

INTENTIONAL LIVING

Mastering the Art of Purpose



*A true, powerful, proven and heart-thawing secret
that will strategically unlock your potential to greatness.*

Tenywa Joseph Micheal

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TENYWA JOSEPH MICHEAL

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May God look with gracious favour upon my mother, Justine Margret Kutaira, who taught me to endure in times of adversity and prepare for a moment of abundance with courage and hope. You taught me how to live a life of virtue, work, love, and prayer. You are the epitome of a true mother, mentor and friend.

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CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Changing an Attitude	8
Overcoming Self-Doubt	16
How to have Constant Positive Energy	28
The Power to Stand Alone	38
Powerful Decision Making	45
You are what you Eat	58
Finding Meaning and the Means	66
Whom the World Needs	72
How to Escape the Tragedy of Schooling	78
Being a Master of your own Destiny	96
Notes	106

Introduction

Take up one idea, make that one idea your life, think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success

-Swami Vivekananda

All offsprings from humans, animals and plants do not make a choice while coming to life. Often times, besides other circumstances, parents take up a primary decision and role in bringing us to this life. As children, we receive care and protection from peers and elders until we are able to understand and make decisions. Depending on the circumstances that define each individual, biological growth is natural and we may have limited control over it. We associate with religions, peer groups, schools, among other groups where we develop and shape our interests and aspirations. Generally, we find life unfolding naturally. On the other hand however, maturity is not merely a process that occurs out of nature but it may come with a deliberate effort. For us to realize our full potential, we have got to be intentional in every undertaking.

Similarly, Mastering the art of purpose is the goal of all creation. Evolution was and is for a purpose. The most ancient civilizations and revolutions were for a purpose, and all things in the universe do not only exist for a purpose, but are in a struggle to master the art of purpose. If mastering the art of purpose is the goal of all creation, the big question is whether realizing this purpose is by design or sought after by reason. To have a clear under-

standing of this question, we need to understand further the meaning of the word “purpose”.

Grammatically, the term “purpose” is synonymous with the term “use”. Both words point to the importance of something and this is the most common understanding. In the second context, the term “purpose” points to the desired end of a particular state or process.

As a little boy, I was ever amazed by the beauty of the clay pots one elderly (Muzeyi) country man always moulded. With his cracked wrinkled left hand at the back and a walking stick in the right hand, he always strolled to the swamp for clay. Seemingly burdened by the weight of his age, he always took countless rests in every tree shed he found by the narrow foot-path dotted with weeds, uneven spots and rocks, until he finally made it to the swamp and moulded small-ball-like pieces of clay. With frail hands, he trudged for hours carrying the clay balls to his hut where he understandably sighed as he held his back to soothe the pain therein upon every trip successfully delivered.

The following day, he sat for hours in his rickety grass thatched hut near an old tall pawpaw tree in his immediate back yard. After about two days when the sun was ready to drop behind the hill now and a bright red disc appeared in the clear sky, he piled the clay pots together with some pieces of fire wood and dried papyrus. Shortly after, he set them ablaze, filling the innocent sky with a billow of dark cloudy smoke.

On realizing that we had not yet fetched water for bathing, we dashed out of Muzeyi’s courtyard, elbowing one

another out of the way so as to get non-leaky good jerry cans. Immediately after, a scuffle for the jerrycan tops ensued, resulting in a hurried trot down the narrow hill for water.

The next morning, nothing else astounded us, but the clay pots' beauty in Muzeyi's compound. It is this beauty that he always carried to the drinking joints, for his customers to make a choice and pay. Having money in his hands infused him with galloping vibrancy; he not only returned home singing exciting folk songs, but steadily staggered across the road with fish and a small bottle of Waragi firmly held in his hands as indecipherable English phrases jetted out of his mouth.

Looking at Muzeyi's tale, it is, inevitably inferable that his purpose was realized after he sold the pots. That he routinely did the same thing, he mastered how he successfully reached his end; he mastered the art of a good end, that is, his purpose. Arguably, if the desired end is achieved, talking about a realized purpose would be right, but where an unintended or undesired end is what presents, the purpose is frustrated; hence, the result is not a realized purpose. For example if Muzeyi took his pots to the market and they accidentally broke along the way, his purpose would not be realized.

As earlier noted that all things act towards a particular end, it is arguable that to act towards an end is by design, but to realize that desired end, is an art. Impliedly, we all live and act for a particular purpose, but only those who master the art can realize their purpose; those who cannot master the art of purpose cannot realize it. Whether

purpose is understood in the context of use or the context of a desired end, to live a purposeful life and finally realize our purpose, we must master the art of purpose.

This book, therefore, identifies different ways that can be explored to reach the desired good end, which end makes us useful, not only to ourselves, but to humanity and its environment. Arguably, this book is critically relevant to every person because all humans have a natural inclination towards what is good; we all long for what is good and that desired good end defines our purpose. We, therefore, have a natural inclination towards our purpose, and this fully-fledged manual, which is incomparably relevant due to its three dimensional approach, is vital for one to operate and function purposefully. The facts and techniques necessary as we master the art of purpose of our life are demonstrable in a three-dimensional approach as here bellow expounded:

Historical Dimension

Many historical facts have been recounted at various occasions due to the lessons contained herein. What the world is today is a result of various historical events. What we are and who we are is also a result of some historical facts about all those who came before us and what they did. If it is crudely stated, we are a product of history despite living in the present. By the fact that even our present shall once become history whether good or bad; we have a lot of lessons we draw from different historical events. We can, therefore, draw lessons from the past to inform our present so as to prepare for a better future. Most importantly, the author also uses diverse experiences of his past to convey a message about the

present and a forecast about the future.

Scientific Dimension

The contribution of science to the whole of humanity cannot be under-estimated. Science has not only influenced how man sees the world today, but has also determined how man sees science itself. As other world systems have become of age and inadequate in answering the modern challenges of man, science seems to be that genius giant who cannot run short of answers only that he may need some more time. Our hope in science is so strong that even what science cannot explain now, we have strong faith that someday science shall find out. It is for this reason that in our effort to master the art of purpose, many scientific findings and facts have been utilized. Some parts of this book may even seem to be dedicated to passionate scientists, but have been communicated so simply without being distorted.

Spiritual Dimension

Science and religion may have different discrepancies, but at least one ground onto which these two main authorities agree is that man is both physical and spiritual. This theory of dualism holds that man is made up of the soul, mind and body. In this spiritual approach, the author takes serious consideration of the psychological makeup of man and the power of the mind. Similarly, various scriptural texts have been referred to from time to time because there is transforming power in the word of God. It was by the word that God created all that is seen and unseen, yet through his creation we see his love. We can, therefore, infer that through his word, we experience his love and plans for our life.

