

finding yourself the Thomas again

approach

-Femi Babalola

-Toyin Seth-Ogungbe'

loving you

-Adeyinka Oresanya

whose vessel are you?

-Ibukun Abraham

who is in the house?

-Tosin Babalola

something money can't buy

-Tobi Olowookere

how to live above depression

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www.grenepages.com

20



who is in the house?



whose vessel are you?

14



something money can't buy



how to live above depression

4



loving you

6



For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. Luke 15:24 KJV

The popular prodigal son of the bible was said to be lost when he parked his load, left his father's house and travelled to a far country.

Though He missed him and had him on His mind always, to Him, the son was lost.

22nd word He was not called lost because he suffered at some point in his adventure, he was lost even when he had enough to squander. As long as he was away from the father, he was not just lost; he was dead. The best part of the prodigal son's story was not when he was lost and dead. The most exciting part was when he was found again.

In this edition of grenepages, let's consider **finding yourself...again**. Each article in here provides steps to a self-discovery of your present status. You will be able to tell with sincerity whether you are lost or found, dead or alive. After your discovery, you will be able to identify the steps to take in going back to the Father and remaining in Him. As you read through, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Amen.

Welcome to grenepages...again.

10



Cobi Olowookere

the Thomas approach

Ioving

Homegirl,

There has been a long silence. I know. It has not been for the lack of words or time, for there can never be more than 24 hours a day, as deemed adequate for fulfillment of all purposes by the creator. Rather it is the limitation of mental space, and a constant fight to attain equilibrium. This fight is what drives us every single day to achieve all we can.

However, what is so dear to my heart is your calls and emails, just to check on me. It is so beautiful, so heartfelt and so appreciated.

Can we take it from where we left off?

I find it perplexing that we expend so much energy, so much time in learning how to love people

but pay little or no attention

to learn how to love ourselves.

No, this is not a call to self

-centeredness or a lesson in selfishness, for those in themselves reflect an absurd outlook on one's life.

This is a clamor for self-love—a conscious and even unconscious regard for the totality of oneself; a devotion to discovering, honoring, admiring and nurturing the uniqueness of YOU and appreciating the specificity of your purpose, beauty, every-



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thing that makes up YOU.

It is discovering that NO ONE is better than YOU—yes, they could be more privileged, but no, not better—and acknowledging that you are not better than anyone. Therefore, there is no need to walk around town or amongst peers with drooping shoulders, head usually down in timidity and shame, face clouded in dull-



ness, constantly wishing you were like the girl standing next to you.

If you spend all your time and energy trying to be someone else, the best you can be is the version of someone else, a photocopy.

However, why don't we concentrate the same energy on being a better YOU? By that, you emerge as a refined gold.

Loving you is honoring what constitutes YOU.

It is admiring and appreciating your own beauty.

It is the teasing out of your strengths to benefit generations and the remolding of your weaknesses in becoming a better you.

Loving YOU is being at ease with YOU.

If you love YOU, you will respect YOU

If you love YOU, you will nurture YOU.

If you love YOU, you will discipline YOU.

If you love you, you will pamper YOU.

In addition, when you start to love YOU, you will be able to love others truly, just as the Lord commanded to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. You will be able to appreciate their uniqueness and live peaceably with them.

Then, you will indeed be your father's daughter.
Isn't that awesome to know?
Stay beautiful.

Your Homegirl,

Adeyinka Oresanya

#tomyownhomegirl
#iamyourhomegirlsotalktome

them! So I made a decision to tour many countries in the world someday and I was determined to work hard to afford this.

At 21, I met the love of who com-

me, shared my passion for life and by the next year, we said I do before

Toyin Seth-Ogungbe TEE-WAI teewai.com loved ones. It was the best day of my life. At 23, I had my own baby, a girl; she is everything and more. Like every child, she was demanding of my time, attention and love. I struggled with the balance, my work, marriage, parenting and living. Between all of this, I lost myself; my dreams, passion and I feel entrapped as much as I try to ignore it. I need help!

This fictional story is the reality of many men

and women today. Age isn't exactly the issue here as we grow up differently based on what we are exposed to, or the knowledge we seek. I do not claim to have all the answers, but I will love to share the things I have learned that could help before or after you get to this point.

