostle Paul. Paul was a man on a divine mission. He accomplished a lot because of his passion for the vision he received from the Lord. Consider this Bible story about him: He was dragged out of the town of Lystra and stoned for preaching the gospel. Then they left him for dead. But miraculously, he survived it. He got up and went back into the town. And by the next day, he was on his way to another town. His passion for the vision kept him going when most men would have quit. You need to realize that your mission in life needs vision and passion. Your vision will get you going on your mission. And your passion for your vision will enable you to accomplish your mission.

Misdirected Passion Can Derail Vision

You need the force of passion if you desire to be an achiever. However this force must be sustained with adequate knowledge and grace. This is important because the oil for passion is a mixture of grace and knowledge. They lubricate the engine for passion. Without grace—God’s enabling power to accomplish things—your passion will ultimately go dry. Without knowledge, it could take you in a wrong direction or drive you to a dead end.

Passion or zeal becomes misdirected when knowledge is lacking. Consider the story of John the Baptist in the Bible. John the Baptist knew a lot about passion. He ministered in a similar spirit and passion as Elijah. This made him very effective and influential. The outcome

of his ministry shook the nation of Israel, made news in the palace of King Herod Antipas, and prepared the way for Jesus.

It was all too much for John to contain his amazement at seeing Jesus standing before him to be baptized. Right before him was standing the fulfillment of his message about the coming Messiah. So his passion knew no bounds as he released some of his disciples to Jesus and was willing to leave the scene for him. His anticipation was that the Messiah would quickly get about the process of establishing his kingdom.

It turned out that the Baptizer's knowledge of the kingdom plan was minimal. And this became a major test for him as his passion dwindled in the prison. He would have longed to see the Messiah sitting on the throne as the new king of Israel, and he would have desired to be a part of it as a free man. Instead, he heard that Jesus was busy preaching and healing the sick. This was too much for his mind to handle. Jesus sent back a word of encouragement to him, urging him not to be offended.

Revelation knowledge produces light. It illuminates your way. And this will keep you going in the right direction and enhance your progress. You really cannot take your dream or vision beyond the light you have. But misdirected passion can get you past the light you have and keep you going in the midst of darkness. This could derail your vision. You need knowledge—and you need grace. Grace will empower your passion, and knowledge will give it proper direction. This is why you need to grow in grace and knowledge.

Grace, More Grace, and Overflowing Grace

Grace will ensure that your passion remains aflame. When you need to stir up your passion, ask for grace. When the situation against you seems to intensify, ask for more grace. God gives more grace to the humble. You can even move up and operate at the level of overflowing grace. Overflowing grace produces great power and passion, which work together to produce great results. The early church experienced

this. In the book of Acts, chapter 4, we are told, “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.”³⁶

Paul told Timothy to be strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus. Without grace, the engine of passion will break down. Grace gives you access to the anointing. It propels the engine for passion, and it enables you to perform. When you are full of grace, you will experience a flow of the anointing. You will also be passionate about what you do. And you will be enabled to perform at a level of excellence.

Paul could challenge Timothy to be strong in God’s grace because he personally experienced it. We see an acknowledgement of this in his first letter to the church in the city of Corinth: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”³⁷

You may receive your vision from God and run out to perform it, you may have great ideas you want to see become realities, and you may be passionate about your mission, but you need grace, and more grace. This will ensure you keep coming back to the throne of God. Apart from God, and the grace He gives, you can do nothing of eternal value.

Everyone Can Be Passionate—including the Elderly

Passion is not an exclusive preserve of the young. Rather, every believer—irrespective of his or her age—can exercise a high degree of passion. Any elderly person who recognizes the difference grace makes and continues to come boldly for it, will be energized to outperform and outshine any young person who acts in his natural strength. We see in the book of Isaiah that, “Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”³⁸

Two people, who are elderly in their ages, continue to amaze me with their passion. The first is my dad. And the other is Helmuth Madsen—a man we got to know while living in Denmark. My dad is, presently, an ordained elder in a church in Nigeria. His passion for the Lord amazes me because it is so contagious. His faith in God, and his consistent fervent service, is such an encouragement to me and other people who know him. Yet it is proper to point out that he had not always been like this. I received my salvation before him and when this happened, he felt I had given in to a form of religious fanaticism so he opposed it. But God eventually glorified his name by turning things around as my dad got saved—along with my mum—and became very committed. If you get to know him, you would conclude that all that matters to him is his relationship with Jesus.

On the occasion of dad's seventieth birthday in 2009, I wrote a brief summary about his life on behalf of all the children. I believe none of these words is an overstatement. I said, "Our dad is a father indeed; a man who fears God; a man sold out to Jesus whom he serves passionately; a man of integrity; a man who loves people and loves to see them succeed; a man of faith and a motivator; a man of influence; a man who has the wisdom of an elder, combined with the energy and zeal of a youth; may the Lord honor him with many more glorious years of health and fruitful service."

You Stand to Gain by Being Passionate

You cannot ignore the place and power of properly directed passion because of the obvious benefits it brings. Firstly, whatever you are passionate for will put you on display. If your passion is invested in a good cause, it will make you an achiever. Secondly, your passion has a way of revealing your area of uniqueness. Even those who may not like you will recognize the difference you bring to the table. Also, your passion will energize you to stay strong. It will help you to remain fruitful. And it will keep you going and growing even when those around you have quit. This was the testimony of Caleb—one

of the twelve men sent to explore the Promised Land on behalf of the Israelites. At that time, he was forty and very passionate about conquering the land. Forty-five years later, his passion had not diminished. He told Joshua, “Today I am eighty-five years old. I am as strong now as I was when Moses sent me on that journey, and I can still travel and fight as well as I could then.”³⁹

As he continued speaking, it was obvious that, at eighty-five, Caleb was still eager to take on the giants in the land—he still wanted to get the job finished. “So give me the hill country that the LORD promised me. You will remember that as scouts we found the descendants of Anak living there in great, walled towns. But if the LORD is with me, I will drive them out of the land, just as the LORD said.”⁴⁰

Eventually, Caleb’s passion paid off—He ended up possessing his inheritance in the Promised Land. If you are eager to take on the giants that may line your route as you press on to accomplish your dreams; if you are daring enough to confront any challenge you may face; if you are willing to put in whatever it will take to get the job finished, then your passion will also keep paying off.

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PART THREE

STAYING SUCCESSFUL AND
TRAINING OTHERS

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10

CONNECTION BETWEEN GOOD STEWARDSHIP AND LASTING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Continuity of success cannot be assured wherever the power of stewardship is not at work.

If you stop developing, your level of excellence will drop. And you will not be able to train others effectively.

You cannot successfully train people in anything if you are not passionate about it yourself.

We need to view our accomplishments in the light of eternity. This is because there is an eternal dimension to stewardship.

Achievement of remarkable success is a happiness booster and a source of encouragement. It can be so refreshing it usually fills the heart with a healthy sense of fulfillment and delight. Even when you are humble about it—as we all should be—you can't deny the fact that the more you experience an increasing level of success in what you do, the more you would want it to continue. However continuity of

success cannot be assured wherever the power of stewardship is not at work. For all our strong desires for more, there are levels we cannot rise to in accomplishing our purposes—there are experiences we will not be able to have—until we develop a good attitude of stewardship, and a working plan to back it up. We see a good example of this from the story of the late Dr. Billy Graham and the organization he founded.

Starting from the 1940's, Dr. Graham served and experienced decades of outstanding success in his work as an evangelist and Christian leader. Beyond this, the organization he founded—the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association—continues to make a global difference. One remarkable event that helped set the stage for this sound organizational structure and longevity of success took place in a hotel room in the town of Modesto, California. The year was 1948. By this time the ministry was becoming more influential and Dr. Graham and members of his inner circle wanted this to continue. So they met in the hotel room to discuss the common criticisms evangelists faced and how to maintain personal and corporate integrity. In the end they came up with what is referred to as the *Modesto Manifesto*. The key points in the manifesto included the need for purity in relationships, as well as humility to avoid tearing down other ministers from the pulpit. They also agreed to stay financially accountable and avoid exaggerating their results and accomplishments. It is obvious that as Evangelist Graham and his team were agreeing on these things, they had stewardship in mind.

We have to learn to become good stewards of the successes God enables us to achieve. We have to be good stewards of his grace and favor on our lives. We have to be diligent in managing the abilities, skills, information, wisdom and other resources we have acquired over time. The same applies to the connections, relationships, good names and influence with people which the Lord has enabled us to have. Stewardship is a divine calling. In fact it is an ever-widening calling in terms of its requirements because the more successful you become, the more responsible you would be expected to be as a steward. This helps us to appreciate how essential it is as a component

of the divine design for lasting accomplishments. And the focus in this chapter is on five important things that a good attitude of stewardship would lead to in the life of a person already experiencing remarkable success.

Five Things That Quality Stewardship Would Enable You to Do

We can easily see these five things at work in the life of Paul the apostle. Paul was very successful in accomplishing his divine purpose. As a leader, he recognized that stewardship was a calling. And he fully embraced it. In his first letter to the Corinthian church he talked about successful and influential leaders like Peter, Apollos and himself, whom the Corinthians were scrambling to associate with. Paul told them, “Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” He continued by saying, “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.”⁴¹ So let’s look at the five things that quality stewardship would enable you to do from the life and writings of Paul in the New Testament.

Stewardship Will Enable You to Acquire Skills for Expertise

Paul said in First Corinthians 3:10, “Because of God’s grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful.” This verse is quite revealing. It helps us to understand that we can stand on God’s grace and excel in the things we do—and excel in such a way that we display a level of expertise in doing it. From the story of Paul we know that expertise in anything is not an overnight thing. Yet the fact is it’s not always a function of experience. I think it has a lot more to do with stewardship. We saw earlier that Paul embraced stewardship as a calling. In another chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, he told them “But because God was so

gracious, so very generous, here I am. And I'm not about to let his grace go to waste. Haven't I worked hard trying to do more than any of the others? Even then, my work didn't amount to all that much. It was God giving me the work to do, giving me the energy to do it." ⁴²

Obviously, Paul was a good steward of God's grace—He depended on it, kept asking for more of it, did not waste it, was wise in investing it, and achieved a lot with it, in spite of all the challenges he faced. So a primary proof of quality stewardship is seen in your continuing ability to display a good level of expertise in accomplishing your divine assignment in spite of the challenges you may face in doing it. We are all assigned differently. Our levels in life are not the same. But we all have a responsibility to do our best with the grace on our lives.

Stewardship Will Equip You to Help Others to Become Successful

We are all uniquely gifted. However not everyone is excelling in putting their gifts and abilities to work. If you can stand out in what you do—and become exemplary in the way you do it—you could become a person of remarkable influence. This means that you will gain the respect of people. You will also acquire the mastery to teach and train others. And you will be in a good position to help others to become successful. This is further proof of the importance of stewardship. People who stay successful and help others to become successful are actually living-out their calling as stewards. Paul told Timothy whom he mentored, "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." ⁴³

Earlier in the book I pointed out the need to keep developing if you want to stay successful. The same thing could be said about stewardship. Continued personal development is essential if the ability to be a good steward is to be sustained. For Christians, this requires cooperation with the Holy Spirit. You have to keep developing yourself

in the Word of God. Keep developing yourself in the love of God. Keep developing yourself in His grace. And stay relevant in your world. If you stop developing, your level of excellence will drop. You will not be able to keep up with the things happening in your field and in your world. You will lose influence and respect. And you will not be able to train others effectively and help them to become successful. So keep learning. Keep developing. Maintain a keen interest. Stay enthusiastic about what you do. Don't let your passion for it dwindle.

Q & A with Dr. Hugh Osgood

Q: What is your approach in training others?

A: My emphasis is on getting the best out of them, rather than putting into them; unpacking them, rather than packing into them.

There is a connection between being a person burning with passion for something and being able to help others to become successful. You cannot successfully train people in anything if you are not passionate about it yourself. How can you help others to become successful if you do not have anything that is ongoing which you are doing your best to stay successful at? No trainer can help a player to achieve a remarkable level of success if the trainer thinks everything he or she is doing is just to help the player to become successful. That sounds nice and caring. But it is hollow. As a trainer, you need to see your success in the success of those you are training. This will enable you to stay passionate in what you are doing. Schools are assessed based on the performance of their students. In the end, the success of a teacher cannot be separated from the performances of those he or she has taught.