Intentional living; Mastering the art of purpose is not only good, but a basic need. It does not only direct our steps, but it directs our thoughts and actions because with these, we pursue our purpose. In this era of moral dilemma, where the abnormal seems normal, yet new philosophies of life set man into a crisis, education seems insufficient to bring the desired change, this manual contains various life facts; hence, it is informative. Given the various crises visible in the declining quality of life despite the technological advancement, this manual is inspirational. Finally, it offers a tested and trusted strong platform for a change of attitude because a renewed thinking creates a renewed perspective, which in turn generates transforming power for the individual and the entire world. Wish you a fruitful navigation through this manual on a purposeful life



Changing An Attitude

Could we change our attitude, we should not only see life differently, but life itself would come to be different

-Katherine Mansfield

P psychologists such as B.F. Skinner, Ivan Pavlov, among others propose various theories that explain how one's mental/cognitive processes are influenced, as well as behavior and performance. Among the determining factors is the feeling of inadequacy. This affects our potential and performance. An inferiority complex that shatters all the possibilities of excellence is dependent on our past experience. These include our past failures, social or economic status, looking up to people who have failed or succeeded, and the change in environment. From a personal experience, after primary I joined a secondary school of a higher social class. The conversations of fellow students who had been in first class schools always left me speechless. Their narratives centered on high school movies, the tourist sites they had visited, computer programs they were comfortable with and computer games they loved most. In brief, they had lived in a world unknown to me.

I did not have a peer with whom to share my remote experiences with. While in the chains of self-inferiority due to the change in the social class and environment, I had a colleague who had hoped to join an international

school, but did not. He was afflicted by the fear of attaining education from a middle class school that would not enable him to realize his expectations. He disliked the school so much every Monday morning he soaked his two pairs of school uniform, including shoes as an excuse not to attend class.

He always acted on the extremes that his father was regularly invited to school to discuss the son's conduct. Although both of us excelled academically, we were never at ease with ourselves. Every day seemed 'hell'. The situation was too complex to comprehend just as the Catholic Church's concept of the Trinity. I could not participate in class and any school activity. I isolated myself despite the love for such a powerful school at the time.

Whenever I thought about my life in school, I felt irritated. I would nervously look about to see if there was no one watching me. I developed the desire to have a new beginning, the urgency to develop a new person in me and the thirst to overcome fear and be at ease like other students. While battling with this incomprehensible situation I always reflected deeply on Mr. J. Kategga, my teacher of English language. "You should hold the bull by the horns," he always reminded us, emphasizing courage and being active in class.

Gradually, I felt that the life I lived was so unpleasant. One evening, while others stretched and slipped out to the football pitch through the faded green lower gate, I remained in the dormitory turning pages of the newly published school Iguana Magazine. Attracted by the green picture of a monitor-lizard like animal that cov-

ered almost a-half the cover page, my eyes landed on a quote from Ambrose Redmoon: "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear".

The questions the quote provoked in me jerked me into a loud inevitable sigh. Feeling uneasy and irritated by my own thoughts, I threw the magazine back in my rusted metallic box and slammed it shut. The dormitory was eerily quiet; I decided to walk out to the school notice board to see prom photos of the previous senior six students where I was sure no one would engage me into nonsensical conversations.

Fortunately, the school enrolled for a newly founded R.A.I.S.E Program. This was an acronym that was at times written as a single word because of its multi-faceted meaning. It stood for the following:

R – Reap what you sow

A – Aspire to be the best you can be

I – Invest in your future

S – Start now

E – Education is the key to success

Various first class schools in Uganda operated this witty formula to empower students and youth through career guidance and cultivating the self. Until then, I had never imagined that an hour talk would ever change my life; fear spanning three years was unbelievably consumed like a cup of coffee on a cold evening. As Dana te Boston, the founder of this therapeutically appreciated program, accomplished an hour session on 'Overcoming our Fears', I swallowed down the tension which felt big

in my throat. My stomach clenched and the heart ached. He painted a picture in which I saw myself. Guilt pricked my heart while he gave examples in which I envisioned myself. I steadily gazed at Boston because he spoke like a Jewish prophet, revealing every secret about me. Any time he rolled his round dazzling eyes, they accusingly descended on me. I felt him drilling me through the bone marrow. My bones were like a never lubricated old squeaky bicycle and the squealing heart was thumping against my ribs. I stealthily followed him after the session. He darted only to see a fumbling student who was the definition of fear. I could feel the squeals and grunts of my stomach. My teeth rattled and I shivered. It was an incomprehensible state, but I realized that it was a result of discovering how fear kills. Indeed, fear had bound me for years. Giving a loud sigh, I said to him "that boy is me." "That boy!" he exclaimed.

He had drilled me all through by his powerful speech and real life experience. Truly, he had talked of a boy who was bleak. Taking a second deep breath, I harnessed the energy to explain. Patting my left shoulder and speaking in a gentle and compassionate voice, Boston asked me to sit on the green metallic bench in the visitors' park. After sharing with him my experience in school, he enjoined me to find a pen and a writing pad. He asked me to describe "fear" with the worst adjectives that I could ever imagine. Clearing my voice as though I was to speak, I wrote:

Fear is bad
Fear kills
Fear is a wild monster
Fear is a ferocious beast
Fear is the worst enemy
Fear ends today

He said: "Based on this, I tell you that in life fear nothing, except fear itself." I took the deepest breath as though I had been for a marathon. Stroking me like a cat, Boston with a gentle smile added: "You have tested the race in a life journey and you are now somewhere." At this, I felt a tremendous relief, inner power and happiness. Smilingly, I calmly nodded my head in approval and with a look of gratitude.

Thereafter, he quickly slid his furry hand into the pocket on his checkered red shirt and forked out a card bearing the following questions, upon which he asked me to conduct a personal therapy based on three WH words

Where am I going?	(Destiny)
Why do I want to go there?	(Reason)
Who if not me?	(Courage)

"What do you find common in these questions," he inquired. "I see the personal pronoun 'I,'" I smilingly asserted. Impressed, he stretched out his hand to offer me a handshake. "Know this!" he said, elaborating: "The pronoun 'I' has an invaluable significance; you have to always assert and reassert yourself in every circumstance and activity that you undertake."

He instructed me to say “If it’s gonna be, it’s up to me” three times with faith and confidence. Boston strongly emphasized that I should always recite this slogan as part of my morning prayer. After reading the questions loudly, he once again said: “Know this! The future (destiny) only belongs to those who can blend vision with courage and for the right reason.”

Feeling a special and foreign power for the first time, I felt like exploding into a run to go and accomplish everything that I had always desired and did not do. I felt like reading everything that I had not read. I nearly sounded the gong to parade the entire school and share my first speech. I now felt I should contest for all the posts I had always wished to stand for. I was filled with real power. Laying a paternal arm across my shoulder, Boston asked me whether I had been to any Pentecostal Church. Before I made an attempt, he told me that in the Pentecostal Churches, the inspired worshippers among the congregation give testimonies. Softening the tone of his voice, he sighed and said: “Know this! No testimony without test and no triumph without trial.” He congratulated me upon walking that life’s journey of self-transformation.

