EVERYDAY IS CHRISTMAS

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The Journey Beyond the Manger

TIMOTHY ADEREMI ©2017

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BOOK REVIEW

In times like this where Christmas celebrations are big and bold and where the celebration is all about merriment and fun. This book is very timely. It is a reminder to us all not to get carried away and forget that the only reason we have Christmas is because Christ came. He is the REASON for the season.

Deroju Amokomowo

What constitutes Christmas has raised much dust for a long time now in Christian circle. Many Christians who see Christmas as a special day of celebration can hardly tell why Christmas is special. But why would Christians celebrate if he/she does not know the basis for doing so? Where purpose of a thing is not known abuse of that thing becomes inevitable, according to Dr. Myles Monroe.

I am very delighted to have been invited to write a foreword to this very important work which has been written by someone who knows

Christmas and who has devoted his time to the discovery of a better understanding of the subject of Christmas. The facts are evident in the biblical manner in which the book has been set out and in which empirical assertions have been made.

The author, Pastor Timothy Aderemi who with the precision of a management scientist, which he is, cut to the heart of the matter. This book is a medium to propagate the truth for people eagerly seeking the truth in today's Christianity that is repetitively embracing extraneous ideas.

Engineer Bode Araba

Lekki Peninsula, Nigeria.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Special thanks to my mum, Lady Evangelist Lydia Adunola, amongst all that you gave up for me which I am forever grateful for, growing up you didn't only lead me to church, you also introduced me to the God of the bible. Heaven will reward you. Also to my amazing brothers: Gbadebo, Peter and Philipage Aderemi, we have been through it all but God sent His Son Jesus Christ at Christmas just for us you know!

I acknowledge the hundreds of preachers and Sunday school teachers who have allowed me learn a few things on the subject of Christmas. This book is possible because of their insight and perspectives.

"Everyday is Christmas, The Journey beyond the Manger" is a collage of the many Christmases I have witnessed, and the events that have unfolded, year in, year out.

Life is a journey, and it starts from the womb to the tomb, and ends

in either heaven or hell.

Firstly, I am here to appreciate the God of all wisdom, who saw something in me that I couldn't see; He prophesied over my life and after many years, the word eventually came to pass fulfilling God's purpose. I thank God for the breath and insight, for the light from every verse, and for Jesus my blessed saviour.

I can't but thank the following people for their courage, support and guidance in making this project a success: Agbabiaka Emmanuel – Zonal Outreach Coordinator, Opeyemi Araba – Graphic Designer, Don Azubuike and Kelechi Anunibe your inspirational words were so helpful!

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To my incredible editors; Roli Wilkey, Yvonne Awosanya-Adefajo and Stacy Stanley-Ugbeda, you added colour to this project, what an amazing gift of God you are. God sends people into other people's lives. Thank God I met you and your families.

My mentors and parents: Pastors Godman & Bolarinwa Akinlabi (Lead Pastors, The Elevation Church), God's wisdom over your life is very contagious and I thank you for being great coaches. Thank You!

To my wife of many years and still counting, Rejoice Aderemi and my son, Samuel: Life is about giving; you both, my precious gifts from God, gave up so much to make this dream to bless humanity a reality. Because of you, I never lack for consistent, constant encouragement. Thank you so much! DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the God who loved the world so much, He sent his begotten Son to us to save us from our sins. Without you Jesus, there won't be any Christmas. You revealed all these lessons to me. Thank You Jesus. Everyday is Christmas is also dedicated to everyone who earnestly desire the next level in God for his/her life. Shalom.

FOREWORD

Everyday is Christmas, A Journey beyond the Manger, is a beautiful journey to into the actual purpose and intent of Christmas, Timothy has wittingly burrowed the word of God to give direction and meaning to this age long celebration, capturing vital lessons and providing insights of the true meaning of the season.

What is the real meaning of Christmas?

Is it the gifts under the tree, the lights on the windows, the cards in the mail, jollof rice, turkey dinners with family and friends, stockings hanging in the living room, and shouts of "Merry Christmas" Is this really Christmas? I remember while growing up, I used to look forward to attending the school carols to sing songs I didn't quite understand, since I wasn't a Christian then, and visiting my Christian friends at home during the Yuletide to enjoy Christmas goodies and get fascinated by the glittering decor.

The story of Christmas is not just a story but a mystery. With this book, Timothy has done a great job to unravel this mystery in a simple way, bringing it down to practical applications for daily living and giving nuggets that can propel you into destiny.

For many, Christmas is the time to think of Jesus Christ as a baby in a manger. While the birth of Christ is a special and miraculous event, it isn't the primary focus. This book deals extensively with the central truth of the Christmas story in nine important lessons, giving it a well-rounded and significant perspective.

I congratulate Timothy for this admirable work. This is a handbook for everyone. Read this book and Christmas becomes more than just a holiday, but a time for miracles, life-changing moments of reflection, comfort, and transformation; and please get a copy for someone, and it could be the best Christmas gift they would ever receive.

Godman Akinlabi

Lagos, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

THE JOURNEY TO THE MANGER

I had an experience on 23rd December 2007, which marked a turning point in my life and that of my family.

I woke up that Sunday morning, with a strong urge to attend a different church from my home church and so I decided to visit a church in my neighbourhood. En-route, the bus I boarded had a flat tyre, and as is a very common scene with Lagos commuters, passengers started requesting that their fares be refunded.

Right in the midst of this pandemonium, the Holy Spirit asked me to look straight ahead and then I saw a huge influx of people heading towards a particular building. Taking a closer look, I saw a bill board with a large caption: "Daystar Christian Centre."

This was quite unlike what I was familiar with, and I thought to myself – what manner of church would have a name like this? It was a rather

unusual title for a church, as at the time, I had always believed every church must append the label "CHURCH" to her name.

I asked one of the passengers who appeared calm despite the bus situation, and he replied: it's actually a church. Out of curiosity I strayed into Daystar Christian Centre that day.

It was the Sunday right before Christmas. Pastor Godman Akinlabi preached that day. I listened aptly to every word. His Christmas message was totally different from the conventional Christmas messages I had heard, and he narrated the birth of Jesus Christ in practical terms. He charged the congregation to not only 'Grow Old, but to Grow Up.' He further stressed that, the Jesus we celebrate during Christmas was born in the manger but refused to remain in the manger.

An altar call was made and I rededicated my life again that day and it was the beginning of an interesting journey.

My journey is quite similar to that of the wise men from the East that visited Jesus.

They went all the way from their familiar territory in the East to Jerusalem to worship the child Jesus whose star they had sighted, and they relied on the direction of a majestic star to take them to their unfamiliar destination. What a glorious adventure!

They came because they saw, and they came that they might worship.

Unlike Herod, they were no kings, but mere men. Humble men. It was in humility that they were able to draw near to God and get some revelation from Him; for indeed, God guides the meek in judgement

and teaches His ways to the humble. (Psalm 25:9)

Their revelation in the East could have been wasted had they stayed back to argue about it, but they took some steps forward and eventually progressed as the star led them.

Arriving Jerusalem, they met Herod. He was a king enrobed in royalty, but they recognized that he was not the one they sought. Herod was popular, but not the particular. Had the wise men been carried away by the glory of Herod, they would have been mistaken and missed their mission.

So, they pressed further until they found the real King whom they sought; and they offered both their presents and their worship.

This would go on to be the most significant event of their lives: to offer worship to the Saviour King! They did it once in Jerusalem, but they might as well have learnt to do it all their lives.

The Scribes searched the records to give them directions, but never progressed from Herod's palace. Perhaps, they were too carried away with the facts they didn't gather enough faith to make the journey.

They knew the place of the Messiah's birth, but were unaware of the timing.

Sometimes, wisdom does not reward the wise, as an Irish proverb puts it, 'The believer is happy. The doubter is wise.'

Of course, I speak here particularly with regards to scepticism which hinders rather than help.

It is good to query things, and hence, find possibilities for a better outcome. But, oh! how our human wisdom often robs us of much happiness that we could have enjoyed.

Today, there are many twisted facts about Christmas that people don't even know what to believe anymore. And they allow their too much scepticism to rob them of the joy of such a sacred celebration.

For example, we know that wise men from the East visited the child Jesus, but who numbered them?

Matthew didn't, neither did Luke. But we have been taught from cradle that 'three' wise men visited Jesus. Now, the argument is everywhere about the number of the wise men.

Another argument that has long stood is the date of Jesus' birth. And seeing that the actual date is not known, nor does the period that it is celebrated correspond logically in any way, some have done away with celebrating Christmas.

To put it simply, we have wrestled with facts and figures, but refused to press on in faith towards fulfilment.

Interestingly, most of our doubts have been erected by our own machinations. My best guess is that people numbered the wise men according to the gifts presented to the child Jesus.

The more we doubt, the more we doubt. The more we believe, the more we believe. It is our mind-set that determines our life's state.

A mind purposed to worship does not need too much fact, but it

will surely find God – like the wise men and the woman at the well of Sychar – even if it has to do so by surrendering its reasoning to ascend the mount of faith.

As we progress in Christian pilgrimage, we need to grow up, rather than just growing old. Let us leave arguments about dates and records to the Scribes. No amount of knowledge of those things will help the accuracy of our worship. It will neither make us holy nor happy.

To celebrate Christmas to is worship the Saviour King. Whosoever will not celebrate it does not have to stop us.

We are reflecting on the significance of His birth and the importance it holds for our lives, as we find our life's meaning in the meaning of His own life. This is what worship is about, and it is a lifetime adventure.

Indeed, a life without meaning is not worth living. So also, a feast without meaning is not worth celebrating.

This book is about finding meaning in the birth of Christ in order to find meaning for your life.

It opens you up to a world of meaning in Christmas and helps you discover timeless truths that should be adapted for purposeful living within time.

As we examine different aspects about Christmas, trust God for a meek heart to be led all the way by His Spirit. He led the wise men to the manger, and from the manger. Except He leads you, you will be trapped in the letters rather than threshing them to discover His truths and the message for your 'now'. Beware!

My personal desire is that everyone reading this book will have a fresh perspective, shift their focus from the event of Christmas, to fulfilling destiny.

So, once you have buckled your heart, you can take a free ride through. You will surely be glad you did.

Welcome on board!

Timothy Aderemi

ONE

PROPHECY

God loves to speak backwards forward

We must understand that God's word travels in echoes. No matter how long or how far, God's word will bounce off the wall to hit you.

For example, in *John 11*, we read closely about how Jesus responded to Lazarus' death. He said: "*let's go and wake him up from sleep.*" Jesus spoke to Lazarus but He directed the word straight to the tomb where Lazarus was laid; and when the dead body reached the tomb, Jesus had to activate the word he had spoken initially.

When Jesus called unto Lazarus for that activation, His words travelled in echoes, bounced off the walls, and eventually hit Lazarus. No matter how long it has taken, as long as God has said it concerning you, it will definitely come to pass!

UNDERSTANDING THE APPOINTED TIME

Through visions, dreams and prophecies, God spoke to men various times about the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Perhaps, the very first of such came at Eden when He spoke about the Seed of the woman. He yet spoke to Abraham, Moses and many other Old Testament prophets who heralded precisely the name, the place and tribe, as well as the mission of Jesus' birth.

And just after Israel had been without a true prophet to bring the word of God to them, John came forth and then followed Jesus.

The Israelites had lost track of the appointed time. As far as they were concerned, they were expecting a Messiah, but He didn't have to come in their time. So, looked away from the present and looked forward to the future.

PROPHECY 23

Slowly, but surely, the prophecy was fulfilled. He came. In their own time. At their own place. For their own cry. But they knew Him not!

