

BOOK TWEEN TY-1

Every young
person's guide
to adulthood

AANUOLUWAPO OLAJIDE

BEFORE 21

Copyright © 2020 by AANUOLUWAPO OLAJIDE

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods without the prior written consent of the author, except in the case of brief excerpts embodied in journalistic reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

For permission requests, write to the author addressed at aanujide@gmail.com

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (AMP) are taken from the Amplified Bible, Copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

CONTENTS

Dedication

Acknowledgement

The backstory

1: Man know thyself	8
2: You are a spirit	22
3: Get to the roots!	28
4: Your thinking shapes your reality	35
5: The power of the mind	41
6: Push	50
7: Be still	57
8: You are what you say	65
9: Love and things	75
10: Loss	85
11: The Blood	88

DEDICATION

To you:

Dip your feet in the water

It will not sweep you

You will walk on it

THE BACKSTORY

If there is anything I want you to know, it is that you reading this book is no mistake. We are in crucial times right now and ignorance is no excuse to play small. This book will open you up to see the things you need to work on to be ready for the times we are in. It is one I would have loved to read before I was 21.

You know the way age milestones are celebrated with all the pomp and talks? I had the opposite of that in the year I was about to clock 18. I had this fear; I related it to my friend about how I was not looking forward to it and would love to stall it. Despite that, the year came and it then became a new normal to be scared each year especially when my birthday approaches. This continued long until I was 21, after which I had a sense of acceptance about my age, but the stirring inside of me would not stop.

In October 2017, after I returned from the compulsory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in Kebbi State, Nigeria, I was sharing this same fear with my then-boyfriend, now fiancé. I was past 21 by then but I mentioned wistfully about how I wished I had someone

talk with me about what the years ahead were like especially the stirrings I had that seemed like stormy weather foretelling the rain's coming. After I shared this with him, he mentioned doing a little research, asking for the opinion of others and writing a book as a guide.

I did it.

Yes, I wrote the first draft in 2018 and shared it with some of my friends whose judgement I trusted.

But it was not enough.

I still felt the gap within me and even though it was a nice compilation, it did little to ease off the stirring within. I took their comments and thanked them but it took me years to realize what was missing – ME.

Many times we do not get the answers that can help us because we are not asking the right question. Asking the right question can transform your understanding and vision of yourself. It took me two years to get to this point where I started to ask the right question and get the needed answers.

The book was not supposed to be a collation of ideas but the process of a life lived that is ready for what is happening in the world currently.

So, this book I am sharing with you now is my process in response to the stirrings that never left me. It is the book I wish was written before I was 18 or 21, so I could read it and glean wisdom in it, but much more than that, it is God's answer to some of today's issues. So, take it seriously. Read it and take some time to ponder on it. This is not one you rush and keep away to gather dust.

I pray sincerely that this book meets you at this point in your life whether you are 21, about to be 21, or more than 21 years of age. I pray that it opens you up to a new vista of understanding and assurance that will guide you as you walk through this thing called life.

You've got all my love,

Aanuoluwapo.

1

MAN, KNOW THYSELF

Who Do Men Say That You Are?

The inner battle never ended, it only paused for a little while and attacked strongly when I was all quiet and alone. Sometimes it came in the form of self-pity, other times as self-loathing and yet some other time as a deep dissatisfaction that the funniest movie or most interesting stories never seemed to fill. I was like the bottomless pit.

You know those stories we were told about how long-grained rice was a luxury in the past and was only eaten on Christmas or Sundays in the well-to-do households, that was how joy was like – a rare happening, an unusual emotion. If you have experienced joy, you'll know how cosy it is compared to happiness. I had short gasps of it and the only thing I was grateful for was life even though I often told myself I was wasting it.

I know the feeling of emptiness, of not having a goal, of not being excited at any achievement and having nothing

to aspire to yet knowing there is so much more I am supposed to be and do. Oh! I was not living in a separate world, well, maybe I did – a world I called mine.

For most people in the African setting, your life is laid out for you in the sequence society expects of you to achieve what will be termed “success” by them. Success is usually seen as people’s approval of what you’re doing and this is wrong on so many levels.

We all have a unique blend of experiences, talents, skills, goals and dreams that cannot be seen in any other person on the earth. It’s like your DNA. Why? Because even though you go through the same situation in life, your response and the reason for your response will differ from the other person because of your thoughts, your exposure, your environment and your dreams.

The idea of an African dream, although subtle, is something like this - go through primary and secondary education, get admission into a good university to study a renowned course, land a well-paying job, marry a beautiful spouse, start a family with more than one child and then you are almost free to do anything you like with

your life afterwards. Unfortunately, many people are conditioned to live this dream and they do not realize it.

Waiting for society to give you a standard to aspire to is like sitting down on a mat and asking people “Who do you think I am?”

One would say, “You are a beautiful cripple”,

Another would say “I think your life would make more sense if you can change the mat to a rug or carpet at the very least”,

Then another will say, “You are not maximizing your potential! Do you know how much other cripples are making each day begging for money?? You’re dulling yourself”,

Yet another will shake his head pitifully, “Ah! See what the world has done, turned you into a mess” and many more.

Do you see how limiting this is? They each are defining you based on their own experiences and thoughts too and not because they hate you or anything.

Why would you hand over something as powerful and defining as who you are deep inside to people who cannot see beyond the speck in their own eyes? Why let your life be defined by people like you and leave the One who created you Himself? Why shortchange your life and potential for something as fickle as the opinion of men which changes like the clouds in the sky, here at this moment and in another place at the next moment? You need to come to know who you are.

Before you can make any significant progress in your life, you have to come to terms with who people say you are but most importantly, who you see yourself as and say you are.

Who Do You Say That You Are?

I wrote down things I wanted to get done every year but deep down I had no drive for it, it was herd mentality – me wanting to do what others did without the understanding behind it. And like every goal without a

compelling reason, it died the moment my pen left the paper.

I wanted more, I yearned for more, there had to be more. I mean, I have seen it in the eyes of people, the drive, the why that keeps them going and wakes them up at night. I bought into everyone's dream and purpose except mine. I walked all around with the sense of a pause in my life and I did not know how to actively pursue something. I knew something was wrong and I was less than what I was supposed to be or do in the long run until December 2019.

December 2019 was the waking point in my life. It was the period I knew I could not continue that way. Everyone gets to that point in their life, some quicker, some faster but undisputable we all get to that bend in the road where we know it is either we continue full throttle and end up in the ditch or we slow down and take decisive thoughts on how we are going to navigate the bend to come out in better shape than where we are coming from.

Defining Point

December 30, 2019.

I had had enough. I was at the place Jacob was where he said he would not let God go until he blessed him. I was broken inside in ways I knew no glue could fix and I was not going to use tapes to hold together so it looks alright. I knew I did not want the next year to look the same for me. I needed something to change and I was willing to do anything for it to happen. I had lost some years in this wilderness season I refused to come out of, yet God kept calling every time.

December 31, 2019.

I was asked my goals for the new year and I answered in the negative, which was quite strange but I felt sure about it. As usual, we went for cross-over service at church and I kept asking God what He planned for the new year since I was not interested in making up goals that left me empty. That was when I knew it.