Asserting that self-transformation is the greatest achievement in life, he encouraged me to step on my fears and never turn back. Filled with great joy, I assured him that having overcome fear, I was to have a great deal of faith in my own potential, a positive attitude, be enthusiastic and remain persistent. I remembered Jesus’ words to Peter in Mathew 16:18: “...You are a rock, on you I will build my Church..” Premised on these words, I solilo-

quized: “Fear, onto you I will stand and on courage I will build my destiny.” I prayed in thanks giving for having changed my stress into strength.

This experience is based on a school environment and it may sound naïve. Fine! But, I strongly believe that it is in one way or the other related to our daily experiences. We often find challenges due to our past experiences. Changing from one working environment to another may come along with incomparable challenges. These may include inferiority and superiority complexes, marginalization and our early childhood experiences, are such immense stumbling blocks. Our past failures may as well inhibit the necessary exploitation of our potential, but what matters is not the number of fallings, but how many times one gets up. “Holding the bull by the horns” is very crucial for any person who wants to live a life of purpose.

There is a common assertion that “life is a game”. This phrase has a powerful hidden meaning. To win a game, one must play using either logic or math. By this, we play to win, but if we use psychology, we play not to lose because our brains hate the idea of losing something that is valuable to us. In this, we abandon our rational thought and make poor decisions out of fear to fail. “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself” as Franklin Roosevelt, the 32nd president of the United States of America said during his inaugural address in 1933. From this experience I came to conclude that success is not a destination, but a journey. Other situations might have created our past, screwed the present, but have no control over the future. When I changed my attitude, the world

became a beautiful and warm place for me. My level of association changed and I made friends who have walked my life's journey with me because they believe in me. We must keep moving even when others despise our efforts. In an attempt to have a self-transformation, many people may not understand us, but this should not be an issue to winners. Have faith, be enthusiastic, keep a positive attitude and remain persistent. A soul that never loses faith and hope while remaining persistent in prayer, yields an unquenchable power. Above all, commend all your endeavors into the hands of that Supreme Being that you believe in through prayer with faith. He assures us in Mathew 17:20-21: 'If you have faith....Nothing shall be impossible.'



Overcoming Self-Doubt

A happy person is not a person in a certain set of circumstances, but rather a person with a certain set of attitudes

-Hugh Downs

In John 20:24-29, we read about the doubting Thomas who was a disciple of Jesus. After Jesus' resurrection and appearance to his disciples in the upper room, Thomas, who was away during Jesus' appearance, could not believe. There are various lessons to draw from this scriptural text, but the most important is that Thomas does not refute the possibility of the resurrection of his Lord. However, what he needs is to see and touch Jesus' wounds before he believes. Knowledge is, therefore, vital for our belief.

Even in the case of self-doubt, we do not refute our ability to accomplish a particular task, but we feel a need for some other sensible proof of our ability to do so. The proof to show us that we are capable of some achievements may be material or immaterial, ranging from nationality, finances, ethnicity, sex, age, religion, education background and related opportunities. In such an era of 'technical know-who' rather than technical know-how, that is, how connected we are to people of influence in society may also give us confidence. People with self-doubt have a lot of negative energy and feel that any progress is too hard for them; hence, self-doubt con-

notes a feeling of inadequacy to accomplish that which we are capable of doing. It may not necessarily be a feeling of inability, but a hidden opinion about how less fortunate or less gifted we may be. It is often synonymous with inferiority complex which is a great obstacle to self-actualization. Self-actualization is a natural longing for appreciation, intimacy, recognition for any accomplishment or achievement or connection with those that are powerful in society due to wealth or any form of authority.

Besides the dearth of knowledge, our past failures are fundamental in instilling a feeling of inadequacy. Worse still, due to our past failures and shortcomings, some people might have along the way doubted us and so communicated the negative feelings to us right from the time we were in our mothers' womb, through our childhood, school and work environment. What people may say about our childhood appearances, games and capabilities could have instilled a feeling of rejection. These may just be few of the many causes of inadequacy that may not miss in our life's journey. This implies that everyone is a potential candidate for self-doubt. Discussed below are the possible five ways one can firmly hold on to overcome self-doubt.

Step One: Confront your Past

As earlier noted that our past experiences contribute greatly towards self-doubt, we cannot change them, but change the way we view our past, thereby changing ourselves. In 2018, the Catholic Diocese of Jinja organized a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It cost \$1,970 per individual. Despite the fact that it was quite costly given the

economic status of Uganda, quite a number of people were willing to sell off all they had as to be part of the pilgrims. Subsequently, I became curious about Jerusalem, learning that besides being one of the oldest cities in the world and considered holy by the three Abrahamic religions, that is, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it had experienced the worst of human conflict and violence. “A place that has never had any taste of peace has been destroyed twice, besieged twenty-three times, attacked fifty-two times and captured and recaptured forty-four times”¹.

Despite such a terrible history, Jerusalem attracts millions of tourists from around the world far than any other ancient cities. From this we learn that status can be abused, violated, vandalized or cruelly mocked, but it can never be taken. Jerusalem originally means “Possession of peace” or “Foundation of peace”² and it was through an understanding of the greatness of this ruined city that it was rebuilt and its popularity restored. When we understand our history and master our failures, all the blocks that hit us in the past are used to construct new magnificent empires; they cease to be stumbling blocks. Our status endures despite the challenges that we face on our way to greatness; hence, our purpose remains unique and enduring in validity.

Similarly, one important figure in modern day history is South African political icon Nelson Mandela. Born on 18th July 1918, he joined the African National Congress (ANC) in 1943 and co-founded its Youth League in 1944 from where he fought against the apartheid regime. He was first arrested on 5 December 1956 leading him into

the Treason trial. He was re-arrested in 1962 and tried in 1963 in what came to be known as the Rivonia trial where he was to face the death penalty in 1964. He was; thus, imprisoned for twenty-seven years, first at Robben Island and later at Pollsmoor Prison, where he was subjected to harsh labor such as breaking stones. Despite such, his status was not destroyed. This is the reason he remained a presidential material. It would be easy to imagine him coming out with anger, bitterness and revenge.

Contrarily, Mandela preached forgiveness, reconciliation and tolerance. In the film *Invictus* which covers the events from the release of Mandela from prison in 1990 to his inauguration in 1994 as South Africa's president, he notes: "Forgiveness liberates the soul. It removes fear. That is why it is such a powerful weapon. The past is the past, we look to the future". In the same manner, the great icon shared his experience with A.P.J Abdul Kalam (Then President of India) in 2004 during a visit to South Africa: "As I walked out of the door towards the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison"³. Mahatma Gandhi often noted that "The weak can never forgive; forgiveness is the attribute of the strong". In the same sense, he argued that 'an eye for an eye will make the whole world blind'. Forgiving is not, therefore, for the sake of those who hurt you, but for your own sake. While confronting one's past, we must forgive those who hurt us along the way and then forgive ourselves for any mistakes or failures.

Unfortunately, it is not that easy; many times, we choose

to forgive, but the feelings of the affliction keep hurting us. When confronting our past, we need to acknowledge that it is easier to forgive than carry old wounds. Clinging onto our past-hurts is like carrying a red hot coal waiting to throw it at the one who hurt us. By the time we find our enemy, the coal shall have burnt us.

