



grenepages

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Almost...

“They said a child acts foolishly, his mother says it doesn’t matter as long as he is alive. What kills faster than foolishness?”

Let me tell you a short story. My close friend who topped our class all through senior secondary school was a Muslim. While we shared the awards almost evenly, he comes out overall best, always. I felt insulted. How can I be in a class, and a Muslim will be the overall best. I spied on him and discovered his secrets. At least I thought I did. He writes a few Arabic words on the first page of all his scripts.

So I decided to write IJN, an acronym I chose for In Jesus Name on all my scripts. Nothing beats the name of Jesus, I said to myself. That year, not only did Tope come out as overall best again, he beat me to awards that I used to collect and added that to his collection.

Tope knew how to answer questions better. He was obviously smarter. He studied more than I did. He was more detailed than I was. In almost everything as a student, he put in more efforts than the rest of us. I hoped to be better just because I wrote IJN on my scripts. I was wrong. *Wisdom is the principal thing. Get wisdom. In all thy getting, get understanding.*

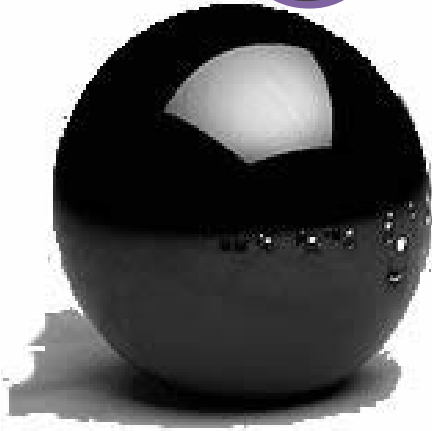
In this our 20th issue, let’s take a look at how we can fit into God’s plans wisely. We can’t be foolish.

Welcome again. This is *grenepages*.

Tobi Olowookere

**20th
word**

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***“Arise, shine, for your
light has come, and the
glory of the LORD rises
upon you.”***

Isaiah 60:1 NIV



Joan Abimbola

MINISTERING RHYTHMS

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Nowing

Do you know how to live?
When you know you have to leave-
All the comforts, all the things
All the paths leading not to your dreams

Are you bold enough to leave?
Knowing it won't be an ease
Are you ready to rise still?
And fight for the life you need

Oh yes you're afraid
No one may sing you a praise
Days filled with lonely roads
Yet you know you're not alone

God is on your side
In faith, make your stride
No! you won't be ashamed
'Cos you live and move in His name

Face your fears and rise
Face your fears and shine
You know you've got this light
Place it where it will be bright!

we cannot

...for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. Luke 16:8 KJV

There is a subtle but very critical concern about our scarce appropriation of the virtue of wisdom as Christians in the business and corporate world. It is an abuse of the sacrifice made by Christ, if we just live and generate result in the same class as unbelievers, not to even mention lower class. It

does not honour our Christ if we will not yield results



Femi Sobayo

TREASURES IN JAR OF CLAY
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that will make the world bow to his infinite intelligence. To what use then, do we put his resources?

It may appear that Christians become wise by default at new birth. This assumption is not exactly right. That is the more reason we think that we are in adequate in wisdom always. At new birth, we were born into a massive repository of resources, part of which includes wisdom, but that is not the same as us being automatically wise at redemption.

James, speaking to 'the Brethren' says, '*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask...*' (James 1:5 KJV). This suggests that a brother in the Lord can lack wisdom. Not because his Lord has not provided it at redemption, but the saint has not asked for, nor used it. We can have foolish saints of God.

The 10 virgins in Matthew 25 were qualified to be invited by the groom, either due to their holiness or by

be foolish



sheer grace of the groom, but five of them failed to see the groom despite the invitation. Why? Lack of wisdom! They were mentally lazy not to have pre-empted all possible circumstances, planned, coordinated themselves accordingly and provided enough resources. They acted too regular, expecting the groom to arrive in their own expected time. They were holy but lacked wisdom. That is the definition of some of us today.

There is no place where we are assured that only holiness will deliver to us our earthly or spiritual inheritance. Even the ministry, which has been committed to us, will require wisdom; *'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves'* (Matthew 10:16 KJV). We must learn to walk circumspectly, consciously strategizing and appropriating divine wisdom for daily living. It is important, for us to live above temptations and to excel in corporate and business world for the glory of God.

Rehab, a mere harlot, strategized her way into a covenant with the Israelites. She considered that if spies from Israel, with an undefeatable God were already scanning Jeri-

cho, then Jericho was doomed. She strategically realigned her position, offered to help the spies, made them sign a covenant with her (Joshua 2). She saved not just herself alone, but all of her family members also. She was not even who you will call a believer.

Christians need to pay more attention to the Bible, not just for knowledge but also for a dignified living through the wisdom in its pages. We must seek more of the Holy Spirit inspired-strategies for a distinguished life. You cannot run your business, yielding poor results as if you do not have a vault of absolute intelligence. You cannot be as ordinary as everyone in your office, we must showcase the infinite wisdom of our God for distinction.