The Scriptures say in *Habakkuk 2:3* "the vision is yet for an appointed time."

"Vision is foresight with insight based on hindsight."

-George Barna,

What vision has God given you in times past? What vision is He giving you currently? It will surely come to pass.

Could it even be that this Christmas is your appointed time?

In case you have not heard of them before, let me introduce you to two Greek words in the Bible translated as 'time'. They are Chronos and Kairos.

Chronos is the personification of time, and it governs linear time. Kairos, on the other hand, signifies a proper time for action. Kairos means the appointed time in the purpose of God.

What is your disposition towards the appointed time?

What do you do while you are waiting for the appointed time? Do you wait like someone expecting a train or are you just impatient and eager to proceed to your destination?

Prophecies are futuristic in nature, and it takes watching, praying and patience to lay hold on their reality. But once God has said it, rest assured it will come to pass.

Of all men in Israel at time, only few people knew the Messiah before His birth and prepared to receive Him: Joseph and Mary were a category, so also Simeon and Anna.

Little wonder, He came first to them at His birth and dedication respectively.

At the appointed time, you shall see the salvation of God!

DO YOU BELIEVE?

It is one thing to hear, but yet another to believe what you hear, especially when it is spoken by God Himself.

We hear with our ears but we believe with our hearts.

Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. We also ought to follow his example of faith.

Mary believed the word of God spoken to her by Angel Gabriel and was called blessed.

In **Amos 3:7**, we read, "Surely, the Lord does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets."

But guess what? Jesus did not do many miracles in His own neighbourhood because of the unbelief of His people. He however did much more in surrounding regions.

Unbelief only hinders us from tapping into God's faithfulness.

Perhaps, this holiday period is a time for sober reflection. It is time to take stock and fill our minds with memories of all that God has said in the past concerning you.

Write them down, meditate on them and believe.

IN THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY

Jesus was born to fulfil prophecies and so were you. His life was prophetic, and He fulfilled a divine script. The gospels were sprinkled with reflections on the prophecies of old as He fulfilled them in the New Testament era.

Joel 2:28 says a lot about the concept of prophecy. One of the agents of prophecy fulfilment is God's Spirit. It's quite interesting that many prophets had spoken a lot about Jesus' job description even before His birth.

As a Son, Jesus was given to us as a gift. Like we see in His life, one proof of your son-ship is in your ability to solve problems, and you can only walk in that realm if only you are filled with the Holy Spirit and if you remain under His influence.

WE HEAR
WITH OUR
EARS BUT
WE BELIEVE
WITH OUR
HEARTS.

Now is the time for the fulfilment of long time prophecies, and the world waits for the earnest manifestations of the sons and daughters of God. The world awaits your manifestation! Every invention that has blessed humanity has always come from God as He modelled in Gen 1:26. He created the tree and not furniture; light, and not the bulb. He left room for man to carry on the creation assignment.

Every of man's invention is simply a response to a Prophecy. Lagos, the Mega City, was once a vision and an idea.

God needed Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Babatunde Raji Fashola. First, He used Bola Ahmed Tinubu to start Alliance for Democracy, Action Congress .

As planned by design, after Fashola's tenure had expired, God needed another man to carry on the assignment to fulfil His prophecy for Lagos State, hence the introduction of another man – Akinwunmi Ambode.

Are you fulfilling what God has said concerning you?

WALKING INTO PROPHECY

Prophecy and the miraculous don't usually carry a name tag. So,

how do you work yourself in and out of its fulfilment? The answer is simple: put yourself on the schedule.

The woman with the Alabaster box, the woman with issue of blood, as well as Joseph and Jacob are examples of people who walked into fulfilment of prophecies.

EVERY
OF MAN'S
INVENTION
IS SIMPLY A
RESPONSE TO
A PROPHECY.

Esau and Jacob both had great destinies and a future, such that they are referred to as "Nations", but Esau lost that which would have keyed him into divine blessings.

You can only enjoy God's grace to the extent of the light you have of God's word and His prophecies. That is why you must seek to know, and know to take responsibility.

To work into prophecy, you must have the right heart, be different and be amongst the right association or company. You must have an understanding and a right interpretation of information. You must have done some research about the prophecy, to discover what its implication is, and you decide then to either work in or out of it. E.g. Mary, Judas Iscariot, Rahab, Ruth, David.

THE STATE OF YOUR HEART AND MIND

How you react and embrace words of prophecy speaks a lot about the state of your heart. What you meditate on determines your responses when God shows up at your doorstep.

You are quite familiar with what happens in a car or aeroplane when passengers sense danger. That kind of experience often reveals the state of heart of those on board as they phrases like "the Blood of Jesus", "Holy Ghost Fire", "Yeppa", "Ayelala", "Alihamdudulahi" etc.

Most often, life situations, amplify our innermost thoughts.

Hebrews 13:15 says "by Him, therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name." You can only offer what you have inside; God help you, the content is full

of regret, murmuring, etc. remember you can only give what you have. Let the joy of the Lord fill your heart during Christmas.

PROPHECY AND THE
MIRACULOUS DON'T
USUALLY CARRY A NAME
TAG. SO, HOW DO YOU WORK
YOURSELF IN AND OUT OF ITS
FULFILMENT? THE ANSWER
IS SIMPLE: PUT YOURSELF ON
THE SCHEDULE.

To walk into prophecy, this Christmas and beyond, your heart has to be in the right state. How can you get your heart and mind set the way it should be?

WORKING YOUR HEART AND MINDSET INTO SHAPE!

Here is a list suggesting of things you can do as you decide to start working on your mind set and your ideas this Christmas.

Change your mentality or attitude. Phil 4:8

Be sure that your mind-set is not hindering you from embracing what God has said, or what He is doing at the moment.

Get your perspective right. *Habakkuk 3:17-19*

How you see determines what you see. Trust God to help you see correctly. Expose your mind to His word, so that your perspective can be transformed.

STOP, START, REVIEW.

Consistently take time to evaluate what you are doing and what results you are getting. This is how to improve your walk and work.

IET THE
JOY OF
THE IORD
FILL YOUR
HEART
DURING
CHRISTMAS.

Increase your capacity and trust God for relevant solutions.

You can afford to keep doing things the same way. To increase your capacity, you have to develop yourself in various areas. Become more competent in order to do more and achieve more.

Act in Faith. Position yourself – identify your sycamore tree.

In the Bible, Zacchaeus heard Jesus was coming to town and he knew that he would be lost in the crowd and decided to position himself properly so that he could see the Saviour and the Saviour could see him, so he climbed the sycamore tree.

There are Sycamore trees all around us that we need to climb to enable us see opportunities and for opportunities to see us.

Jesus sighted Zacchaeus amidst the crowd because Zacchaeus climbed

the Sycamore tree. Some of those Sycamore trees available in this age are not limited to additional degree(s), great mentors, personal vision, good relationships etc.

The Sycamore tree created a clear line of vision for Zacchaeus. It helped him rise above the crowd and see the Lord clearly. It placed him in the right position for the invitation that would follow. Jesus told him to come down for he was coming to his house! Imagine the thrill. For us, the sycamore tree is a symbol of that place in our own lives which enables us to have a clear vision of Jesus.

Place a heavy demand on God's word to produce result in the years to come.

The fulfilment of prophecy precipitates a new beginning. Stay on the emphasis on God's word and hold on to it until you see the results that you seek.

IN A NUTSHELL

Every man/woman must live out God's intent for their lives written from the foundation of the earth just as Jesus came to fulfil age long prophecy. There is so much written about us in the Scriptures. There is much more God wants to disclose to us. Let us search out His word and work them into fulfilment in our lives.

GOD'S DIMENSION OF CHRIST "GO TO THE ANTS"

hen we X-ray Isaiah 9:7b, we discover that Christ represents God's wisdom and power.

God's power is always wrought in the atmosphere of the ridiculous. Total reliance is the basic requirements to bring God's prophecies to fulfilment.

God's wisdom is not always complicated, His ways are simple. Power becomes effective when mixed with God's wisdom.

MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S POWER

I once led a prayer session with the leadership of our church and this scripture *1 Corinthians 1:24* "but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." came alive to me that if we understood how and when we need to apply wisdom to get tangible results, we would not exert power unnecessarily.

People who are blessed with only power may get a level of results as power in itself is destructive if not properly used. You need a combination of wisdom and power to achieve impact.

When God manifests His power, we see healing and miracles; and when He shows us His wisdom, we see a manifestation of strategy, structured occurrence and teaching. For example, in the story of feeding the 5,000, Jesus asked the people to sit in groups. (Mark 6:39). I believe it is easier to share supplies to where everyone involved is organised as opposed to when everyone is pressing to get something at the same time and thereby resulting in chaos or causing havoc.

What kind of order have you put around your life, marriage, finances, spiritual development? "Anytime and anywhere God perceives order, increase is inevitable" Act 6:1-7.

THE SHOW OF GOD'S WISDOM

Creating the whole world in sequence is a clear show of God's wisdom, but allowing Pharaoh and his avengers drown in the red seas is a show of God's power. Power and wisdom are inseparable.

Here are a few examples of the show of God's wisdom:

- Moses stepping out into the red sea.
- Asking Noah to build an ark when it had never rained before.
- For cleansing, he had to have a cool shower in the pool of Jordan (very muddy, unclean pool) not even Oriental or Eko Hotel & Suites swimming pool. 2 Kings 5:10, John 9:11
- Do you know that the same doubting Thomas we all talk about took the gospel of Christ to India, and many people got saved?

POWER
BECOMES
EFFECTIVE
WHEN
MIXED
WITH GOD'S
WISDOM.

Peter who denied Jesus three times, yet Jesus handed over the early church to him.

- A virgin, young lady that didn't have any child bearing experience was favoured to give birth to the Saviour of the world.
- David stripped himself of all the presidential armour to fight Goliath of Gath "ISIS/ Boko Haram" of his time. Yet with 5 stones he won the battle, God used that experience as an opportunity to validate his life assignment.

"Almost every problem is pregnant with opportunities, problems are doorway to new possibilities" – **Timothy Aderemi**

What then is wisdom?

Wisdom is the quality or state of being wise; knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action; sagacity, discernment or insight.

PEOPLE WHO ARE BLESSED
WITH ONLY POWER MAY
GET A LEVEL OF RESULTS
AS POWER IN ITSELF IS
DESTRUCTIVE IF NOT
PROPERLY USED. YOU NEED A
COMBINATION OF WISDOM
AND POWER TO ACHIEVE
IMPACT.

The biblical definition of wisdom is the fear of the Lord as that's where it begins and God is the source. The earthly wisdom is really no wisdom at all because "the wisdom of this world is folly with God" (1 Cor 3:19). True wisdom is found in obedience to God: fearing Him and His Word; in the Word of God - the Bible; and by praying or asking for it. All other ground is sinking sand.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVES TO WISDOM

Wisdom is always crying out, seeking who will recognize and apply it. God uses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. Proverbs 8:34; 1 Cor 2:9.

If you ever find yourself struggling with quality decision making, it's a pointer that wisdom is in short supply.

Ecclesiastes 10:10 stresses the essence of godly direction as a result of divine wisdom.

EXPRESSIONS OF GOD'S WISDOM AND POWER IN THE LIVES OF MEN

Below are different expression of how God displayed his Wisdom and power both with biblical references and men & women of our time.