Through self-reflection, we feel the depth of the hurt and we come to understand the conditions that brought it up. We, therefore, realize that all of us are human and capable of hurting others. Hence, forgiving is one of the divine attributes which can save us from being as cruel as those who hurt us. When we forgive, we realize that we are more powerful than those who hurt us. This vitality does not only point towards spiritual or emotional health, but also contributes towards physical rejuvenation. Our esteem; thus, rises and we are able to overcome self-doubt because we feel that we are stronger than those who hurt us we are greater than our past failures.

Step Two: Know Thyself

Socrates, the philosopher of antiquity, emphasizes the writings that were inscribed at the temple of Delphi in ancient Greece. Delphi is a holy place located at the south-western spur of Mount Parnassus in Greece. The writings were “Gnaut Seuton”. These literally mean “know thyself”⁴ . The Greek words emphasized ever being in touch with the inside. They invite us to take a deeper reflection about our uniqueness and giftedness vis-à-vis our purpose. Considering the biological and the psychological makeup of the human person, our complexity and uniqueness cannot be comprehended even by any existing scientific studies so far accomplished.

Each individual is a unique artifact of God's own hands. With Gods perfection and love, he made everyone to reflect his majesty and glory.

Enormous investigations in philosophy, psychology, cognitive science and religion, all agree that the human person has both the brain and the mind. Unfortunately, it remains a big question on how these two interact. It remains a puzzle how the immaterial or spiritual realities like thoughts and emotions can be brought forth by the physical neurons and synapses. This is not different from the question of what consciousness exactly is. There is no agreement if the mind is a product of the brain or it is separate. Considering the physiology of the human brain, it only constitutes 2% of the human body, yet it receives 15% of the blood from the heart, 20% percent of the body oxygen and 25% of the body glucose is utilized by the brain.⁵ these unreciprocated questions tell us how each individual is.

Once in a church on Sunday, the preacher analogized that if we do not know our worth, we are not different from a crested crane. He noted that the crested crane is revered in Uganda and is part of the Uganda Coat of Arms. Unfortunately, it remains in the bush, yet everyone would be glad to ever have it in his home because it is a source of national pride. Besides the spiritual and physiological uniqueness of man, in the creation account in Genesis 1:26, while creating the human kind, God said "Let us make human beings in our own likeness....". More interestingly, in Jeremiah 1:5, God categorically

mentions that “Before I formed you in your mother’s womb, I knew you”. If only each individual could realize how unique and special he/she is, there would be no room for self-doubt. If we reflect on how unique and special we are, we can be able to understand our nature. In this way, we identify our purpose and pursue that particular purpose. Based on our purpose, we ably mould our life and all our value systems that are in line within our purpose.

Step Three: Believe in Thyself

Quite often, we are told and reminded to believe in ourselves. It is quite rare or impossible to sit for a national examination in our lifetime without being encouraged by various people. We are normally told to believe in ourselves. There are equally different approaches that have been suggested by psychologists on how we can come to believe in ourselves. While overcoming self-doubt, we need to believe in our own capabilities. In 2008/9 when Barrack Obama was contesting for the presidency of the United States of America, his famous and captivating catchphrase was “Yes We Can” that also defined his most famous 2008 speeches. Subsequently, various analysts partly attribute his success to this assertion.

David Axelrod, then campaign media adviser for Barack Obama pointed out in his 2015 memoir ‘Believer: My Forty Years in Politics’, “It had strong appeal to black and liberal voters on whom we were counting....” Notably, there is a plethora of slogans, including biblical quotations, that instill a great faith in us; hence, overcoming self-doubt. For example, Philippians 4:13 notes that “I can do everything through Christ who strengthens

me". When such phrases are asserted with faith, they yield an enormous power that can help us overcome self-doubt and any form of fears.

Different religions have different creeds they use to profess their faith. In the Catholic Church, reaffirming ones faith is a must in the official form of worship, the Holy Mass. This is purposely for reaffirming what one believes. We, therefore, always need to regularly reaffirm our belief in our capabilities so as to remain focused on our life purpose. Proclaiming our convictions inscribes them in our hearts and awakens a positive energy in us. This helps us to overcome self-doubt.

Step Four: Invest in Thyself

In Kampala City, there is a school Light Academy with the motto "Knowledge is Power". The bold font of the school motto always attracted my sight and puzzled me whenever I saw it during my road fitness exercises because I always wondered how knowledge is power. I always kept various questions in my mind and even listed some knowledgeable people who are considerably powerless because their knowledge does not reflect the quality of life they lived. I always had reasons to disqualify the validity of that motto not until one day during my road fitness exercises a heavy downpour fell on the earth just after I had reached the aforementioned school's gate. I had to take shelter in the school because any nearby houses, where could have possibly sought refuge, were about a hundred meters away. The elderly gateman, who owned an incredibly combed beard that almost covered his entire face and a well pronounced black spot on his forehead, took pity on me. He invited

me into his small security room at the gate.

As the rain unceasingly pounded the earth and loudly splattered the roof over our heads, my eyes kept glued on the school motto. Later, I realized that knowledge of something yields confidence. In turn, confidence breeds courage, which is a cardinal virtue. Prior knowledge and courage propel us to actions. By the time it stopped raining, I could not doubt the motto anymore because creative thinking makes us discover what may seem impossible. If we creatively think and we act with courage, which all stem from knowledge, we are able to overcome self-doubt. We are equally able to invent and implement solutions to any challenges affecting the world; hence, knowledge makes us better persons. Similarly, knowledge makes us ready for opportunities because opportunities only knock on the doors of prepared persons. When we invest in knowledge for a reasonable time, we are confident enough; thus, self-doubt cannot have a room in our lives.

Step Five: Be Thyself

Curiosity and love for knowledge has always compelled me to explore the foundations of knowledge and any existing theories. One of the important figures in human history is Greek philosopher Aristotle. His works are the backbone of modern day science and ethics. He proposed the geocentric theory which argued that the earth (geo) is at the centre of the universe. This equally explained that the sun and other heavenly bodies revolve around the earth. Many educated people subscribed to the Aristotelian geocentric view, including the Church, and later many of our African cultures. Additionally, there

are biblical examples that attest Aristotle's argument. For example, Psalm 104:5 "You fixed the earth on its foundations, it can never be moved", and Ecclesiastes 1:5 "The sun rises and the sun sets, then it presses to the place where it rises". 1 Chronicles 16:30, and Psalm 93:1, and 96:10, are the other scriptures.

On the contrary, in 1543 Nicolaus Copernicus published *On the Revolution of the Heavenly Spheres* which ignited the Copernican Revolution that formed the heliocentric theory. The theory argues that the sun (*helio*), not the earth, was fixed and all other bodies, including the earth, revolved around the sun. Galileo Galilei, born in Pisa in 1564 in Italy, was passionate about Copernicus' ideas. He had passion for mathematics, but was discouraged to study mathematics because it was less paying at that time. He; thus, enrolled for a medical course to please his father. Gradually, he successfully persuaded his father to allow him study mathematics instead of medicine.