... and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth. 2 Samuel 14:20 KJV

Wisdom will always deliver. It is the principal thing.



You are indeed a light in the world to shine that men might see (Matthew 5:16). therefore you must stay away from pollutants else your light will not be seen. However, there are some relationships that you cannot strain i.e. kinship/familial ties. In such cases, you must remain unblended and hold on tightly to what you believe. Sometimes, what wins the other person over is not being a little bit relaxed about your convictions (or to compromise) but your tenacity in what you do and believe in.

-Tosin Babalola

what is the everything?

Homegirl,

I was so excited to hear from you. I know I've been very far away from you, and I'm very sorry. I missed you, too, never doubt it for a moment. You said if having a family meant one going MIA on friends and family then you are scared to go into one. Hey, babe, it really isn't like that. I just woke up



Adeyinka Oresanya

THE DAUGHTER'S INSPIRATIONS
adeyinkaoresanya.com

one morning to find myself wearing many hats, heavy ones at that, and in order not to buckle under, I had

to shed some for a while in order to gain my balance. But know that I'm here for you, I have always been, and I'll continue to strive to be better. So you met with the girls for lunch last week— oh! How I missed lunch with my girlfriends. Not to worry, though, I'll set a date on the calendar for us to get together soon. I was amazed to hear that Tolani finally decided not to go to Law School and is planning to marry Chief because, according to her,



the point of



she didn't really see the point since every woman ends up serving a man in his kitchen and bed. Moreover, you were wondering where that leaves you and the others. It's so sad that some of us girls still have that kind of perspective to our lives.

You see, situations and circumstances, especially negative ones, make us question who we are as a person and a female, why we are here and what the point of everything is. The society is not making it easier either. We end up feeling powerless, helpless, inferior and lost.

These lead so many of us to make wrong choices and settle for the low life, one full of regrets. However, let's go back to the basics, girl, right to creation where it all began. Yes, It's still all about God, and His word—the good old Bible.

I hope you know that God the Father, the Creator Himself, loves us so much just as he does the men and everyone else. He doesn't treat us differently. He created male and female in His likeness and blessed us at the SAME time with the SAME blessing—to go be the best we



can ever be (See Genesis 1: 28-29). The only thing is He made the male to be a leader because for any team to progress, it is important for them to have a leader. You yourself know the benefit of leadership in the organization where you work. That's a talk for another day. God told us to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. I'm in the kitchen right now, I looked around, the earth is LARGER than it (and you know my kitchen is very large, LOL). *Homegirl*, God knew us before we were made in our mother's womb, even before the world was created, and already gifted us with everything we need to be the best to the glory of His Name and to our own happiness and sense of fulfillment and nothing changes that. So Tolani grew up in a poor home and her mom didn't go to school; Ikeoluwa's parents are rich, she herself is rich but she has a heart defect; no matter how much Michelle diets, she still couldn't shake off the extra kilos; you grew up with two negligent parents; and I didn't even grow up with a daddy. It still doesn't change God's intended purpose for us. While I acknowledge these affect our perspective, mentality and emotions, which is a great challenge, yet they are things we can and must rise over, for us to get the best of what was intended for us. Girl, I, your *Homegirl*, is affirming it that you

are a beautiful woman inside out; your circumstances shouldn't determine who you will be. You have so much embedded in you by your Creator. You have so much to give to your seed and others. It is a sin to see yourself otherwise. It is a crime for you to settle for less. All you need is to draw out those gems so that we can all enjoy YOU-the epitome of beauty. I will talk to you about that in my next mail to you.

I have to run along now, the house is suddenly silent and silence is suspicious in my house—your godsons are up to something—and I must act fast!

I feel with prayer and gentle talk, we can make Tolani see reason. Marriage is sweet, but it is also work, and one shouldn't go into it with that kind of mentality. It won't end well. Till the next time we talk, stay beautiful. I love you as always!

Your *Homegirl*,
Adeyinka Oresanya

#tomyhomegirl
#lamyourhomegirlstotalktome

almost..

He was already familiar with the words coming out of his Aunt's mouth, "Why wouldn't you try some more? You aren't totally dumb now or are you?" He had forgiven her in advance, she didn't mean the words, and his repeated failings had made her say those words.

"Almost" was his thing. He had begun to pride himself in it lately. At least he almost got the answers right most of time. He was always so close to finishing the book before it was time up. He was almost

done with his chores before Mum returned from the market. he had come a long way.



Toyin Seth-Ogungbe
TEE-WAI
teewai.com

Then he met her, she was sophisticated and well spoken. Beautiful and her stare the day she first said, 'How are you?' had made him answer more honestly than he could ever recall doing to anyone. Somehow, she had developed an interest in him and he looked forward to recounting his activity to her daily. She listened with keen interest and her fixated gaze and blue eyes made him give details as if he was already transparent.