• Abraham

God asked him to leave his kindred and go to a land He will show him, to offer his son for a sacrifice following an instruction from God. *Genesis 12:1-12, Genesis 22: 1-19*

• Lot & Abraham

Abraham allowed Lot to choose inheritance before him. *Genesis* 13: 7-16

Noah

Built an ark based on instructions from God despite the fact that it had never rained in the land prior to that time. He had no reference. *Genesis 6: 1-22*

Moses

Though left for dead; it was Moses that eventually led the Israelites out of bondage to the promised land. *Exodus 2:1-10*

• Naomi & Ruth

Against all shattered hopes, Ruth followed her mother-in-law and she met Boaz, and by that connection, she became a member of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. *Ruth* 1:15-22, *Ruth* 4: 13-22, *Matthew* 1:5-6

• Thomas Deimos

Doubting Thomas through his belief in the resurrected Christ took the gospel to India. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Thomas_Church,_Palayoor#Legend

• Mary

A virgin, very inexperienced was a delicate thing to experiment. Trusting the Saviour of the world, God's begotten in the care of a young lady who has not even had sex before, No D & C experience, etc is a dangerous risk to take. *Luke 1: 26-28*

• Pastor E. A Adeboye

Left City Centre to a bush to build a city based on an instruction from God. RCCG, Redemption Camp

- Bishop David Oyedepo
 Left the City to plant a
 church in the outskirts
 of a town. Canaan Land
 Otta, Nigeria
- Peter
 Using a Lying and Denying disciple to build the church of Jesus Christ. Matthew

ANYTIME
AND
ANYWHERE
GOD
PERCEIVES
ORDER,
INCREASE IS
INEVITABLE"
ACT 6:1-7

RISK VS FAITH

16:18

Is there a correlation between risk taking and faith taking?

"When you act in faith, it will never make sense to you but a step of faith will eventually lead to a walk of fame" - **Timothy Aderemi**

To illustrate this point, I will share a story of a Christian sister of mine.

Ayodeji Oluyemisi Megbope, is the CEO of No Left Overs Nig. Ltd – a full scale catering outfit which started with a take-off capital of N1, 000 but today has an annual turn-over that runs into millions of naira.

She is one of the first women worldwide to benefit from the 10,000

Women Initiative – set up to empower 10,000 under-serviced women worldwide with formal business skills and education.

Today she is an ambassador of the 10,000 Women Initiative; she has graced numerous local and international platforms and has thus become an inspiration to many.

Oluyemisi started by selling Moin-Moin. At the time she started selling Moin-Moin, it was not with the intention to start a business. She had gotten to a situation where she had little or nothing to fall back on. It was a coincidence. She had cooked Moin-Moin earlier that day and her sister-in-law came to visit later.

Her sister-in-law tasted the Moin-Moin and on her request, Oluyemisi made some Moin-Moin for her for a thousand naira. For the next couple of months, she increased her turn over to an average of N40, 000.

She had been reading and listening to business people, and had learned that the best way to achieve success in business is to have a high turnover.

So the question that popped to her mind was: where could she go to make her products/services available to a wider audience? So she went to her last place of work.

It was a very humbling experience for her. She had resigned from that job and when she was leaving she had told everyone that cared to listen that she was going to open her own school.

To return to the same school and hawk Moin-Moin was very humbling for her, but she had to do it because she prayed about it and knew that this was where she needed to be. And it just opened her up to a wider market, and like they say, the rest is history. Oluyemisi had faith in God, and she took a walk of faith.

The fact that Mary was inexperienced suggests that she had to totally rely and depend on God all through the conception, birth and upbringing processes of Jesus Christ.

Abraham was asked to leave his people and head out to a place God will show him. If he had the address, he may not have needed God, so he had to keep asking "where did God go?" so he could follow Him closely.

Endeavour not to go on that journey except you get the roadmap from God or you allow Him to show you the way all through. You can't run your life with your sixth sense. In the words of Sam Adeyemi, "Your brain is too small to navigate and direct the route of your life."

As we celebrate Christmas again, are there critical life decisions you need to make even at the twilight to a new year?

I trust that God will give you grace to take the right step in Jesus Name, Amen.

There is a huge difference between human wisdom and Godly wisdom. It would have been easier to have the son of God be given birth to in Lagoon Hospital, or at St. Nicholas of our time, but with God's wisdom in display, Jesus was born in a manger.

Jesus is the good shepherd no wonder he was born in the manger, I believe there is a relationship between the place of His Birth and His Assignment. The manger connotes that no life experience is ever wasted,

charge yourself to realize, analyse and learn from those experiences.

YOUR STRENGTH IS IN YOUR GOD-GIVEN STORY

It's not a function of the circumstances of your birth – you may not even have had the privilege of a naming Ceremony – but the end will justify the means; which is unequivocally your Purpose for existence. You don't find your purpose, you discover it!

The strength of every successful individual is in their God-given stories.

"You sold me but God sent me" can only come from a regenerated mind full of God's love, who finds himself in a Joseph's kind of situation.

The circumstance of Jesus' birth was meant to be the most ridiculous, but it turned out to become the most celebrated ever. It will remain relevant till He (Jesus) returns.

"YOUR BRAIN IS TOO SMALL TO NAVIGATE AND DIRECT THE ROUTE OF YOUR LIFE."

I trust that as you focus on the essence of Christmas, your story which might not have been interesting thus far will become a phenomenon in Jesus Name, amen.

The celebration of the birth of Jesus has moved from just an event to

becoming a phenomenon and an enterprise. A lot of people make a fortune just marking or observing his birthday. Christmas becomes the point of discussion every December 25th.

I believe God wants to make your life an amazement this Christmas, and He wants to give you a new identity.

YOU DON'T FIND YOUR PURPOSE, YOU DISCOVER IT!

"If you detest the ridiculous, you have robbed yourself of the miraculous"

- Timothy Aderemi

TOTAL OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

Sometime in 2010, the Lord asked me to resign from my job with Guaranty Trust Bank, GTBank to follow Pastor Godman Akinlabi to start The Elevation Church in 2010, and the story and experience has been phenomenal.

The golden Question is: What ridiculous instruction have you received from God lately?

Wisdom is the ability to respond and recognize the people you need to honour and obey and know when you need to do this. God's wisdom is not a respecter of age, race, colour etc. He gives His wisdom at will to those who will ask for it.

Mary & Zechariah were confronted with the same message (Give birth

to a child), same messenger (The Angel) however their responses weren't the same to the message and the messenger and eventually they

have different consequences as a result of their experience.

After the angel had delivered Mary's message to her, she accepted in belief and replied expectantly; "be unto me according to your word." After Zechariah received the word from the angel, his reply was riddled with doubt as he questioned the messenger of God: "How could these things be?"

"IF YOU
DETEST THE
RIDICULOUS,
YOU HAVE
ROBBED
YOURSELF
OF THE
MIRACULOUS"

WATCH OUT FOR UNBELIEF!

Although he had been obviously praying for his wife's conception, Zechariah received God's message of hope, yet he doubted God and was punished for it.

On the other hand, Mary wasn't preparing for a baby at that time yet she had a clean slate and believed whatsoever God told her she had to believe.

It may not be your turn or time of favour, but when God turns to you, then it becomes your turn and time.

WISDOM OF RIGHT APPLICATION

You require wisdom for right application: David learnt how to throw stones, play the stringed instrument (Harp). David understood that killing Goliath would require his catapulting skill rather than music; and the evil spirit would flee from Saul's life without catapult but just by mere string instrument.

I encourage that you ask God to open your eyes in this Christmas period to identify the skill and talent that will bring your Goliath down.

It is good to identify your Goliath. What is your Goliath? Is it poverty, sin or fear etc? You will not approach them in your name but in the name of Yahweh. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runs into it and finds safety.

I once remember the story of a young Nigerian man, who was living in the United Kingdom and suddenly God told him to relocate to Nigeria. At the time he relocated, the economy was in shambles, things were very rough initially and the thought of returning to the United Kingdom crossed his mind many times. In spite of the pressure to return to the United Kingdom by his wife, he held on to God's word and just at the nick of time, God came through for him.

He applied for the post of a junior executive in an organisation, and despite being over qualified; he decided to take the role. He made a presentation at the office and one of the Executive Directors of the organisation was pleased with his delivery and decided to create a new department for him. He was given an official car, his salary was raised every six months and he is currently managing the company's portfolio, whose assets are worth billions of dollars!

World's wisdom will tell him to go back to the UK while God's wisdom says relocate to Nigeria.

Are you sensitive to hear from God this Christmas? When he speaks to you, whether it makes sense or not, will you obey? What are you doing with the instructions you have received so far?

There is wisdom for living and life. Lately, have you asked God to bless your perspectives?

WALKING IN WISDOM AND POWER THIS CHRISTMAS

This Christmas, we need to challenge ourselves; if Jesus grew in wisdom,

stature and favour with God and Man, then we should not be an exemption.

People increase in age, weight, height, but do you know that you can also increase in wisdom?

To walk in wisdom and power this Christmas, here are some of the things we require:

Walk with the Wise – Keep the right company; a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Sow seeds – Sow sacrificially to God and He will respond to you

TT MAY
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just like He did for Solomon. You can also sow into the life of wise people all around you.

Read voraciously. Readers are leaders. In Hebrews 10:7, the scriptures say 'Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God'. How well do you know yourself and what God has designed for you? You also gain wisdom feeding from others'.

Study God's word. This also helps gain and increase in wisdom. Revelation from God's word shines light on your path.

Observe wise people and glean wisdom. In the words of Godman Akinlabi, "assumption is the lowest level of knowledge."

IN A NUTSHELL

This is showcasing how God displayed His Wisdom though viewed by men as foolishness, it also talks about the wisdom side and the power of God and how we can leverage on both for a successful living.

Have you ever imagined that God could have made Jesus appear from heaven to the earth the same way He ascended which is a display of God's power? Rather, He allowed wisdom prevail by allowing Jesus to come through a woman, a mere human being.

If His introduction were to be what I explained above, many may not have believed Him because most of them will doubt Him.

Remember That...

- Wisdom suggests that we lean on the God of all Wisdom.
- God's wisdom often appears like foolishness to men, but the end justifies the means.
- This inseparable combination of the Power and the Wisdom are needed to succeed in any endeavour.
- *To access the tr*ue gift of Christmas, you must walk in God's wisdom and power.

THREE HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

In some parts of the world people prefer to say "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas."

I wonder why there is an increasing need to eliminate Christ from Christmas. There will never have been Christmas without Christ. Christmas is not just a holiday break; Christ is still at the centre of it all through the entire season and we celebrate His person during and after Christmas.

THE MEANING OF CHRIST

Life's journey starts with a cry and ends with a deep breath. The only person that can make Christmas meaningful is the man upstairs "Jesus, the Christ."

What does Christ mean?

The Anointed One.

A life without a touch from the Anointed One would literally end in shambles. The anointing breaks the yoke.

Christmas is a great opportunity to allow you append super to your natural, and you become super-natural!

A man's first cry is heard on the day he is born, and his last breath is taken on the day he dies. The gap that exists between his first cry (FC) and his last breath (LB) should be filled with Jesus Christ (JC). It's only Jesus Christ that can give your life a meaning and He is everything in-between.

Let's use this formula to remember this invaluable truth:

Your First Cry (FC) to your Last Breath (LB) = Jesus Christ (JC)

Hence, FC <> LB = JC

A REORIENTATION OF CHRISTMAS

I recount my growing days up in the country side in Efon-Alaaye, Ekiti State. On Boxing Day, the day after Christmas, all the children in the neighbourhood would engage in a contest. Each of us would list the places we had visited and the number of pounded yam wraps we consumed on Christmas day!