Pope Paul V ordered Galileo not to hold, defend or teach the heliocentric theory of Copernicus which was opposed to the Church's geocentric view in 1616, whether orally or in writing. Based on his convictions, Galileo took sixteen years contemplating what he believed and what he was told to believe. He also invented the first telescope. He then published *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, a book in which he defended the heliocentric theory. The Church banned this book and no person was allowed to read or defend it. In 1633 during his trial, he was accused of holding wrong teachings (heresy). He asserted that the sun is static, and it is

at the centre of the universe, but not the earth and that the earth rotates around the sun. He was asked to curse and detest these opinions during the inquisition trial in 1633. He was sentenced to house arrest, where he remained for the rest of his life, until death.

Fortunately, 202 years later Galileo's book was removed from the list of Vatican's banned books. This seemed too late to do Galileo any good, but it again took another 170 years for the Church to admit the change and Pope John Paul II in 1992 officially conceded that the Earth is not stationary; it revolves around the sun. It, however, took eight more years and in 2000, Pope John Paul apologized on behalf of the Catholic Church on how it had treated Galileo. It is not a question if the apology after 367 years of Galileo's sentence would do him any service because it was a great sign of reconciliation between the Church's teaching and science.⁶

From the example of Galileo, we can appreciate that imitations are limitations. It is evident that if Galileo had imitated the existing 'truth', he would be limited in his discoveries. It is possible that even the whole world could be carrying on the wrong 'truth'. The courage of one man led to a whole shift in how the world appreciates science. Rolo May is a renowned psychiatrist and in his 1967 publication *Man's Search for Himself*, he points out that the opposite of courage in our society is not cowardice, but it is conformity. If we fail to be ourselves and we want to live on other peoples' behalf, we frustrate God's plans for us and for the world. If we stick

to our purpose, we are able to contribute to the world the unique gifts which God has bestowed on us.

Aristotle in his work *The Nicomachian Ethics* argues that “Where your talents and the need of the world cross, there lies your purpose”. If we live our true selves, we are able to exploit our talents as we respond to the needs of the world; hence, our purpose is realized. Being ready to be oneself is one great step in overcoming self-doubt and ensuring self actualization. It is through this that we ably build the world around us.

After Galileo, more improved telescopes have been invented and 100 billion galaxies in the universe have been discovered and new planets explored, but they are all fruits of one man having been ready to be himself. When we imitate others, we deprive the world of the individual precious God-given gifts.



How to have Constant Positive Energy

Happiness is an attitude. We either make ourselves miserable, or happy and strong. The amount of work is the same

-Francesca Reigler

In our daily engagements, we see people who have a constant positive energy; they accomplish all their tasks with zeal. They can even handle different tasks at the same time with the same energy and determination. Such people are persistent and run all their activities with ease and motivation. They are ever charged for good results and they draw joy from their accomplishments. Their positive energy flows so naturally, making others think that it is just a talent or gift to have positive energy.

In a work environment, such people are often accused of working for promotions and to be seen, yet it may not be necessarily so. To put it precisely, they are donkey-like. On the contrary, we see others who are less motivated and never meet deadlines. They never accomplish, even the cheapest task, and act as though their energy was destroyed. Even when they set targets for themselves, they can never take a step. When they choose and make up their mind to do something, they can start with energy, but suddenly get weighed down and give up along the way. Some take pity on themselves and begin to feel they are unlucky or less gifted. The truth is that we are all capable of possessing the

same energy at the same degree.

Luckily, Newtonian science and existing studies such as Brownian laws of motion have proven that we all have energy within us. To start with, at the beginning of the 17th century, philosopher Wilhelm Leibniz, in his theory of Monads published in his book in 1666, *De Arte Combinatoria* (On the Art of Combination) first asserted that nothing exists, except small packs of force which he called monads. His explanation was rather complex and obscure. Today in a simpler explanation, quantum physics equally supports the same argument that things do not exist solidly as we see them, but they are mere packets of energy and the universe is a gigantic field of energy. Quantum physics studies the atomic and sub-atomic processes.

When quantum physicists penetrated into the innermost part of matter, they were surprised to see that matter is not solid as our senses tell us, but it is mere energy in motion. Unlike lower level chemistry that is informed by Newtonian science, which sees matter as having shape and atoms being arranged in an orderly manner, deeper studies of the subatomic particles reveal that matter has no design or shape. They sometimes behave like waves, sometimes like particles, and sometimes behave like both.⁷ By the fact that humans are also matter, they possess these atomic and subatomic units; scientifically, they are a heap of energy.

Similarly, biological processes are products of energy. The nervous system shows that impulses to the brain through the synapses move in form of electrical energy

by exchange of positive and negative charges through protein receptors. Studies of the digestive system equally demonstrate that after food has been digested, it is assimilated into the cells as simple chemical elements and compounds such as sodium, iron and potassium, with chemical energy from the digestive system into the cell.

The respiratory system is not in any way different. An examination of the Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) shows that it is written in chemical compounds to form a helix which is bound by chemical energy. More obvious is the human circulatory system. When the heart fails to generate the energy to pump blood, soon the brain waves stop and so does life. To sum up the whole baggage of chemistry and biology concerning the human anatomy, we can say we are full of energy. It may manifest in various forms such as chemical, electrical, potential, kinetic, spiritual energy, or even other forms.

Interestingly, the law of conservation of energy, to which humans also subscribe, states that “energy can neither be created nor destroyed, but it can be transformed from one form to another”. We have seen that humans are naturally full of energy. Negative energy can become positive energy and the reverse is true. Since we realized that all people are made up of packets of energy and all their bodily processes are driven by energy, those who look less motivated with no zeal for their ideals may seem to be having no energy. The difference between the two personalities is in mastering the law of conservation of energy. Conserving our energy is an

art that can be developed through practice. Therefore, the three steps hereunder help us in maintaining a high positive energy.

i) Learn to Value Silence

A number of biblical figures demonstrate the value of silence and conservation of energy. There is, for example, Prophet Jonah, whom God commanded to go to Nineveh, and he disobeyed. In the book of Jonah 2:1, Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and the fish vomited him. The three days of silence converted his negative energy into positive energy for the proclamation of God's word. Acts chapter 9 accounts for the conversion of Saul from a persecutor to a proclaimer. When he encountered the Lord on his way to Damascus, Saul lost his sight for three days. The three days silence is the secret behind changing his negative energy into positive energy. He is one of the outstanding examples who transformed negative energy into positive energy during his silence. He was an apostle who never lived at Jesus' time, yet he preached more than any of the apostles of Jesus. He went all around the towns persecuting the Church with energy and enthusiasm, and when he transformed his energy for the greater glory of God, he preached to both Jews and Gentiles.