Today was different; she didn't seem as playful as she usually was. Her hair wasn't packed as usual. Roy had picked a corner in her house to keep from bothering her as she didn't look herself. The



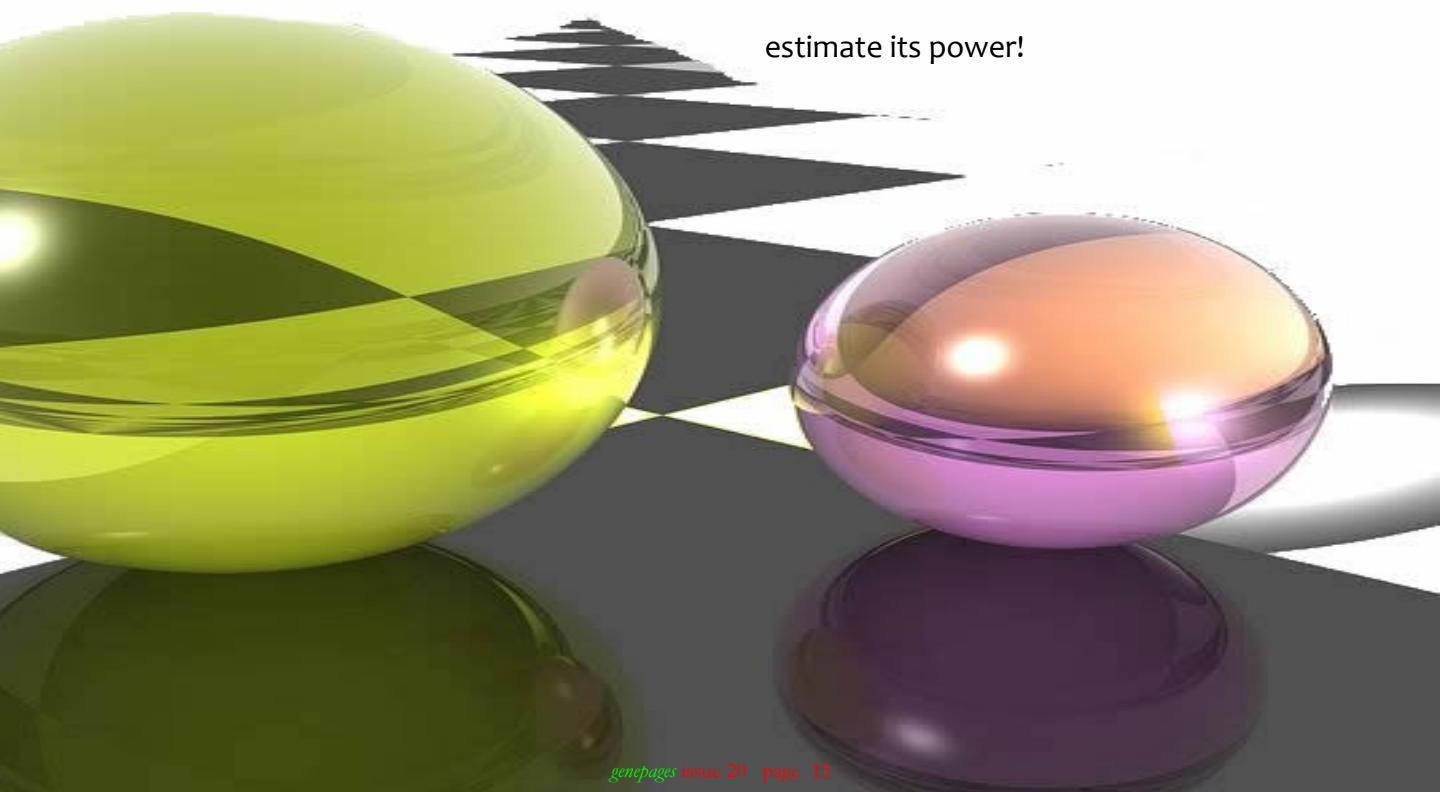
project had been almost completed but it was missing two ingredients he couldn't figure out. As if reading his thoughts, she says, 'Whoa, this is beautiful. I knew you could do it'. 'Really,' I asked. 'Yes, she replied, you are so gifted, I am so proud of you'. Overtaken by emotions, he packed up the project, gave her a peck on her forehead and wished her a quick recovery.

He had stood by the tree across his house all morning watching people come and go out of her house afraid to approach them to find out what he already knew. His mum tapped him on the shoulder quietly and confirmed his suspicion, 'Aunty Ena slept and didn't wake up this morning, I know you were very fond of her, I am so sorry'. Before she tries to hug him

he rushes into the house leaving her confused. Grandma Ena was a warm neighbor and everyone loved her. Though in her 80's, her gait and demeanor was like a lady in her 30's.