Stewardship Enables the Blessing to Keep Flowing

The gifts and call of God will always remain intact. But the anointing and blessing that flows through the gifted and called could be affected by poor stewardship. And we need to be on our guard against this. The essence of the remarkable successes God gives us is not for us to control and lord things over other people. It is not for self-promotion. And it is not to show we have arrived in life. Rather, it is to show the difference God's grace could make through the lives of those who are good stewards of it. It is to enable us bless people and enrich their lives as we live-out our divine purposes.

The blessing is God's enabling power to succeed. When it flows, creativity, excellence, supernatural success and growth will be evident. The blessing enables a person to overcome challenges, fulfill divine purpose and significantly impact other people—even future generations. This is what happened to Paul. He stayed humble about the blessing on his life and utilized it to be a blessing to others.

Some questions to ask at this point are, “Do you treat God's rich deposit of blessing on your life as priceless? Or have you begun to take it for granted? Are you allowing pride, moral failings, avoidable slip ups and financial misconduct to stop the flow?” We can easily observe that some people who are so blessed and well-placed in life struggle to stay successful in doing the things they do. I think it often has a lot to do with their inability to consistently activate and steward the blessing on their lives. A good attitude of stewardship is a must if we are to see an increasing flow of blessing through our lives and the work we do. Paul saw the grace and blessing of God flow, and continue to flow, in his life—enabling him to excel in fulfilling his purpose. And so can anyone else who is willing to recognize and put to work the power of stewardship.

Stewardship Will Enable You to Pass on a Legacy of Lasting Accomplishments

Why should we remain devoted? Why should we continue to apply the requirements of diligence, direction, discipline and determination in the things we do? Why make the effort to avoid distractions and keep developing? Why do our best to help others to go forward as we are going forward? And why should we continue to stand on God's grace and keep serving as good stewards? As Christians, it should be because we love Jesus—we love serving Him; we love doing things His way; and we want to live out His destiny for our lives. It should also be because we love people—we genuinely care for people; we want the causes and organizations we serve to succeed; and we want to make a significant difference and be a part of ensuring the world around us is blessed. Yet, there is something more it should be about. It should also be because we are thinking generationally and we would want to pass on a legacy of lasting accomplishments.

We will look more closely at generational thinking and legacy in another chapter. However, it is important to recognize how much we are benefiting today from Paul's diligence and commitment to stewardship. Some of the letters he wrote in the process of carrying out his missionary work and training leaders represent a huge chunk of the books in the New Testament. This is indeed a rich legacy to pass on.

Stewardship Will Enable You to Receive an Eternal Prize

We need to view our accomplishments in the light of eternity. This is because there is an eternal dimension to stewardship. Christians know that we will stand before Jesus to give an account of the things we have done in this life. So, our ultimate goal is to finish well and hear Him say "Well done, good and faithful servant;" We also want to receive the eternal prize He has for us and share in His future reign. Paul told Timothy, "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him."⁴⁴

It is the desire of every soldier to be decorated for outstanding devotion to duty, and it is the desire of every professional athlete to be decorated for winning on the track or field. As Paul pointed out in First Corinthians 9 verse 25, they discipline themselves to receive an earthly crown that will eventually fade away. However, for those devoted to Jesus, the stakes are even higher because their quest for outstanding performance as stewards will be rewarded with an eternal crown that will not fade away.

There will be a decoration ceremony in heaven. And at that ceremony, Jesus will decorate those who stayed faithful and finished their races with an eternal crown. So let's recount some of the things that would lead to this. If we delight in Jesus and make Him the chief desire of our hearts, we will discover His specific destinies for our lives. If we avoid distractions, discipline ourselves, and diligently follow His directions, we will fulfill the dreams He gives to us and bring delight to a lot of people. If we serve well as stewards, endure the suffering that comes with it, stay strong in God's grace and keep developing in the process, we will finish the race, and, eventually, get to reign with Jesus.

11

OVERCOMING UNFAIR OPPOSITION, STRIFE AND PERSECUTION

While you would expect everybody to rejoice with you, your testimony and accomplishments will not be music to the ears of some people.

Watch for people close to you or in your organization who are offended.

Any compromise that sustains strife is counter-productive any decision to tolerate it does not spring from wisdom.

Most achievers in recorded history were unfairly criticized, wrongly opposed, at times rejected, and greatly persecuted. Some saw people rise up to blackmail them in order to ruin their reputation. Some were faced with difficult issues from the inside; from those closest to them; those they were working with. And some others died unrecognized and uncelebrated. But, remarkably, they are the toast of the world

today! They endured through the challenging times they faced. They held on to God and stood their ground. They continued to work hard to nurture and bring their brilliant ideas to fruition—even though they could have given up and buried their ideas. Consider the story of the catholic monk Gregor Mendel who died in 1884. He is recognized as the founder of Genetic Science. Yet, after his work was published in 1866, Mendel's ground-breaking experiments carried out with pea plants did not get acknowledged even in the scientific community. In fact, his papers were burned after his death. But by the early part of the twentieth century, the brilliance of Gregor Mendel's work became obvious.

Five Qualities Achievers Have which Attract Unfair Opposition

Outstanding success comes with challenges. And these challenges usually come because of five things: your results, your reputation, your resources, your response and your resilience. Your *results* are the open confirmation of your achievements and the difference you are making. Your *reputation* can be a proof of your good name and how influential you have become. Your *resources* show the blessings that surround you. Your *response* to situations is proof of what you believe in and stand for. Your *resilience* is the evidence you are likely to keep making impact into the foreseeable future. These five qualities can be too troubling for some interest groups and people in our world today to ignore.

If you go through the Bible, you will observe that the successes achieved by godly people produced blessings and enemies. Isaac was envied because he prospered in a time of famine. The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt because a new Pharaoh could not stand their explosive growth. Daniel was thrown into a den of lions because his colleagues were jealous of his favored position. And the apostles were put in jail because the Jewish leaders were jealous of their popularity. So a way to measure the outstanding nature of the progress you have

made as an individual or organization is that it will stir up a hornet's nest. While you would expect everybody to celebrate you and rejoice with you, your testimony and accomplishments will not be music to the ears of some people. Rather, it will leave a sour taste in their mouths. And like wasps that sting, they will come against you. Their actions toward you will reveal their desire to dampen your zeal, stifle your progress, and limit your influence. However, you have to learn not to look to the crowd for your green light. You have to stay passionate about your purpose. You have to stay creative. You have to keep pressing on. If you know what to do, you will see that God will turn around every challenge to your favor. He will make it a momentum builder and a stepping stone to higher levels of success.

William Booth Saw Unfair Opposition as a Tribute and Momentum Builder

Salvation Army, the organization founded by William and Catherine Booth, was active in the 1880's and beyond in its campaign against the high levels of drunkenness among the poor in England. As a result of this they were opposed by the Alcohol-selling Industry. A group called Skeleton Army often disrupted marches against alcohol which were organized by the Salvation Army. And their disruptions became violent at times leading to injuries and deaths among members of the Salvation Army. What did William Booth make of challenges like this? In a book he wrote in 1890 he said, "Such opposition is to be counted upon, and to be utilized as the best of all tributes to the value of our work. Those who thus count upon violence and bloodshed are too few to hinder, and their opposition will merely add to the momentum with which I hope and believe this Scheme will ultimately be enabled to surmount all dissent, and achieve, with the blessing of God, that measure of success with which I verily believe it to be charged,"⁴⁵

Strive to Be Free of Strife

Success and strife do not go together. You should not expect to stay successful and continue to make progress with strife hanging around you. So do your best to avoid it. If it rears up, deal with it. This will help your progress. Strife is a stifler. It dries up good communication and leaves no room for understanding between people. It promotes division and thereby is a vision-killer. When strife thrives without being dealt with it leads to disintegration. A house, work place, church, community, nation, or kingdom divided by strife will ultimately fall.

The great work done by William J. Seymour and his team at the Azusa Street Revival in the early 1900s is still celebrated today. It is generally acknowledged that this revival marked the beginning of the Pentecostal Movement which continues to grow by the millions around the world today. However, we also need to learn lessons from the challenges that rose up to undermine the Azusa Street Revival. One prominent challenge was strife in the leadership team.

Watch for people close to you or in your organization who are offended. Many people who sow discord to poison the minds of others and disturb the harmony in a place harbor an offense. They may have felt overlooked, slighted, or unappreciated. And they are out, even if secretly or cunningly, to make a point about it. The message here is that any compromise that sustains strife is counter-productive—any decision to tolerate it does not spring from wisdom. You have to deal prayerfully with strife or it will keep tearing down whatever is built. We all know it's easier to tear down than it is to build.

Blessings dwell in strife-free atmospheres. Whether at home, work, business or church, an environment free from strife is a rich ground for God to invest in. Psalm 133: 1 and 3 say, "How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon that falls on the mountains of Zion. And there the LORD has pronounced his blessing, even life everlasting." So make every effort to ensure the atmosphere around you is strife-free and Holy Spirit-friendly. Remember, where

there is harmony, God pours out His power to prosper. This produces lasting accomplishments.

Let Persecution Squeeze out Greatness from Your Life

That's what happened to William Tyndale. It's remarkable how the monarchy and established church of his time opposed Tyndale to the end; simply because he wanted everyone—including commoners—to have access to the Bible in the English language. Yet, in persecuting him, they facilitated the circumstances that God used to make Tyndale great and give him a lasting legacy.

In doing his work of Bible translations, William Tyndale had to go into hiding and move from place to place in Europe because of the opposition and persecution he faced. He left England for Germany in 1524 in order to translate the New Testament into English. Copies of the finished work were then smuggled into England and Scotland. He also went on to complete the translation of the entire Bible into English. And, instead of seeing his historic achievements celebrated, Tyndale faced even more open hostilities. He was eventually betrayed and seized in Antwerp, Belgium in 1535. For a period, he was jailed in a castle close to Brussels. William Tyndale was subsequently put on trial for heresy, found guilty, strangled, and his body burned at the stake. As he died, he said the now famous prayer, "Lord! Open the King of England's eyes." That king was Henry VIII. And Tyndale's prayer was answered in amazing ways because two years later the same king commissioned the translation of what became known as the Great Bible for the Church of England. The translation which was published in 1539 was largely based on the work of William Tyndale. In fact, subsequent English translations of the Bible commissioned by the monarchy were also largely based on the work of Tyndale—including the King James Version of the Bible.

The first step in overcoming persecution is to keep in mind what the Bible says about it. It tells us everyone who will live godly in Christ will be persecuted. Jesus made it clear—in John 15:18-20 and

Matthew 10:16-25—that just as people hated Him, called Him names, falsely accused Him, and wrongly criticized Him, His followers would experience the same. He even pointed out in Mark 10:29-30 that the hundred-fold blessing—which will come to those who leave everything to follow Him—will be accompanied with persecution.

It is also important in overcoming persecution to look beyond people and recognize who the real enemy is. This is because the hornet's nest is actually stirred by the devil and his cohort who hate to see believers succeed. They form the back room where the persecution that is played out in real life is written and rehearsed. When you see believers being hated because of their godly stands and achievements, remember that there are invisible hands from the world of evil propping up the opposition.

You have to make a quality decision to endure and overcome any squeeze that persecution may bring to your life as a Christian. Don't let it defeat your faith or make you bitter. But let it squeeze out something better from your life—let it strengthen your attitude as a progress-minded person, knowing that it proves your belief in Jesus and it lacks the power to stop his purpose in your life.

When the apostles were arrested in Jerusalem and put in jail because a group of religious leaders could not stand their success and popularity, their response was amazing: They were jailed and, afterward, harshly interrogated like criminals. Then they were flogged and placed under gagging orders. But as they were released, they left the council rejoicing. And the book of Acts tells us why: “The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus. And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: ‘Jesus is the Messiah.’”⁴⁶

What a response! Persecution only served to fire up their zeal for more successes. We can see that they rejoiced and continued. Rather than give up, they intensified their efforts to accomplish the God-given dream in their hearts. We should not do otherwise.