“In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength”

Isa 30:15

It was during the sermon I heard the whisper in my heart that I have come to realize as God's, ever so solemn yet so sure and strong – habits and attitudes. I heard it and started to smile because I just knew breakthrough had come. Although I did not know the full extent of the light I received, I was certain it had come and I was glad because it started the process for me, the process of preparation and making me ready as an answer.

Now, I know I had to get to rock bottom to know there was no other way to go but up and I needed to look for the One who was capable of taking me out of the uncertainties and mess I had made of myself and still use it for His glory.

You may be tempted to take a seat, a pen and notebook and give labels to yourself such as:

“I am smart”

“I am very creative”

“I am a deep thinker”...

Stop. Stop. Stop. That is as impotent as the society giving you a definition because like the others, your experiences, environment, talents, skills and exposure have limited your view and understanding of who you are.

You can only get a true understanding of who you are from the person who does not have a tainted view of you – God. He is the One who sees you and remembers what He made you be and do when He from the beginning had you in mind, created you and formed you.

Oh, dear! Can you not see? Can you not perceive it? That until you go back to the beginning, you would never know the depth of all that has been placed inside you which you are supposed to birth to the nations.

You have got to come back to your roots, your first root. You have got to get back on your knees, seeking earnestly like the thirsty land that you are for a river to flow within you. You have got to get to that place of full surrender where you drop the rags you have used to cover your

nakedness and come to the One who owns you, your Owner-Father to clothe you with Himself.

You have got to get to that place where you no longer look to people, things or activities to fill you up and give you temporary happiness but to your One True Love who is Love Himself to fill you with Himself and birth His character through His Spirit in you so that you are filled with Him yet hungry for Him.

Oh, dear! Can you not see? Can you not perceive? You are nothing without Him. Only He can show your true worth untainted by the opinions and expectations of men.

Oh, dear! Can you not see? Can you not hear? Can you not perceive? The beckoning of grace and love in your heart. Have you for so long blocked out the sweet fragrance of His Spirit which beckons you into so much more than yourself?

Can you not see? Can you not perceive? That your life is so much bigger than yourself and what's happening to you is more than just for your learning and becoming but for others also.

Oh that you would see! Oh that you would hear! The whispers of love calling your wandering heart back home, serving your hungry heart food and drink that satisfies and nourishes.

Oh that you would perceive! How much you mean to Him and how He has longed to hold you in His arms and hear you whisper “Papa, I am back home!” Oh that you would know the depth of His love! Oh that you would know how wide His grace extends! Oh that you may know that from the moment you called to Him, He sees you the way He sees Jesus.

The Lord your God in your midst,

The Mighty One, will save;

He will rejoice over you with gladness,

He will quiet you with His love,

He will rejoice over you with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17

Oh that you would know the name He gave you – Delight!
Oh that you would perceive how He rejoices over you
with singing. He traded it all away so you could have it
all! Oh that you will begin to know yourself the way He
knows you, see you the way He sees you and understand
what He has called you to be and do when He first
conceived the idea of the person called you.

May you know.

May you see.

May you perceive.

May you understand.

If only you can see eternity placed before you. If only you
can see the vast amount of territory you are to walk and
take as far as your eyes can see and as far as you can walk
around. If only you can see the vast amount of resources
behind the assignment God has placed in your hands. Oh,
man! Oh, that you would know yourself and see you as
He sees you.

We are to go back to the beginning, that was where it all
started, that was where the purest intention was and if you

will ever launch into the future that you can feel burning within your bosom. Dreams are valid, pains and experiences are valid but you are beyond your current environment and experiences if you start to change the lens with which you have been seeing yourself.

Rediscovery

Life as we used to know it is no longer the same. A lot of shifting and shaking has been going on and at a crucial time like this, there is no space to play small or say “I am still young, I am not going to be affected”. While my generation and those before me are out fulfilling God’s Kingdom Agenda, you cannot be left by yourself and unaware of what we are doing because you also have a role to play in God’s Kingdom Agenda.

An example will be Jesus while he lived on earth. While he was yet young, he knew there was something He was supposed to do for His people. God had entrusted Him to Mary and Joseph because He knew their character and they could raise Him the way it would be needed.

At the young age of 12, He sat with the Pharisees and religious leaders and discussed Scriptures with them. It was not an act of pride but one of the many flickers of understanding of purpose He had. He was aware, informed and ready for God's Kingdom Agenda even though he waited 21 more years before He could step into the assignment.

You are not too young to be informed, to perceive what God is doing or to be used by God for His Agenda.

As you drop the clouded lens you've been wearing all along, begin to evaluate yourself. This is not to define yourself but to be aware of your person, character and tendencies. This would help you know what muscles you have left dormant and should start exercising because it is useful for where you are going. It will also help you know if you will need to adjust to fit where you are going.

Before the day of manifestation comes, everyone is given a level field where they have to prepare. Some people prepare throughout that season and are ready for the next while some are unaware of the season they are in and are unprepared for their manifestation yet others come into

preparation at a later time. Having a decent understanding of your personality and strength helps you ask the right questions like; if this is the future I am supposed to play a vital role in, Holy Spirit, what character of yours do I need to embody now so that when it is time to manifest it comes as an outflow of who I am and not a struggle to act like it or a pretense.

Sit with your Creator and ask Him to show you your flaws and pray yourself into your transformation. He would begin to reveal things to you, connect you with people and even lead you to resources that would help you. Being spiritual is not an excuse to dump down on yourself, rather your spirituality should enhance your intelligence and logic such that you operate at a higher realm than those who do not. You can speak wisdom and proffer solution to dead-end problems. The people who are relevant and influential for a long time are those who can bring solutions to people as many times as possible.

2

YOU ARE A SPIRIT

You are more than your five senses

What was your first thought when you saw the heading of this chapter? Yeah, yeah? Or what does that even mean?

In truth, whether you agree to it or not, you are more than your physical body, you are more than what you can see, smell, hear, touch or feel. You are more than anything physical.

...while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:18

Unfortunately, today, there are more and more individuals who walk around with no thought of where they come from (by this I do not mean your hometown or family

lineage, I mean the Kingdom you have been called into through receiving Christ as your Lord and Savior). They walk around as victims of circumstances rather than standing as the victor they are through Christ giving you the dominion over all things.

Your strength as an individual does not come from your intelligence, family connections, networks of friends and people in important positions or even your street-smartness. Rather, your strength lies in your ability to infuse spirituality into your natural expressions in life whether as an artist, musician, designer, accountant, lawyer, medical personnel, sales manager, sportsman, chef, waiter, or whatever you are doing.

The spirit realm is as real as the realm we live and operate in right now, maybe even more real than it. Have you read of, heard of, or seen generals in the faith who walk and talk and act like they are not in this realm with you? For these people, the spirit realm is more real than the physical to them because that realm is the brain box behind this realm.

In a biography of Kathryn Kuhlman¹, she spoke about how she had sought understanding of spiritual things and it led her to constant prayer and searching the Scripture, here is the result:

“That is the reason He is as real to me as the next beat of my heart — more real to me, very, very often, than one sitting in the room with me.”