After Jesus' death, the disciples retreated to the upper room, where to reflect and pray as well. While in the upper room and after a series of reflections, the disciples received the spirit, not of fear, but courage. They entered deep into themselves and surrendered to the absolute power and were able to overcome the chains of fear. When we learn to value silence, we convert our

negative energy to positive energy. We no longer depend on our flesh or the circumstances around us, but we completely submit to the uncontrollable spirit of success. When we are spirit-filled, we even lose concern about the obstacles in our environment and what people say about our plans and decisions. When people are spirit-filled for success, they see themselves beyond the limits of their environment and locality. For life to be lived meaningfully, there must be a moment of entering the innermost self. Each individual who has to live a meaningful life must knock at all the doors deep within to examine his potentials, weaknesses, aspirations, motivation and purpose. This may be done any time and as many times as possible.

A negative energy is any force that drags you towards the opposite direction from the one you intend to go. You may have to meet the deadline for an assignment, yet the desire to spend long hours on social media while scrolling through other people's lives, keeps you in the stands. All the things that do not contribute to the success of our life projects and activities on hand can yield negative energies. During silence, we hear and know how the negative energy in us resonates so that it can be transformed into positive energy. For example, if one is struggling for a spiritual break through, during silence he can choose to spend long hours on movies or unconstructive conversations, instead of prayers and reflection on Holy Scriptures. While in the loud noise of our bodily allurements, we cannot hear how the energy in us resonates. Positive energy is made visible in enthusiasm, courage, commitment and persistence. People who mastered the value of silence have been immortalized

and are models for generations. These are great men and women who formed new persons in themselves, yet under the same old skin.

ii) Watch your Level of Association

Despite the fact that in silence we hear the quiet voice within, the clues from others partly influence our lives. It is common knowledge that the people we associate with impact our lives in various dimensions, including physical, emotional, spiritual, economic and social wellbeing. This fact is attested to by the Luganda proverb '*Mbulira gwoyita naye nkubulire empisa zo*' (Tell me your associates and I will tell you your character). Proverbs 13:20 notes that "Walk with the wise and you become wise, but the companion of fools fares badly". Sometimes we immediately notice the impact of our associates, yet in many cases, we take long to realize how our life is being impacted. Humans are by nature social beings and cannot leave in isolation.

However, we have a duty to use our God-given gift of reason to discern the type of people we associate with if we are to ensure a constant positive energy. Positive-minded people fill us with a positive energy and these are worth associating with. To keep a constant energy, we must be mindful of the people we surround ourselves with. If they are negatively charged, then they can neutralize our positive charge. The people we associate with can influence the realization of our destiny in three ways:

- **Push us towards our destiny**

Such friends have a reason to live. They live a life of purpose and are determined to realize their worthy ideals. They draw joy from their success and also celebrate others' success. They commend what others do and are positive about other people's progress. They appreciate and encourage even the slightest of achievement that others make on the path to their destiny. They see the world as loving, caring, beautiful and good to live in with the company of others. They are full of positive energy and transmit it to not only the people around them, but also to all the other creatures in their environment. They are charismatic and worth associating with. Their encouragement both in word and deed fills us with a positive energy. They always speak and act while respecting the other person's independent thoughts. They give us a push even when we feel weak because they believe in us.

- **Push us off the path to our destiny**

The friends that push us off the path to our destiny have negative energy that propels us to the wrong direction, losing focus on our destiny. They do not value our aspirations, but theirs. They are self-centered and feel that theirs is the best. They are ever ready to associate with us as long as we are willing to follow them at the expense of our aspirations. Friends who push us off the path to our destiny are the easiest to make and deceptively appear to be friendlier than positive-minded friends. They parade minor allurements that are inevitably appealing. They love playing with our appetites and short-lived enjoyments. They offer simple promises and offer sim-

ple tokens if one complies with them; hence, they don't give room for independent thought. They seem to know much and are fond of using demeaning language and mockery to despise us if we stand our ground; they are an obstacle to the realization of our destiny.

- **Block us from our destiny**

Such friends are full of a negative energy that neutralizes us completely. They often have no goals to live for. They are extreme misers who find sadness in other people's success, but find joy in their failure. Thus, they work hard to discourage others from pursuing their goals, but drive them into the abyss ill-company. They drag you behind and weigh your energy down. In a nutshell, they are a wet blanket. With the determination to block other people's progress, they destroy the bridge in one's life journey than see others rejoice their achievements.

Unfortunately, such negative-minded people do not necessarily need to be your friends before they destroy you. Your own individual weaknesses such as lack of direction or purpose can be a fertile ground for you to be penetrated and controlled. They are self-proclaimed fortune tellers and speak like prophets against people's progress. Besides their failure to acknowledge other people's potentials, they wrongly diagnose others and then inject them with their negative energies. Arguably, nothing, except failure, comes out of such people.

iii) Remain connected to God

In my childhood, I loved to watch birds soaring in the sky in beautiful formations, especially in the evening. Often times, we sang folk songs asking the white birds to

share with us their white color so as to be as beautiful as them. Moving into one direction, they always suddenly changed direction, leaving us wondering if there was a road in the sky use of which required the birds to behave so or had a lead bird that commanded them.

Similarly, on watching Animal World TV series, I realized fish have the same behavior while in the water. My mind wrestled with the idea that perhaps such turns arise as a form of communication. But, experiments in Quantum physics explain that among all, there is a field of energy and all the birds and fish are in touch and resonate according to that field of energy. But, the fact that the universe is a dynamic web of interconnectedness, human beings are equally in this field of energy.⁸

Similarly, when we are full of positive energy, we are not particular entities, but resonate within the gigantic field of energy. Remaining in this field requires that we remain in unity with God to whom all power belongs so as to keep a constant energy. If I may analogize, a magnet has a force and it can attract other magnetic materials such as pins. When a pin is attracted to a magnet, it is magnetized; hence, it becomes a ferromagnetic material that can attract other pins. The force, therefore, is shared through a series of pins. When the pin is alone and not connected to the magnet, it cannot attract other pins; thus, it has no power on its own. In the same manner, we cannot keep a constant positive energy unless we are joined to the source of all power who is God. We keep with the gigantic field of supreme energy through prayer and a life worthy of the glory of God in us and this is the last and most important secret to a constant

positive energy.

God is fair to everyone because all He created was good and when he created man, he was very good. We are all in his likeness and image; hence, he loves us equally. He would never give others more energy and others less because we are all worthy of his majesty. Out of his love for humankind, he bestowed on us the free will as an extra favor. We all have the ability to transform the energy he gave us. Success is a journey that is moved step by step and requires an effort. Success is not exactly like betting, and it is neither magic nor a miracle. It is keeping a constant positive energy made visible in determination, confidence, hard work and persistence. Keeping a constant energy takes effort and regular reflection on our daily living, and watching our level of association as well as remaining connected to God.