12

SURE STEPS IN STAYING SUCCESSFUL

A challenge arises when people and organizations gradually dilute the strength of what enabled them to become successful.

Don't let your passion for what you are doing push you beyond what your body can handle.

Success must be properly directed to avoid the pitfall of parking at some point to erect a monument to yourself.

Generational thinking will take your success beyond you and give it longevity that could affect several generations to come.

One stand-out point in the stories of people with lasting accomplishments is that they took sure steps in staying successful. What do I mean by this? They did not abandon the principles that enabled them to become successful. A challenge arises when people and organizations gradually dilute the strength of what enabled them to achieve success. As a result they unknowingly allow their excellent practices to become corroded. They dismantle their building blocks,

erode their foundation, and allow failure to creep in. Whenever compromise sets in, failure is close at the door. Little holes that are not stitched in time produce avoidable tears that may end up ruining a garment.

It is one thing to attain success in an area of life; and quite another to do what it takes to retain it. To remain successful, you don't necessarily have to focus on avoiding failure. The better thing to do is to recognize and prioritize the other side of success. The other side of success is not failure. Rather, it is doing the things that will provide the enduring foundation you need to remain successful. Make no mistake about it—the idea of a sudden collapse of what was otherwise very successful is uncommon in real life. The common occurrence is that success ebbs away before a collapse is obvious. Two examples come to mind here.

Fall of the Roman Empire and Collapse of Lehman Brothers

We are told Rome was not built in a day. Likewise, the fall of the Roman Empire did not occur suddenly. There was a period of decline that continued for over three hundred years. The then mighty empire that ruled the world of its day was undone by—among other things—corruption, political ineptitude, overzealous military adventures and inflation.

It took several years for economies around the globe to recover from a downturn that began in the last quarter of 2008. A pivotal point in that economic downturn happened to be the collapse of the erstwhile investment banking giant Lehman Brothers. But even though the demise of Lehman Brothers became news to the world in September, 2008, the seeds that produced it had been sown over time.

The first stone for the foundation of the company was laid in 1844 by Henry Lehman, a Bavarian immigrant with Jewish background. After two of his brothers teamed up with Henry, they changed the name of the business to Lehman Brothers in 1850. The business had humble beginnings. But the three brothers worked hard and were

prudent in their investments. So, the business became stable and grew.

When the Great Depression set in, in the 1930's, Lehman Brothers did not just survive— more than that—it was strong enough to help other organizations with the funds that enabled them to pull through that trying economic period in the history of America. But by the time of its fall in 2008, years of prudence and collective decision making had been thrown overboard as the investment giant was assuming toxic debts with risks so many times more than their capital. Greed for quick profit and mismanagement may have been at the root of it all.

As the inevitability of a collapse was setting in, most people still thought the company was too big to fail—that surely it would be bailed out. But they were wrong because by then the reputation built over the years had gone down the drain. And you might say Lehman Brothers collapsed, but the real truth is that a new generation of leaders failed to build on the good foundation laid by the original three Lehman brothers.

You should not abandon the principles that brought you success, except where positive change is inevitable for enhancing your success. When organizations trivialize the principles that brought them success, they find it easier to lower the guard on integrity, cut corners, buy into ambitious and extremely risky ideas, manipulate financial records, compromise on safety standards, product quality and customer service. The underlying assumption for their actions is usually that it wouldn't really hurt anything in the short-term. But as I pointed earlier, whenever compromise sets in, failure is close at the door.

Stay Healthy So Your Body Can Get You to the Finish Line

One of the brightest preachers to come out of Scotland was named Robert Murray McCheyne. Born in Edinburgh on May 21, 1813, McCheyne grew up to have a genuine and passionate heart for God.

This made him very influential at a young age. However he lived to be 29 years of age. As he lay dying he said to a friend who was with him, “God gave me a message to deliver and a horse to ride. Alas, I have killed the horse and now I cannot deliver the message.”

Go for lasting success, and, as you do that, ensure you are also going for total success. This will require, among other things, that you do your best to protect your health. Aim for a stress-free life. Don't take more responsibilities than you can shoulder. Feed and train your body to stay strong and last long. Get sufficient sleep. Take time out to rest. The prophet Elijah was tired after his exploits on Mount Carmel with King Ahab and the false prophets of Baal. And to compound matters, he ran for his life when he got wind of the death threat from Jezebel, the king's wife. So he experienced a burn-out and was all set to quit his prophetic calling. However it's remarkable that he stopped at a point and slept off under a tree. Despite Elijah's complaints, God ensured the prophet got the rest, good food and renewal of strength he needed to get going again. Don't let your passion for the work you are doing push you beyond what your body can handle. Think of the fact that Jesus was tired sometimes, and took time out, with his disciples, to rest. You cannot live your life, continually, on the fast lane. If you do, pause a while and listen because an alarm bell might be ringing around you. I personally experienced this.

Several years ago, I was all out to achieve success in my work as a university lecturer. I was often on the move, from one place to another, as I fulfilled several obligations. But a period of ill health meant I had to lay all of that aside as I held onto God to stay alive. I came out of that experience with a bagful of valuable lessons. One lesson that has stuck in my mind ever since is the fact that a mistreated body can limit your potential and result in unfulfilled dreams. Your drive for all-round success cannot exclude the need to stay healthy enough so your body can get you to the finish line. There is a time to work, a time to rest, and a time to sleep. King Solomon said, “It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously working for food to eat, for God gives rest to his loved ones.”⁴⁷

Don't Be Taken Over by Success

If you major in progress, you will have the equilibrium required to go from success to success, deal with crises, and overcome mistakes and failures. However, your desire for success must be properly directed to avoid the pitfall of parking at some point to erect a monument to yourself. One person who did just that was King Uzziah.

Uzziah became king of Judah at a very young age. He was only sixteen. However his age did not hinder him from being successful because he was taught to fear God—“Uzziah sought God during the days of Zechariah, who taught him to fear God. And as long as the king sought guidance from the LORD, God gave him success.”⁴⁸ But Uzziah’s string of successes—which included military exploits and building projects—soon got into his head. And he parked to admire his own fame and power. Verse sixteen of the Bible passage above tells us that, “When he had become powerful, he also became proud, which led to his downfall.” He yielded to a strange idea and set out to usurp the role of a priest in the Temple. This cost him the throne, and he died in disgrace.

King Nebuchadnezzar Thought He Had Arrived

King Nebuchadnezzar was the ruler of the Babylonian empire at the height of its glory. One day he looked across the city of Babylon and thought he had arrived. From the flat roof of his palace he said, “Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.”⁴⁹ But God saw his pride and struck him with a form of insanity. He spent seven years eating grass among wild animals until he looked up to heaven and honored the Most High who lives forever.

You need to recognize that as good as success is, it is not your point of arrival. And it is not your prize. Remember what Paul said in his letter to the Philippian Church. He made it clear he had not arrived. Paul determined not to look back to his past successes. He

chose to stay focused and press on to finish his divine task. I believe this is an attitude we all need to emulate. So stay humble. Keep learning. Keep developing yourself. Keep making positive changes. Keep pressing on. And above all, stay devoted to Jesus and cooperate with the Holy Spirit every step of the way.

We need to always keep in mind that it is neither by our might nor our power. And we should not let people get the impression that we are achieving all the things we are achieving just by our human effort. In his book *Dictionary of Burning Words of Brilliant Writers*, Josiah Hotchkiss quoted Evangelist D. L. Moody who said, “Many of the Bible characters fell just in the things in which they were thought to be strongest. Moses failed in his humility; Abraham in his faith; Elijah in his courage, for one woman scared him away to the juniper tree; Peter, whose strong point was boldness, was so frightened by a maid as to deny the Lord.”⁵⁰ But thank God the stories of these Bible characters did not end this way. So, the challenge is still that we stay devoted to Jesus—He alone is the source of the strength we need to remain successful and finish well; and He is the one that will award us an eternal prize in the end.

Practice Generational Thinking

Those who have the perspective of progress practice generational thinking. They have a vision that goes beyond themselves and beyond their time. They see how generations of their family and the wider society could be impacted positively because of the stand they took and the race they ran. They also recognize the fact that some people could labor in the sun to sow the seed—sometimes with little to show for it—only to hand over the baton to others who will bring in the harvest with smiles on their faces. Generational thinking will take your success beyond you and give it longevity that could affect several generations to come.

Few men have achieved lasting success the way David Livingstone, the great Scottish missionary and explorer of the nineteenth century

came by it. I have quoted few excerpts from his journals in some of the chapters in this book. Dr. Livingstone must have dreamed of success as he left the shores of Britain on his life-changing journey to Africa. He was on his way to explore and evangelize parts of the continent. Eventually, he achieved a lot with his explorations—he was the one that named Victoria Falls, in honor of Queen Victoria, the then head of the British Empire. However, after years of almost fruitless labor in his evangelistic efforts in Africa, it seemed like he had failed to achieve his ultimate dream. In spite of this, Dr. Livingstone put up a bold face and was progress-minded enough to look beyond the horizon of his time and catch a glimpse of those coming after him as they were basking in the abundance of their harvest. He wrote in his journal on Sunday, June 19, 1853: “Future missionaries will be rewarded by conversions for every sermon. We are their pioneers and helpers. Let them not forget the watchmen of the night—us, who worked when all was gloom and no evidence of success in the way of conversion, cheered our paths. They will doubtless have more light than we, but we served our Master earnestly, and proclaimed the same gospel as they will do.”⁵¹ David Livingstone made this journal entry at about the middle of the nineteenth century, and time has proved how right he was.

Bringing It All Together

God’s plan is not for us to just stumble into success and stumble out of it. Rather He wants us to experience it and see it last.

13

GENERATIONAL THINKING AND LEGACY

You should not stress yourself by trying to shape your story and legacy. Rather, let the divine designer work out wonders with what may look like the broken pieces of your life.

Generational thinking will create in your mind an enduring picture of the relay race we are involved in.

In the process of training and mentoring the next generation, there will be the challenge of Demas.

Your achievement of lasting success should serve to build up momentum for others to surpass what you accomplished.

A primary question on the issue of legacy is, “When all has been said and done, what will you be remembered for?” As you think about this, I want to suggest that you should not stress yourself by trying to shape your story and legacy. Rather, let the divine designer work out wonders with what may look like the broken pieces of your life. As was pointed out in the first chapter, the storylines of most of the great achievers we remember today show that they started out

from ordinary backgrounds. They went through ups and downs. They faced lots of difficult challenges. They also made mistakes and experienced failure. Yet, through it all, they were able to stand on God's grace and accomplish things so remarkable people will keep talking about them for generations to come. One person whose story fits in well here is the great pioneer Aimee Semple McPherson.

The Legacy of Aimee Semple McPherson

The Bible says in Second Corinthians 4:7, "We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves." I think this is a good summary for the life of the lady known as Sister Aimee. Aimee was born in Salford, Ontario Canada on October 9, 1890. She grew up in a Christian home influenced by the Salvation Army and the Methodist Church. Right from her teenage years, it became obvious she had an evangelistic calling on her life. Yet, it was also in her teens that she experienced a very painful crisis. She became widowed while still 19. Her then husband, Robert Semple, died of dysentery in Hong Kong while they were both on a missionary tour of China. Their daughter Roberta was born shortly after this. So, Sister Aimee also became a single mum.

I could go on to write about the challenges Aimee Semple McPherson faced. I could point out the mistakes she made—especially in the area of marriage. I could talk about her fame and controversies as projected by the media of her day. I could also talk about the fact she was kidnapped and taken to Mexico in 1926; although she later escaped. But I want to focus on her achievements and legacy. Sister Aimee had a heart for God. She had a passion for the salvation of souls and believed in the demonstration of God's power. In her determination to preach the gospel, she took her two children with her in the car and travelled across the United States to conduct evangelistic meetings. She also had a pioneering spirit and

great organizational ability. This became obvious after she settled in Los Angeles in 1918.

Aimee Semple McPherson's rise to prominence as a woman in ministry reveals what God can do through any one that surrenders his or her all to Him. She started a church in Los Angeles shortly after settling there and within a few years the congregation had grown to become a mega church with thousands of members. Sister Aimee went on to found International Church of the Foursquare Gospel—now known as The Four Square Church—which today has millions of members around the world. Early enough, this pioneer Christian leader recognized the role media could play in effective evangelism and in 1922 she became the first woman in ministry to go on radio. This made her even more influential.