Today, I always pray a prayer from Kathryn Kuhlman's life – Lord, I want You to be more real to me than any other person in the room.

This realness being referred to here is not carrying a fearful disposition of sin consciousness. No! This realness is a taking over of your senses, your proclivities, and your intentions by the spiritual such that you live this natural life as an offshoot of that life. This means that you remain in tune like a well-tuned violin to your Creator. You carry a God-consciousness that comes from a place of intimacy and fellowship with the CEO of your life.

¹Robert Liardon, *Kathryn Kuhlman: A Spiritual Biography of God's Miracle Working Power*, 18.

That realm is real because people have lived it and you and I can operate from that realm.

For you to come into the fullness of your purpose and what God has called you to be, you need to understand that you can no longer be oblivious of the workings in the spirit realm, your choosing to play small is not only limiting you but the numerous individuals joined to your manifestation.

The top players at this end time will not just be the most naturally gifted pianist, players or lawyers but those who operate in the spirit realm to bring solutions that the ordinary mind cannot conceive because eyes have not seen neither have ears heard.

While chaos is happening in the world and it seems like more problems are happening on all sides, the only saving grace for you as an individual, for the family unit, community, nation and the world as a whole is those who operate in the spirit realm and can bring those answers to their physical workspaces. Problems will be happening fast at the heel of the other, and it would take the natural

mind many years to think up a solution while those who are spiritual can provide them now.

Natural solutions will only go this far and no more, we need to switch to more creativity, more insights, more concepts, more ideas, more innovation coming from people in touch with God.

It's time for the sons

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God

Romans 8:19

This is not the time to claim

“I was born a Christian”,

“I come from a Christian home”,

“I do not need Jesus” or

“I am a Christian and that is enough”.

No!

Your playing small does not serve anyone. Your lukewarm life cannot serve you anymore. Your disdain for the spiritual does not reduce its potency to disrupt and align things to God's Agenda on the earth.

This is the time to take your relationship with God with more seriousness and fervency than you have ever done before because you have a huge role to play in the global sphere of things and operating in the natural alone will not only limit you but expose you as an easy target for the enemy.

It is no longer enough to go to church every Sunday or every service day or read your Bible and pray, you have got to be intentional about building a relationship with God like Father to Child where Spirit talks with Spirit in the most real way, such that He becomes more real to you than the next person in the room. Oh! You need to come to that depth, that sweet intimacy of the Spirit and intimacy with the Father.

Selah!

3

GET TO THE ROOTS!

What do you run on?

Do you know that your belief system is the fuel on which your life runs? No matter how efficient and capable the engine of a vehicle is, if bad fuel is introduced into it, it would limit the capacity of the engine and in the long run damage the engine itself. The same with you as an individual.

The beliefs you have about yourself, about God, about money, about purpose is what will determine how far you go and how wide you reach. Take a few moments to ponder on people you respect and are relevant in their sphere of influence, what do you think are the beliefs that run their life? What are the values on which they have built their life system?

If you can, take a short study on them, watch as many videos as you can where they speak, read their books and

observe them from afar. You will be able to see patterns in their belief system and the way their lives have turned out.

The same with you. What beliefs fuel your life?

This is not just about what you say when everyone is around and it is all happy and bright. It is what fuels your actions and the way you live your life. It is what you believe in an unshakable manner such that even when people call you the opposite, you can stare them down and tell them who you are based on what you believe.

Religion and roots

For many people, the word Christianity is synonymous to mediocrity. This is as a result of stereotypes who have preached against money and wealth and pointed out that the wealthy cannot make heaven. The truth is some poor people will not make heaven because the criteria for heaven is not in wealth but in accepting Christ as your Lord and personal Savior.

My mentor, Rev. Femi Ogundare, usually says something: if the main purpose of you coming to the earth is for the salvation of your soul, then at the point of accepting Christ as your Lord and Savior, you should be shot dead to meet your Savior. This is to say that the new life you have been given is not only to make in heaven but for earthly relevance too.

Many have been deceived, and have stayed in mediocre positions for so long with the excuse that they want to serve God whereas they are feeding their fears and limiting what God wants to do in the world through them. It is the days of His Kingdom like the days of Joseph, Elijah, David, Solomon, and the other generals in Christ. The examples we have today are too few to continue with that limiting mindset. You need to remove the notion that Christians are average individuals who do not play important roles in the realm of affairs of this world.

Identifying the roots

Sitting quietly by yourself is not an easy thing to do but it is usually an effective means of knowing yourself and getting instructions from God. Getting to the root of your belief system about yourself, about wealth, about solution providers, about relationships, about people etc. is not a walk in the park. It is a hard but necessary job of peeling back layer after layers of ugliness and things you are comfortable with but cannot serve you into a better life.

It is seeing the scars of your past experiences and rather than covering it in shame, you look at it for what it is and identify what resolutions you made about yourself and the world after it happened. It is recognizing your thought patterns after a heartbreak that left you in the woods, or a loss that brought about mistrust and an unwillingness to love anyone again. It is realizing the way you see yourself in the mirror is not painted by your eyes but the words of others about how fat you are or how skinny you are, or your eyes that would not focus on an object easily or your legs that seemed to bow slightly. It is seeing the many lies you have painted to yourself as the truth or accepted from

others as valid and one by one pulling them down and building the truth where they once were.

It is looking at yourself in the mirror and seeing your scars as battle flags for where the enemy tried but you survived, it is looking at those flaws that you avoid in the mirror and seeing them as beautiful identifiers of your person.

It is allowing yourself grieve as many times as your heart wants for the loss of that precious person and understanding that this life is too small to hold all your love to your chest without pouring it out to others.

It is seeing your weakness as what they are and rather than running from them, strategizing how to work on them or partner with someone who would help you on it.

It is removing the labels and box you try to define yourself with and realizing you are a river branching out with different streams (expressions).

Dealing with the root

You have to remove that limiting belief and replace that belief by surrounding yourself with new examples -

people who are an example of the future God is revealing in your heart. Surround yourself with people that inspire you and stories that break limiting beliefs in your heart and begin to show you all the limitless possibilities there is.

It will take action on your part; this action can be in form of confessions, taking actions that would beat your usual self like going to an auto-mart and getting a quote on a vehicle even though you do not have your return fare on you, it could be attending events where you will meet high-flyers you admire so that it is easier to believe that you too can get that level of success. It could be taking trips to places you've never been before to get an experience that widens your perspective and life. There is no limit to what you can and should do to break those limiting beliefs.

Before you start acting, you have to first of all question where you got the belief from. Only when you have uncovered the lie can you start laying the truth as the foundation of your life.