That was how I celebrated every Christmas until I moved into Lagos. Then, on one wonderful day in December 2007, strayed into Daystar Christian Centre where Pastor Godman Akinlabi preached a Christmas message that gave me hope and challenged my age long mind-set about the season.

Immediately after the sermon, I had a reorientation that changed my life forever; the message of Christmas birthed hope, strength and life in me.

The twilight to Christmas comes with a visitation.

"What is important must not be at the mercy of what matter least" -Godman Akinlabi.

MAKING AN IMPACT AT CHRISTMAS

What is most important is how you leave the stage not how you came on. Do you currently have a job? Are you currently in a relationship? Are you a member of a church? Give your best such that your exit will be so felt.

Do any of these names ring a bell? Jesus Christ, Simon Peter, Kenneth Copeland, Dr. Myles Monroe, Bishop Idahosa, David Oyedepo, Pastor E. A. Adeboye, Aliko Dangote, Mark Zuckerberg, Richard Branson, Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, Sam Adeyemi, Godman Akinlabi, Steven Furtick, Timothy Aderemi permit me to include my name and you can also include your name.

This is not an exhaustive list. These are people who came on the stage or scene of life and made impact and some are still making impact.

Long before Mary was visited by the angel, she had read through scripture, and was well versed on all the prophecies about the Messiah. I believe that when the angel approached her, she responded appropriately; the story about the coming Messiah wasn't strange and this helped her response.

RESPONDING TO THE CALL FOR IMPACT

God is always sending us ministering spirits; it is up to us how we respond.

Mary pondered on the message and not so much on the messenger.

Has God spoken to you lately? You need to document and ponder on what God is saying to you.

What does it mean to ponder? To ponder is to think about something carefully, especially before making a decision or arriving at a conclusion.

Christmas is a good time to ruminate, ponder and meditate on God's word and His promises to you.

"WHAT IS
IMPORTANT
MUST NOT
BE AT THE
MERCY
OF WHAT
MATTER
LEAST"

Although every human being is created for a purpose, sadly, some die without fulfilling their purpose. The reasons many don't maximize their potential varies and are not limited to: lack of direction, wrong association, being at the right place at the wrong time, or being at the right place with the wrong people.

The angel told Mary that she was carrying the saviour of the world and her next task was to ponder on and meditate over the message she had received.

If she had been born in this time, I can imagine what her Facebook/ Instagram /Twitter pages would have been reading. Your word have I hid in my heart that I will not sin against you.

At some point she knew her identity had changed so Mary had to reflect on the weight of what she was carrying. Do you have a clue of what God has deposited in you?

WHO IS YOUR DREAM MIDWIFE?[1]

Who is midwifing your dream?

The seed inside of you is asking, calling for a corresponding signal to catch fire.

Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, who at that time was also carrying another great seed of God (John the Baptist). As the women saluted each other, the seed inside Elizabeth leaped for the first time, just to confirm the angel's message.

There are some people you will meet who God will use to give voice to and amplify God's gift, seed and babies in your bosom.

You can't be friends with everyone.

Deep calls unto the deep, iron sharpens iron. Not everybody is your friend and confidante. Not every partnership is your partnership. Abraham could have avoided the land conflicts had he not brought Lot on the journey with him.

We need grace to identify where we are per time and how to apply ourselves appropriately.

There are people who carry the same grace you do. You should find them, relate with them and compare notes from time to time.

Watch out for dream killers.

¹ Midwife is a person who serves as an attendant at childbirth but is not a physician.

FREE FROM OPPRESSION

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

The dawn to Christmas is a walk into freedom from every form of oppression. Whosoever the Son has set free is free indeed. You must know what you are carrying.

One of my favourite characters in the bible is Peter. He was always the first to answer questions asked by Jesus.

Peter reminds me of someone I knew back in school who would sit right in front of the lecturer, hanging unto every word the lecturer spoke, but would not understand or pass the course. THE SEED
INSIDE OF YOU
IS ASKING,
CALLING FOR A
CORRESPONDING
SIGNAL TO
CATCH FIRE.

Peter was too forward. He

was one of those smart and sometimes annoying students, who always answered questions, even while the teacher was still asking them.

Before Jesus had finished asking a question, his hand was always up, ready to provide an answer.

In *Matthew 16:15-18* Jesus asked the question: "who do men say that *I am*?" Other disciples answered their master's question, but Peter's life trajectory took a new turn the day he decided to ponder a little

before answering his master's question; this was a defining moment for Peter as he replied: "You are the Christ!"

CHRISTMAS IS THE FULFILMENT OF LIFE'S ASSIGNMENT

The essence of Christmas is not a measure of the amount of chicken that is eaten or the visitations that are done.

It is the fulfilment of life's assignment (Luke 1:41).

When the little boy was packing his little meal in *Mark 6*, he started from the place of obscurity where nobody knew him or his package but when God "*stepped into the scene*, *everything changed*." The little boy now became a message reference and a phenomenon.

YOU CAN'T BE FRIENDS WITH EVERYONE. Don't be afraid or ashamed of the days of little beginning. It is the father's wish to enlarge it, if only you will add Him to the equation of your life. The scriptures say "without me you can do nothing" and the scriptures cannot be broken.

"Pack your little meal in obscurity, add God to the equation and watch nations feed from your little" - **Timothy Aderemi**

CHRISTMAS: A JOURNEY FROM OBSCURITY TO PHENOMENAL

The journey of Jesus Christ into the wilderness was deliberate to enable him build spiritual muscles. Christmas, is a journey from Obscurity to Phenomenal.

THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTMAS IS NOT A MEASURE OF THE AMOUNT OF CHICKEN THAT IS EATEN OR THE VISITATIONS THAT ARE DONE.

There are different stages in life and we must know how to navigate each of them. Adam moved from obscurity to limelight from the time of his creation to the point when he was given the privilege of naming all the animals.

Take a business for example. Obscurity is when you have received the idea from God; it is your "*Ideation Process*." Every idea that blesses humanity positively is from God.

The place of obscurity is the stage of your life when you are incubating, researching, developing and naming your ideas. In a sense, no one sees your idea at this stage until God steps in and the whole world focuses on your idea or creation. At that point, it becomes www.comeandsee.ng

THE ORIGIN OF 'XMAS'

Christmas is also sometimes referred to as Xmas.

Some people don't think we should refer to Christmas as 'Xmas,' because they are of the opinion that the word 'Xmas' takes the 'Christ' (Jesus) out of Christmas. (As Christmas comes from Christ-Mass, the Church service that celebrated the birth of Jesus.) But that is not quite right!

In the Greek language and alphabet, the letter that looks like an X is the Greek letter 'chi' (pronounced 'key' - it rhymes with 'eye') which is the first letter of the Greek word for Christ, Christos. The early church used the first two letters of Christos in the Greek alphabet 'chi' and 'rho'

to create a monogram (symbol) to represent the name of Jesus. This looks like an X with a small p on the top: . The symbol of a fish is sometimes used by Christians (you might

CHRISTMAS, IS A JOURNEY FROM OBSCURITY TO PHENOMENAL.

see a fish sticker on a car or someone wearing a little fish badge).

This comes from the time when the first Christians had to meet in secret, as the Romans wanted to kill them (before Emperor Constantine became a Christian). Jesus had said that he wanted to make his followers 'Fishers of Men', so people started to use that symbol. At that time, when two Christians would meet, one person would draw half a basic fish shape (often using their foot in the dust on the ground) and the other person would draw the other half of the fish.

The Greek word for fish is 'Ikthus' or 'Ichthys'. There are five Greek

letters in the word. It can also make up a sentence of Christian beliefs 'I.e.-sous Christos Theou Huios So-the-r' which in English means "Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Saviour".

The second letter of these five letters is X or Christos! So Xmas can also mean Christmas; but it should also be pronounced 'Christmas' rather than 'ex-mas'!

BIRTHING A JESUS-LIKE PHENOMENON

If you want to birth the Jesus' kind of phenomenon, you have to let go of sentiments in your walk with God.

Abraham had an encounter with God and he was given specific instructions: "Go and Sacrifice Isaac, your son of promise to me in the land of Moriah on the mount that I will show you."

Abraham understood his servants hadn't been there in the boardroom with God when they had their closed door meeting, so he asked them to wait for him and Isaac. "The lad & I will go yonder to worship and will return unto you" Genesis 22:5. How was he able to interpret Go and Sacrifice your Son to mean 'I and the lad will go yonder to worship'?

I remember when I needed to take a critical decision about changing my place of worship. I had been in a church for over 6 years as the keyboardist and I was at the verge of becoming the music director for my Parish and Province with more leadership capacity promises. I had built strong ties with all the members; I was even planning to get married in the church and was hoping to get financial support from the church & my church family.

When I felt God telling me to move to another church, it took a while for me to rationalize why I should stay. I found a scripture in *Act* 5:29:

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men. I will rather please God than men."

This scripture ministered to me and I obeyed eventually and did as His spirit was directing me.

With a singular movement, I met God again, rededicated my life to Christ, met my Pastors (Godman Akinlabi and Sam Adeyemi) and many other destiny catalysts. My life took a new turn and it has been from one level of glory to the other.

IN A NUTSHELL

Christmas is more than a holiday period but a time to be happy about so many things ranging from the opportunity to receive God's best gift, the light that dispels darkness.

Remember That:

- Jesus Christ is the reason for the season, and it goes beyond the Holiday
- He came to light our world and anyone who allowed Him to personally light their world.
- An encounter with The Anointed One will make the difference in your life, and makes you a phenomenon
- By not referencing Christ, you fail to maximize the essence of Christmas

FOUR GROWTH AND MATURITY

esus Christ increased in wisdom, influence, interaction, purpose and assignment.

Don't allow your past dictate your future.

"Growing old is automatic, growing up is intentional. Don't only grow old, rather grow up!" – **Godman Akinlabi**

Jesus Christ was born in the manger, but He didn't remain in the manger.

The lesson here is you must have the ability to understand that everything that has happened to you in the past is in the past and this should not ultimately define who you are. You should see it as a pointer to your destiny. Being born in the manger authenticates the fact that Jesus is the great Shepherd and the precious Lamb of God slain for the remission of our sins.

There is more to the circumstances of our birth, past, present or what you can see now. This message is reiterated during Christmas.

What you cannot measure, you cannot increase or grow.

This little boy born in the manger grew from being a son carried in the manger and in a few years moved to becoming what the whole world would require for their salvation.

FROM SON TO SAVIOUR

Are you still the same person from last Christmas?

What discipline should you embrace to engender growth and maturity? The list is endless, but here are some of the elements: Love, Vision, Humility, Simplicity and Hearing from God.

You can only change what you are willing to confront.

To grow up, there are some things that you need to confront head on.

We need to learn from the life of Jesus. Although he played Ludo, Table Soccer, Hide & Seek with his friends, he knew there was more to His life than that. He knew when to transition from a boy playing with sand and step into destiny and purpose.

Life is in stages and men are in sizes. Have you identified the current stage you are right now?

This Christmas, challenge yourself to know what next is lined up for you in your destiny.

Jesus knew when he had to leave his friends at the playground and head to the synagogue to have quality conversation with the scholars; he gave himself to training and exposure, and He was willing to learn from others.

Appraise yourself spiritually, physically and also your goals.

"GROWING
OLD IS
AUTOMATIC,
GROWING
UP IS
INTENTIONAL.
DON'T ONLY
GROW OLD,
RATHER
GROW UP!"
- GODMAN
AKINLABI

Take the leap, jump out of the boat, out of your comfort zone where even the least sinner can be to a place of immeasurably more.