He hurriedly placed his project on his reading table and recalled her words; finally, he had figured it out! He smiled as he envisioned her smiling, then he allowed the tears flow naturally. She didn't leave without giving him the biggest gift. With her warmth, she helped him see himself differently and in one sentence, she had said so many things he would never forget. He had heard love, believe and hope. He was never going to be satisfied with 'almost' again. He had been awakened by the power of one woman's faith in him.

Find someone to empower today with your believe in them. Verbalize it and never underestimate its power!



be the s

... Hezekiah's words greatly encouraged the people.

2 Chronicles 32:8

How can a speaker make great impact? How can my words move beyond mere “making sense” to “carrying life”? How can my words go beyond making people nod their heads, yet having no encounters? How can I speak to the sick and get them healed? How do I complete the almost impossible task of speaking to the bereaved and get them comforted? I want to speak to the fearful and make them bold. Like Hezekiah, I desire that my words will greatly encourage the people.



“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged...”

Tobi Olowookere
GRACEDPAGES
gracedpages.wordpress.com

Many believe the way to get to the hearts of people is to create an atmosphere of fear; to frighten them and make them feel insecure. Magnifying the problem or creating one when there is none. This has been a secret weapon of many speakers who wanted to make impact but they end up leaving the listener worse than they met him.

Hezekiah could have said; “My people, wahala dey o. Commander Sennacherib, the one who puts to ruin every nation in his path has decid-



Speaker



ed to visit us. We are doomed. He has the largest army and the most deadly weapons in the world. He has destroyed 117 nations. What do we do?"

With that, he simply would have thrown the nation into fear, with some quick but soulless preparation for a war they surely would not win.

No positive impact is made by magnifying the problem and ending

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three audien

The perfect and mature relationship anyone can have with Christ is that Christ is living in him (Colossians 1:27). Until Christ is living in a person, the relationship between that person and Christ is not complete. The relationship between an unbeliever and Christ is that Christ died for him. Someone who is born again has advanced the relationship. He has moved from 'Christ died for me' to 'I have died with Christ'. The perfect relationship with



Ope Rowland
THRIVE
operowland.blogspot.com

Christ moves you from been dead with Christ to 'the life I live is

Christ who lives in me'.

If one has not got to this stage where Christ lives through him, such has not matured. The person who is an unbeliever is not yet born let alone maturing while the person who is born again has been born, but has not matured. The stage of maturity is when Christ is the one living inside you. Therefore, your relationship must advance beyond 'Christ died for me'. It must get to 'I died with Christ' and move on to 'Christ lives in me', which is the assurance of glory.

The person that Christ lives in is someone who is longing for what pleases Jesus Christ. When you are always interested in what pleases your father, you are living for your

nces

father. In addition, your father is the one who is living through you. If you have a friend, and all you do is to try to please that friend, in dressing, eating, lifestyle, your friend is the one living through you; you are not the one living because all you are living is your friend's life. Therefore, when you are looking forward, always longing for Christ's pleasure, he is living through you. Jesus died so that those who live will no longer live



for themselves (2 Corinthians 5:15). You are not supposed to be living for yourself again. You are to live for Christ. That is Christ in you. When we stopped living for ourselves, we will start living for Christ. We are to be living for whatever pleases him, for his purpose and for his mandate, which include getting others on board (2 Corinthians 5:18). We are to ensure others too are into this journey of living for Christ so that they can be assured of sharing in his glory.

We show we are not selfish by trying to present everyone perfect in his or her relationship with Christ. We do not want to share this glory alone; we want others to partake with us. We communicate this message of perfection using all wisdom God has given us.

So everywhere we go, we tell everyone about Christ. We warn them and teach them with all the wisdom God has given us, for we want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ.

Colossians 1:28 NLT

People will be perfected when they are told. It is when they hear about this mystery that they can apply it to their lives but they cannot hear except they are told. Paul was saying we just do not tell everybody in the same way, we use all manner of wisdom. He was not just us-

ing the approach of sitting everybody down and preaching to them. He used every possible method to make sure people understand and practice this mystery.

The wisdom is about the power, the energy and the ability God gives you. There are some super human abilities inside of you. There are some energies and power inside of you. Some abilities are lying dormant inside of you but the wisdom is to put them into use. You putting them into use are the wisdom God is giving you.

I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other friends who have never known me personally.

Colossians 2:1 NLT

Your Immediate Audience

... I have agonized for you ...

Paul presented this mystery to the church in Colossae but he wrote this letter while in prison; he was not in Colossae at that time. The Colossians were his immediate audience and the primary recipients of this letter. Your neighbours are your immediate audience. Your family members are your immediate audience. Your colleagues at work are your immediate audience. Your church members are your immediate audience. Your job is that you

must not be selfish with this mystery. You must use all the wisdom God gives you to present everyone in your immediate audience perfect in their relationship with Christ. We are not just talking about unbelievers; believers who are not living for Christ are included. Therefore, you have your job cut out for you. You have a ministry to your immediate audience.

Your Extended Audience

... and for the church at Laodicea ...