Today, stand against small-mindedness, poverty mentality, mediocre operations, being comfortable with the small, with fear and the “me and mine” mentality. Step out into the wide-open spaces of grace where God has made all things available for and to you. He has held nothing back from you. Can you imagine the wealth of arsenal God has with Him? How then can you think so small of yourself and the One who has called you? How? Break free from those mentalities and here is how:

Knowledge brings light and understanding. So you need to go over this chapter as many times as possible and take time out with yourself until you begin to see how these mindsets have limited you and how they have influenced your life thus far. Write them down in your journal. Then you sit down again and write your new experiences, replacing the old with the new. I will speak later on the power of confession but for now, identify those mindsets and let resentment stir up in you towards them such that when they peep out in your thought or conversation, you can recognize it and attack it instantly.

4

YOUR THINKING SHAPES YOUR REALITY

Small mindedness

Usually, there is a thin line between right and wrong such that a little deviation from the right makes it entirely wrong. Some of us hardly see the thin line between contentment and small-mindedness. It is so thin that it is glossed over and small-mindedness is easily called contentment.

Small mindedness is the concept of thinking just for you and yours. Anything that happens boils down to how it affects only you in the now. People with this kind of mindset are hardly able to make it to the big leagues where the shots are called, major decisions on the economy of communities and nations are made and where relevance and influence are far-reaching. It can also be called a poverty mindset where everything that occupies your heart and head is “How can I make more money?”, “How

am I going to feed my family?" and nothing beyond that. This kind of mindset makes you focus on the short term rather than the long run. What this means is that your time is entirely consumed by small thinking when it was created to proffer solutions to the world like Joseph. If you want to be a big player in your industry space, you have to pay attention to what kind of thoughts fill your mind. Do you have a poverty mentality or an abundance mentality?

An abundance mentality, on the other hand, is a concept of thinking that goes beyond your immediate gains to your value, you begin to think about what kind of value can you offer that people need, what kind of problems do people face that they may or may not be aware of it but you can solve and from there become a relevant player in your industry space. For people with an abundance mindset, it is not first about how much can I make from selling chin-chin but about what is the value of this chin-chin to the people I want to sell it to? How does it help them?

The power of exposure and repetition

For those who do not naturally think like this, it may seem like a hard thing to do but here is what works - the power of exposure and the power of repetition.

Now, you know thinking small is not going to serve you, your family, your community and your God. You have to come to a place where every expression of you in the form of a business, family, program or anything comes almost naturally without the first thought being money but “how should I go about this Lord”. A what-will-you-have-me-do spirit that runs at the instruction of the Father because you know in the economics of God, time is very crucial and every assignment comes with every resource that will be needed for it.

The words we say with our mouth are powerful but much more are the thoughts in our heart because they are the engine from which our words are produced from. Interestingly, while your thoughts have much influence on your words, your words can also influence your thoughts, albeit a little longer than the former. Also, it is impossible to stop a bad habit without replacing it because no part of

man is empty, it has to be filled with something – good or bad.

Knowing all this, we cannot simply end small-mindedness and poverty thinking by saying calmly “I do not have a poverty mindset”. Here is what happens, at this point, you are telling your mind and channeling your thoughts on what not to think or how not to think without telling it what to think.

Child experts will tell you, rather than tell your child not to go outside, give them positive or safe options, this way they can then choose without feeling like everything is not working out for them. The same way your mind, rather than say “I do no longer think small”, say “I have an abundance mindset and I offer value to people around me, my community and my nation”.

See how powerful the second statement is?

The second statement forces your mind on what it should be, in essence, you are speaking forth what you want to see as God did in the beginning. When you say it often enough your thoughts begin to align to those words and

then when a situation comes up rather than think “there is a pandemic or economic recession, how will I survive?” you will start to think “see the way many people are suffering, I think there is a problem here that I can solve, how do I go about it?”

Do you see that?

Malcolm Gladwell in his book *Outliers* conducted a research on people who are relevant in their craft whether as athletes or sports players or musicians. From his research, he realized one common factor: those who were experts or top players in their field had dedicated themselves to about 10,000 hours of doing their craft irrespective of the outcome. Musicians who were renowned and well known had practiced on their instrument hours upon hours, days on days until it became a part of them - until they embodied their music. The same thing with basketball players, tennis players, golf players amongst others.

You can take this principle and apply it to change your mindset. Write out a confession of what you want concerning your mindset, make a recording of it and play

it and say it for as many times as possible. There is such a thing as the power of 90 days transformation. I heard about this from PDDK (Pastor Debola Deji-Kurunmi) where she said that 90 days is an operating system in life because it is short enough to keep your focus on a target and long enough to see the change happen. So, take this serious, get your confessions ready and do it for hours every day for 90 days.

Interestingly, you will start to see the shift in thinking in weeks and this will come in your thought process, the search for more knowledge from books and conferences that will enrich your mind and help you start to ask the right questions and think about problems another way.

Selah!

5

THE POWER OF THE MIND

The human mind is a very powerful thing – tool, equipment, or field. It contains a mine of power which most people usually leave unexplored or unchanneled for something else. It can take the most ordinary concept or idea and transform it into a global solution that Nations are waiting for and willing to pay ridiculous amounts to own it. It can affect economies of Nations that have been in a mess for decades; that is how powerful the human mind is.

As with every powerful tool or resource, there is always the fight for control and ownership; the human mind is not exempt from this. The Bible says, who you give yourself to is your Master, whether to mammon or God. That is a simple truth. Armed with the knowledge that the mind is controlled or directed by a force greater than the owner, whether consciously or unconsciously, who is in control of your mind?

Who has the final say on what you produce out of the multitude of thoughts and ideas in your mind?

Who and what do you open your mind to and feed it with?

Whether you consciously feed your mind or not, the truth is you become who or what you feed your mind because your mind affects your life expressions. How you think affects how you behave and react to things. It affects what you decide to do in life. Some people's mind has been fed with poverty being equated with not working in a big organization. This might have come from discussions they have overheard or assumptions they made while little.

Dealing with Negative Patterns

The human mind is a blank canvas brought plain and empty when we are born, but each experience leaves a mark on the canvas. Like every painting, you cannot erase it. To make a change, you will have to use a color thicker and more powerful than the color that was first on it and then lay it over it as many times as it takes to cover the former color. Yet another way is a complete wiping of the

canvas with a strong chemical. The second way looks a bit complex but is more effective and long-lasting than the first. With this example, you can see that it takes something greater than what was initially to start a new order. It is the same way with your thinking.

Every thinking and experience you have paints a part of an image on your mind and continues to form a pattern that you may be unconscious of. It is the reason you may see someone who has a repeated cycle of failure in their studies or heartbreaks in relationships. A pattern has been formed through the different experiences and thoughts that you have allowed to linger in your mind.

If anything will change it will not be by merely trying to overlaying positive thoughts over the negative patterns. It will be by a long period of sitting down with yourself and the Holy Spirit showing you each color on the canvas and helping you see how those colors got there. As you begin to see the pattern and identify the root, you can deal with it effectively, heal from it and learn from it. Then it becomes easier for the new color to stick on the canvas.

So sit with the Holy Spirit and let Him begin to show you the lapses. Interestingly, you may discover that an experience you think is so neutral or good has a bad root or meaning in your mind that would later affect an expression of you, unless you deal with it early on.

Take Charge of Your Mind

Your mind is a wonderful resource and goldmine of solutions. Do not think that you are inconsequential in the global play of things. No! You are not! You are God's handiwork and a big and important part of those He wants to use in His end-time army across the nations of the world.