BEFORE

Self-Discovery - Know Yourself

This means you need to find your purpose in life. It means digging deep into your childhood and revealing the experiences that shaped you (good and bad). It means realizing what your beliefs are and living by them. The effects of self-discovery include happiness, fulfillment, clarity and maybe even enlightenment!

Love Yourself

To know yourself is one thing, to love yourself is another. Forgive yourself! Yes, you messed up and it's done; forgive and learn from it. Be able to feel whole and completely happy all by yourself without the need for another person to validate your decisions, actions and reactions. Guard your heart, take responsibility for your actions and don't compare your development to others. Accept yourself as handsome and beautiful without being told. Own your weaknesses and flaws; correct what you can in character, comportment, lifestyle etc. Accept what you cannot fix like a scar on the face, a crossed eye, disability in the body or a freckled face and love you just the way you are.



Be Equipped

Having a good understanding of things before getting into it is expedient. Do not enter marriage unaware of what it takes. Ask questions, get mentors, seek counsel, read and hear talks on it. Each marriage is a unique story; however, some basics are common to all. Understand what it takes to be a committed husband/wife, have sexual intimacy, what could cause delay in pregnancy, birth control, money, communication, managing in-laws, balancing work and domestic issues etc.

Realistic Expectations

Expectations are also problematic when we use them as a measuring rod that guides our emotions. We all have the right as humans to demand and expect things and it's quite human to do so. I understand that we all have preferences and values that we live our lives by and that we hope our partners are on the same page, but that's much different from those things being absolute. The truth is marriage is tough. It's a hard path to merge your life with someone else and face life together no matter what it brings your way.

AFTER

Managing Expectations

Healthy marriages tend to have several things in common; they tend to have realistic preferences

for the way that the marriage runs (e.g. my partner is only human and can make mistakes). They tend to be resilient because they can avoid being stuck on unmet expectations. They usually roll with the punches and see difficulty in the marriage as a challenge to overcome rather than a sign of failure. Healthy marriages tend to manage their expectations.

Marriage can be challenging and can be even more so when you throw unrealistic expectations/demands into the mix. Give yourself and your partner a break and allow each other to be human. Don't be afraid to express what you want and what you hope to get from the relationship.

Know Your Spouse

I often say that if you truly love your spouse you need to have an idea of the child he/she was. Understand their strengths, dreams and goals. Seek to enhance, support, and cheer them to fulfilling purpose. To fully enjoy your spouse, you need to allow them exhale (time to connect and play with friends and family). Support their dreams (pay for that exam, support by watching the kids when they need to read). Find ways to lessen the burden on one party by sharing it. Realize when you need to seek help for your partner to feel better etc.

Overcoming Denial

Denial is one of the most common defense

mechanisms that we all use, pretending that an uncomfortable thing did not happen. Overcoming this self-deception and consciously accepting there is a problem is the beginning of finding a solution.

Reconnect

Locate your old friends who knew who you used to be. They remind you of the person you once were and allow you judge better the person you have become. It is said that talking to an old friend makes you realize how much your life has changed. Healthy friendships help you awaken the child in you.

Seek Help

When you find that you cannot break out of the denial, or even begin to reach out to old friends as bridges have been burnt or there are actually no friends to call out to, find someone to talk to, howbeit a stranger who is experienced in counseling and is better equipped to guide you on the journey of self-recovery. There is therapy in talking about things that weigh you down.