Sister Aimee mobilized funds and led her congregation to build the 5300-seater Angelus Temple—doing her best to avoid debt in the process. This mega church building which was dedicated on New Year's Day 1923 became a stand-out structure in LA and because of her heart for the body of Christ Sister Aimee made it clear the building was available for the use of Christians of all denominations. Aimee Semple McPherson was very creative. In particular, she used eye-catching illustrations to bring home her sermons. And because of her style she was able to reach out to the broader society, including people from Hollywood. Sister Aimee also had a genuine eagerness to do whatever she could to help people who were sick and those who were needy. The massive feeding programs organized by the church she led made a remarkable difference during the years of the Great Depression in America. Yet, while accomplishing all the things God used her to do, Sister Aimee had health and emotional issues of her own which she had to deal with. She died unexpectedly on September 27, 1944. That same year her son Rolf McPherson succeeded her—ensuring that the good work started by her mother did not pass away with her. Rolf went on to lead the Four Square Church denomination for the next forty-four years.

Facing-up to the Succession Question

What good is success without a good successor? It can only be good enough for a self-centered person. Your picture of life is incomplete if you do not see beyond your leg of the relay of life and beyond your time on the earth. This is where generational thinking and legacy come into play. Progress-minded people usually cultivate a godly attitude that enables them to look beyond their personal successes and think of coming generations. It's easy to get bogged down with a small-minded approach to living—where the main focus is on building a personal empire, fencing it in, and occupying it like a king who will be in charge endlessly. In this fantasy land, everything is about how a person can become more and more successful; as though our time on earth is limitless. But someday reality will dawn.

Hezekiah was a godly king of Judah. However, when the prophet Isaiah came with the news that the king was going to die from his sickness, Hezekiah wept bitterly. The king talked about how righteous and faithful he had been, which was true. Yet I think there was something else on his mind. In the message he received from Isaiah, God had also told him, "Put your house in order." So it's likely that one reason why Hezekiah wept bitterly was because he had no son to succeed him. At this time, Manasseh who eventually succeeded him had not been born—He was born within the fifteen extra years God granted Hezekiah to live. And we know from the Bible that Manasseh spent most of his 55-year reign as king over Judah reversing all the progress that had been made under his father. He was not adequately trained to be a good successor.

How Far Can You See?

A short-sighted approach to living can have severe consequences. Think of Adam and Eve. They were the first two people that lived here on the earth. And because of the prime position God gave to them, they had a great opportunity to lay a good foundation for all

who were to be born after them. However, they were so short-sighted in their vision they kept their eyes on the fruit of a tree instead of on their future generations. And as a result of this they were unable to pass on the pleasure of the Garden of Eden to their children—their lack of far-sight failed them and left severe consequences for those coming after them.

We all need good insight, hindsight and foresight in order to become successful and stay successful. Yet there has to be more. We also need to be far-sighted enough to see beyond our own success. Generational thinking will create in your mind an enduring picture of the relay race we are involved in. When you are far-sighted enough to have the next generation in mind, it will enable you to generate a tremendous amount of momentum in your leg of the race—a momentum that will not be easily reversed when you hand over the baton. Added to this, as you put in your best in running your leg of the relay, it is important that the next runner is warming up and ready to go once the baton is exchanged. This lesson reveals the significance of training and equipping the next generation. And it can be accomplished in many ways, including mentorship and impartation, and building up an inheritance for coming generations.

Mentorship and Impartation— Encouraging Potential in People

In 1988, I was still young in the Christian faith. But my pastor then, Bishop Dan Akaonye, saw potential in me and gave me an opportunity to preach during a midweek service in the church. At the end of the preaching, I felt I had flopped. I was so concerned with getting it right and making the best out of the opportunity that I didn't realize the purpose in what he did for me. But now, I know better. The opportunity I was given enabled me to take the necessary first step in what has turned out to be a life-long journey.

Through the years, many other people have encouraged me, invested in my life, and given me opportunities. A case in point is

the period I started out as a university lecturer in a business school. As I was concluding my postgraduate program in 1992, I remember being called into a meeting with two other people—the professor who oversaw my research work and the then head of the business school. They called me in to ask if I would consider joining the teaching staff. I took time out before giving my response. But the manner of their approach and their desire to encourage the potential they saw in me has not been lost in my mind.

From the Bible we see that Paul saw potential in Timothy. He saw his genuine faith in God. So, he invested in Timothy's life and encouraged him. Writing about this to Timothy, Paul said, "I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you."⁵² The spiritual deposit is a seed that needs to be nurtured to produce fruit, but it could be surrounded by weeds that are eager to choke it once it springs up. This is why, besides Timothy's genuine faith, Paul also saw his weaknesses—he saw fear and timidity. So he had to train Timothy to overcome his weaknesses and fan into flames the spiritual gift in him.

Another story in the Bible comes to mind. Barnabas saw potential in John Mark. He saw strength in the young man, even though his weakness was obvious, and he stuck with him at the expense of his partnership in the ministry with Paul. Barnabas trained John Mark and helped to develop his potential to the point that John Mark became extremely useful. And Paul acknowledged this. In writing to Timothy, Paul made a request, "Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me in my ministry."⁵³ The encouragement John Mark received from Barnabas brought out the achiever in him. He became a blessing to Paul, and a blessing to his generation. And, beyond that, he became a channel of blessing to future generations because God used him to write the second book of the New Testament.

The Challenge of Demas

In the process of mentoring and empowering the next generation, there will be the challenge of Demas: Those who will not place value on, and continue in, the investment they have received. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4, verse 10a, “Demas has deserted me because he loves the things of this life.” However, for every Demas there will be a “Timothy,” a “Titus,” a “Doctor Luke,” a “John Mark” and many others who will carry on the work to the next level.

Build Up an Inheritance for Coming Generations

King David did it for his son Solomon. And it is important to observe his attitude in doing this. He had a good desire to build a temple for God—even the prophet Nathan felt it was in order and urged him to go for it. But when the prophet announced to David that God said no, he was all the same glad that his successor had the mandate to do it. Then, David, instead of burying the dream he had, set out to make it happen for the next generation. By the time Solomon took over as the king with the mandate to build the temple, the plans were in place, an enormous reserve of precious materials had been accumulated, and he had the goodwill of the people. All these were transferred to him as an inheritance from his father. David did not build the temple. But he built up an inheritance that enabled his successor to build it. We see in the book of Proverbs that, “Good people leave an inheritance to their grandchildren, but the sinner’s wealth passes to the godly.”⁵⁴

Bringing It All Together

Generational thinking will affect your perspective about success. It will affect the way you think. It will also reflect in your prayers and have an impact on what you believe God for. It will affect your approach to living. It will affect your legacy.

As you give your all to accomplishing your purpose—and as you

enjoy the success and recognition that comes with it—you need to develop the kind of heart that is large enough to leave room for the success of others to become a priority in your life. Challenge your mind to think beyond yourself and your personal success. Be a model of good conduct for others to learn from. Be willing to share your wealth of knowledge and wisdom with others. You can write books where you share your experiences. Think about the next generation. And as much as God gives you grace, become actively involved in mentoring and equipping them, so they can take things to the next level. It is important to recognize that your achievement of lasting success should serve to build up momentum for others to surpass what you accomplished.

authorHOUSE®

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GET YOUR FOCUS RIGHT

You can't only keep looking through a lens that is mini-focused otherwise you could miss much of the bigger picture of your life.

There should be a time, and a place, for everything that is essential in our lives.

Don't ignore the fact that so many things want to attract and keep your attention.

Competence and expertise are achieved through concentrated and continuous learning and practice. And they are maintained the same way.

I would like to start this chapter by calling your attention to something I think is very important: I encourage you to learn early enough how to bring a healthy balance to your focus in life. So much that is positive, true and helpful has been said about the power of focus. Yet, we all have to acknowledge that being extremely focused can have its blind side. And getting your focus right would require—among other things—that you do all you can to avoid this blind side. Many people's

idea of being focused is one-dimensional. And this brings a lot of benefits. But it also has its disadvantages. You can't only keep looking through a lens that is mini-focused—otherwise you could miss much of the bigger picture of your life. Dr. David Livingstone, the great Scottish missionary and explorer, was gracious in acknowledging this error in an aspect of his life. In an entry he made in his journal in 1870 he said, "I often ponder over my missionary career...while spending all my energy in teaching the brethren...generally I was so much exhausted with the mental and manual labor of the day, that in the evening there was no fun left in me. I did not play with my little ones while I had them, and they soon sprang up in my absences, and left me conscious that I had none to play with."⁵⁵

The World of Firm-Grip Workaholics

I think of what happens in the world of people that could be seen as firm-grip workaholics. Such people are fully immersed in the dream that keeps on burning in their hearts. They build up business empires, give their all to their careers, are super dedicated in the work or ministry that they do—and they have strings of successes to show for it. However, if you look closely, you will observe that their successes are often one-dimensional. They come home to face the down-side in their marriages and homes. Sometimes, those of them that are Christians can be so spiritually weak and ill-equipped that they easily fall prey to temptations and attacks from the enemy. So, what is at the root of the problem? I think it is obvious to see.

Firm-grip workaholics can become so keyed-in to their one area of extreme focus—which is their career, ministry, work or business—that they not only adopt a permanent hands-on approach in doing it, but take it further to a firm-grip hold. It's as though things will collapse and their world of successes could evaporate if they don't maintain a firm-grip and keep their eyes only set on it. The irony is that what they fear could come upon them. Unless they review their

approach, their unbalanced focus could lead to the eventual collapse of everything around them.

There should be a time, and a place, for everything that is essential in our lives. Make out quality time for each of the essentials and give each of them the quality focus it requires in its time. When people are that keyed-in to their jobs, career or business, there may not be much room for proper rest and family vacations. And if they go on vacation, they ruin it by going on vacation with work clothes on. This reveals the blind side of one-dimensional focus. Focus on work should not be at the expense of the focus your spiritual life, health, marriage, and children deserve. Striking this necessary balance will result in well-rounded successes and lasting accomplishments.

Back at college, some students were labeled as “Triangular Students.” This had nothing to do with their shape. Rather, it had to do with the movements they usually made around some of the campus blocks. The buildings were aligned in such a way that their movements revealed a triangular pattern as they went back and forth from the hostels to the classrooms, to the dining hall, and to the library. Nothing else seemed to matter to them except their books. This attitude could lead to academic success—and it is right to say this is the main thing. But the problem is such people could miss out on other very good things that would have made for a better experience at college.

People Going On a Journey Need to Check Their Luggage

Decisions about a journey are incomplete until due consideration has been given to the important issue of luggage. In the journey of life, your focus will be affected by who and what you go along with. If you want to achieve lasting accomplishments, you will need to continually check and be sure of this. Who you go along with, and what you carry along with you in the journey of life can follow you—and help you—to the end. However, they could also delay you to the end, or worse still, they could keep you from the end.

From the book of Genesis we see that Abraham took Lot with him when he set out to obey God. Later, he and his wife also took Hagar along. With time, it became obvious that both Lot and Hagar were not really part of the plan. They became sources of major distractions; hindrances instead of any real help.

In a journey the weight of excess luggage is not usually felt at the beginning. However, as the journey progresses, it exerts so much strain. And there is only one thing to do with excess luggage: Do away with it! The Bible tells us in the book of Hebrews, “Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.”⁵⁶

Recognizing the Power of Staying Focused

This will always be important. So many things want to attract and keep your attention from time to time. Therefore you have to train your mind to give its concentrated attention to the one thing that needs to be focused on at a point in time. This is a winning attitude because getting your focus right—and keeping it on what is right—is essential for success at any level and in every field. Athletes who want to excel at the Olympics will care less what it will cost them as they stay focused and prepare for that one defining moment in their career. Come rain or shine—winter or summer—they will keep to their training regimen. They are usually disciplined in their eating habits, and do whatever else is necessary to qualify for the big stage. On getting to the Olympics, they still have to avoid distractions if they are to make it to the podium. And you would think that after winning they should now relax and settle down to a normal life. Not so—not if they want to compete and win at the next Olympics.