Paul was also contending to present the Laodicean perfect in their relationship with Christ. There was another church in Laodicea (Colossians 4: 16). Paul's second audience was the extended one, which goes beyond your natural community. It is the extended one you can access. Thank God for the social media. You now have access to people on several platforms; that is your church in Laodicea. Present each of your online contact perfect in their relationships with Christ using all manner of wisdom God gives you. You have an assignment not just to people in your immediate environment but even to your extended environment.

God bless the social media inventors, they have extended your environment for you. You can be here and reach someone residing in continents apart. You are in Colossae and your Laodicea is online. You can reach them with

this mystery. You have a job of extending this mystery by presenting people who are far away physically but you can reach across to them online. Present them perfect in their relationship with Christ. Show them, convince them, proclaim, and tell them, with all the wisdom God gives you how to live in Christ so that they can be guaranteed of sharing in Christ's glory.

We do not want to go alone to enjoy this glory. Take all your contact and friends on the social media platforms along to partake in this glory. When you get into that glory, you will not be able to *Whatsapp* those who are not in it. You will not be able to *Facebook* them. You will not be able to share your pictures and status updates with them. Rather, you invite them now so that you can share the experiences together. You have to work hard to present even all those your extended audience perfect in their relationship with Christ. The perfect relationship with Christ is Christ living in them. You make sure not only you are working on it; they too are working on it.

Your Unknown Audience

... and for many other friends who have never known me personally ...

Paul also addressed all those who have never met him. This third audience includes you; you have never met Paul. Paul's striving is presenting you too perfect in your relationship with

Christ via his epistles. Using the entire wisdom God gives you, present the coming generations even those yet to be born perfect in their relationship with Christ. Do something that will present them right with Christ. The likes of Kenyon, Wigglesworth, Finney and Wesley were long dead before we were born but what they did (including their writings) are still presenting us perfect in our relationship with Christ. They are not alive and you have not met with them, yet they are presenting you. That is the third category of audience; doing a work that outlives your generation. Someone brought the gospel to this country, what he did then is still presenting you perfect in your relationship with Christ. If they never used that wisdom God gave them to establish the gospel in this part, we might not be born again yet. However, they preserve generations and ensured that they will be perfected in their relationships with Christ with what they did with the wisdom God gave them. Your job is not only to the people in your Colossae and Laodicea; it includes people you have never met and will never meet you in generations to come. People that will be born in another century will never meet you; you can still meet someone you have not met before as long as you are still living. You can meet in the plane one day on your way to China and the person refer

to your expressed wisdom he had encountered. However, when you are dead, will someone come to stand by your grave and wake you up to comment on or acknowledge that wisdom? There are songwriters you never met alive but their songs are still perfecting you. You have never met Fanny Crosby, yet her hymns are still presenting you perfect. You have a work to do for your immediate audience, you have a work to your extended audience and you have a work to do for the generations to come. That is how not to be selfish and live for Christ. When you live for Christ, concerned about what pleases him and what he is interested in, then he is living in you. When your interest is his own, he is living in you.



...continued from page 17

with “it is well.” (Sometimes I feel “it is well” could be the most abused bible language on earth.)

“I know this sickness. It is very terrible. Aisan yi lo pa iya ore mi!(This same sickness killed my friend's mother.) Have you started feeling pains in your head yet? Ah, it will soon start giving you headache, but it is well sha, it is well.

Don't tell someone who is scheduled for a medical procedure how many people have died of it before praying with them. You will only be coating poison with sugar by doing that.

Don't be the doctor who is more interested in telling patients how many weeks they have left than telling them their chances of staying alive. We all have a good number of people who have swallowed up those dates in victory.

"Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that is with him; for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles."

And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. 2 Chronicles 32:7-8 NKJV

Hezekiah's points were clear; we have to learn from him if we must make impact. We must learn to emphasize strength and courage. Don't be the leader who destabilizes his followers by showing how weak and fearful he has become. “Don’t be afraid or discouraged” are the words of a true leader.

... For there is a power far greater on our side...

Hezekiah's speech glorified God. Let your words give glory to God. No words will heal, deliver or comfort the heart, if it does not glorify God. No words will magnify a sickness and heal it at the same time.

... He may have a great army, but they are merely men...

Let your words magnify the weakness of the enemy. Open the eyes of the listener to the available way out, no matter how small. Let them know there is a way.

Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side. 2 Chronicles 32:22 NKJV

Like Hezekiah, be the speaker whose words bring salvation.

are you

Where was Thomas on the day Jesus appeared to the disciples after the resurrection? Why was he absent on such an important day? What could have taken him away from the midst of the brethren at such a critical moment?

Did he go out to buy something? Was he out with his twin brother? Did he go on a visitation? Where was he? I have always wondered what kept Thomas out of the gathering of the brethren on such an important day.

John 20:24 tells us, "Now Thomas, called the

Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came"(NKJV).