In Luke 2:29-50, the level of His wisdom was even beyond the understanding of his parents. It took them quite some time to process Jesus' discussion. His speech was strategic and logic, and at a young age, he had grown in human relations, exhibited high level emotional intelligence, loved God and loved people.

It baffles me in our society, people who suddenly have access to few naira or dollar notes, become pompous, and no longer can relate

WHAT YOU CANNOT MEASURE, YOU CANNOT INCREASE OR GROW. with their peers, colleagues, family members. Sadly, some of these people lose their salvation, sell their soul to the devil, cut away from everyone and eventually become a "god" to themselves.

Jesus was humble, despite what he carried on his inside. Jesus was of a different species. He was an embodiment of the power of God, and yet, he mingled with the twelve disciples.

Have you ever asked why Judas had to use a kiss to identify him amongst the twelve? He never dressed differently from his disciples, he looked like every one of them, and it would have been very difficult for the soldier to identify Jesus if Judas hadn't kissed him.

Make up your mind that from this Christmas, and going forward,

you will continue to grow and mature in Humility, Wisdom, the will of God and communication with the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, this humble, lowly birth really shook the world.

ARE YOU MAKING IMPACT?

You don't need 150 years to make impact. Jesus was on earth for only 33 years and till tomorrow, he was and still is the best thing that has happened to our world.

You would have expected the birth of the long-awaited messiah to have been surrounded by great wealth, a heavy naming ceremony, paparazzi, an Ovation cover story, given a spot on LindaIkeji blog; yet his adoptive father worked as a simple carpenter and his mother (Mary) had virtually no influence.

Although they didn't ask for the child, they took full responsibility for him, and when King Herod wanted to kill Jesus by all means, they did everything to protect him.

What gift or idea has God given you that King Herod is looking for to kill? Will you ask God for grace, boldness and divine encounter to preserve it, by asking what precisely to do?

When Pharaoh wanted all male children dead by all means, Moses' parents came up with divine inspiration to protect him.

Parents, how are you faring in this regard? What steps are you taking to becoming great parents and caring for the godly seeds God has given to you?

Mary and Joseph placed the new born king in a manger, a feeding through for animals, and they probably slept in the cave where the inn owners kept their animals. Amazingly, the angels announced the birth of Jesus and sang of His glory, but not to the audience of great men and women; only simple shepherds tendering their flocks out in the field heard the angel's fanfare.

Remember the scripture says: "God resists the proud but He gave grace to the humble and simple."

I pray that as you engage this book, your life will be lived like Jesus; you will not only add to the world's statistics or data, you will shake the world positively and your footprints will forever be on the sand of time in Jesus Name, Amen.

Jesus first came to the ordinary people, God still appears to ordinary men and women today.

Irrespective of your vocation, status, background, experience and exposure, Jesus can and will still come to you. Jesus will come to anyone who will receive Him. When ordinary people decide to follow Him, He can accomplish extraordinary things through them.

Jesus knew about his assignment in life but when he needed to grow as a carpenter, he learnt the trade wholeheartedly. There is a concept called Faith & Patience. *Hebrews* 6:12 talks about faith and patience.

Sometimes when we feel like God is silent, or we have delayed answers to our prayers, it does not mean God has denied our request, or decided to come late, He is just coming very big and in massive-style! "Invigilators are always silent in the examination hall"

God works in a mysterious ways, and has worked with simple men and women.

THIS CHRISTMAS, BE A BLESSING!

Usually, all sorts of plastic fruits and ornaments hang from a Christmas tree. They are not always edible and usually have no consumable benefit to anyone. People may be blessed with gifts, but you have to grow fruits and it takes time. "Follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promise" – **Hebrews 6:12**

It's most likely during December that Jesus cursed the fig tree that did not have fruit, my imagination.

When life circumstances throw things at you, what fruit do you respond with? Don't be like a Christmas tree that no one can eat from; instead, be a blessing.

In *John 2*, I strongly believe Jesus must have been performing little miracles at home before this wedding reception occurrence, that was why his mum could be confident to jumpstart His official unveiling of miracle working.

YOU CAN ONLY CHANGE WHAT YOU ARE WILLING TO CONFRONT.

It's not the number of people that you know but the number of people that glorifies God with your life. There is also ability to joggle the needful.

"The things that matter less must not be at the mercy of the things that matter most" - **Godman Akinlabi**

IN A NUTSHELL

Though Jesus was born in the manger, he didn't remain in the manger. Ultimately, you aren't defined by where you were born and your life's experience, but by how you far you lean on God for inspiration to turn out great, which comes with some sense of deliberateness & intentionality.

Remember that...

- Growing old is automatic, while growing up is intentional.
 Don't only grow old, rather grow up
- Embrace disciplines that can engender growth and maturity.
- There is always a manger experience for everyone and how we interpret will determine the outcome.

FIVE FIND X, WHAT IS WRITTEN?

A few people dreaded mathematics growing up. I am one of them.

One of the aspects of mathematics that I grappled with for a long time was equations and scenarios to "find x." In the same vein, life's journey is all about equations, principles, precept upon precepts, and at one point or the other, the need to find X.

Jesus, in the years after leaving the Manger, took time out to find, meditate and communicate what had been written about Him. To fulfil destiny and significance in life, we also need to find out what has been written about us in the word of God; it is propelling for successful living.

PRESERVING YOUR LIGHT

To minimise the events of fire during Christmas, in 1895 Ralph Morris, an American telephonist, invented the first electric Christmas lights, similar to the ones we use today.

Vision is key to provision and you cannot maximize what you cannot see through. You therefore require light and illumination to actualise your vision.

Scripture says you are the light of the world, a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden. Your announcement to the world is a function of the efficacy of your light. Right from creation, God created different kinds of light. We have lesser and greater lights^[2].

² For further study on kinds of light. Visit www.tim.aderemi.com

Your light can only shine brighter in the midst of darkness and the world we live in is a great example of darkness whether in business, academics, career or marriage.

How do you preserve your light, and prevent it from being put off?

Light will always dispel darkness anytime any day, no wonder Jesus said: "I am the light of the world, I have come to give them life and in abundance."

Do you find yourself asking questions such as: why am I here in Nigeria right now?

The good news is you are here for such a time as this; and it doesn't matter where you are - Lagos, Mozambique, Ghana, Nasarawa, Jigawa, Tokyo or Las Vegas – the world wants to see your light shine!

"Let your light shine so bright that your father in heaven may be glorified"
-Matthew 5:16

The ability to see what is written about you is a function of the greater light you receive from God. Revelation knowledge will change your life, chart a new course and perfect your life trajectory.

The difference between the results in the life of two children of God is a function of what they know.

There is something Pastor Enoch A. Adeboye, Bishop David Oyedepo knows that others do not know from the scripture.

"The level of your faith is the product of the level of your light. Higher level in the scriptures equals higher level of faith". - Dr. Paul Enenche.

The scriptures say "the entrance of God's word give light" -Psalms 119:130

It is very hard to be what you cannot see or have the capacity to see. "Seeing is becoming" this is also a function of the amount of light you get from the word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16 says: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The scripture is God's gift to man for impact. The scripture is profitable - you lose quite a lot when you distance yourself from the Word. The scripture is also inspired which means to breathe. The more revelations you get from the scripture, the more like Him you become, because the scripture is His breath.

One verse of the scripture you understand will move you from obscurity to significance, from lack to plenty, from weak to strong and from timidity to boldness.

Don't leave the world the way you met it, influence your world positively.

ACCESSING THE LIGHT OF GOD

How do you get this light as a child of God?

Be aware that you are light.

Understand the type of light that you are and that it's a function of time that enable us move from lesser light to greater light.

Focus on your light and let it shine! "Focus is what you are looking for and what you are looking at";

"Looking unto Jesus, the author and completer of our faith." Psalms 34:5

FINDING PURPOSE THROUGH GOD'S WORD

The sweetest book on earth that I have come to know is the Bible (word of God) my prayer is that God should open it for you.

Our life's journey, the entirety of our purpose, and our being is found in the Word of God. It is our responsibility to find our journey through God's word. Jesus Christ even when tempted of the devil responded to all of the tests with "it is written." He quoted or referred to what he found about himself in the books.

A fish thrives in a pond, but the moment it leaves its natural habitat, it is misaligned and prone to death. Unless it understands its purpose,

VISION IS KEY TO PROVISION AND YOU CANNOT MAXIMIZE WHAT YOU CANNOT SEE THROUGH. YOU THEREFORE REQUIRE LIGHT AND ILLUMINATION TO ACTUALISE YOUR VISION.

"LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE SO BRIGHT THAT YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN MAY BE GLORIFIED" -MATTHEW 5:16 and understands what has been said about it, a fish risks certain death by going to places it should not go.

What is written in the word of God—that you find, believe, and act on—is able to overturn and outrun what is happening to you. Luke 4:18.

Live now but not wholly for yourself; you are a ring in a chain link, don't deny others of their destinies attached to yours. You are responsible for many lives. Don't remain in the mould other

people have made for you.

In *Matthew 16:15-20*, Jesus had to ask his disciples again who they thought he was.

People had their opinions and identity of Christ. If Christ had not known He is the Christ which he found reading from scripture, maybe he would have settled in as one of the prophets as pointed by the disciples. It is saddening to note that after all the missionary journey and ministry work, almost none of the disciples could state who their master was.

GOD THINKS IN PICTURES

God's words are usually in pictures. If I say Spell Mango, what comes

to your mind first won't be the spelling but the image. *Habakkuk 3:* 1-4 says *I will stand upon my watch and see what He will say to me ...*"

Also in *Jeremiah 33:3* "Call unto me and I will show you great and mighty things". So when God speaks, He is showing you pictures and your sight has to be clear not blur.

My desire for you is to crave for and capture more of God's thoughts for your life.

How many of God's pictures are you able to capture on a daily, monthly and per second basis? What has been written in the Word is potent enough to override, and overtake what is currently happening in your life.

APPLICATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

Information in-take is key to your livelihood.

Jesus overcame the devil's temptation by the right application of the Word. He stressed further that "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of God's mind."

The scripture that says He keeps him in perfect peace came alive a while ago when I was being misrepresented and misquoted DON'T
LEAVE THE
WORLD
THE WAY
YOU MET IT,
INFLUENCE
YOUR
WORLD
POSITIVELY.

by a friend. This incident almost pushed me out of God's purpose for my life. I became cranky, resentful and grudged several people in my heart at that period. Few weeks after the incidence, I cried to God for help, because the bible says if I keep iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me. I asked God for a word to heal my heart so He sent me Isaiah 26:3 - He keep him in perfect peace.

"FOCUS
IS WHAT
YOU ARE
LOOKING
FOR AND
WHAT
YOU ARE
LOOKING
AT";

The Holy Spirit confronted me with statements such as: Why are you losing your peace over this seemingly little issue? Do you want to be a waster? When you get to heaven and you realized that your mansion is incomplete as a result your decision to quit, what would you say? Is this person enough to derail you from your life assignment?

After this crucial conversation with the Holy Ghost, though painful, I called for a meeting, forgave the person, released all the people I had carried a grudge in my heart, and I was totally healed and delivered. All this happened because I exposed myself to the word of God that was able to overturn and overrun what was happening to me at that time.

Looking again at *Joshua 1:8*... It shall not depart from your mouth. What are those things separating you from the word of God? God

is a God of newness. His steadfast love never ceases, they are new every morning. He is always willing to serve up a fresh meal, if only we will seek after it.

It is good to know the word of God, at that level, it is called Logos, and there is another dimension where you meditate on it.

You start to receive light on the word and at this point, it becomes a Rhema to you. God expects all His children to operate in this space of Rhema.