Watch closely and you will observe that most people who are into sports usually go through periods of being sidelined by injuries. But they still come back, resume training, and continue with their

careers. However what often leads them to draw the curtains on their individual sporting career earlier than they ought to is the loss of focus—when they are no longer able to give their concentrated attention to it.

I have tried my fingers on stitching with a needle. And for me, the big task is in getting the thread to pass through the eye of the needle—In fact, the smaller the eye of the needle, the more challenging the task. So to get the thread through the small eye of the needle requires a high level of focus, as would your desire for success in the things that are significant in your life. Someone could say, “Why not go for a bigger needle with a bigger eye?” But this depends on what is being stitched. A big needle might just leave more holes to be stitched. A small needle is what you need when a fine and neat finish is required. Also, where a big needle is required, the size of the thread would have to be big enough to match it. So get your focus right and keep it set—if you want to succeed in seeing the thread pass through the small eye of the needle. Keep your eyes straight. Allow no room for distractions. Aim to hit the target. Give it all it deserves. The task cannot be done with one finger. Hold on. You cannot afford to drop the thread or the needle. Maintain appropriate balance as you move your fingers towards the goal. If you fail, don’t give up. Remember the stitching to be done. As the saying goes, “A stitch in time saves nine.” Try again. Once the thread has gone through the eye of the needle successfully, there is a sense of fulfillment. All else to be done seems easy. Just pass the thread from side to side in a steady rhythm.

Set Your Mind on Your Mission

Your mind has to be trained to see the accomplishment of your divine purpose as a journey that must not be broken by interruptions and distractions. Once your mind is set, nothing will be able to derail your wheels of progress. In the Bible we read about the men who had set their minds on building a city and a tower that would “touch the sky” in Babel. If not for divine intervention, they would have achieved

their dream. God saw their unity and the resoluteness of their minds as they went about their project—and He knew that whatever they set out to do they would accomplish. However, He also saw their motives, which were wrong. So He had to intervene to stop them.

Set your mind and keep it set. This will bring results and rewards that will not come otherwise. Paul knew something about this. He personally stated how he forgets about the past and focuses on what lies ahead. And, as stated earlier, he told Timothy, “Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress.”⁵⁷ When your mind is set and properly focused, your mouth will confirm it. Teach your mind to agree with the word of God, so when others say, “It’s not possible,” you will boldly declare, “Nothing is impossible with my God.” Feed your mind with the truth. Challenge it to think positively. Declare to yourself, “I will see my dream actualized. I will see my vision fulfilled.” This is the mindset of an achiever. This is what separates successful people from the crowd. Keep reminding yourself, “I have the mind of Christ. It’s the mind of the One who is the Beginning and the End. He sees the end from the beginning. If I keep my eyes and mind on Him, He will lead me from the beginning to the end.”

So What Are the Benefits?

I think the benefits of getting your focus right are overwhelming. Any price you pay for being focused on your purpose will be overwhelmed by the favorable returns you will reap. For a start, you will enjoy the power of undivided attention. This eliminates clutter in your mind. As I pointed out earlier, don’t ignore the fact that so many things want to attract and keep your attention. Maintaining an undivided attention will energize the pursuit of your dream and accelerate your progress. It will help you to give your time and resources to what matters. And it will enable you to stand out as a person on a mission. Your difference will be obvious and speak volumes, as people will easily recognize what you stand for.

Getting your focus right will also help you to develop a confident assurance that your goals will be achieved. This is a position of rest. Because of the investment of time and intellectual resources into your area of focus you will attract and acquire wisdom—as well as skill—which will enable you to be very effective at what you do. Competence and expertise are achieved through concentrated and continuous learning and practice. And they are maintained the same way.

The temptation to quit on worthy causes—or become distracted in the process of doing them—is a challenge many people struggle with. However people who can properly direct their focus will easily avoid distractions and stay on track. Yes, they will face difficulties like others, but they will see beyond them and overcome them. With God’s help, they will be empowered to raise their game above satanic interruptions. They will go through the valleys and rough places of life with grace. And they will see God turn adversities to their advantage, and problems will become opportunities for them to experience promotion.

A Lesson from the Eighty-fourth Psalm

Challenges have little respect for the weak-minded. Those who are unstable and vacillate are likely to keep singing the songs of victims. But those who are resolute about their purpose will outlive the storms of life. They will see God help them through challenges, and use the challenges to work out a lot of good things in their lives. We see a picture of this in Psalm 84. This Psalm celebrates the temple that was in Jerusalem and the longing of those who desired to be there. In particular, verses 5 to 7 describe the attitude of those who had to set their minds on pilgrimage in order to get to the temple. Their uncompromising attitude about their journey was important because there was a valley to cross before they could arrive at their destination. The psalmist declared: “What joy for those whose strength comes from the LORD, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.” He continued by saying, “When they walk

through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings. They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Jerusalem. ⁵⁸

The valley they had to cross on their way to the temple posed a challenge to their journey; it did not normally present a friendly atmosphere. However, because their minds were set on arriving at the temple, they would be amazed to find that on getting to the valley it had become a place to be refreshed—a place full of blessings! So, instead of a setback to their journey, the valley would become a place of renewed strength for the rest of the journey to the temple.

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PART FOUR

DEVELOPING QUALITY
RELATIONSHIPS AND
DEVELOPING YOURSELF

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15

DON'T BE A LONELY SUPERHERO

The wisdom needed for lasting accomplishments will teach you to recognize the power of companionship.

It takes networking for the benefits of synergy to be multiplied.

Great men and women who succeeded in the past submitted themselves to the mentorship of others ahead of them in the journey of life.

Back in 2017, Linda and I were invited to an awards evening at the high school our two daughters attended. Parents with school-age children know what it feels like to watch your child receive an award for academic achievement. For us, it was really an evening to remember. But there was more to it.

The school had also invited a special guest, Emma Mitchell, to give a speech. And I found her story to be quite compelling. Emma

was part of the Coxless Crew that in January 2016 made history by becoming the first female crew to row the Pacific Ocean from America to Australia. In the process they also set a world record for the longest ocean rowing crossing. There were six of them. And they spent 257 days at sea in their boat. In her speech, Emma Mitchell said much about the team effort that made their record-setting performance possible. No one crew member could have done it alone. They had to take turns to row for hours and keep the journey going. And in the end they achieved their dream. Emma concluded her presentation by quoting Mother Teresa who reportedly said, "I can do things you cannot. You can do things I cannot. Together we can do great things." This often used quotation may be a paraphrase or interpretation of Mother Teresa's own words. However, it is good for promoting team work. And it is packed full of meaning and depth of wisdom.

Much more can be accomplished when people work together in agreement. All the things written in this book about achieving significant success do not imply that you should become a lonely superhero. Rather, the wisdom needed for lasting accomplishments will teach you to recognize the power of companionship. It is wise to recognize that in each of us is strength as well as weakness. What one person lacks, another supplies. We make up for each other in amazing ways that only an awesome divine design could have allowed to be so.

In July 1870, D. L. Moody heard Ira Sankey sing at a YMCA convention in Indianapolis, Indiana and the evangelist immediately recognized the important role Sankey could play in the success of his ministry. Months later, Ira Sankey became associated with evangelist Moody as his solo singer and music director. Over time, D. L. Moody became a great evangelist and Ira Sankey became a great hymn composer. We can also look at the successful ministry of Dr. Billy Graham and observe he was not a lonely super hero. For several decades, Dr. Graham worked together with Cliff Barrows, his crusade song leader and choir director, as well as the gospel singer George Beverly Shea.

The successful accomplishment of your dreams will at some stage or another require the involvement of others. In the chapter

Make a Bold Move, you will read about how Jonathan the son of King Saul made a daring move that brought deliverance to a nation. However, you will need to observe that he did not go alone. He needed assistance. He needed his armor bearer. And he eventually needed support from the rest of the army.

Get the Balance Right

Personal acts of courage and exemplary conduct will continue to be required from us. However, they cannot displace the superior power available to those who recognize the purpose of pulling together and going for a task in agreement. Men and women who exercised authority and did great exploits in the Bible showed their need for companions. Even though they made bold moves and performed daring acts, they were also great team players. For example, David slew the giant Goliath. This was a daring act. And he had to move when no one else dared to. But this one victory was not enough to fully subdue the Philistine army. They kept coming back throughout the reign of King Saul. And, apart from Goliath, there were other giants waiting in the wings.

A more enduring conquest of the Philistine army occurred after David surrounded himself with an inner circle of mighty warriors. His mighty warriors were with him during his days in the wilderness. They stayed with him when he became king of Israel. And one of them was on hand to rescue him when he almost became a victim of another Philistine giant on the battlefield. The book of Second Samuel tells us, "Once again the Philistines were at war with Israel. And when David and his men were in the thick of battle, David became weak and exhausted." The passage continues by saying, "Ishbi-benob was a descendant of the giants; his bronze spearhead weighed more than seven pounds, and he was armed with a new sword. He had cornered David and was about to kill him. But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to David's rescue and killed the Philistine."⁵⁹

David, the giant killer, was rescued from another giant in his

time of weakness because a member of his inner circle of warriors was on hand. Clearly, the battle against the giants was not a one-man show, even though in the beginning it seemed like it was. David had to move alone against Goliath. But he had the wisdom to train and take others with him to confront and eliminate the remaining giants. The book of Second Samuel summarizes for us how four of the giants were eliminated: “These four Philistines were descendants of the giants of Gath, but David and his warriors killed them.”⁶⁰

What King David recognized, the Apostle Peter also did. Peter walked on water even though no one else dared to follow him. But he was also a team player. In particular, he found in the Apostle John a co-worker, a companion, and a friend. Peter went with John to the empty tomb of Jesus; they were together at the Beautiful Gate where the lame man was healed; they stood side by side before the ruling Jewish Council in the aftermath of the miraculous healing; and they went together to Samaria to help out Philip when a revival broke out there. They did a lot together. And there is no doubt they learned this principle from the practical lesson Jesus taught them when he sent them out two-by-two. In Ecclesiastes we are told that, “Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.”⁶¹

Understand the Kingdom Plan

While we may celebrate individual accomplishments, God is seeking and building a network that is accomplishing the greater good of advancing His kingdom. This is also a fundamental principle in the running of successful organizations. It takes networking for the benefits of synergy to be multiplied.

Joshua 23 verse 10 says, “Each one of you will put to flight a thousand of the enemy.” Yet it is proper to have a balanced understanding of this scripture. It’s great to make a move, to step out in faith, and to chase a thousand. But when it’s about each person chasing a thousand,

competition will thrive and each could seek to have the advantage. This will compromise the greater good and diminish the impact of the kingdom—just as it would in any worthwhile organization. One will put to flight a thousand. Two could put to flight ten thousand. And there is no telling the extent of what could happen when a healthy network is in place. The goals are to build the kingdom and glorify God, to multiply strength and diminish weakness, to collectively resist the schemes of the enemy, and to enforce victory at a large scale. This is a winning strategy that also ensures we all run successfully and make it to the end. Ecclesiastes 4:12 tells us that, “A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.”

Recognize the Power of Mentorship

Tryon Edwards made this quotation in *A Dictionary of Thoughts*, a book which he edited: “People never improve unless they look to some standard or example higher and better than themselves.”⁶² Great men and women who succeeded in the past submitted themselves to the mentorship of others ahead of them in the journey of life. The moves you need to make in the pursuit of your dream may be unique, but the process of accomplishing them will not be new. Some others would have made similar moves in the past and come out successful. It is important for you to recognize you need their help along the way.

When you associate with the wise and learn their ways, you will become wise. When you associate with the successful and learn their ways, you will become successful. As you make your moves, God will bring you in contact with the right person or people to help you along the way. And He will enable you to have access to the reserve of wisdom deposited in them. If you draw close enough to them with the right attitude—and if you honor the relationship—you will learn a lot from them and you will be successful in your dream just as they are successful in theirs. This is the power of mentorship.

UCHENNA NWEKE

Bringing It All Together

Don't limit your chances of achieving remarkable things by striving to be a lonely super hero. We can easily observe the benefits of teamwork by looking at successful marriages, sports teams, churches, corporate groups and other organizations. But we need to get better at practicing it.

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16

THE POWER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

None of us can be tough-skinned enough to successfully go through life without the need for encouragement.