Thomas missed this important encounter with the Lord because of his absence. The Scripture recorded what transpired between the disciples and the Lord when Thomas was away.

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."



Femi Babalola
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iyiolafemibabalola.wordpress.com



with us?

When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." John 20:19-23 NKJV

Thomas missed all these. Well, one might say Jesus made it up to him eight days later. The

question, however, is why will I postpone until eight days what I can have today? Why will I settle for a makeup when I can have the original experience?

I observe that Jesus came back purposely because of Thomas. He did not want a doubter in His camp. This single experience changed Thomas' nickname from Didymus to Doubter. Today, not many of us know him as a twin though it is written in the scriptures. We are quick to remember him as a doubter though



he was not particularly called so. We are prone to judge all other things that Thomas said or did in the scriptures from this perspective. That is the cost of his absence.

Thomas had to pay this horrendous price because he *"was not with them when Jesus came."* There a few lessons we can learn from Thomas' absence;

Thomas' physical presence was questionable. Hebrews 10:25 teaches us that, *"not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching"*(NKJV).

Physical absence can be a great indication of spiritual absence. One of the ways to discern someone who has begun to backslide is truancy; the fellow will become inconsistent in meetings. There will always be excuses for absenteeism. People withdraw from gatherings when their heart is no longer with the fellowship.

There are, however, cases where the reason for our absence is genuine but we must be careful the enemy does not preoccupy us with the cares of life at the expense of the care of our inner man. This is important because there are blessings that can only be imparted to us as we have fellowship with other saints.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ...for there the Lord commanded the blessing — life forevermore. Psalm 133:1-3 NKJV.

One more reason one should desist from physical absence from meetings is that you would not know the day when the Lord will bring your portion. Perhaps, the day you felt like staying home is the day the Lord has ordained to visit you. Thomas did not know the Lord was going to come that day.

We must strive to work with God's schedules not ours. He can come at any time He decides. Abraham did not know God was going to come the day and the way He came. He came as three men. Thank God, Sarah was nearby when they asked for her whereabouts. Perhaps, they would have missed what they have been praying and waiting for in 25 years. If you believe your spiritual portion is in the Christian fellowship you attend, beware of truancy, you may miss your spiritual portion. If you must be



absent, let your reasons be genuine.

Thomas' absence predisposed him to danger. The Bible made it clear that ***“the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews.”*** Thomas was outside. He wasn't within the confines of grace and protection. He could be lynched, stabbed or arrested by the angry Jews. No likeminded brother was there to protect him. He was outside. He was alone.

This is what happens when we separate from the fellowship of the saints physically, spiritually or psychologically. When we withdraw, the enemy has a chance to trap us. When we are not in close touch with fellow brothers and sisters in the faith, we become easy prey of the devil. We are exposed to the spiritual coldness in the outside world.

This was what happened to Dinah the only daughter of Jacob. She ***“went out*** to visit the women of the land” (Genesis 34:1 NIV, Emphasis mine). She left the roof of protection of her father. She wanted to see what was going on in the

world. She wanted to see how the women of the land do it. Perhaps, she sneaked out without the permission of her nurse, mother or father. The

result was tragic; Dinah was defiled. It was the last time her name was mentioned in God's history.

Judah fell into the trap of adultery when he left the company of his brothers and made a stranger his friend. The Bible said, “It came to pass at that time that ***Judah departed from his brothers***, and visited a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah” (Genesis 38:1 NKJV, Emphasis mine).

Friend, it could be that the constant attack of the enemy on your spiritual life, finances, family life and career is the result of your absence. You are not with us even though you are physically present. Your heart has been deceived by the world though you still give to the Lord. These days, one does not have to be physically detached before one can go out of the fold. One can do it on the internet as you watch ungodly movies and browse ungodly websites. What you are doing may not be obvious in the physical, but the enemy of your soul knows who you are. It is time to quickly repent and return to the fold. Don't let your case be like that of Judas who went out into the night never to return again. Come back home!



3. Thomas' absence created a gap in his spiritual experience as compared to the rest of the apostles. While he was away, records show that Jesus ministered to the apostles in five different ways,

He ministered peace to them.

He showed them his hands and side.

He breathed on them to receive the Holy Spirit.

He commissioned and sent them.

He gave them authority to forgive and retain the sins of men.

I also observed that of the five things the apostles who were present at first received, Thomas received only two - peace and the showing of his hands and sides when Jesus returned. This was the cost of his absence. Then, while he was having his first encounter, the rest were taking the second dose.

I have often had to wonder why certain brothers and sisters in the same gathering with us used to have a different Christian experience. It is always obvious that something is missing. I have often had to query whether they are really with us though they come to meetings consistently.

If you are with us then your experience

ought to be similar with the rest of us. Why are you struggling with sin when others are receiving freedom from it? Why are you timid when others have grown bold? Why have you not been baptized in the Holy Spirit? Why are you not experiencing the dividends of salvation just like the rest of believers in Christ? Why is it that the same word that healed and transformed people's life had no effect on you?