The Power to Stand alone

*Things turn out best for people who make
the best out of the way things turn up*

-Art Linkletter

Some moments in life often require us to take the courage and stand out for our dreams and aspirations. It is based on a sincere fact that each person has an inner power, but the challenge is in awakening it and choosing to stand by that power. A lack of courage makes us doubt our capabilities and we fail to stand out and shine. Oprah Winfrey equally puts it: "Do the one thing you think you cannot do. Fail at it. Try again. Do better the second time. The Only people who never tumble are those who never mount the high wire. This is your moment. Own it". It may not be that obvious to stand out and shine on the very first day we try, but it may involve numerous trials. The momentum to greatness is not necessarily in today's perfect excellence, but in the power to rise after one falls. It is through such a tedious attempt that we can firmly stand.

Occasionally, we find it easier to stand in a group than to stand alone. Often times, the bigger the group, the securer we feel. This reminds me of Mr. Alex, my primary six science teacher. He was as tall as Zacchaeus, Jesus' friend. Unlike other teachers whom we addressed with titles such as "Mr" and "Sir", his only title

was “Master”. Failure to address him so attracted canes from him similar to canes tax defaulters suffered during the colonial period.

That aside, he always effectively tucked in his over-size blue velvet shirt into his faded Teachers’ college maroon trouser that he tightened slightly below his chest. He always matched swiftly into class so much that his extra-large shirt formed a dome at the back more less like the first invented parachute. He would rather forget to polish his shoes than forget to carry a stick of almost his height to the classroom. If precisely put, he was more zealous at caning than teaching.

One day upon entering the class, he fired us a question. Those who knew the answer put their hands up. Unlike other days, this time he restrained from caning all those who had not put up their hands as his habit was. He invited those who knew the answer to the front. He instructed those who did not know to go to the back of the classroom, and those who were not sure remained in the middle.

It took pupils a great deal of time changing from one group to another because many were not sure of the group he would cane most. Even more worrying was his suggestion that those who went to the front, but had wrong answers would yield double punishment, making almost all the people at front shift to back. Understandably, those already at the back confidently smiled and laughed in their fists for fear of being seen now that their number had swollen up; they felt stronger and securer, the punishment awaiting them notwithstanding.

Some times in life, we may not only have to look for a bigger group to find security. We may have to stand out alone and face the consequences of our decisions because our purpose in life is never the same. The English adage that “Better to stand alone than to be in an ill company” summarizes it. Standing in a crowd may offer a feeling of relief, but will never help us overcome our weaknesses. It is not different from drinking alcohol or abusing drugs to overcome a problem. The challenge still remains and victory is in facing the challenge. The only hidden trick that winners use is learning to stand out for a worthy ideal even when life appears to be at stake. Even in circumstances, where we have the same goal, successful people have the mastery of standing out for their convictions.

While still finding relief and security in a group, it downed on me in high school; this was my turning point all together. My beloved and charming physics teacher Mr. Vincent, who at the time had countable grey hair, was exceedingly active, fast in all he did and found joy in making tantalizing statements.

One Monday noon as he swiftly entered our class, he put up a calculation on the blackboard. He randomly invited me to take up the problem. As I reluctantly and fearfully stood up, he gazed at me with his eyes slightly above the top edge of his extraordinarily big-rimmed glasses as his moustache strongly quivered like a leaf under a rainstorm, sending my inner self into chaotic turmoil. My stomach growled like a wolf cub in a snow cave. I saw red and yellow as my ears rung and felt flamed up.

Trembling, I picked a piece of chalk and slowly broke some tiny pieces off with my thumbnail to appear as though I was thinking so hard. The entire class was as silent as a grave yard. Although shouting at learners was his trademark, he did not yell at me; but calmly said: "Some of you amuse me. So, if I give you a calculation, you stop thinking, freeze, melt and sink! But, if I tell you that there is no food today, then you will begin to think. How come? Water is there, firewood is there, the cooks are there, flour is there, even the beans are there and we paid our school fees! How come?" He then instructed me to take up my seat, but I felt so uneasy for the whole lesson.

That I stood out alone facing the teacher before a problem on the blackboard was such a challenging moment so much that I forewent lunch that day; I remained in the classroom alone examined my life and aspirations. I realized that just as I stood alone for the calculation, I had to learn to stand alone and define myself. Deep in my heart I vowed that by hook or crook, I had to grasp each and every concept by heart and I had to stand out. I had to let go crowd group thinking and related false confidence that comes with being part of a group. I realized that one may move in the crowd, but when the eleventh hour strikes, one stands alone.

"How come and why me?" is the powerful question that kept racing in my mind. If such a question comes from deep within the heart, it means one feels they do not deserve what they are going through. It is an implication that you still have self-worth so much that you feel you do not deserve what you are going through. It is a feel-

ing indicative that one desires that something greater or positive should happen than negative circumstance at hand. This, too, implies that regardless of how much terror you face, you still feel you have something left with; that is the humanity in you. It is the ability to use the faculty of reason and position oneself for a greater good. If we have no circumstances challenging our beliefs, then we have got to challenge ourselves, propelling us to the next level of greatness. True rejoicing comes after we have known our worth and equally defended it.

When we challenge ourselves and choose to stand out, any vow made is imprinted in the heart. Any commitment made will last as long as one lives. This is basically because at such a moment, all the body systems respond to your challenge. To restate it, you are not concerned about anything, except the challenge and the commitment you make. The two Mosaic tablets for the Ten Commandments broke, but such a vow will never break. It is the only covenant that you sign between the psyche and the body, and it is written in the heart. It is the willingness to stand out and shine, and standing out is a golden rule for successful people.

Just like Saul changed from a persecutor to a preacher, my song changed that day. The confidence that I got in standing alone in the face of challenges, was beyond measure. It is that fire that still burns. It is that power that still propels me to hunger for what lasts. I became hungry for priceless endeavors. Standing up alone to face the calculation amidst a great silence challenged my beliefs. I realized that a renewed thinking can only occur at a cost, but it is not worth remaining the same.

I emptied myself of the fears, thinking in terms of ‘we’ and I filled my mind with positive energy, determination, enthusiasm and hunger for higher ideals endowed with magnificent worth. It was a new stanza of life. It was a leap into the true self for a true life. Since then, I realized that a renewed thinking yields enormous power that distinguishes winners from the majority.

My experience taught me to stand out alone for things that are imperishable. The higher order values offer the true definition of life. These are grounded on things that are unseen rather than the visible ones. Life does not necessarily depend on the beautiful spouse, material wealth, high paying job, number of children, but it depends on the relationship between the self and these secondary aspects. That relationship that is unseen is the pillar of life. The degrees may never define life, but the unseen wisdom counts in all spheres of life. The value of life depends on the metaphysical. Metaphysics is of Greek origin, where *meta* means after or beyond and *physika* means the physical or seen, which we can perceive with our senses.

Truth only lies in that which goes beyond our senses. Always have hunger, not for physical gains, but unseen realities like knowledge, justice, love, ethics, friendship and commitment because these give us the power to stand. The two words “in” and “for” can sum up this whole discussion. The former stands for what is inside and this can never be corrupted, while the later points to what is outside the self. This is the core reason why wise people invest first in themselves and subsequently for themselves. This gives us the power to stand, stand

out and be outstanding.