Highly motivated people are very effective in the work they do.

As a Christian you need to realize that your greatest encourager is inside you in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Don't yield to feelings of discouragement. Rather, look for ways to receive the encouragement you need to overcome it.

One of the great Christian leaders that came out of China in the twentieth century was Watchman Nee. The books he authored, including *The Spiritual Man*, *Normal Christian Life*, *Sit, Walk, Stand*, *The Breaking of the Outer Man and the Release of the Spirit*, have continued to inspire generations of Christians around the world. Watchman Nee's belief in Christ and his passion for the growth of the church in China was unquestionable. And because of his influence

the communist regime in China imprisoned him in 1952. Yet, in looking at Watchman Nee's story of enduring accomplishments you will find that an important factor in it all was his quality relationship with his wife Charity Chang whom he married in 1934. Charity turned out to be a great encourager in her husband's life in his time of greatest need. Until she died in 1971, she was the only one allowed to visit Watchman Nee during his several years of imprisonment. Watchman Nee died in prison on May 30, 1972.

To excel in your purpose or the dreams you want to accomplish in life, your resolve, confidence, passion and drive should be unquestionable and unquenchable. However, in trying times, what could sustain your resolve and confidence—what could urge you on and keep you going—may be few precious words of encouragement. God has so designed it that none of us can be tough-skinned enough to successfully go through life without the need for encouragement. In effect, when you outline all that is required for a person or a team to attain success and retain it over a significant period of time, you cannot exclude the need for encouragement.

Years back I visited a young man who was my junior at University. At this time, he had graduated. To my amazement, he told me he would not have completed his university education if not for something remarkable God used me to do in his life. When he said this, I was surprised because I had no clue what it was all about. He continued by saying he got to a point where he decided to quit his studies and go home. On this particular day, he was carrying a bag, on his way home, when I saw him. As he told me, I called out to him and started encouraging him without knowing a thing about his decision or where he was going. The words he heard enabled him to change his mind. He carried on with his studies and went on to complete a degree program. Truly, if we let God, He will use our words of encouragement to do more than we could imagine.

Encouragement Brings the Best Out of a Person

It works like a tonic to boost a person's spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual vigor. It revives and refreshes. It strengthens and emboldens. It is a motivator. It works like an accelerator by enhancing speed of performance. It helps to keep the momentum of good results going. In all, it can be said that highly motivated people are very effective in the work they do.

Progress will always be hindered by the absence of encouragement. An individual or a team low on morale is like a parked train that is going nowhere. But one word of encouragement can produce the confidence and attitude needed to get going again on the mission. It can get a person who has been downcast to brighten up and look forward in hope. It can challenge the mind to see the best—instead of focusing on the worst. It can be the catalyst that would get a person running to accomplish difficult tasks and fulfill humanly-impossible dreams. It can also produce a spark that could activate dormant potential in people and unearth hidden treasures in their lives.

My wife Linda is a gifted writer. However, this gift could have remained unrecognized if not for the words of encouragement she received from an elderly lady in London. It all began as a casual discussion about gardening and everything else. And as this lady listened she felt my wife had a lot to say which could be of help to others. So she encouraged her to put her ideas down in a book. This was the first spark that got her thinking about writing a book. And not long after that, her first book was published. On the publication of the book, Linda formally acknowledged the role this elderly lady played in making it possible. But when she called to offer her a complimentary copy of the book, she was surprised to find that the lady could not remember encouraging her to write a book. Truly, when encouraging others becomes an attitude that flows from your heart, you could do it without realizing what you have done—but for the person encouraged it could be life-changing.

You cannot stay successful without encouragement. When the apostle Paul was arrested and held in custody in Jerusalem, it

seemed like his resolve to continue was in doubt. He may have been under some form of pressure—not knowing what was to follow next. However, a direct word of encouragement from the Lord Jesus made the difference. Acts 23:11 tells us, “That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, “Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well.” You can imagine how Paul felt after hearing those words. They would have helped him to regain his courage. They would have enabled him to overcome any fears about the future of his ministry. This is the power of encouragement on display. Paul’s experience helps us to understand that there would be times when each of us would need to hear words like, “Be encouraged; don’t give up; it’s not over yet; you can do it!” And if you need to hear it today, I encourage you to receive it. God wants us to be encouraged. He will always find a way to supply encouragement to us when we need it—if we are open to receive it. In fact, as a Christian you need to realize that your greatest encourager is inside you—in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Watch Who You Associate With or Bring Close to You

Close relationships are vital in life. However, it is important to note that anyone you associate with or bring close to you could eventually become an encourager or a competitor. Barnabas was close to Paul. Jonathan was close to David. Caleb stood with Joshua. Lot was close to Abraham. Each of these relationships had the potential of producing either encouragers or competitors. Jonathan chose to encourage David rather than compete with him. Caleb stood with Joshua and submitted to his leadership. But Lot had other ideas in his relationship with Abraham. He preferred to be a competitor. This made the environment not conducive for progress.

A young man I know needed to go for a course. This meant he had to be away from his job for a few weeks. So his line manager asked him to recommend a suitable person in the organization who would stand in for him until his return. The young man’s thought

immediately went to another man who he had a close relationship with. He was happy to give his friend an opportunity to earn more money. And his friend gladly accepted the offer, settled down to the job, liked it, and got the idea to take it over permanently.

While the young man was away, his friend was busy implementing his plot. His strategy was to get the line manager on his side by giving gifts to him. On his return, the young man was shocked to learn about the developments. He could not understand why his friend had suddenly become a competitor, and why he had to fight for his job. It took his trust in God and his unwillingness to let go for him to be restored to his position.

The fact is competition breeds in a carnal mind. This is why as Christians we need to be spiritually-minded. The spiritual mind recognizes that two who agree are better than one. It is a mutually beneficial relationship—encouragement is given and encouragement is received. Both are edified and built-up. But the natural mind loves to compare and compete. It likes to compare clothes, houses, children, and even spirituality. It thrives on promoting self above others.

Obviously, there is a healthy form of competition that is to be expected in some work places and organizations. This would create room for outstanding performers to be rewarded. However, there should be a proper boundary to it—in order to ensure that harmony, team work and the accomplishment of the overall vision of the organization is not sacrificed. In an atmosphere where there is mutual encouragement, individuals will be highly motivated to excel in their unique roles without losing sight of the bigger picture.

You Need to Resist the Spirit of Discouragement

Wisdom will teach you not only to recognize the power of encouragement, but also to be on your guard against the trap of discouragement. Discouragement is a zeal quencher. It drains life out of people's passion. Its goal is to stand in the way of hope and confidence. It is an interrupter of progress. In the book of First

Samuel chapter one, we read about the story of Hannah. Hannah was discouraged because she couldn't conceive. She was also discouraged by the negative treatment she kept receiving from Peninnah, her husband's second wife. And from Hannah's story we see that discouragement can keep a person sad. It can keep a person from eating. And it can reduce a person to tears from time to time. You will not have a sense of fulfillment when you stay discouraged. So what did Hannah do? She picked up courage and called on God for help. As she was praying in desperation at Shiloh, she told Eli the priest, "I haven't been drinking wine or anything stronger. But I am very discouraged, and I was pouring out my heart to the LORD." ⁶³

To achieve its goal, discouragement usually covers the atmosphere with despair. And it does this by creating a gloomy picture in the mind. This battle in the mind will lead some people to question the value in what has been achieved and the reward in going forward. They reach the wrong conclusions and say the wrong things. When someone says, "Nothing seems to work for me," it is obvious that the person is discouraged. This is what happened to Jacob in the Bible. At a point in his life, Jacob became very discouraged. This led him to say, in Genesis 42:36, "Everything is going against me!" Why did he say this? He considered how his amazing dream for his family and his expectations for the future were being wrecked by circumstances that seemed beyond his control. But Jacob was wrong. Unknown to him, God was at work, using the circumstances to bring about a good end. When Jacob heard Joseph was still alive, it was like a resurrection took place: Not the resurrection of Joseph, but of Jacob. He came back to life from the spiritual numbness of discouragement. We read the account of this in the book of Genesis: "They told him, 'Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.' Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived." ⁶⁴

Please note the following three facts about discouragement: Firstly, the negative words you hear or the adverse situations you face do not automatically produce discouragement. Rather, discouragement gains

a foothold in your life when you react negatively to words and adverse situations. Secondly, fear, worry and doubt trigger negative reactions that are welcoming to discouragement. Also your mouth is a gateway and negative words can serve as an invitation to discouragement. And thirdly, discouragement works on the mind, emotion and will, using what has been said or what has happened to a person to stifle his or her progress. These facts should challenge you to prayerfully stand on the word of God and resist the spirit of discouragement anytime it wants to attack your mind. Don't just yield to feelings of discouragement. Rather, look for ways to receive the encouragement you need to overcome it.

Be an Encourager

If you want to reap a harvest of encouragement in your life, you have to learn to sow it consistently into the lives of others. Some people are great at being encouragers because they are specially gifted to do it. However, everyone is expected to do it. It is a lifestyle to desire. So, what difference can your presence make? A lot if you choose to be an encourager. Your words have a lot to say about you. In many ways, they will shape people's perceptions of who you are. People are glad whenever you are around because they know the grace of God flowing from your words can give hope to the hopeless and put a smile back on the face of the sad. Paul had a taste of this at a time he dearly needed to be encouraged. And the person who made the difference on this occasion was Titus. Paul tells us, "But God, who encourages those who are discouraged, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus. His presence was a joy."⁶⁵

So, can you reach down just to help others up? Jonathan left the palace and ended up in the wilderness. In 1 Samuel 23:16, it tells us why: "Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God."

I remember a young man who did what was unusual. A general fast was declared in a campus fellowship, which he was a part of. But

on the day of the fast, he went around picking his teeth, all for fun, as though he had been feasting instead of fasting. He saw a lot of things from the happy side of life. And what he did would have brightened a lot of faces that were down because of the fast.

Encourage Potential in People

Encouragement is a seed that has the power to activate the potential in people. One word or act of encouragement can generate a spark that will produce greatness out of ordinary lives. It takes great character to reach down and help others up. An encourager will be willing to overlook obvious weaknesses in order to bring out the hidden treasures in people. In the chapter on *Generational Thinking and Legacy* I share two stories of how people have affected my life in a special way because they encouraged the potential they saw in me.

Give Hope to the Hopeless

Hope is an anointing that restores dreams. It gives strength to continue and not give up. It's like a glimmer of light that captures the attention of someone in the dark and creates an irreversible momentum that leads him or her through the night into the full dawning of day. An encourager will recognize that hopeless situations can be turned around, and that God can use him or her to give hope to the hopeless.

I remember a story I heard in 1998 when I was very sick. Someone visited me and shared this true story at a time when I had only been married for months yet was holding onto God to stay alive. It gave me a lot of hope. It's about a young man who took ill shortly after his wedding. He deteriorated rapidly and became bed-ridden. All medical efforts to get him healed proved unsuccessful. This continued for many years. Blames were passed around on why he became sick. And his wife suffered a lot in this period. But one day this young man suddenly got up by himself. He recovered fully to the amazement of all who knew about his ill health. You can imagine how encouraged I was after

hearing this story. And by God's grace, I, also, eventually got up and recovered. How I still treasure that visit and the hope it brought to me!

Encourage Yourself

In March 1873, David Livingstone made an entry in his journal in which he said, "Nothing earthly will make me give up my work in despair. I encourage myself in the Lord my God, and go forward."⁶⁶ Encouraging yourself is not really optional. You need to do it from time to time. We know King David did it, and Job did it. We can also imagine that Noah, in his generation, had to encourage himself. The best way to encourage yourself is to speak the Word of God over your life.

I am a Nigerian by birth, and after graduating from the university in 1988, I had to serve my country of origin for one year. This is a mandatory national service. And you could be sent to any part of the country. I was posted to teach in a village school in a remote part of the country. To put things nicely, I would say the place lacked some essential amenities. However, before I knew I was going to be sent there, I had stumbled into a scripture that says, "The unfailing love of the LORD fills the earth."⁶⁷ I kept declaring this scripture over myself. Eventually, it became an anchor for my soul throughout my stay there.