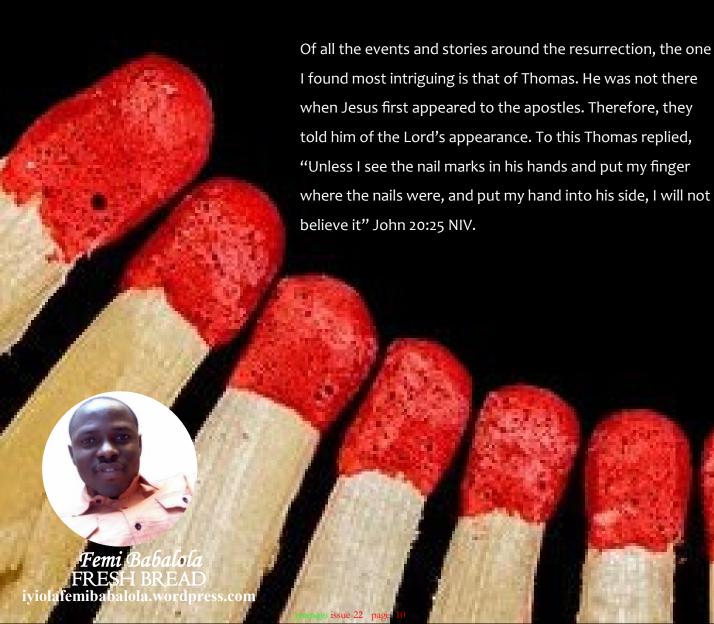
Pray

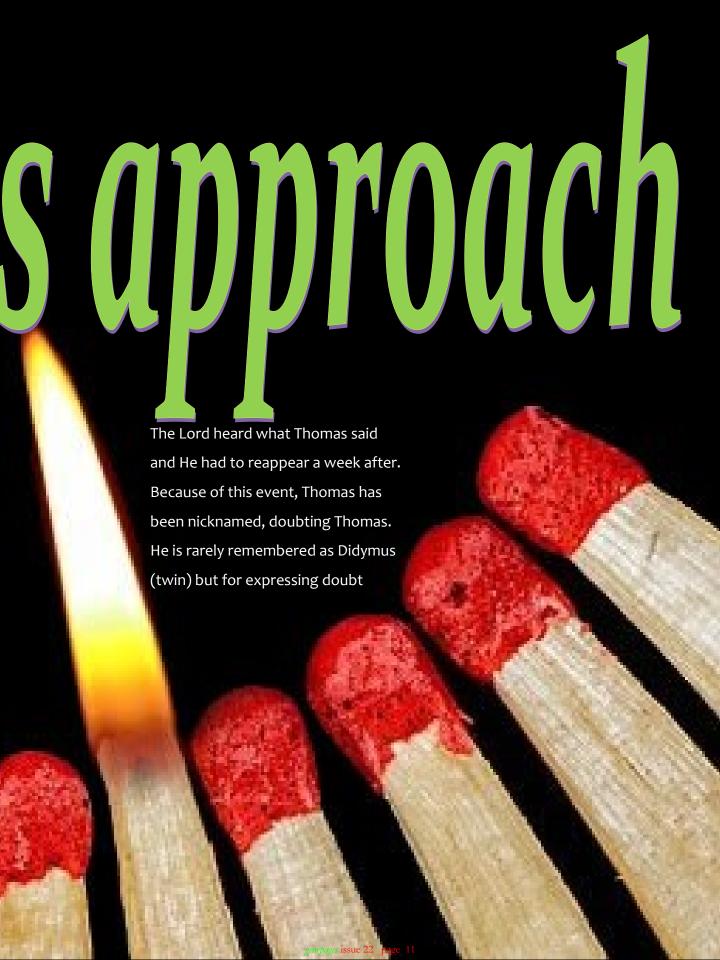
Martin Luther King said, 'The less I pray, the harder it gets; the more I pray, the better it goes'. There is a great measure of calm and clarity that comes from the place of prayer. It cannot be overemphasized that the quickest way to get back on ones feet is to get down on our knees in prayer.

Play

Just as in children, play helps us develop new and creative solutions to problems. It can be an important source of relaxation and stimulation for adults as well. While you let loose and laugh at yourself, you have a better experience and express emotions.







about the Lord's appearance.

No other character in the Bible seems to have suffered criticism through the ages for his doubt or unbelief like Thomas.

But perhaps we need to look at Thomas' action in a new light. I stand to be corrected but I make bold to say that we have been shielded from the lesson we should have learnt from Thomas because we focused on his doubt. What we failed to see was that "his doubt" brought Jesus back. Jesus had to wait one more week else, a vacuum would be left behind. One of His apostles will go into the world with a divided mind and a corruption might be introduced to the resurrection story.

Thomas did not want to base his faith on what others said but on what he saw, touched and felt. I believe his desire to see go beyond the expression of doubt but a desperation to experience what others have experienced. Thomas did not want to revel in the testimonies of others; he wanted to share his too.