One thing that holds people down in life is not money, help or idea but fear.

Mary lay hold on what God had in store for her just because she acted in faith by her action, correspondence. Faith without Works is dead.

The word of God that we find, seek and believe in has power to distinguish. I am of the opinion that Mary wasn't the only virgin in Nazareth, it shouldn't be that bad. Mary was able to position and prepare herself and the miracle and long-time prophesy was fulfilled through her.

Mary had to present herself holy before God & by the washing by the word of God. Ephesians 5:26.

Will you check yourself this Christmas?

IN A NUTSHELL

Jesus after leaving the manger took time out to find, meditate and communicate what has been written about Him. We also need to find out what has been written, it is the propelling force for successful living.

Remember that...

- Every Individual should have a Personal Mission/Vision Statement
- Every individual should live out what has been written about him or her.

SIX

MAXIMIZE THE MOMENT

"Learning to number our days doesn't only speak to birthdays, but making each day of our lives count for something worth Heaven's investment" – **Timothy Aderemi.**

We must have a mind-shift to how we see time. Calendar times are loaded with opportunities of a lifetime that await anyone who is sensitive & courageous to maximize it.

Peter walked on water, Esther stood before the King, the lepers in 2 kings, the thief that was crucified alongside Jesus, Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus, David challenged and confronted Goliath – these are all examples of men and women who maximized the moment that was upon them.

The moment we run away from God when faced with little or big challenges, the devil rejoices. Scripture says when you fail in the day of adversaries, you are a poor specimen, there is not so much to you in the first place. Proverbs 24:10

The best time to run to God is when you have troubles all around you and also when you do not have any trouble as well, just to balance things.

In Luke 7:36-50, we focus on the woman that was bent over.

THE WOMAN THAT WAS BENT OVER

She didn't resort her predicament to FATE, we are created for connection and not isolation. Despite her situation, she maintained a strong connection with God, she was found around God's family praising God, attending service.

Imagine if her story had happened during 21st century times. I can imagine the usher directing her to her regular seat for 18years, but on that fateful day, her steps were ordered by God. The protocol officer had made Jesus come in to the church auditorium through the back door that Sunday morning, hopefully to fix his lapel microphone or

get his message slides through to the Multimedia team at the back of the auditorium.

Suddenly Jesus noticed the woman that was bent over, and asked the head usher: "has this woman gone through our membership class, faith development classes? Is she in any unit, how about home cell fellowship? Why hasn't anyone brought this woman's case to me all this while?"

Then the head usher unleashes Super Story episode 3. While she was still narrating this story, Jesus cut in right there, "ask that the choir continue praise and worship." Jesus called her forward and said to her "woman thou art loose from your infirmity!"

Immediately, she was straightened up and glorified and worshipped God.

I pray that this Christmas what God will do in your life will bring Glory to God and you will Worship Him.

I believe one handsome man who has been trusting God for a future partner will see her that day just because he was able to see the real beauty bent over for years.

Despite the woman's circumstance, she thronged in and Jesus, the miracle worker saw that she had wasted so much time in that situation; the time for her miracle had come, and thankfully, she had not missed it!

Even though you are going through situations that try to bend you over, you need to keep and maintain your praise. Job said: "though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!"

When you choose to praise God in your seeming circumstances, it

will confuse the enemy. Just continue to raise your voice in praise and soon, God will raise you above your situations.

This bent over woman visited the needful places and in the process, Jesus turned to her – her lifting came and her healing manifested. I am trusting God that as you engage the God of Christmas, restoration is your portion and your bent-over days are over!

Those who could not recognize you when bent over now will ask that you dine, have lunch, take selfies with them now that you are straightened up now in Jesus Name, Amen.

Let the song of Hannah in *1 Samuel 2:1* be your anchor.

UNDERSTANDING TIME AND CHANCE

A few years ago, as a young minister at The Elevation Church, and by my job description and role, I was often asked by church members to pray and dedicate their houses. In a particular month, I could dedicate as much as five (5) houses;, usually the owners of these houses either younger or about my age, During one of these occasions, I was getting ready to leave my apartment, then I started feeling discouraged and I knew it's very likely to leave the place sad, depressed rather than rejoice with the family.

Different thoughts of me being a failure not to even been able to own my own house, slowly crept in. It dawned on me that I needed to follow the ethics of pastoring and my duties to officiate and represent God well in that event, so I reached for the bathroom, cried to God for help and He immediately sent me a word *Ecclesiastes 9:11* "I have seen something under the sun: the race is not to the swift or battle to

the strong, nor does food comes to the wise or wealth to the brilliant of favour to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all" – "Time and Chance happened to them all" as compared to "Time & Chance happened to some"

That sort of consoled me, I left the bathroom trusting God's word to pray for and bless the family. It was a great outing that day, and I left, trusting God to present my own time and chance to build my own house.

WHEN YOU CHOOSE
TO PRAISE GOD IN YOUR
SEEMING CIRCUMSTANCES, IT
WILL CONFUSE THE ENEMY.
JUST CONTINUE TO RAISE
YOUR VOICE IN PRAISE AND
SOON, GOD WILL RAISE YOU
ABOVE YOUR SITUATIONS.

When the psalmist said: "He sent His word, it deliver them from all their destruction." I understood it better that day.

In life, we will always be presented with both Time and Chance scenarios, and we need to be able to maximize both effectively.

Another interesting story I recall is found in *Mark 11:1-11*.

The donkey Jesus rode during his triumphal entry to Bethany had been

there for some time, but then, Kairos happened again to it.

Are you trusting God for a breakthrough, a husband, a wife, a job, etc? Your triumphal time is now because the days of indecision are over.

The donkey had been tied in a place between two towns, which implies lack of direction, purpose, clarity etc. When God steps in, many people who have despised you will spread their cloaks and rejoice with you. You will be empowered to make quality and godly decisions that will move your life forward.

I will elaborate more on the role of Time and Chance in the story of this red light district woman.

IN LIFE. WE WILL ALWAYS BE PRESENTED WITH BOTH TIME AND CHANCE SCENARIOS. AND WE NEED TO BE ABLE TO MAXIMIZE BOTH EFFECTIVELY.

THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT WOMAN

She had spent most of her time engaged in illegal business transactions; she was a notorious husband snatcher and a chief Aristo (Prostitute) of her time. She was so influential; the government gave her Certificate of Occupancy (C-of-O) right at the central district of the city.

I believe she lived in the highbrow area of Jericho that time. If she was resident in Nigeria, she would have been resident in Abuja, close to Ask Rock. Her ability to embrace her time and chance saved her, entire family from destruction, and also earned her a featured spot in the lineage of Grace i.e. the genealogy of Jesus Christ "Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab" Matthew 1:5

I began to ask myself how that happened. The answer is, she was favoured.

Remember we mentioned earlier that "Favour isn't fair."

She entered boldly to the throne of Grace and she got goodness and favour after her engagement with the spies. Hospitality to God's people made way for her in terms of safety, preservation and enlistment to the Patriarch's list. *Joshua* 2:1-24.

TOO OLD OR TOO YOUNG TO MAKE IMPACT?

Are you wondering how to maximize your life?

Do you think you are too old? Or perhaps, you are too young?

Whether you are old and you feel the next song you should be singing is "Nearer my God to thee," my take is that you watch out for an auspicious moment and plug in.

Two armed robbers, hired killers were hung alongside on the Cross with Jesus Christ. One had a sharp tongue while the other understood that a window of Grace had just opened right before him, and he asked that Jesus remember him when He arrived at Paradise.

Just in the space of time before his crucifixion, though he was in a condemned state, left for dead, Grace stepped in and he maximized his life.

Scriptures says I am come that they may have life in abundance.

To that young person who thinks: I have all the time! There are young people who made huge difference in their lives, and the lives of many others. Jesus had the privilege of living for only 33 years on earth, but the influence he wielded has spanned across that time zone.

LACK OF DIRECTION,
PURPOSE, CLARITY ETC.
WHEN GOD STEPS IN, MANY
PEOPLE WHO HAVE DESPISED
YOU WILL SPREAD THEIR
CLOAKS AND REJOICE WITH
YOU.

Being young does not mean you must lack godly values, self-control etc. Jesus was just 12 years when he knew he had to be about His father's business. Joseph was approached by Potiphar's wife when he was a youth, but he refused to defile himself.

HOW TO MAXIMIZE THE MOMENT

Create a Compelling Vision: This helps you to connect with the picture you had seen before in your mind.

High Expectation:

Be sensitive and watch out for that auspicious moment. Expectation they say is the mother of the miraculous.

Self-Leadership:

You can only get to where you have been yourself first in your mind.

• Discernment:

Trust the Holy Spirit for steps and please don't secondguess yourself the moment you are sure you heard from the Holy Spirit.

• Faith:

Act in faith and believe in your heart that faithful is He that has promised

• Lean on the Holy Spirit:

Trust the Holy Spirit for steps and please don't secondguess yourself the moment you are sure you heard from the Holy Spirit.

Be Sensitive:

Be sensitive and watch out for it. Anticipation they say is the mother of the miraculous.

IN A NUTSHELL

The phrase: "Teach us to number our days" doesn't only speak to Birthdays, but it means we should make each day of our life count for something that's worth Heaven's investment.

There has to be a mind shift to how we see time, calendar, times but these are loaded with opportunities of a lifetime that awaits anyone who is sensitive & courageous to maximize it

E.g. Peter (walked on Water, echoed out who Jesus is in Matthew 16:18) Esther before the King. The Lepers in 2 kings, the thief crucified alongside Jesus, Zacchaeus, David & Goliath

Scriptures says 'Day unto Day utter speech'. 'Let each day, moment, event, situation speaks to you based on God's word & prophecy"

SEVEN BE THE GIFT - JOHN 3:16

Jesus came as God's greatest gift to humanity. We must replicate this gesture and have a sense of responsibility to become a gift to God, ourselves, our families, our environment, our world and sphere of influence.

THE GIFT OF SALVATION

One of the very precious gifts of God is salvation; it is the bedrock for everything and our being.

God told Cornelius to send for Peter in order to learn the plans of salvation. The angel could tell Cornelius where to go to get saved, but God had to send a man to preach.

Men are saved by hearing and hearing the word of God and that is because faith comes by hearing and hearing. Scriptures says God has spoken one, twice have I heard.

You cannot believe without hearing and you can't hear who you do not believe in.

The golden question is: "Are your words, works, deeds and character gifts to God and Humanity?"

YOUR GIFT IS YOUR FLAVOUR

Every human being is an extension of God.

God manifested His gifts from creation till now in diverse ways, and we are created in His image and Likeness. God's gifting in you can range from science, music, technology, manufacturing, arts, poetry, just to mention a few; the charge is that you discover and celebrate your flavour.

It is a tradition to decorate Christmas trees with lights, shiny balls, sparkly tinsels and other ornaments. A Christmas tree may be have been a natural tree such as the Fir tree or the spruce bought from a plantation or taken from the forest, but usually people prefer artificial trees.

I believe the tree Jesus Christ cursed, that dried up must have been a Christmas tree. It was looking beautiful, but it didn't have edible fruit.

The golden question is: "Are you a Christmas tree?" We must bear gifts of precious fruits, all-round season. *John 15:5*

EVERY
HUMAN
BEING IS AN
EXTENSION
OF GOD.

My father is glorified when we bear much fruit and we must be ready to sow seeds in preparation for a bountiful harvest. There are different levels of harvest, the 50s, 70s, 100s and the 1,000,000s. Which one are you prepared for?

THE GIFT OF A SON

Christmas is really about a big gift that God gave the world about 2,000 years ago – the gift of Jesus!