I was not the only one posted to this village. One young man, in particular, raised a storm with his words right from the first day we got there. He made clear his distaste for being there. And he could not just stand it. It was not long before his father intervened to get him posted elsewhere. But I had made up my mind to stay.

God showed that His word can be trusted, for indeed the earth is full of His goodness and unfailing love. He did not let His word that I kept declaring over myself fall to the ground. Shortly after my arrival, the Lord gave me favor with someone in position there. I was abundantly provided for during my stay there—not to mention so many other miracles I experienced. I can definitely say my stay in that remote village turned out to be successful.

17

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IS ESSENTIAL

To stay on top of your game, you need to keep the learning process going.

You need to bring yourself to a position where you can challenge and overcome habits and actions which keep you underperforming.

Commitment without personal development will leave a man well behind where he should be in life.

Peter J. Daniels is an outstanding achiever from Australia. Born in 1932, he has made his mark in the business world in the area of real estate and as a highly successful entrepreneur. Dr. Daniels is the president and founder of the World Centre for Entrepreneurial Studies. Part of his initiative is what is called the *Gabriel Call* which has the goal of training over a million Christian business people by 2025 to financially support local churches for evangelism purposes.

Peter Daniels is also an accomplished author and public speaker. He usually comes once to conduct free of charge seminars in churches around the world. And he has been honored with several international awards for his achievements and philanthropy. On the home front, he has had a successful marriage since 1955 to Robina his wife. Yet, if you know his background, you would realize that the story of Dr. Daniels could have been so different if he had not taken the steps he took to develop himself.

Peter J. Daniels rose from a background where he had four fathers and two mothers. As he grew up, he did not have much of a positive example from his family members and relatives. He struggled at school—experienced rejection there—and remained illiterate into his early adult life. His complete CV would show that he started out working as a bricklayer and stone mason. So, how did things turnaround for him? One of the major sparks that generated the successes that Dr. Daniels's eventually experienced was his quality decision to become a learner and engage in personal development. He bought three dictionaries; kept one in the car and two in the house. And he made out time to go through the dictionary—and checked with people for corrections—until he knew the meaning of words. He also challenged himself by reading hundreds of biographies of great achievers. Today his success story is motivating lots of people around the world.

Development Will Keep You on the Cutting Edge

In the hearts of people who have embraced their purpose there is always the longing for something more. They may not want to do something else. However, they want more to happen in what they are doing and in the way they do it. They want to see it progress and move to higher levels. They are not just satisfied doing what they are called to do; they desire to become—and remain—outstanding at doing it. Personal development has to come into the picture if this kind of longing is to be met.

You cannot ignore the need to stay on the cutting edge as you navigate your way to lasting accomplishments. When you stop developing, you limit your growth and performance; and, over time, your influence will diminish. To stay on top of your game, you need to keep the learning process going through the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge. You need to keep sharpening your skills so you can keep enhancing your performance. And as we will see from the story that follows, character development should also not be ignored.

A Lesson from the Story of David Livingstone

David Livingstone, the well-known Scottish missionary and explorer, wrote something remarkable in his journal while on a journey in Africa. The year was probably 1853. He said, “I feel the want of books in this journey more than anything else. A Sichuana Pentateuch, a lined journal, Thompson’s Tables, a Nautical Almanac, and a Bible, constitute my stock. The last constitutes my chief resource; but the want of other mental pabulum is felt severely.”⁶⁸ What was the issue here? I think Dr. Livingstone wanted to keep developing. He wanted to stay relevant. He wanted to remain in good form mentally as he faced up to the challenge of making progress in his work in Africa. And if you look closely, you will observe that the emphasis here is on the development of the mind—which is a key factor in the personal development equation.

If we fast-forward Dr. Livingstone’s story a bit, we will find that about thirteen years later he also wrote in his journal, “We now end 1866. It has not been so fruitful as I intended. Will try to do better in 1867, and be better—more gentle and loving; and may the Almighty, to whom I commit my way, bring my desires to pass, and prosper me! May he who was full of grace and truth impress his character on mine; grace—eagerness to show favor; truth—truthfulness; sincerity; honor—for his mercy’s sake.”⁶⁹ What is the emphasis here? I think Dr. Livingstone is talking about developing the kind of heart he needed to become more successful.

Every new level in life would usually require more leverage to sustain it. And you would need to raise your standard of excellence to new levels. This again tells us why personal development is essential. Great achievers are great learners. We all need to keep learning from others on how to do things better. And we also need to develop better ways of doing the things we do. Seek out and stick with mentors who will help to bring the best out of you. Keep walking with the wise. And surround yourself with good and well-informed advisers.

Helpful Exercises in Personal Development

Determine to live a productive life. Become effective in doing the things you do. Carlos Wilcox said, “The best way for a man to get out of a lowly position is to be conspicuously effective in it.”⁷⁰ Seeds produce a harvest and investments bring returns. Yet, we all need to realize that activity is not always equivalent to productivity. Gifts, time, and other resources can be wasted. And wasters end up opening doors—at no choice of theirs—for poverty and lack to rule over them. So, your ability to minimize waste and maximize output is proof of proficiency. And it is important that your efforts are going into good grounds that are productive.

You need to keep developing your understanding of the Word of God—because it is the foundation for productivity. Keep hearing the Word. Study it. Meditate on it. Love it. Believe it. Confess it. Live it out. And share it. Fill your heart with God’s word because the issues of life flow from the heart. Also, remember that the Word of God shapes the mind, and the mind shapes the person. A person with a renewed mind is a person who reflects the true image of God. Such a person will understand the mind of God, know what to do, do things with excellence and live a productive life.

Challenge Any Area of Laxity in Your life

If you want to stand out, you have to stand up to any area of laxity in your life. You need to bring yourself to a position where you can challenge and overcome habits and actions which keep you underperforming. In the book *A Dictionary of Thoughts* edited by Tryon Edwards, we see this remarkable words: “Any act often repeated soon forms a habit; and habit allowed, steadily gains in strength—At first it may be but as the spider’s web, easily broken through, but if not resisted it soon binds us with chains of steel.”⁷¹

Avoid the Excuse Trap

Dwight L. Moody said, “Do you know the origin of excuses? You will find it away back in Eden. When Adam had sinned, he tried to excuse himself.”⁷² Most times, excuses are attractive and cheap to make. But don’t allow your mind to buy into them. You can find a thousand and one excuses why things are the way they are in your life, why nothing seems to work for you, why you just can’t see what else you could do, why you cannot see how your situation could change, and why you are not cut out for great things. If this is going on in your mind, you are not alone. However, the truth is that God can help you through his Word. Look at these nuggets of wisdom contained in the book of Romans 12:2: “Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out.” It continues by saying, “Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you and develops well-formed maturity in you.”⁷³

Face Up to Your Mistakes

We have all made mistakes. A man with an excellent spirit will respond to a mistake with the right attitude—he will face up to it. This means that he will admit it, deal with it, learn from it, get over it, and not repeat it. After going through this process, he comes out stronger than he was before the mistake. He is better equipped to deal with the issues of life and in a position to help others—both those who have made a similar mistake and those who are yet to make the mistake. This is an important dimension of practicing excellence, and it leads to progress. However, a poor response to a mistake will be obvious and it will hinder progress. The person involved will very likely deny it, or admit it and then moan over it. This would mean that he or she could be held back by the mistake and could eventually repeat it.

Don't Resist Making Positive Changes

This is important because you cannot go farther than the positive changes you are willing to accept and implement. Your quest to keep developing will also require that you respond and adapt to positive changes when the need arises. Don't resist positive change. You cannot go farther than the changes you are open to and ready to follow through. Those who want to keep improving and keep rising in life should be prepared to take full advantage of positive changes happening in their field and in the world around them.

Add Personal Development to Your Commitment

Commitment and progress do not always accompany each other. You would have seen people who have worked their hearts out and shown a high level of commitment at work—or in whatever they are doing—but with little progress to back it up. This is where personal development comes into the equation. Opportunities for progress

come to all. Your commitment will give you access to life-changing opportunities, but will not be enough to ensure you recognize them and take full advantage of them. Commitment can bring promotion, but may not equip you to handle it well. It will open some doors for you and enable you to achieve some form of success. But to press into the maximum of your potential—to assail the highest heights and remain there—you need to get the combination right by bringing personal development into the equation. This will help to prepare you for your golden opportunity. In the words of H. P. Liddon, “What we do upon a great occasion will probably depend upon what we already are; what we are will be the result of previous years of self-discipline.” Personal development is a form of self-discipline.

Commitment without personal development will leave a man well behind where he should be in life. Someone could remain faithful at the same job when he or she could have moved to a better paying job. And the reason for remaining on the same job may not be justified—it may not be as a result of a life-long calling or a commitment based on loyalty. Rather, it could be due to ignorance, inadequate skill, resistance to change, or inability to recognize and go for opportunities.

Limitations to your progress are proof of unutilized potential. The more your potential is activated, the more you can rise to higher levels in life and remain there. This is why we all need to keep developing. Personal development is required to activate our unutilized potential and keep our wheels of progress going from season to season. Commitment alone can only take you so far. When you cease to be relevant, you quickly lose influence. Personal development will enable you to enlarge your capacity, sharpen your skills, and remain relevant to your world. This will enhance your worth. And when your worth is enhanced, your service will be sought after, and your commitment will be better appreciated. Ecclesiastes 10:10 tells us, “Using a dull ax requires great strength, so sharpen the blade. That’s the value of wisdom; it helps you succeed.”

I know a faithful young man who went on a self-sponsored course and afterwards applied for a new job. They were willing to give the

job to him, but he found out that the place of work would be too far for him so he declined the offer. Then they called back to say they were arranging for him to work at a location closer to him. They were determined not to lose him because of the skill he had acquired. When you choose to walk in wisdom, God will qualify you to be in high demand. Your uniqueness will be obvious for all to see. And you will be an answer to a need where you are.

Develop Yourself—Develop Others

A quotation contained in the book *A Dictionary of Thoughts* says that, “Thoroughly to teach another is the best way to learn for yourself.” Apart from personal development, your desire to experience significance in life would require that you are involved in developing others. As you go on achieving success and retaining it, you should also be able to influence and train others in the process. This is why some questions should be regularly on your mind—questions like, “Is my character and general conduct exemplary? How are those around me being enhanced by what I do? Who have I mentored to become successful? Who am I training to keep the legacy of accomplishments going after I have finished my part of the relay of life? These issues are considered in more detail in the chapter on generational thinking and legacy.

18

MAKE A BOLD MOVE

The major turning points in the success stories of achievers are often traceable to the courageous moves they made.

So many people want to be more useful. But they are struggling to get off the blocks and see it happen. And this cannot be ignored or simply explained away.

You cannot progress beyond the fear that has locked you in—unless you decide to defy it and make a daring move.

Desire for lasting accomplishments will not be met sitting down. Success is attained and retained when you take steps and make bold moves in the right direction.

As I write, the most translated film in the world is an evangelistic tool known as the *Jesus Film*. It has been translated into over twenty-one hundred languages and viewed by billions of people. By looking at the story behind the global impact of the film, we will see the importance of making a bold move. It is painful to contemplate all the ideas, dreams and potential that are laying waste around the world—and the golden opportunities that are missed—because

people are unwilling to make a move. The fact is that the major turning points in the success stories of achievers are often traceable to the courageous moves they made. Whether it is walking on the moon, or crossing the oceans to reach the unreached, people have had to take bold steps in order to accomplish remarkable things.

The bold move that set the stage for the global impact of the *Jesus Film* began in earnest in 1981 when the late Dr. Bill Bright created a project for translating it into foreign languages. Bill Bright was born in 1921. After embracing the call of God as a young man in 1944 he developed a passion to play a significant part in helping to fulfill the Great Commission. His first major move came in 1951 when he and Vonette his wife founded Campus Crusade for Christ at University of California, Los Angeles. Since then, the work Campus Crusade does has spread to other universities around the globe. The organization is now known as Cru. Dr. Bright is also remembered for writing the *Four Spiritual Laws*—another useful tool for sharing the gospel. Yet, it is worth pointing out that the idea of the Jesus Film in English was not originally that of Bill Bright. However, when the producer John Heyman intimated him about it, Dr. Bright saw purpose in the idea. He jumped on board and got his organization to spend millions of Dollars in funding it. The film was first released in 1979. While some critics were spending their time assessing the financial success or otherwise of the film, Dr. Bill Bright was occupied with another important courageous move that needed to be made—how to get the Jesus Film translated into other languages. Today it is available in hundreds of languages. The immediate impact of the project was quite revolutionary because for many people, especially in remote parts of the globe, the idea of watching a film and seeing Jesus speak in their native tongue seemed too good to be true. But there it was! As real and moving as anything they could have imagined. And the film may still be the first and only one some people have in their native language. Bill Bright died July 19, 2003.