Unfortunately, most of us have based our faith on hearsay; we have not seen, touched and felt the power and the presence of God in our own lives. We have heard but we have not seen. We have not experienced in our own lives what we have read in the Bible or preached to us in our churches. People have shared testimonies of deliverance from sin, healing of sicknesses, mi-

raculous provisions, baptism in the Holy Spirit and mighty manifestations of God's power. They have seen the Lord but you have not. Several Christians grapple with sin, sicknesses, and other implications of sin; the very things that took Jesus to the cross. We claim to belong to Him but we have not proofs that we are His. There is no distinction between the world and us. Unbelievers are quietly asking, "What difference does Jesus make?" Perhaps, we need to take the Thomas approach and demand for a revelation of the Lord in our lives too. If Jesus heals, let me experience the healing. If He saves from sin, I want to experience it. If He provides then let me be a witness. I want to see too. Today, I do not see Thomas as a doubting Thomas but the desperate one; the one who will not base his faith on what others said but on what He has seen, touched and felt. Our witness about Christ to the world is weak because our experience of Christ is weak. You do not need any special preparation or feel ashamed to tell people about what has worked for you consistently. There is a kind of confidence you exude when you tell people what you have experienced. No wonder Paul could confidently say,

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,

for it is the power of God to salvation for every-

one who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" Romans 1:16 NKJV Peter also said,

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory:"

This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" 2 Peter 1:16-18 NKJV

And John,

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life — the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us" 1 John 1:1-2 NKJV

Perhaps we should reevaluate our efforts in winning the world over to Christ. Perhaps, it is not that souls are difficult to win but that our witness is weak because our experience of Christ is weak. Maybe we need to cry out like Thomas and ask Jesus to reveal Himself to us again so that we can go and boldly tell the world what we have seen.



What do you think about the man that the Bible called Zacchaeus? Yes! I mean the short man who climbed the sycamore tree to see Jesus. He's probably most famous because not only he was short, but also for his desperate

Here, I find it shocking that the man at the center of this funny tree-climbing story was not a pauper. He was a bil-

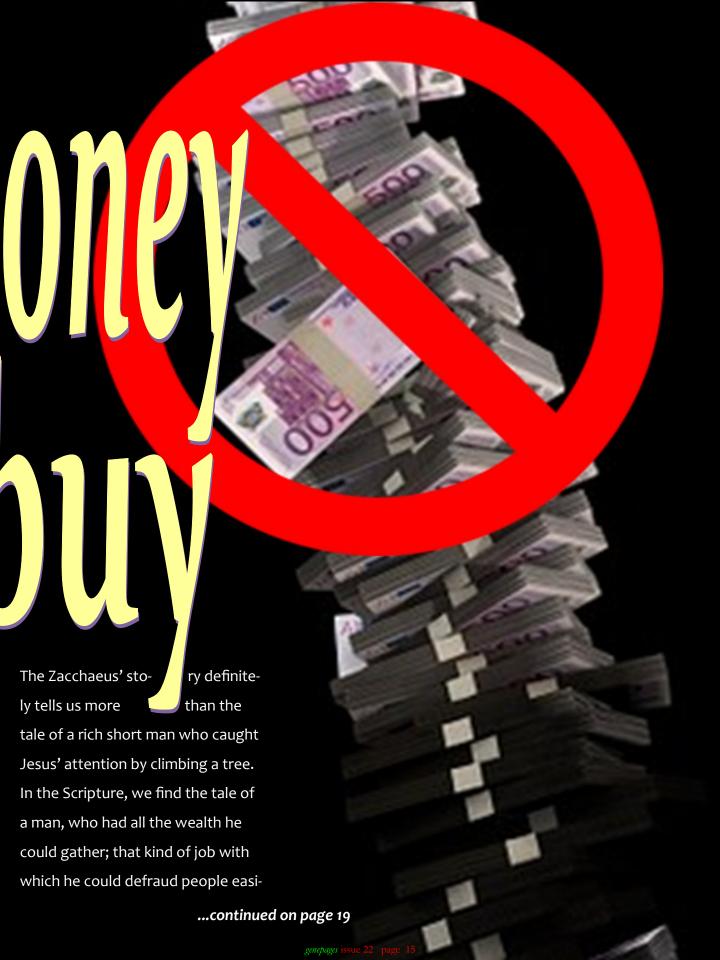
act to catch a glimpse of the greatest

man who ever lived.

lionaire of his time. His wealth brought him fame. He probably had a lovely

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family too. The fact that he had a home ready to receive Jesus suggests this. Wife was beautiful and supportive. His kids were doing just great, finishing on top of their classes every term. What else can a man ask for? It is therefore astonishing that his status stands paradoxical to the scriptural account of his action – that which we have to learn from in our own day. Meeting the man Zacchaeus made me realize there's something just more important.



how to li

Depression is a state of the mind, which has the absence of hope as the underlying cause irrespective of the diagnosed causes. It is a culmination of thoughts over time in the process of which hope thoughts are being squeezed out.