In life's field, what differentiates those who win from those who do not is their mind, how they think, how they see issues and challenges, their view of life.

How do you see yourself? As God does? Or as the society defines you based on your looks and abilities?

How do you think? How do you approach problems or challenges? As something unsurmountable or as a hurdle you need to climb over to get to where you are going?

How do you see your future? As a major influence in your community, nation or world or as someone who stays in the corner like a mouse?

How do you see your gifting and talents? As bragging rights to compare yourself with others or to reach lives and impact people with them?

How do you see what God has committed into your hands? As a burden you'll rather not do or a privilege to be entrusted with one of God's work on the earth?

Seeing With the Right Lens

Vision is powerful; how you see yourself and where you see yourself heading is very powerful. It is what will wake you up from your bed early in the morning, keep you motivated during the day and keep you up at night dreaming and strategizing. It is what would influence your decision to do some things that would ordinarily be

termed unusual to your personality. It is what will constrain you to make some sacrifices that people would try to talk you out of like Daniel and Ashpenaz. It is what would influence you to change your circle of friends and build a relationship with some people. It is what will help you screen the people you allow to speak over your life and those you give your ears to for advice and wisdom. It is what will make you become the person you can be.

Vision is like a mirror, only it does a different job. Rather than show you the person in front of the mirror, vision reveals you to you, it shows you your ugly part and slowly and surely it reveals the person you can be when you deal with the ugly parts.

It is like a sudden awakening in your spirit, an abrupt or gradual realization that is capable of stopping the way your world revolves and redirect it in a completely different way that would surprise you. Vision is that powerful.

Vision is the spring to your steps and the resolution in your eyes that makes your spirit jump alive like a desert plant at the scent of rain. Despite the way your nerves are

playing with you, it is what adds confidence to your gait and helps you to look at those you term influential as levels you can get to and surpass rather than as gods to be worshipped.

It is what makes you insist on your portion because of a deeper understanding that your lot is maintained and no one can take it from you. It is what makes you get angry at the lies that play in your head and gives you the strength to speak the truth over your situation until you see the changes.

It is what makes you rise from the dust even when you are weary and tired and have fallen over 7 times and say, though I fall, I rise again. It is what makes you keep the fuel burning and oil in your lamp because you know the journey is far and the night is long yet you have to wait for the Master.

It is what makes you move beyond your disabilities to draw up the abilities in you and wake them up to come alive and produce results!

Vision is the bounce in your feet and the constant reminder that you are a man on a mission and that mission is not a short-term one but for a long term that can take different shapes and container, nevertheless a mission.

Can you see now why you cannot afford to think small?

Can you see now why you cannot afford to play small or allow society define for you who you are and what you're going to be and do?

Do you now see why you cannot expose yourself to anything anyhow? And why others may do a certain thing but you can't because what drives you is different from them.

Do you now understand why you have to be intentional about your growth, about what you do, read, and where you go, as you become the person God is calling you?

Do you now see why you cannot remain in your environment and be content there? Do you now see the need to expose yourself to something more than what is around you because your environment and past do not have a final say on what you become in the future?

Can you see for yourself that you are shortchanging yourself and selling yourself short when you think money is all you need or money is the focus of your life?

You are a (wo)man with a vision.

You are a (wo)man on a mission.

You can no longer play small or be a victim of circumstances.

You are the protagonist of your own story.

What steps are you going to take to build your mind today?

6

PUSH

There is something beyond this Wall

God is creative.

Have you ever sat and wondered how God made each person different and unique. Apart from each person having a unique DNA, we are widely different yet the same.

Our personalities differ in more ways than one, while some are introverts, some are extroverts; while some are natural-born leaders, some have to learn leadership; while some have grit and tenacity to push through until they see results, some have to learn to persevere and be tenacious until they see the results they want. Whether you fall in the category of those who naturally exhibit some needed character trait or those who do not, one thing is essential – if you want to be all that you have seen with your inner eyes and let your dreams become reality, you have to hone your traits or learn and build up those you do not have.

For people who write or do creative work like paint or sing, you will be familiar with “writer’s block” or “creative block”. Seth Godin, an entrepreneur and blogger, in an interview once said: “writer’s block is a myth”. He said this to say if you continue to give yourself to the daily activities of doing what you are supposed to do and show up, you will find that you will keep pushing the boundaries and stretching yourself only to discover that you have made several masterpieces through that action. On the other hand, if you say you will wait till the block is over, you may wait months, lose time in brushing your skills because you are waiting for the perfect condition to learn and there will be no tangible result compared to deciding to show up whether you feel like it or not, whether your creative juice is low or overflowing.

If many of the people you admire today will be honest with you, they will tell you that left to their natural element, they will not get to where they are but they had to keep doing the conscious work of dreaming and doing. They had to develop skills that they required to activate the dream and bring it to reality. Whether they like to work

hard, crunch the numbers or stay in bed, it did not matter in the face of the dream and vision that captured their soul and it gave them the push to do what they have to do every day to ensure it comes to reality.

No one's life gets better just by lazing around and sitting on their hands. No! Not one! Speak with your mentor or people who inspire you and you will find that it is not always as easy as you think it is from the sidelines. They have had to make tough choices and decide what exactly they want out of life and go for it. They have had to stand up multiple times when life threw them on their back. They have had to stare failure in the face many times than they want to count and say "No, not today!" It is not easy, it is not an easy feat but it is doable.

I like to write when I feel inspired to, allowing the words drop on my lap like manna from heaven, but I know if I would write this book and produce it in time for you, then I have to show up whether it is convenient or not.

Everyone wants to live the baby-girl and baby-boy life. The one where you do not have to worry about a thing just lay on the beach as often as you want and spend without

caution, but life is more than that. You are made for so much more than yourself, that is why you have to push beyond the limits of yourself to explore the new levels you can get to.

You do not want to be that person who is old and grey, who with each shaky breathe reflects on his journey through life and can only say “If only I...”

Push, give it everything you have got. How many doors are you going to look at without trying a little more before saying “I am locked out”?

How many times are you going to let life happen to you instead of happening to life?

How many times are you going to play the victim card saying “it is because of my environment”, “it is because of my background”, “we were poor growing up...”, “it is Nigeria and ASUU’s fault”, “it is a lecturer’s fault”?

How long will you push the responsibility for your life to other people instead of taking the reins from their hands and determining what happens to you, what does not

happen to you, how you react to what happens to you and how people do things to you?

How many times will you see another person make that deal, get that opportunity and say he was lucky or she's from a rich family? Stop it!

How many times will you stop waiting for "luck" to shine on you and instead make things work in your favor and let things be aligned?

You have got to step up your game, you have got to look out and take responsibility for what happens to you, not your parents, not your past, not what those guys did to you, not what your environment said you could be, not what you teachers kept saying you are.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOU.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR LIFE.

Now act like it!