Why People Desire Progress Yet are Unwilling to Make a Move

Everyone alive is gifted. We all have an endowed capacity potent with all manner of possibilities. However, as sweet as these words sound to the ears, it is important to remember that your potential and possibilities are no good if you don't make a quality move and put them to a good use. It's like having a car locked up in your garage. A car that remains parked is on a journey to nowhere. It cannot get you to your destination. What makes news in life are results and accomplishments—the outcome of putting your gift to a purposeful use. This is how people become achievers. It is how they can serve, gain influence, and make a significant difference in their world. It is also why they will be admired and remembered for good in the future. The challenge though is that far too many people are sitting down with their gifts and good intentions, and seem incapable of hitting the road and accomplishing anything of worth. So many people want to be more useful. But they are struggling to get off the blocks and see it happen. And this cannot be ignored or simply explained away.

Why is it that many people desire to make progress and yet are unwilling to make a move? Why are many settling for the foot of the mountain when they can head for the peak? Are there reasons to explain why lots of people resist positive change and settle for the comfort of the immediate instead of reaching out for the possibilities of the future which they actually desire? Why are so many clutching on to excuses and hurts of the past instead of pressing on to new life-transforming experiences? And why is staying average preferred by many who could easily aspire for the best? These are questions that require answers. And in answering them you have to recognize that there will always be an excuse for people to draw back when they should go forward. For some, there will always be a lion on the way—a risk factor that makes it too dangerous to proceed—or for the idealist the time and conditions will never be right. Yet, if you take a closer look you will observe that the real issue is fear. Whether it is

fear of failure or fear of the unknown, you cannot progress beyond the fear that has locked you in—unless you decide to defy it and make a daring move.

This chapter will challenge you to say *no* to fear. It will point out the importance of breaking free from your comfort zone and embracing positive changes. In it you will learn about what I call the power of one day. And you will see why you have to be courageous enough to seize the opportunity it presents to you.

What If I Fail?

If all men and women lived their lives pondering over the question, “What if I fail?” then Thomas Edison would not have had over a thousand patents to his credit for his inventions, including the phonograph and the commercialization of electric light. The Wright brothers would not have taken to the air on their first flight in 1903. Likewise, Yuri Gagarin would not have flown into space in 1961 and Neil Armstrong would not have set foot on the surface of the moon in 1969. In fact if everyone kept thinking, “What if I fail?” Florence Nightingale would not have saved many lives by risking hers during the Crimean Wars. Christiaan Barnard would not have attempted the first heart transplant in 1967, and many other medical feats we celebrate today would not have been possible. Also, no one would dare to reach the peak of Mount Everest. And, most importantly, people would be of little use in the hand of God.

People who keep pondering over the question, “What if I fail?” keep playing the waiting game even after receiving a green light to go forward. They could experience remarkable progress. But they don’t because they keep allowing the fear of failure to dictate the pace of their race. This is why there is an unwritten sign on the lanes that lead to outstanding accomplishments and significance in life which points out that the fearful are not welcome.

Sometime in 2012, Bro. Satish Kumar the founding pastor of Calvary Temple in Hyderabad, India told the congregation they were

going to lay the foundation stone for their 18,000-seat modern church building on November 11 of that year. He said this after a four-month period of consistent corporate prayers by the church. Brother Kumar went on to tell them the building would be finished in fifty-two days—the same number of days it took Nehemiah and his team to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. This was a bold move. The kind of move no fearful person would want to be a part of. To the glory of God, the building was finished in fifty-two days and dedicated on January 1 2013.

As a Christian, you are likely to feel the fear of failure knocking on the door if you are gearing up to do anything worthwhile. However, that is not a reason to give in to it. Remember, God has not given us a spirit of fear. And with His help you will always find a way forward despite the fear that is trying to stop your progress. Check out Matthew 25:25. There we can see that the third servant in the parable of the talents did not make a move because he was afraid of failing. While the other two servants set out on business, he went and hid his talent. Fear of failure is a crippler. It is a road blocker. It comes to hinder success. It is a dream thief that wants to lock in your potential and cut short your dreams. So, you need to stand up in faith and confront it. You have to be determined in ensuring it doesn't stop you from doing what God has given you grace to do. And even if you fail in the process of doing it, you can always turn the failure to a learning curve that will position you for success. The point being made here is that success can only come if you choose to defy the fear of failure and keep making progress.

Resistance to Change

Your ability to conquer new grounds and move to higher heights will be affected by your readiness to accept and adapt to positive changes. Many times an unwillingness to go forward is traceable to a fear of the unknown, and this is aided by a resistance to change. I think of the fact that many big stores in London now have self-checkout facilities.

This means that you don't have to wait in the queue just to pay to a cashier. You can scan your purchases and pay via an automated system. It's easy to learn, and I usually go for it after shopping. But I didn't always do this. Like many others, I was initially reluctant to give it a try when they were first introduced years ago. I preferred to wait to have a real person do it for me. We naturally like to do the things we are comfortable at. But a problem with such an attitude is that it doesn't recognize the fact that a lot is changing around us. And unless you make necessary adjustments, by the time you look again, you could be amazed at how far behind you would be.

As a believer in Christ, you have a great mind, and great minds recognize the need to embrace positive changes. At challenging times—when there is a problem and when the pressure mounts—many people choose to go back to the familiar for comfort. They return to their comfort zones. But great minds think of change and how to adapt to it. They look closely to observe what could be done differently. They recognize that this could be the only way forward. So, before you can make a successful move, you need to prepare your mind for action. A person cannot accomplish what his or her mind has not been renewed to accept. Challenge your mind: “If it is in God's will for me, then I can do it.”

It's comfortable to be in the boat. However, if you remain in it, you cannot walk on water. Abraham made a move and became the father of faith and of many nations. Faith is a risk. But true faith never fails. True faith never fails because it is anchored on the forever-settled Word of God. Faith is a spiritual force you need to apply to break into new territories and move up to new horizons. Without force, there really would be no significant advancement.

The Power of One Day

The difference one day could make in your life depends a lot on your decision to make a move. The prodigal son, in a parable of Jesus, could have suffered for the rest of his life. But one day he came to his

senses, made the right move, and returned into the waiting arms of his loving father.

In the book of First Samuel, chapter 14, we see how timid men can be. In the face of enemy occupation and oppression, King Saul, his soldiers, and religious leaders sat down under a tree. Even though they were God's covenant people, the problem remained unsolved because they lacked the vision for freedom and were too fearful to make a move. In contrast, we also see the attitude of Jonathan, the son of the king. He activated the power of one day. First Samuel 14:1 tells us, "One day Jonathan said to his armor bearer, 'Come on, let's go over to where the Philistines have their outpost.' But Jonathan did not tell his father what he was doing." If you read on in the chapter, you will see that God used his bold move to deliver the nation. Jonathan was the real leader on that day because when he moved, others followed. Even the backsliders came back and followed. Also, cowards in hiding came out. They all followed in pursuit of the Philistines. Let this story be a challenge to all of us. God is looking for righteous pacesetters who will be examples in the light. When they move, others will follow. May you be one of them!

A Delayed Move Can Be Costly

I heard a Christian leader share a story with regret. He was told his neighbor's daughter was sick and the urge came in his heart to go and pray for her healing. However, he had to go to work. So, he felt it could wait. On returning from work in the evening, he made his move to answer the urge, but he was told she had been taken to the hospital. The next news that came shook him to his bones: the girl was dead.

As he shared this story, he was still wondering if things wouldn't have turned out differently had he gone to pray for her when the urge came. In his mind, he knew he made his move too late. Proverbs 3:27-28, says, "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it's in your power to help them. If you can help your neighbor now, don't say, 'Come back tomorrow, and then I'll help you.'"

The Difference between One Day and Another

Among the miracles of Jesus, one stands out because a man defied all odds in his desperate move to be able to see with his eyes. Perhaps Blind Bartimaeus, as he was known, may not in his wildest dreams have imagined he could one day get to see with his eyes. In fact, he had accepted as his lot in life to sit and beg by the wayside. This was until the day he heard that Jesus, the One who did amazing miracles, was passing by. Bartimaeus made a move to catch up with Jesus because he recognized his day of deliverance had come. Even though he was blind, he was so desperate in his move that he dropped his coat and defied those shouting him down until he stood before Jesus and received his sight.

So, the difference one day has over another is in your understanding of timing. It's in your understanding of divine moments. It's also in your ability to rise to the occasion in the power of the Spirit and make a move. You need to be prepared to defy challenges and distractions. You also need to be prepared to make the most of every opportunity.

Many people are oblivious of their day of opportunity. And others watch as opportunities pass by them. In their minds, they wonder what difference such opportunities could make in their lives. The truth is the only way to find out may be to challenge your mind to see the need for action, overcome your fears, rise to your feet, and make a daring move. Your desire for progress and lasting accomplishments will not be met sitting down. Success is attained when you take steps in the right direction. And you retain your success by continuing to make bold moves in the right direction. Remember that in a race every athlete involved should run. So, continue to hold firmly to your baton and make a move when the need arises.

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- 27 First Kings 17:4 (NIV)
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The Power of Right Decisions

- 29 Quoted in Dictionary of Burning Words of Brilliant Writers (1895) by Josiah Hotchkiss, p.186
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- 31 Acts 27:10
- 32 See Acts 27:12 (NIV)
- 33 Philippians 4:8 (THE MESSAGE)

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- 36 Acts 4:33 (NIV)
- 37 First Corinthians 15:10 (NIV)
- 38 Isaiah 40:30-31
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Connection between Good Stewardship and Lasting Success

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- 42 First Corinthians 15:10 (THE MESSAGE)
- 43 Second Timothy 2:1-2 (NIV)
- 44 Second Timothy 2:12a (NKJV)

Overcoming Unfair Opposition, Strife and Persecution

- 45 In Darkest England And the Way Out (1890) by William Booth, p.81
- 46 Acts 5:41-42

Sure Steps in Staying Successful

- 47 Psalm 127:2
- 48 Second Chronicles 26:5
- 49 Daniel 4:30b
- 50 Dictionary of Burning Words of Brilliant Writers (1895) by Josiah Gilbert Hotchkiss, p.532

- 51 Quoted in *The Personal Life of David Livingstone (1880)* by William Garden Blaikie, p.143
- 52 Second Timothy 1:5-6
- 53 Second Timothy 4:11
- 54 Proverbs 13:22

Get Your Focus Right

- 55 Quoted in *The Personal Life of David Livingstone (1880)* by William Garden Blaikie, p.97
- 56 Hebrews 12:1b-2a
- 57 First Timothy 4:15
- 58 Psalm 84:5-7

Don't Be a Lonely Superhero

- 59 Second Samuel 21:15-17a
- 60 Second Samuel 21:22
- 61 Ecclesiastes 4:9-10
- 62 *A Dictionary of Thoughts: Being a Cyclopaedia of Laconic Quotations from the Best Authors of the World both Ancient and Modern (1908, F.B. Dickerson Company)* edited by Tryon Edwards, p.156

Recognize the Power of Encouragement

- 63 First Samuel 1:15
- 64 Genesis 45 verses 26-27—NIV
- 65 Second Corinthians 7 verses 5-7a
- 66 Quoted in *The Personal Life of David Livingstone (1880)* by William Garden Blaikie, p.444
- 67 Psalm 33:5b

Personal Development is Essential

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- 69 *Ibid.*, p.380
- 70 Quoted in *Dictionary of Burning Words of Brilliant Writers (1895)* by Josiah Gilbert Hotchkiss, p.205

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 - 72 To the Work! To the Work! Exhortations to Christians (1884) by Dwight L. Moody, p.82
 - 73 Romans 12:2 (THE MESSAGE)

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