Now don't get it twisted. Being with us, as I have been saying, is not an issue of physical presence. One can be physically present but psychologically absent. The body is in church but the mind and the spirit is somewhere else.

I have discovered that the impact of a message from a preacher or a song from a singer does not depend only on the anointing of the preacher or singer; it depends also on the state of the mind or spirit of the hearer, the more the psychological and spiritual alertness, the greater the impact of the message or song.

This is why the same word that delivered your neighbor may not make a difference in your life. Others may be baptized in the Holy Spirit while you remain the same because in reality you are not with

us even though you are there physically.

Thomas' absence is a great indication of what will happen when Jesus comes. John 20:24 says, *"Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came"*(NKJV). He was one of the twelve but he was not with them when Jesus came. There are also many who are currently one of us but who will not be with us when He comes. They would have broken faith with the Lord before He comes. They will be outside the fold when He comes.

One can be in the choir, the ushering unit, the prayer unit, part of the pastorate or deaconate and he or she is not one of us. One can even be the preacher and he is not numbered in the common wealth of Zion. One may be in church's register but his name is not registered in the Book of life. This is why such people will not be with us when He comes.

Now, I am thinking of that day when He will come. Oh, that I may be with them when He comes! Oh, that I may be numbered among those that will be present when He comes! Oh, that nothing will take me out of the fold when He comes!

Thomas had another chance to see his Lord but after that day, there will not be chance to see Him again. It will be too late. This reminds me of the five foolish virgins; they were not with them when

He came. By the time they came back it was too late. The door had been shut.

Will you be with us when Jesus would come?

Will you be part of the church when he comes? Thomas was not with them when he came. The painful thing was there was no tangible reason for his absence.

If it was consequential, the Scripture will perhaps have told us.

Anything seeking to rip you off the body of Christ is your enemy. It could be a job, a friend, a film, etc. Rip off anything or anybody seeking to rip you of your relationship with Christ.

Ultimately, the scripture says, *"Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord."* Nothing can compare with the joy of seeing the Lord.

There is that joy that accompanies seeing the Lord daily as we spend time with Him in prayer and the word. Then there is that ultimate joy we would have when He comes; such joy that will swallow every grief. It cannot be taken away from us forever. You don't want to miss it. it's why you want to be within the fold and confines of His grace until He comes.

May you be with us when He comes!



not unequ

BE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED WITH UNBELIEVING BELIEVERS

You have heard the words of Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:14 – “Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers”. However, permit me to say that there is also an unequal yoking with ‘unbelieving believers’. Unbelieving believers are Christians who have refused to grow spiritually. They have an outlook of godliness but they do not understand nor practice the principles of spiritual growth. They are not inclined towards sowing spiritual seeds therefore they not experience the concomitant rewards of such exercise. They do not perceive

the need for fervent pursuit of God nor do they know how to go about it. They are active in church

activities but spiritually stagnant and retrogressing.

When you begin to operate below what



Tosin Babalola
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ally yoked

your potential and your will can accomplish due to your association/relationship with such people, you can be said to be unequally yoked. In the ancient agricultural setting,

ploughing was carried out using animals- oxen that were of the same size, height, weight, and strength, usually born around the same period. If the farmer goes contrary to this principle, the ploughing is hampered. He will not get good results because the stronger ox will find it hard to work effectively as it is being deterred by the weak one while the weak ox will feel strained by the stronger ox. Progress of the ploughing will be affected adversely in the end.

Many young and zealous Christians get hampered along the way in their Christian walk due to association with certain kinds of people. Having decided to serve God with their talent (potential), time and resources, denying themselves of the pleasure of youthful delight and committing to the course of the Gospel wholly and totally, then something goes wrong. For instance, you take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way to be of service to God and to humanity especially in your local assembly but on the other hand



is your colleague at work who is also a friend in church (serving in the same department); he looks for every 'legitimate' reason to stay away from church meetings. This attitude begins to irritate you and then you are getting afraid that your relationship might become strained. You spend a lot of time searching out God's perspective in order that you will align your world-view with His (God's) but your friend thinks you are getting on the extreme. Yes! Your relationship might soon fall apart and until you detach, you will not function maximally.

When it does not look like your friend is striving to attain your level of spiritual fervency or even go beyond that level, the Bible says to strain such relationship (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). Paul warns us against Christians who live like unbelievers. He did not say to tolerate and manage such people because the truth is that their evil will undoubtedly influence good people. Instead, he advised that people with such attitude should be quarantined so others don't take after their attitude of lukewarmness.

Paul warned the Galatians who had begun to entertain the company of people with

erroneous beliefs (Judaism). He vehemently kicked against such people and their false doctrines. He wished that they were removed from among the Galatians because only then would his teachings begin to have lasting impact on the Galatians.