Take, for instance, you are led to an apartment building and you are told it all belongs to you. Walking up you try to access some rooms and the door opens easily like an automated door. Yet there are some of the rooms and it

has the popular iron door which has been locked up for a long while. You turn the key in and it opens to a certain level and no more, what do you do? Do you say, “Oh no, it was not meant for me” or do you try the key one more time and if it does not open you use your body to force the door open?

That there, is how you take opportunities and face situations that you come up against. You take the bull by the horn because even if it was handed to you personally by God, sometimes you have to push through the current challenge to get it. It means you have to show up, you have to learn something new if that is what is required, you have to pray for wisdom to access what has been given to you and apply wisdom in many different ways.

Success is not an easy walk in the park, it is doing the uncomfortable until it becomes comfortable, it is pushing even when it is the last strength in you, it is pushing even when the hope you are clinging on is getting frail, it is the pushing, the grit and the tenacity to wake up every day whether you are happy, sad or sour all over and saying

“one more day towards my goal”, “one more day towards achieving success (whatever it means to you).

Dear, you have got to push. You have got to keep at it until impossible seems like a strange word to you and you see difficulty as another challenge for you to scale over. You have got to face that wall and push it until something shifts inside you and outside too.

7

BE STILL

It is a fast-paced world we live in today. There is the rush to be busy, to hustle, to get something doing. Unfortunately, the media does not help in that aspect. With the fake-life and real-life shown all over the media space, there is a comparison that can catch up on a person unawares. This is usually subtle and comes with varying intensity of emotions, sometimes envy, jealousy, anger, frustration about one's life, confusion amongst others. That is why we must take the deliberate action of staying still.

We are always in a hurry, rushing somewhere and when we are asked how our day went, we say it was unproductive or we cannot say what you spent the whole day doing. By night-time, we cannot point to specific tasks or goals we got done for the day.

Rest. Be still.

Stop the rush. Stop the hustle. Always rushing, always moving even when you do not have a definite direction.

Rest. Be still.

If you see a man pushing at different walls, he will not get much result, if at all he will get any. You might even call him a mad-man. But if he focuses his energy on a particular one that needs to move for him to continue his journey, then the result is exponential.

Rest. Be still.

Running and pushing towards a goal is only effective when it is purposeful and focused.

Rest. Be still.

Learn the art of being still, of not rushing into activities. Learn the art of waiting, planning and strategizing. Learn the art of incubating on an idea until you can see the next move to take.

Rest. Be still.

It is like a game of chess, you never see the players in a rush to make a move or conquer an opponent's piece.

They are usually reflective, thinking deep and strategic in their play. That is the way you should take your life – reflective, with deep thought and strategy. You can only live life this way when you learn to be still and take enough pauses in your life for the next move.

Rest. Be still.

Take time out as often as possible – daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly. Reflect and do a self-examination. How did I spend my time this week? Which activities do I need to engage in less? Which activity do I need to spend more time doing because it is towards my goal?

It is when you learn to be still that you can see some things you need to move, some places you ought to go and some people you need to meet. It is when you are still that you can come out with a sharp focus and face your goals per time without expending energy on things that do not count at the end. It is when you are still that you can begin to see yourself better and know yourself more.

Rest. Be still.

Stop rushing because everyone is on the move. Stop doing things because that is what is in vogue or what everyone is doing. If everyone is following the trends, who is setting the trend, it has to be someone who is not part of the flow as everyone is. You are the protagonist of your own story. You are the painter on the canvas of your life.

Be still before rushing to do.

Your life is in seasons and seasons change; they take a period and then switch to a new focus even if the purpose remains the same or changes. To have progressive movement in your life, you have to learn to take enough pauses in your life to oil the engines of your life that will take you through the next season of your life.

Throughout Jesus' life, he took breaks. Periods when he would go by himself to the mountain to pray and be still. Each time he came down, he launched another season of his ministry and life on earth. You will see this at the start of his ministry when he wanted to choose disciples to follow him, a change in the miracles that would happen in his ministry and even when he was about to die.

Great men that last long and stay on the pedestal of relevance for a long time are people who take breaks to be quiet, to get strategies, instructions and new plans for the next season of their life so they are ready to deliver solutions to problems around them.

This is not only common to humans alone. Birds like eagles have a season where they are still and quiet and go by themselves to renew their strength. They get to a mountain top and get rid of their beak, talons and feathers stage by stage. They are exposed to the elements and as time passes, days and weeks walk by and months stroll by, they gradually start growing new feathers. It is like a rebirth for them because they realize it is the only way to keep living. So also you, if you will continue like the eagle, you have to take time to be still.

Learning to be Still

Getting to a place of stillness and quietness where you are not actively engaged in activities yet productive and getting the most out of your lives and time at that point

can be tough. We are taught to move and not to stay still and quiet.

For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not,

Isaiah 30:15

The following are tips to help you stay still. It may be tough for a while, you may keep going back to the routine and normal you have created for yourself, but if you keep at it, you will see results.

Here they are:

1. Clear your schedule by promptly delivering things that are urgent and important. Delegate an activity if it is not important; this is so your focus is not shifting to what needs to get done instead of what you are about to know or discover by being still.
2. Get away from things that distract you and consume your time. This could be going out with

friends, parties, social media, movies etc. It differs for each person. For social media, you could delete the app or freeze it so it is not always in your face and you do not “mistakenly” go there.

3. Depending on how you can easily lay down worries or burdens in your heart, stay quiet. You may play soft music that inspires you like jazz or anything soft to consciously move from a place of worry to a blank slate.
4. Relax and do not get anxious that you are not resting when your mind is still occupied. Even if it takes hours or days, let go of the distractions and keep trying until you are still.
5. If you can afford a change of scenery, all the better. It could be in the same state or a different state or country, in a hotel or an empty room where you will not be disturbed. Make do with what you have and try to reduce human interactions as much as possible.
6. Take along a journal and pen or writing resource, hard copy will be better to keep track of the inspired thoughts, questions that come to your

heart. You need to be ready because ideas are gaseous and would only stick for as long as you note it down.

These tips will help you reorder your priorities and ensure that the energy you get is redirected to the things you really should focus on.

8

YOU ARE WHAT YOU SAY

Write it down, make it plain

Ideas are lofty and beautiful but they are fleeting like the morning dew when the sun is up.

Take a break now, take a sheet of paper and write down what success means to you now. Remember that what success means to you will continue to change as you continue to grow as an individual.

If you wrote material things on your sheet, take a moment to ask yourself why they matter to you and trace down the idea to its roots. If you can get to the root, then that is what success truly means to you at this season of your life. Also, make sure what success means to you is something quantifiable or identifiable so that when you have gotten there you can know this is the progress I wanted to see and I've succeeded at this, awesome! Let's celebrate this win before we move to the next.

There is power in writing down your goals. Your goals will revolve around what success means to you at that season of your life. As effective as writing down your goal is, it is still inefficient by itself.

Have you ever written new year resolutions or goals for the new year or month and when you do a review you find that you achieved less than 50% of the goals you wrote down? Here is why.