People need a sense of hope to move on in life. It is hope that generates a positive vibe about the future, be it distant or otherwise. People build this hope on people, things, events and assumptions. However, when these premises of hope fail or change, a riot of thoughts would likely occur. The first

sponse in us as humans

thoughts quickly adopt another premise to ab-

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sorb the shock. The newly adopted premise could have been a conscious or unconscious backup premise. At times, it is just an emergency premise that our mind quickly brought up to counter the shock.

Nevertheless, even the new premises have the potential to fail and do fail leading to a cycle of shifting to several new premises. The cycle generation amplitude and frequency differs from person to person. This could explain the reason some are more susceptible to depression than others are over seemingly similar matters and conditions. As these cycles continue, alternative premises diminish and in turn hope thoughts vanish.

Even in the supposed presence of these premises, people might still get depressed. This is because those hope were only present to the soul but absent in the spirit of the individual. Giving hope to the soul without giving hope to the spirit is only a cosmetic fix. Such superficial hope even at its best is false.



In living above depression, ones premise of hope must be checked if it is true or false.

Original/true hope comes from the Word of God. The Word of God enters your spirit, giving hope to your spirit. Other sources give hope to your soul and that is not deep enough. The human spirit can endure a sick body, but who can bear it if the spirit is crushed? (Proverbs 18:14 NLT)

While hope in your spirit can influence your soul, hope in your soul cannot influence your spirit. The flow is from the spirit to the soul and not vice versa. It takes a greater thought to displace another.

Thoughts that emanate from your spirit are greater than those domiciled in your soul are. It is a hope that rises from your spirit that can work for you in the true sense.

Just like your words flows out of your thoughts, the Word of God is an expression of his thoughts. Exposing yourself to his word is exposing yourself to his thoughts concerning you. Yes, he is think-

ing of you and those thoughts are good (1 Peter 5:7, Jeremiah 29:11). Your cognizance of his thoughts makes you see things from another perspective, which is the best perspective. Seeing things outside your narrow perspective allows other thoughts aside those depressing thoughts to float in you. Allowing these other thoughts to multiply will make them to outgrow and outnumber those depressive thoughts and soon push them out.

You multiply thoughts by meditation. Little wonder one of the initial strategies of the enemies attack is to put a distance between you and the Word of God. The enemy is well aware that separating you from God's thoughts gives room to all kinds of thoughts including depressing thoughts to thrive in you.

A deliberate reading of the Word of God instills hope in us. Seeing the letters printed in the Bible lifts up our countenance. Recalling God's promises bring smiles to our faces. Knowing God's mind produces a peace in us that passes all human understanding. A consistent devotion to the Scriptures makes us glad and a cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength (Proverbs 17:22 NLT).

...continued from page 15

ly and get away unpunished. Despite all he had, something was missing in his life and he knew it. There was something silver and shekels could not buy.

If money answers all things (as they say), a man like Zacchaeus should not need Jesus. If he needed him at all, he should have sent him some dollars with a "be my guest" invitation. Men hardly turn down such.

Money is not just good, money is very good, but with a man of Zacchaeus' caliber struggling like that, money cannot be everything. Maybe because we read that Zacchaeus was struggling to see Jesus to the extent of climbing a tree, we tend to see him as a man in need. Yes, he was in need, but what He needed was definitely not money.

Zacchaeus lacked peace. He did not have it in any form. He lacked peace both with God and with men. Zacchaeus tried his best to buy peace for himself and his people. That peace never came until He met Jesus.

When Jesus got to the tree, he looked up and said, Peace I leave with you, my peace i give unto you: "Zacchaeus hurry down. Today is my day to be a guest in your home..." Luke 19:5 MSG

Jesus came, salvation came and peace came with

him.

There's something money cannot buy: Salvation-Peace with God. Zacchaeus was ready to let go of all his wealth in order to find true peace.

Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Luke 19:8 NIV

Do you need peace? Do you have the biggest business in the country, yet a pauper and a slave when you are alone? Do you have the most comfortable bed anyone can afford, yet in it, sleep has made you a game? Everyone think you are living your life at its peak – how you wish they know that deep within, you are almost finished? There's a thirst in your heart and you really don't know what to do? A vacuum in your heart, that you don't know how to fill? I ask again, do you need peace? Like Zacchaeus, you need Jesus. With him is peace, such that money cannot purchase . . .

not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither Let it be afraid. John 14:27 KJV

Who is

Career Mastery Certification Programmes was a huge success, not just because the name of the convener is TS- Tunde Success but it was a success for me and (all other participants) because I had hitherto walked into the class room not knowing what I wanted. However, because the student in me was alert, my Teacher - TS (as he is fondly called) showed up to enlighten everyone on several career related topics, ranging from what and how to write on your Career Dream Canvas, the impact of industrial revolution on your employability, different types of career outcome, and shared insights from locally and globally con-



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ducted research.

I gained the vital information required to take me to my next level and to prepare me for the next phase of my life. I became clear on the things that need my focus and careful attention, few but strong enough to change the tangentry of my life for good.

Among several group activities and exercises that we shared in the class, a particular game that stood out to me. It is called - Who Is in The House? This game stands out to me in three different ways that I would like to share with you but let me explain briefly, how it is played. There are 25 boxes drawn in an A4-size sheet, in each box is a description of a person either by who they are, what they have or a feat they have achieved. As a participant, you are to find people (from the class) who possess these qualities and get such persons to sign in the corresponding box that best describes them. You must continue this until all blank spaces/boxes have been signed and no single individual is allowed to sign more than twice for you while you are not allowed to sign in your own sheet. Hence, the rule goes thus;

"All space must be filled, you must collect the name, phone number and signature of other participants, they can only sign twice, you can't sign on you own form."

The first to fill up all blank spaces wins the game.

I bet you know the import of the game already. People began to read out the qualities from their sheet to one another e.g. "Single", "Plays Golf", "Arsenal fan", "Has relatives in CBN" Etc. asking the other individual if he/she possessed such qualities and we began to exchange sheets to append signatures and share contacts on any corresponding box. But for me there was more. I found it pretty difficult meeting an individual and reading out questions from my blank areas to them, I saw that they looked aggressive in search for answers to their own questions as well. Out of frustration for the too many blank spaces on my sheet and because I hate to struggle to get things, I stood at a strategic location inside the class and yelled out - "I have a relative in CBN". The impact blew my mind. One by one, my co-participants began to bring their sheet to me for sign off in that portion. While signing for each one, I asked them to go through my sheet to see if there was a blank space that matched their quality/achievement and they were over joyed to sign for me, why? Because I had first signed for them.

FROM WHERE YOU ARE, GIVE VALUE.

In order to find your solutions quickly in life, you must first solve other people's problems. Once people can identify that you are willing to aid them in achieving their set goal satisfactorily at minimal or no cost at all, they will naturally gravitate towards you. Service and value to others must be your watchword. Eventually, you will realise that your own needs are also being met.

At some point in the course of the game, I could hear someone telling another crop of people to take their sheet to me – once you give value, a good word will spread for you. Within a short space of time, the signatures on my sheet increased rapidly, because I did not have to walk around the class but, for every signature I got, I first gave out mine.

THE MORE YOU DO, THE MORE YOU WANT TO DO.

As the signatures increased, I became more excited because I could clearly see the very few boxes on my sheet now begging to be filled - I was close to the finishing line. That is how we are when we set

goals. Every mile stone excellently achieved is an encouragement to do more. This is why I strive to win and succeed in anything that I do because achieving one feat will definitely propel me to desire more.

GET MORE PEOPLE IN YOUR CIRCLE

Imagine if this was a real life scenario. Imagine that my career was hanging on a thread and the only redeeming feature would be my connection of someone who plays golf or someone with the royal blood or someone who has relatives in the Presidency etc. if they were not in my circle, I may be stranded. My Pastor taught me that I would improve my productivity and output exponentially by knowing what to delegate, what to relegate, what to eliminate and what to concentrate upon. I have realised that an unproductive life is a life that is diluted. As much as relationships are very key and important, you cannot continue to add every relationship if you are not subtracting - doing it strategically and wisely.

These are the few lessons I gained from participating in this game. I urge you to seek to know "who is in your house", by giving off value from where you are, striving to succeed excellently and increasing the people in your circle.