One of the most famous Bible verses, *John 3:16*, says: "God loved the world so much, that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever believes in him may not be lost but have eternal life."

In *Isaiah 9:6-7*, the bible recalls that: "unto us a child is born, unto us

a son is given." There are different stages involved even in childbirth. One great lesson from this scripture is to recognise that in everything in life, there is a growth process.

It's okay to start as a child but you have to graduate to the level of becoming a 'Son'

"Some employees are hired while some employees are given" – Timothy Aderemi.

This speaks to reinventing oneself within an organizational setting, and family unit, group etc.

Jesus descended from high and gave gifts unto men. It has been proven time again that every human being has been given one or several gifts.

Immediately the child Jesus was born, the angel appeared to the shepherd and the shepherd thoughtfully selected their gifts and presented them to the greatest PRESENT of God.

GIFT EXCHANGE

Gift giving is an important aspect during Christmas. It demonstrates love, respect and goodwill towards others. Wise men brought gifts when Lord Jesus was born.

One of the main reasons we have the custom of giving and receiving presents at Christmas is to remind us of the presents given to Jesus by the Wise Men: Frankincense, Gold and Myrrh. These gifts were symbolic, and represented significant elements of Jesus' life.

• *Frankincense* was a perfume used in Jewish worship

and as a gift, it showed that people would worship Jesus.

- *Gold* was associated with Kings and Christians believe that Jesus is the King of Kings.
- Myrrh was a perfume that was put on dead bodies to make them smell nice and, as a gift, it showed that Jesus would suffer & die.

All over the world, families and friends give presents to each other during Christmas. Most children around the world believe in a Christmas gift bringer. It's often St. Nicholas, Santa Claus or Father Christmas, but in Germany they believe that it is the Christ-kind, in Spain they believe it is the Wise Men, and in Italy they believe it is an old lady called Befana.

Though the wise men brought gifts to baby Jesus, little did they know that He was the greatest gift of all.

Invest some thought into the gifts we give during Christmas, and ensure that every gift given is from a love perspective.

YOU ARE A GIFT TO YOUR GENERATION

When a family, people, or a nation prays, God usually answers with the release of a gift in the form of a human being especially a baby.

Jesus was the answer to a prayer.

Likewise, you and I are answers to prayers. We have been created to solve a problem. You must find out what problem you have been created to solve. A child is born. A Son is given. Gifts are given.

Don't just be a receiver, be a giver.

This Christmas, make a decision that you won't just be a child but that you will be a son.

God gives gifts to men and women at Christmas just like the wise men did with baby Jesus. You must be able to ask God for the gifts He wants you to deploy in the coming years.

What gift has God given you that the world is waiting for?

Release your gift.

Every gift of God is valuable.

Prophet Samuel, the son of Hannah; Bishop David Oyedepo; Aliko

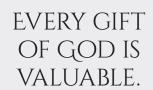
TT'S OKAY
TO START AS
A CHILD BUT
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LEVEL OF
BECOMING A
'SON'

Dangote – business mogul and Africa's richest man; and Cobhams Asuquo - an inspirational musician – are all men that are problem solvers, and gifts to their generation.

To be a gift is to be a problem solver.

Every child God sent to the earth is meant to solve a particular problem the world currently has, or will face. The devil is always after the seed in order to stall the harvest, as seen in the examples of Jesus Christ who was pursued by King Herod, Moses who was hidden away by his mother, and Joseph who was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife.

Anytime the devil tries to steal God's seeds, God always provides the wisdom and releases the strategy to protect them. Ask God for ideas and wisdom to protect your seed too.



IDENTIFYING AND DEPLOYING YOUR GIFT

To become a gift, you need to take a bold step.

Hand over your fish, loaves and watch out for the miraculous. What fish/loaves have you got that you are still holding on to? Hebrews 6:12 presents a long list of people who had handed over their respective fishes/loaves to God and nations are feeding from that little from then till now.

Write that article, write and record that song, invent that idea – the world earnestly waits for the manifestations of the sons of God. Don't starve the world!

In the words of *Myles Monroe*, "The richest place in the world is the cemetery buried with unfulfilled dreams." Great men who did exploit for God aren't the ones who followed the crowd; they are ones who followed the cloud.

What do you have in your hands that God will use? He will not judge you based on what you don't have but what you have, no matter how little. e.g. Jar of oil, 5 loaves, Moses and his rod – God always starts with what you have.

BECOMING A GIFT GOD WILL BE PROUD OF

A number of people have not maximized their potential because they have an "entitlement mind set".

You can't release your potentials when you have an entitlement mind-set.

Everything you have been blessed with – cash or gifts are given by God, you are just a custodian. What you have received is not for decoration, it's for you to give back both to God and humanity. Let go of the entitlement mind set.

Some of the ways you can do this are as follows:

- Self-Talk: David encouraged himself in the Lord.
- Inspirational Dissatisfaction- more to you
- Reinvent yourself
- Wisdom of action. Whether you release it or not, you are affecting positively or negatively.

Make your footprint on the sands of time, and let your life count. Be the gift God has created you to be. Some of the ways to do this include:

- Identify the gifts that has been given by God
- Develop the gift.
- Trust God to light up the gifts for global relevance.

IN A NUTSHELL

Jesus came as God's greatest gift to humanity, everyone must replicate this gesture a sense of responsibility to being a gift to: God, self, Family, environment and their sphere of influence.

Remember To...

- Identify the gifts that have been given to you by God
- Develop your gift
- Trust God to light up your gifts for global relevance

EIGHT CAN YOU BE TRUSTED?

od has a master plan but we all have a role to play in God's plan. Will God find us faithful to carry out His plan and counsel? Alignment to God's purpose is the key to significant living.

Can you be trusted just like Joseph & Mary were trusted to parent God's son?

Mothering goes beyond carrying a child in your womb for 6, 7, 9 or for some 9 ½ months; mothering is much more than the process of child bearing, it is a call to stewardship.

With the deprivation in our world today, mother and fathers, more than before, need to arise and instil godly family values in the next Generation. The famous Lord's Prayer says: "your will be done here on earth as it's done in heaven." Some things will only be enforced on earth if only we take our stand and heaven will place His seal on it.

Can God trust you and I to enforce His will, counsel, promises, and purposes on earth? In *Ezekiel 22:30*, God says he is seeking for a man who will go for Him. God is sending many people out for him, they just aren't listening. Many still don't know when God is speaking to them.

Is God speaking to you?

HEARING FROM GOD

Many of us seek a formula for how to hear from God – do this and get that result – but that is not the way God works. There is a healthy place of seeking God from our hearts, while being open to His leading.

Hearing God speak is like an art. Much to our frequent frustrations, it is not as easy as hearing the audible words of a friend or mentor.

We do not always get clear direction from God. Often, we're called to just move forward, trusting Him, even if we don't know exactly what He's pointing us toward. After all, God is more concerned about who we are becoming than exactly what we are doing, so we often hear His voice in moments of conviction or assurance rather than instruction.

Sometimes, we just need to hear what is true—about ourselves or about a given situation—to obtain the comfort and freedom we desperately need.

...MOTHERING IS MUCH MORE THAN THE PROCESS OF CHILD BEARING, IT IS A CALL TO STEWARDSHIP.

In *Jeremiah 33*, God tells us "Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known." Jesus also says that we live on every word that comes from the mouth of God. This is why we long to hear God speak so much, and why it is so worthy of our pursuit.

A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO HEARING GOD'S VOICE

We all have those moments when we pray a sentence or two while we're going through the day. Those times are great, because they reflect our belief that God is with us at all times. It is important, especially when we really feel we need guidance, to also take some time out of our day to really focus solely on praying concerning a need. Here are some practical steps to hearing from God.

Ask Him to Help You Hear His Voice

I don't only ask God to speak to me. I also ask Him to enable me to hear His voice. God's messages are often quieter than the noise we have grown accustomed to. To hear God's messages, you require a level of sensitivity and receptiveness.

• Unite with God through Praise

Praise is a special route we can take into the presence of God. It connects us with His spirit, allowing us to see beyond our circumstances. In this place, things become less quiet, and we are receptive to His peace. Even if we don't hear anything specific, we will at least set aside a time when we have an increased readiness to receive

• Recognize the Purpose of Silence

It can be frustrating when we don't hear from God. But if we are encountering silence, there may be a reason for it. It is not that we are unworthy, or that God does not care or is not able. The purpose for silence, rather, may be the infinitely more precious thing required for of our development. There are times when God is simply more concerned about our inner growth than what we do with one decision (even if that decision feels huge at the time).

Ask God to Influence Your Life

When I continue to be unsure how to proceed, I often ask God to influence every circumstance. I like to ask God to carry me as a current carries a boat—I know He is already doing this, but I make that request mostly to remind myself that he is.

I love the image of God directing me, without me having

to figure things out or rely on myself. It allows me to rest and know everything will work out. These prayers come with the faith that God is greater than anyone or anything, and He knows how to accomplish His will in our lives.

• Discern if it is His Voice

A common concern when people think they heard from God, is whether the message is just from their own thoughts. If you are wrestling with this question, consider the following:

Are you likely to think this type of thought? If it is more freeing and kind, or more insightful than something you usually come up with, it could be God. Ask yourself if it reflects the nature of God.

How does this thought make you feel? Be aware of how it makes you feel—peaceful and loved, or confused and condemned?

Does this thought stick with you through the next several days and months? If it is an instruction, see if the thought continues longer than a few days, or months.

POSITIONED TO HEAR GOD SPEAK

Are you properly positioned to hear God?

Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, David, Gideon, Paul, Zechariah, Joseph, Mary, Elizabeth are examples of people who were found by God, and availed themselves to Him.

God is still searching for you. Will you be trusted enough?

If only you have an idea of the Jesus-like phenomenon inside of you!

Mary and Joseph both believed God, and positioned themselves to fulfil the prophecy.

To singles and unmarried, the bible speaks clearly on not being unequally yoked with an unbeliever.

Mary and Joseph were both believers. They both understood and served the same God of Israel, and they probably attend the same denominations. They were most likely serving in the same unit: ushering, hospitality, choir, social media or even resource units in the same church; they most likely listened to the same message and so it wasn't a big struggle to understand the ministry of angels and the privilege to be the executor of the age-long prophecy that has even kept many from dying.

THE FAVOUR OF THE LORD

Luke 1:28 says: "thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed are thou among women."

These are great words released here to a virgin. What had Mary done actually to deserve this salutation?

Psalms 120:30 says: "the set time to favour you has come."

It becomes your turn when God turns to you even when you are the last person on the queue. *Bishop T.D.Jakes* one of my founding fathers in faith once preached a powerful sermon titled: "*Favour isn't Fair*"

There are a lot of young damsels from influential families, Ph.D holders, and

High net worth individuals that can afford to travel to developed countries to have their children.

God had the capacity to hire the best surgeons to carry the saviour of the world, but in His infinite mercy, He chose Joseph, a young carpenter guy and a young maiden called Mary, who didn't have a profound family background, and not much had been recorded of her family lineage.

Mary suddenly became the centre of attraction, and what was meant to be a ridiculing story had now become the point of reference.

Frontline media platforms like Linda Ikeji, Bella Naija and Ovation carried this headline story from a celebrated point of view with various retweets on twitter, hundreds of millions of likes on Instagram and Facebook, display pictures of the story all over town. Luke 20:17

This Christmas, you will be celebrated! Where you have been rejected before, I declare you are being celebrated.

Joseph and Mary managed their youthful pressure, the bible recalls that Joseph didn't touch Mary until she delivered Jesus Christ. They weren't obsessed with the pleasure of now-now (Luke 2:19).