The human nature is easily deceived. You can trick your mind to do or not to do something. When you write down goals, your mind receives a sudden boost of energy, it would cheer up and give you a thousand and one ways why the goals are just the best for you right now, but what happens after 48 hours? The energy dwindles, you still feel good about the goal but not as pumped up about it. After 21-30 days, most people would have forgotten their goal and just focus on challenges as they come and living life based on what happens per time.

When you write goals down, you are selecting the mountains you want to climb over and the hurdles you want to cross. You are controlling a good portion of what

you want to happen to you. That is why when people relapse after setting a goal, they can get easily motivated to pick it up and work on it again as opposed to if they did not have a goal set.

Every goal needs an action plan, it is the soul of the goals. Smart, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART) activities that would ensure the goals you set can be achieved. Breaking it down to months, weeks and days, you can redeem the time and make the most of your day and ultimately year because you have a standard you are setting your day and week up to and you know every day when you lay on your bed that you are another step closer to success.

Hence, SMART actions towards your goals are what makes it achievable not the idea of setting goals itself. Setting goals and understanding what success you want to achieve per time keeps you focused and helps you make better decisions about what you can or cannot do based on if it is moving you closer to your goal or not. Start taking actionable steps after you have set your goals.

Set goals and write what success means to you but move further to what you can do every day to get those goals in. You will have to take that sheet of paper again as well as extras and draw up a plan on how to achieve it. Only when you have a plan do you have your goal put down and the rate of achieving it higher than before.

The Power of the Tongue

For we all often stumble and fall and offend in many things. And if anyone does not offend in speech [never says the wrong things], he is a fully developed character and a perfect man, able to control his whole body and to curb his entire nature. ³If we set bits in the horses' mouths to make them obey us, we can turn their whole bodies about. ⁴Likewise, look at the ships: though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the impulse of the helmsman determines. ⁵Even so the tongue is a little member, and it can boast of great things. See how much wood or how great a forest a tiny spark can set ablaze! ⁶And the tongue is a fire. [The tongue is a] world of wickedness set among

our members, contaminating and depraving the whole body and setting on fire the wheel of birth (the cycle of man's nature), being itself ignited by hell (Gehenna)

James 3:2-6 (AMP)

I love the simplicity of Apostle James' letter to the church. It calls to bear the usual failing yet shows that there is a higher way of living that we can aspire to. In this chapter of his letter, we see the characteristics to which he says a man has a fully developed character – his ability to not say the wrong things. It looks simple right? Until you encounter situations that make you want to yell or revenge. Reacting back in insults come as second nature to our mortal bodies but there is a higher way, there is a higher life we have been called to live.

James calls a perfect man, a man that can control his tongue because the tongue is the connecting pivot to the other part of your body and your attitude. The tongue was compared to the rudder of a ship because it is often looked

over as unimportant yet it plays a very important role on the way our lives turn out to be.

The tongue can set on fire and destroy a whole city. It can make two nations begin a war on lies, lead to the death of many and cause tremendous economic loss. That is how powerful that pink, little waggling member of your body is. It can influence the cycle of a man's nature. Your words can determine whether it is well with you or not, it can determine how much peace you experience in your life. It can determine a whole lot.

Some people grow up in an environment where cursing and negative words were spoken over them as insults or for correction, yet those words have affected their mindset and the way they look at themselves. Usually, they will discover that things may not be working well in a certain area of their lives and would be unaware that those words spoken over 2 decades ago have formed a deep root in their lives.

This tongue is the reason why some people think they cannot succeed no matter how hard they try, or why no one can love them because of the many lies that have been

told to them. It is the reason why some people become depressed because of bullies and commit suicide because the words come back like demons unwillingly to let go.

That's how powerful your tongue is.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Proverbs 18:21

The wise man Solomon said death and life are in the power of the tongue and they that use it will receive the rewards and consequences of those same words. So what have you been saying? Will the fruit of your words when they have matured be enjoyable or something you would rather not feast on?

What Are You Saying?

I love the book of Proverbs. It contains such depth of wisdom and can practically change your disposition and attitude by reading it like a life handbook. I recommend

that you read it as often as possible, you will notice a change in you as well as in the words you dish out to others.

Let us check what it says about the tongue

The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly: but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness... A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

Proverbs 15:2, 4

Look at that!

The wise use their tongue to dispense knowledge in the direction that they can enjoy the fruits of the tree of life which has wisdom and healing, not just for themselves but also for others.

What have you been saying with your tongue?!

Have the words you have been speaking been bringing life to you and others or death?

Have the words you have been speaking been bringing health and healing to you and others or sickness and frustration?

Have the words you have been speaking been helping people or been destroying them and wounding their spirit?

Now, more than ever is the time to do an appraisal on the words you have been speaking and the results you are experiencing in your life.

Your words form your experiences and your life. Are you okay with your current life state?

The power for that life change is with you, with your thinking, with your confessions and the words you speak to yourself and others.

Whoever guards his mouth and tongue, keeps his soul from troubles.

Proverbs 21:23

What will you now start saying?

How will you now start talking?

Your words have the ability to shape your experiences today and your future outcomes. That is how powerful it is.

How is your life today? Do you like your present circumstance and experience? What have you been saying or not saying?

Negative words have a role to play in your life as well as positive words too. Interestingly, not speaking over your life is still a way you are shaping your life and experiences because it means you are a ready bus-stop for any and everything – good or bad, to stay in.

Today, decide to watch your words, they can affect your thoughts too. If wrong thoughts come up in your heart, you can use your words to change the direction to which your thoughts are going.

9

LOVE AND THINGS

Who does not love Love?

We were made by a love God, we were made for Him to pour His love on us and out of that outflow of His love, and then we can then pour love on others.

“Each gives what each has to give”² is a powerful statement because an empty well can only give you what it has - nothing. It is to the degree you have to the overflow that you can give to others.

People who hate have a lot of hatred in them and that is what they give to others. People who smile often can smile easily to others because that is what they have in abundance.

If you want to give more love to others, your focus should not be on the actions first.

²John C. Maxwell, *Be All You Can Be*, 17.

Your attention should first be on receiving enough love from our love God, loving yourself and that is when you can fully love others with no strings attached.

It is only a whole person that can love others wholly.

Your First Love

Some things are essentials, basic, and the foundation before other things and they should first be settled. Your first love is one of such. Before you start to look for love outside or expect it from people around you, you should settle this in – God loved you and He still loves you.

The Bible is God's love note to you, see what it says:

The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17

... Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn.

Jeremiah 31:3

Like every product, the manufacturer is the one who can tell it what it is, the purpose for which it was created, what it needs to get done and what is the deal-breaker for them. The same with God. He is completely vested in you, in your affairs and your person. He is interested in you like an investor because He knows you are a solid investment where He can pour His resources on and yield god harvest.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

Jeremiah 1:5

No one can love you more than God does, not your parents, not your friends, not even yourself. Before your parents conceived you, He knew you. While you were still an idea, He loved you, He knew all you were and are

capable of doing yet He never said He would love you less.

Long long before you touched this earth, He made provision for you to enjoy freedom from guilt and your warring conscience when you sin. His son, Jesus, came down, lived life with a certain knowing that He had to die not for Himself but for you and I. Who would do that? Who would care enough to make provision for your freedom before you knew you would be imprisoned by your desires that went against every fiber of your conscience and God's Word? God did.