Whose vess

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 2 Timothy 2:20 NKJV

According to the above scripture, everyone can be likened to a vessel. Though there might be differences in quality, but the quality does not determine the outcome of the vessel. The vessel determines its future depending on the purpose it serves. For instance, if a golden vessel were used to pack dirt or pieces of paper on the street, would you desire it because it is made of gold? However, imagine a wooden vessel with jewelry made of diamonds inside

or a clay vessel filled with foreign currencies inside. Which one would you choose? This is to tell you that your quality

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which has to deal with your looks, your background gifting, potential, upbringing, intellectual abilities, etc. are not as important as what you do with them.

Now, of what use is the child of a billionaire with no tangible impacts in the lives of the people compared to the child of a poor man who grew up to save lives maybe with his/her medical expertise, advocating for the less privilege, seeking justice for people, speaking out against child molestation etc.?

A vessel to honor is the one that adds value to the lives of others and truly represents God on earth. Such a vessel commands honor before God and man.

Being a vessel unto honor has nothing to do with what qualities, privileges or opportunities you have or you don't have. Inside everyman is a uniqueness that God can use to turn us into a superstar if only we allow Him

Let us look at David, a despised vessel. His father and brothers cared less about him, but because he loved God, he became a vessel unto honor.

Let us look at his profile. He was a shepherd, a singer, an instrumentalist, a warrior, a psalmist, a leader etc. He was very blessed with potentials and good looks. All of these would have amounted to nothing if he had not used them to serve God and humanity. This is what it means to be a vessel to honor.

Esther was a slave who ended up in the palace as a queen. She put her life on the line and fasted her way into favor. She eventually stood for the deliverance of her people (Esther 2:5-7, 17-18. Esther 4:15-16).

As you can see, your background is no longer an excuse, the fact that you are not multi-talented as David is not an excuse. That potential inside of you can bring honor to God depending on how you use it.

Nelson Mandela was not talented as David, but he loved the freedom of his people than his life, he eventually became one of the world's most honorable men.

So what quality do you possess? Is it kindness, love, patriotism, leadership, writing etc.? It is high time you stopped thinking you are disadvantaged because of your parent's poverty or they despise

you or you think you are unintelligent and untalented like your mates.

Jonathan and Jeannie Hansen adopted Melita, a Somali female child who at 6 days old was slaughtered and abandoned to die. She was found by a Nigerian UN soldier in the trash can.

They fought for the life of that child in order to adopt her and won the case against the Islamist Community, which was trying to resist a Christian adopting a Muslim child in a Kenyan court. Now the girl is alive with hope of a brilliant future.

I have good news for you, God can use that "small" quality of yours to serve humanity and to bring honor to Himself and to you. Stop wishing you were born rich; many women and men of honor were not born rich.

How Do I Become A Vessel Unto Honor?

Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 2 Timothy 2:21 NKJV

Decide you want to be a vessel unto honor.

Repent of your sin (e.g. lies, fornication,

backbiting, alcoholism, gossip, drunkenness, drug addiction etc.)

Have a strong desire to live a life of impact not just to have cash and live large.

Be ready to go through God's process. To whom much is given, much is expected. Your process is determined by your assignment, calling or destiny. Be ready to follow God's leading.

Maybe you should go and study the story of David in the Bible, and Nelson Mandela of South Africa to understand that it's not a cheap or easy way but it's worth the pain. So, stop looking for fast lane.

Characteristics Of A Vessel To Honor

They seek to serve God and humanity with their qualities.

They are separated unto God in lifestyle, attitude, mannerism, thinking, etc.

They don't follow multitude to do evil.

They honor God with their bodies (1 Corinthians 6:15-20) say no to tattoos, sexual immorality, unnecessary piercing of body parts, plastic surgeries to alter the nature God gave you, etc. You need to understand that as a vessel unto honor, your body belongs to God and use it to honor Him so He can exalt you.

Benefits Of Being A Vessel Unto Honor

As a vessel of honor, you are not used into toilet but on the master's table, which implies you have access to God. This means there is no delay in your prayers.

Honor makes you a world celebrity (Proverbs 22:29).

Your posterity is preserved and blessed with your children and grandchildren benefiting from it. They are equally honored because of you (Psalm 112:1-3).

Honorable vessels live on. They are not easily forgotten, even in death they are remembered for their good works.

KEY NOTE

You do not need a figure 8, good background or many talents to become a vessel unto honor. All you need is to nurture the God-seed in you, decide to use your life to serve God and humanity and see how much honor your life will attract.



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