Titus was with me, and although he is Greek, no one forced him to be circumcised. False Christians were brought in. They slipped in as spies to learn about the freedom Christ Jesus gives us. They hoped to find a way to control us. But we did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the Good News would always be yours. Galatians 2:3-5 GW

You were doing so well. Who stopped you from being influenced by the truth? The arguments of the person who is influencing you do not come from the one who is calling you. A little yeast spreads through the whole batch of dough. The Lord gives me confidence that you will not disagree with this. However, the one who is confusing you will suffer God's judgment regardless of who he is. Galatians 5:7-10 GW

Note that Paul did not decide to tolerate the perpetrators of Judaism by trying to convince them, he simply disallowed them.

The situations that we face today may not be

as serious as the ones discussed above but the same principles do apply. If you find yourself in company with people who have ideas, opinions and viewpoints different from that which you have searched the scriptures and found out to be true (to be the will of God) you must be watchful and get ready to apply the above principle. When you find yourself in close ties with people whose level of quest and desire to love and please God is little compared to yours, there might be danger somewhere along the line.

You use steel to sharpen steel, and one friend sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17 MSG

One deep sea calls to another... Psalms 42:7 GW

I am not down playing on the importance of one believer helping another believer and to be strong and to grow spiritually. That is very important but at this point, we are looking at where area of influence is concerned. 1 Corinthians 15:33 says: Do not be so deceived and misled! Evil companionships (communion, associations) corrupt and deprave good manners and morals and character (AMP). It amazes me that it is 'evil' that corrupts the 'good' and not the 'good' changing the 'evil'. The category of people I discussed in the first paragraph are not 'evil' people per say but they are lukewarm, and

mediocre therefore you are not sure where their appetite actually is.

You are indeed a light in the world to shine that men might see (Matthew 5:16), therefore you must stay away from pollutants else your light will not be seen. However, there are some relationships that you cannot strain i.e. kinship/familial ties. In such cases, you must remain unblended and hold on tightly to what you believe. Sometimes, what wins the other person over is not being a little bit relaxed about your convictions (or to compromise) but your tenacity in what you do and believe in.

Check your list of close friends again, are you unequally yoked with unbelieving believers? If you are, take caution in how you deal with them. There can never be a zone of stagnation in life. It is either you are becoming like them or they are becoming like you.

Most importantly, strive to have the right people around you; people who are able to stretch you spiritually beyond the point where you are right now for the path of the righteous is like the shining light that shines brighter and brighter (Proverbs 4:18).

what kind of

Sometimes, the future looks so far that we often do not think about it, but honestly speaking, the future is closer than you actually think. I still remember those days when I was in the Secondary School, when I never knew what it means to be a parent. Now, I know what it means to be a parent.

Now you may think that being a teenager gives you license to behave anyhow or talk rudely to people including your parents and teachers. Let me tell you the bitter truth, very

soon, just a matter of time, you will grow up to be a parent or be in position of authority. How



Ibukun Abraham

MAXIMIZING TEEN-HOOD
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would you feel if your own child or somebody younger than you treat or talk to you anyhow? Some parents struggle hard to send their children to school, only for such children to get to school and start misbehaving. Some of them do not go to class except being forced. Some see their teachers like a small girl/boy that do not deserve their respect. Some even join bad gangs to drink, smoke, rape or do other wayward things.



child are you?

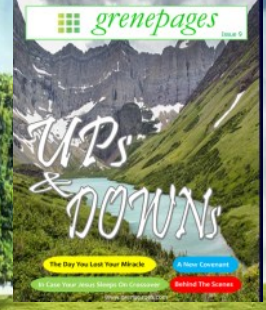
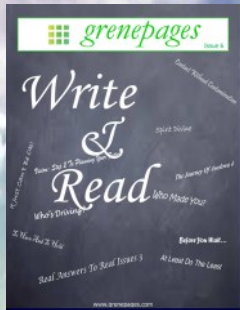
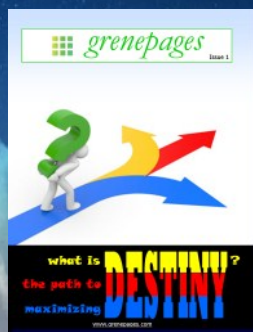
Some children do not just think about the hardship their parents are going through in their desire to give the best to their children. Have you ever sat down to imagine yourself being a father/mother; would you be happy to have a child who brings pains to

you all the time? Life is a field; whatsoever you sow today will be ready for harvest tomorrow. Be careful what you do today, every adult was once a teenager and you too will grow up to be in a position of authority. How would you want people under you to behave towards you? Would you desire a child that brings shame to you because of bad attitude?

It is never too late to change, be the kind of child or student you would like to have as a parent/teacher in the future.

Remember the future is so close.





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Writers: Adeyinka Oresanya, Femi Sobayo, Ibukun Abraham, Joan Abimbola, Olufemi Babalola, Ope Rowland, Tobi Olowookere, Tosin Babalola, Toyin Seth-Ogungbe'

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