Delayed Gratification is very key. Esau couldn't hold his hunger and lost his birth right.

Don't be an Esau-kind of people who for a morsel of bread sold his birth right.

IN A NUTSHELL

God has a plan but we all have a role to play in His master plan. Will God find us faithful to carry out His plan and counsel? Alignment to God's purpose is the key to significant living.

Remember To...

• Learn the principle of discipline

NINE INTERACT WITH THE NEEDFUL

Engage in the right activities, mindsets, and posture to fulfill God's ultimate plan. Be acquainted with people and places that will amplify God's dream in your life.

What is less important must not be at the mercy of what matters most. There are important things that matter to our lives that we need to take serious, and interact with as we progress in life's journey.

One of my favourite quotes comes to mind: "you can only change what you are willing to confront."

BE DELIBERATE ABOUT YOUR INTERACTIONS

To fulfil God's purposes for your life, there are people you must surround yourself with – people going forward, who understand where you are going, your circle of influence will influence your outcome in life.

There are popular sayings: Birds of a feather flock together; show me your friend and I will show you who you are, the companions of fools shall be destroyed.

What do your friends and allies bring to the table? What substance are they made of? Do they motivate you in any way? When people around you speak, do their words edify you?

Jesus always ended up having crucial conversations and knowledgesharing sessions with professors; He interacted with what had been written about him, he was an ardent scholar, studied and understood Harvard term papers, Compared notes and scriptures etc. In fact, no wonder even when Jesus was being tempted of the devil, He made references to previous study sessions and quotes accordingly, hence His victory over the devil.

Mary interacted with the message the angel delivered long after he departed. She processed and pondered on the message delivered to her. She took a step of faith to visit her cousin who had been barren but CNN, CHANNELS TV picked it that Elizabeth is expecting.

Anticipation is the mother of the miraculous. Anticipate a change of season and position appropriately.

The psalmist says: "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" In order to maximize life, there is a place for you, and you must interact with your God-given place. Your place can be your vocation, space etc.

Jesus read His manifesto in *Luke 4:18*. It was a great place to read His life assignment. The exact set of people meant to listen to Jesus' manifesto were all present, he choose the right platform, occasion and posture. Not every opportunity is your opportunity, you need discernment.

Christmas presents to us the right time to write, discover and present your life's assignment and manifesto.

Be deliberate. Take your place, fill your space and see God expand your coast and give you more territory!

STAND OUT, AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In 2 Kings 4:7, what if the little Israelites girl hadn't been hired? Namaan would have either died with his leprosy or would have received his healing, but with some additional stress. Thank God she was part of the family at that time and her voice was not neglected.

May I submit that you are in Nigeria for such a time as this? Make a difference!

Jesus also came to introduce a new culture change. He interacted with the unlikely unqualified men, but they eventually became strong men whom God used to get the gospel to all part of the earth including Africa.

Jesus being born in the manger also signify for a better word "Manger, a symbol of humility" ANTICIPATION
IS THE
MOTHER
OF THE
MIRACULOUS.
ANTICIPATE A
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APPROPRIATELY.

In 2016, one of the most

influential people in the world, Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook visited Nigeria, and to the surprise of everyone, he appeared in a pair of jeans and t-shirt. I know some Nigerians that don't have one quarter of his net worth that would appear in a three piece suit, and a street-long protocol team. I am sure you are familiar with such people.

Jesus made this profound statement: "I must be about my father's business"

The question is: "what does a twelve year old know about business?"

Jesus knew He needed to roll with people whom he could learn from or compare notes with. His circle of influence gave a pointer to where he was headed.

YOUR SLINGS AND STONES

One of my favourite stories, again from the bible, talks about David tending to his father's sheep in the background, not knowing those were signals and pointers to his destiny as a king. He also interacted so much with the slings and stones, that when it was needed, Heaven supplied Grace, and Goliath was brought down.

What Goliath has been harassing you lately? Goliath for some could be prevailing mind-sets, thoughts, and imaginations.

David interacted well with his slings and stones, mastered his art and through the intangible resources conquered Goliath.

Can you identify your slings and stones?

There are opportunities lurking around the corner, we need to grab it. Don't discard any of such opportunities.

Someone said "followers run for the bull while leaders take the bull by the horns."

Run towards those life-threatening situations confronting you and they will flee. The world is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.

EMBRACING THE RIGHT VALUES

Values are also important and we must hold them in high esteem. Interact with the word of God. By this I mean that there is a need to study the Word of God more. Let God's word be your driving force, your anchor and the final authority in every area of your endeavour.

Interact by adding values to people's lives. Invest in other people, as much as you can. Carefully select your circle of influence and ensure that you add value to them.

INTERACT WITH YOUR GOD-GIVEN VISION

Lastly, interact with the vision God has given you. Keep dreaming the dream that God has put in your heart; Keep the dream alive.

When you begin to pursue your dream, somebody will always emerge to try to steal it; it could even be a family member who constantly reminds you of what God could not or would not do through someone like you.

The question is not can you dream, but do you have the courage to act on it?

What do you dream about?

What has God enabled you to see that does not yet exist?

God loves dreamers. Are you a dreamer?

When you dream, you move closer to the way He sees things. In that moment, you rise above your limitations; When you dream, you move from where you are to where He wants you to be.

Is there a God-given dream in your heart? Has life buried it? Have others told you it's too late? Don't you believe it! God has a dream for you, if you seek Him. He will reveal it to you.

Pursue your dream no matter how far-fetched it may seem, for dreams are like children – they are your offspring.

For your dreams to see the light of the day, you need to protect, feed and encourage them to grow.

You are a story that has not been read, but you have already been written; the earth is reading your life but heaven has already finished writing your story. Does it seem like your story is over, just like Lazarus in the bible? Remember Jesus is the author and the finisher of your faith.

This Christmas, step out in faith to claim your destiny!

IN A NUTSHELL

It is important to engage in the right activities, mind-sets, and posture to fulfil God' ultimate plan.

Be acquainted with people, and places that will amplify God's dream in your life.





The original intention of God for Christmas wasn't a plan B but the major Plan A. Jesus Christ, the scriptures writes, is the lamb of God that was slain from the foundation of the world.

Christmas is a walk with God to restore man back to his original place, which he lost when the devil tricked the first man (Adam). Christmas is a journey of Faith, you don't necessarily have to know the next step; if you do then it's not faith.

We must also realize that faithful is He that has promised and He always keeps His part of the deal. He is a promise keeper. One of my favourite hymns is 'Trust and obey, there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to Trust and Obey.'

Abraham expressed total obedience and trust; and he was so convinced that God had spoken to him about sacrificing Isaac. He trusted God's judgement that though he's slayed, he will still trust Him, and he was assured that God will show him the place to offer the sacrifice, and he believed that the lad and himself will come back to his servant.

If you really want to experience the real Christmas, you must allow God alter your plans, for His plans to take centre stage in your life.

God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, the child of promise whom he had waited for over a long period of time. Abraham might have felt God had played a fast one on him by giving him a child that He had plans to take back.

Despite all odds Abraham, obeyed God and genuinely prepared his son, Isaac for a burnt offering before the Lord on Mount Moriah. However, God only use this as a test of Abraham's trust in Him. Thank God Abraham passed the test, and a sacrificial lamb was provided by

God at the point of slaughtering Isaac, Abraham's long awaited son.

What are those "ISAACs" you are holding on to?

Your own Isaac can be that dream job, dream car or a dream relationship; it could also be an ideal figure eight or sinful habits. God wants you to lay down every Isaac so you can pick up new things that will bring Him glory.

TF YOU REALLY WANT
TO EXPERIENCE THE REAL
CHRISTMAS, YOU MUST
ALLOW GOD ALTER YOUR
PLANS, FOR HIS PLANS TO
TAKE CENTRE STAGE IN YOUR
LIFE.

Except a corn of wheat fall to the ground, it abides alone. There is more to you but it starts with the willingness to drop your seed first on the ground so you can have much more fruits.

When you walk with God, you must build capacity to enable you see ahead; Abraham saw the place of his destination afar off. This talks about strategic thinking and futuristic planning. This can be achieved by the help of Holy Spirit.

This Christmas poses an opportunity for you to find what has been written about you either in God's word or prophecy, insight from this

book will help you maximize every moment life presents that will stir up the gift in you and the Holy Spirit will overshadow you to make it the best Christmas you've ever had.

This Christmas, you need to have the Holy Spirit to make it the best you've ever had.

MY CHRISTMAS STORY REFLECTIONS

Golden Question: What does Christmas mean to you?

"Christmas means that Jesus has come again, and it is a great memory for me because our saviour was born"

Tolulope Adeoti.

"The first memory I have of Christmas is the sound of beautiful Christmas songs that filter across the supermarket, and long lines of shopping as a child, lots of food to eat. That memory fades into my early teen years when Christmas meant receiving lavish money gifts from pot-belied uncles, and flamboyant aunts that visited during the holidays. It sadly also meant long days in the kitchen, and a sinkful of dirty dishes that never ran dry. But everything changed the minute I experienced Jesus. Christmas has become a time to remind myself of the reason why my life revolves around walking and living in the footsteps of Jesus; it Is a time to celebrate God, a season to radiate gratitude for Christ – His love, sacrifice and humility. Christmas is a time of strength, a time of joy, a time to be free, a time to be me, and a time to love."

-Yvonne Awosanya-Adefajo

"I lost my father at a really young age and my mum would ensure all special holidays were extra special so we didn't feel like we're missing out on anything and Christmas was no exception. We got new shoes, new pretty dresses, new hair style, food... the whole works. Christmas meant fun and enjoyment with family for me. Being married, I tried to continue the tradition, then November, 2016 came along and I was in a different country with my newly born baby and no family. I felt all alone! All the previous plans of my husband and my daughter coming over were looking very shaky. Seemed like the worst was about to happen and for the first time ever, I wasn't looking forward to Christmas. Then God

did it, my husband, My 1st Daughter, My sister and her whole family.... Everyone was here! We had food, food... The best Christmas so far!"

-Deroju Amokomowo.

"For me, I will say it's the carols. It is really fading out... but back then, people looked forward to the carols... those old songs, such as "Silent Night". These days, when people gather, it is more like a Christmas party, not singing... not carols."

-PG

"On Christmas day itself, we used to cook plenty of food and shared jollof rice with our neighbors. We used to go from house to house to give them bowls of food whether they were Christian or Muslim... Nobody seems to do that anymore". - Tunji Iyiola

I miss knockouts (firecrackers)... growing up we used to have knockout competitions... we would just go round the neighborhood making loud bangs and watch the sparks fly..."

-David Rhino

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CHRISTMAS ENGLISH VOCABULARY

Advent:

The coming of Jesus Christ, It is the month that leads to Christmas.

• Christmas Carols:

Religious songs or popular hymns that people sing during Christmas

• Star of Bethlehem:

The star that announced the birth of Jesus and guided the wise men to find him.

• White Christmas:

A Christmas with snow on the ground.

• Merry Christmas:

Happy holidays and Season's Greetings are the different ways to wish people during Christmas.

• Carols by Candlelight:

A popular tradition is the Carol Service which is often lit by candles. This carol singing generally has lots of singing and Bible readings.

• Santa Claus:

Santa Claus is generally depicted as a portly, joyous white bearded man sometimes with spectacles wearing a red coat with a white collar and cuffs and red trousers and a big black leather belt. He carries a bag full of gifts for children who have been good all year along. It's the reindeer who pulls his sleigh. He is also known as St. Nicholas or Father Christmas in many western countries.