You are worth every drop of blood Jesus spilled on the cross. That is how much love is. Interestingly, this love is a gift, no strings attached. You do not have to do a certain thing to be worthy of it. You do not have to act a certain way to be worthy of it. It was free, paid in full by the One who first loved you.

We are all broken individuals

Broken by sin

*We look at the world around us through that brokenness
Little wonder why many see hurt and pain even in the most
innocent things
It's the reason we seek for cello tapes, temporary things
to fix us
Thinking that it will be enough
But it never is
Because a little movement will reveal the gap
Pour a hot substance in the vessel
After a while, it will begin to leak
Until it all pours out
We are all broken individuals in need of a Savior
In need of the Potter
To break, purify, and remold us back
As whole individuals*

The journey to wholeness starts from the Savior, accepting His love over and over, as many times as it would take until you receive all His love inside your being.

You need the Potter, to show you all the cracks and splits in you and work with Him to fix you until you are whole.

The world needs many whole individuals because only whole individuals have an overflow of love to give to others. It is when you are filled that you can pour out to others.

Accept God's love for you today, it's the first and most important love you need in your life.

You are Worth Loving

Every single part of you is worth loving. The flaws and experience do not matter. There is someone whole who will have the capacity to love you but first, you must be that whole person that loves every single part of you.

Life is in vibes. People will relate to you to the degree of the vibe they get from you. Unfortunately, or rather, fortunately, you cannot pretend on your vibe for so long, it would show underneath the pretense.

The same love you want to receive from someone else is the same love you should pour on yourself.

You want someone to love you with your past mistakes and experiences? Love yourself that way, forgive yourself and anyone who might have hurt you along the way and become whole.

You want someone to look at you and call you beautiful? Look at the mirror, smile at your image and call yourself every sweet name on earth that you can remember.

You want someone to buy you things and take thoughtful actions? Buy yourself gifts, give yourself treats. Get a new dress just because you deserve it. Get a new shade because you did a good job. Take yourself out for lunch just because you need a little loving.

That love you want from someone else, give it to yourself first because you deserve the truest love in the world and that only comes from God and you first.

Your body is a vessel for your purpose. Take care of it. Feed well, dress well, eat well, and exercise often.

Relationships

No man is an island.

God sets the solitary in families...

Psalms 68:6

You may have noticed that God did not create us in isolation. Every person comes through another and is taken care of by one or more people. Even for those who are orphans or have experienced been neglected or unwanted, there is the desire to be with people, to be loved by others, to see that you have a family you call your own.

A family does not necessarily mean those with whom you are related to by blood, it means people you are invested in and they are invested in you too. People you have in your corner and who are on the sidelines cheering you on as you face life, they are the ones who would walk with you when you are afraid, to ensure you do what you want to achieve. That is family.

God has placed you in your own family, and if you feel lonely and alone, you need to go back to your first Love

and ask Him to show you the family He has placed you in. He will begin to bring them around you or you around them, open your heart to be receptive of their love and support.

Significant Other

Our love tank is supposed to first be filled by God and ourselves before any other person. Any other love you get from family, friends or a significant other will feel like a top-up, an additional topping, the icing on an already made cake.

It is like having a car with a fuel tank that is full and the indicator is on F. If you keep pouring after a while it keeps receiving it. That extra is just what it is – extra. Just as you cannot use only the extra fuel to run the car for a long-distance, the same way you cannot run your life with only the love you expect from a significant other.

Your significant other cannot give you all the love that you need, no one can, only God and you can give you the basic love you need for survival.

A man that is well fed will be satisfied when you give him 2 biscuits to eat, but a man that has been hungry for days will not be satisfied by the same. Instead, he may even feel like you have done him evil by giving him what is not enough. The same is true for us in our love relationship.

When we understand, accept and revel in God's love for us and we love ourselves, we become confident of ourselves and that we are loved. So, we will not need the love of others to validate us or make us feel worthy of love because the void has been well filled.

You will not need a guy to make you feel beautiful or a lady to make you feel manly. You are confident in the person called you.

No one is capable of giving you the love only God can offer. No one is capable of filling the space in your heart that is shaped with God.

10

LOSS

Heartbreaks

Heartbreaks are not easy. No one looks forward to it. Interestingly, they do not only happen in love relationships with an ex, but they can also happen with a loved one or even a dream. It can be a tough time or phase and some people never come out of it the same.

Sometimes we are so in love with someone or the idea of a person that they either define how they want to relate with us going forward or we grow to a place where we know the relationship we have with some people will need to change or end.

Life is in cycles and the end of a thing is the beginning of another, we have to open to the next no matter how hard it may be. The new represents change which is a hard thing but not impossible. However hard a heartbreak is, it is time for something new, a different chapter of your life which you must be open and willing to start.

Grief

The loss of a loved one never leaves a person the same way. Things change in ways you may never have anticipated, it is sometimes hard to see the blessings that are present in such a sad time but they are there.

Now we do not want you to be uninformed, believers, about those who are asleep [in death], so that you will not grieve [for them] as the others do who have no hope [beyond this present life]. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again [as in fact He did], even so God [in this same way—by raising them from the dead] will bring with Him those [believers] who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 (AMP)

As God's children, we have hope even after the loss of a dear one. While we will miss them, their smile, their presence, their touch, their thoughtfulness and the

memories will linger for a long time, we have not lost all completely. They have transited from this world as we know it to the presence of our Father where we will all be one day.

I like to imagine it as they going on a long journey and we may not see in a while but we will meet again and recognize each other.

Have you lost a dear one? Take heart, there is still hope. You will meet sometime again. Maybe not so soon.

11

THE BLOOD

The Blood is our vindication. It is the answer to shame and guilt. The Blood is the victory of the saints, it is our badge of honor.

Are you weighed down with past sins, shame and guilt? Do you see yourself as wretched and far from salvation? Do you think that you are irredeemable and lost? The Blood is your answer.

It is your answer to shame and guilt and fear and condemnation and unworthiness and confusion. It is the price that was paid for the redemption of your soul and it is ever available if you will press into it.

So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.

Isaiah 59:19

When guilt rises like a flood that wants to overwhelm you when shame rises and wants to drown you, your answer is the Blood. It is your answer and your vindication. It is your victory over the enemy's assault. It is your salvation!

Look to the Blood. Look to the One who died to save you. Run to His arms. Call on Him. His Blood is available for you. His Blood is what makes you worthy, worthy of God's love, worthy of God's goodness, worthy of the best of things, worthy to take the next gulp of air into your lungs, worthy to lift those arms in worship.

His Blood makes you worthy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aanuoluwapo is a writer, blogger and creative. She has published over 100 pieces on her blog and shared over 150 inspiring thoughts with the hashtag #lifetalkswithAan.

In the past 5 years, she has been compelled to use her writing gift as a channel through which lives can be transformed and influenced.

More than any title can describe her, she's Abba's delight with the sole purpose of using her different life expression for the Kingdom.



**BOOK
TWEEN
TY-1** Every young
person's guide
to adulthood