In this quest, one has to remember that all may not be attained from a silver plate, but may come along with discouraging setbacks, inclines and anticlines. Each person has the will power, and this is what keeps one moving in one direction towards a destiny. As you stand out at the start, many people may not understand you and may despise your efforts, but this should not affect the desire and decision to stand out and shine. Some may be in need of company in the world of failures; thus, they should not discourage you, but the decision you take to unleash your potential should keep you moving. That determination and craving for what one considers to be the pearl should never burn out. Let the bond between you and your God grow stronger. Pray to the sole principle of life and the author of your aspirations. Prayer has the power that is beyond our limited understanding. Trust in God because from him, all power comes.



Powerful Decision Making

The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

One Friday evening as we held a staff weekly meeting, the company director was excited about the commitment of the staff members and the progress of our company. He; thus; revealed that he had organized a surprise dinner for all the employees in the nearby famous Kenturkey Fried Chicken (KFC) restaurant outlet. A mere mention of KFC was sufficient to excite every one present, including the regular and most active contributors during the meeting that they ran short of contributions.

The meeting was soon adjourned and we dashed out to our next destination. After finding some parking slot in the basement, we got to the escalator; it deposited us at the food court. The extreme gentle ambiance at KFC commanded a feel of gentleness within us. Gazing at the side wing, we saw people who were sited upright as though they were having a chess competition. They were steady and upright as though the chairs in the restaurant would somersault in case one dared to lean backwards as they wetted their throats with cocktail juice.

Turning to the counter, the cook was stacking eggrolls in a steamer tray. A pretty waitress whose dazzling blue eyes and pearly teeth reflect the beauty of KFC, welcomed us. Her lovely lips were like twin rosebud petals in spring sunlight. Spinning on her high heel golden boots while she brushed her blond hair off her neck with the left hand, the angelic waitress ushered us into the restaurant.

Since there had been no prior arrangements on what each staff member was to be served, we were presented with the menu and each person was to make a choice on what he or she had to eat. However, it was not that easy for most of the members to make choices. Many turned the menu from cover to cover, before they found what to order for despite the many options therein. Many who could not take a decision on what they had to eat started asking what others had ordered for. They also made the same order as their fellow staff.

It was interesting to note that some who made their choices willfully started grumbling at the first taste of the food, not because it was not good, but other people's choices looked yummier. It was further more interesting to see that others abandoned their choices and ended up sharing with those who seemed to have made better choices. As I had gluey spaghetti and gold ball meat balls, I had fewer conversations as I kept reflecting on the tragedy of decision making.

I quickly recalled the French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, whose argument is based on choice. He categorically notes that man is not only free, but man is

freedom. Out of his freedom, man chooses what he has to be. To him, our choices are the hinges of our destiny because we are what we choose to be. The self is not already made, but is in continuous making. We are the artisans and the choices are the brushes with which we paint what we want our life to be. But, what informs these choices is the big question. Quite often, various factors influence our choices and often time, we have a conflict in/of choices.

The conflicts often arise because the outcomes of our choices are either equally good or sometimes because all the outcomes are bad, but then we must choose a lesser evil. For example, some of the staff members who failed to choose from the menu had a conflict in choices because most dishes were equally good. What is most interesting in Sartre's philosophical argument is that we cannot refuse to choose. He argues that even in refusing to choose out of the existing options, we have chosen not to choose. When we linger into indecision, we have already made a choice not to choose.

When most of my workmates completed their meals, I conversed with Ms. Linda as dug my teeth in the remaining few meat balls on my plate. She shared with me her plans to go for further studies; she quickly opened her leather brown hand bag and presented to me her application form. She sought for some guidance on how she had to fill it. I was kin to note that despite answering some questions, some spaces needed a second thought, or even seeking people's opinion. She had filled in some parts, for example, on gender, where she had to tick female or male. This means that some de-

cisions may be easy while others may contain conflicts within themselves. As I excused myself to complete my meal and then pay attention to her application form, she stretched out her hand for a tooth pick. As I picked the chicken pieces stuck between her teeth, the Human Resource Manager leaned forward with his elbows on the table and called for attention. He gave a vote of thanks to the company director. I then got back to Linda and helped her complete the application form.

While driving home, I kept reflecting on the complexity of decision making. I realized that we often find ourselves in a dilemma because we have to choose from the many good things we face, and we fail to choose. Contrasting with Linda's application form, I realized that some decisions may be easy, for example selecting male or female while filling our gender; hence, the more the options, the more complex the process of decision making. After treading the heavy Kampala city traffic, I reached home and turned on the local television station for the 21:00hr news, and during a short break there was always a review of a particular historical event of that very date. It read "Today in history; On 20th January 1969, Neil Armstrong landed on the moon".

This event was seven years after John F Kennedy in his speech *We Choose to go to the Moon* argued that it was necessary to explore the moon. This was one decision by a leader that determined the course of human history. When Armstrong took his first walk on the moon, he

said: "That's one step for man, one giant leap for mankind". The strong decisions and the smallest of steps taken can transform the world.

In the same manner, a decision from the presidential guard, members of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and Hutu militia groups, an hour after the plane crash that carried Habyarimana and Burundi's president on 6th April 1994 marked the start of the Rwandan genocide. These set up roadblocks and barricades and begun slaughtering Tutsis and Moderate Hutus with impunity⁹ even before establishing who had master minded the shooting of the plane that left no survivors.

So unfortunate that until today, there is no agreement about the culprits. However, this decision resulted into the bloody Rwandan genocide which has been ranked the deadliest and most destructive in modern history. The genocide that included the death of a prime minister and ten Belgian members assigned to protect her, claimed over 800,000 Tutsis. It claimed more lives more quickly than any campaign of mass murder in recorded history, resulting into the largest refugee movements with two million persons fleeing to the neighboring states in the first two weeks.¹⁰ This entire catastrophe was a result of the decision of one person.

The decision by the Japanese emperor to attack Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941 is one of the worst decisions in human history. At such an attempt, the USA responded by bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. This did not only claim over 15 million lives, but the genetic effects have been registered through the

century. It also impoverished a once vibrant economy to the highest hyper inflation rate in modern day history. This reflects how disastrous some decisions are in our lives; some decisions can break us to irreparable levels. The various examples of choices and decisions mentioned in this chapter reflect the complexity of the decision making process.

Right from the menu to filling an application form, choosing a marriage partner as well as other life-determining decisions, it is necessary that we pay attention to decision making. Some choices are generally easy and others that may seem easy to make may yield unbearable consequences. Beside the multitude of choices we make every single day, there are common choices and these equally matter. We have to make choices on the purpose of our life.

This may be guided by our natural inclinations, gifts and talents. Choices on our marriage may be influenced by race, tribe, color, size, education level, religion, and mannerisms, among others. Decisions in leadership may be guided by personal interests or the common goal, while our career choices may be influenced by the working conditions, salary scale, our gifts and skills.

Choices about money may depend on the means of earning, ways of spending, with whom to spend and how much to spend on a particular item. It may also be the returns that may result from our expenditure. Besides the various motivations of our choices, there are fundamental and substantial factors that ought to guide our decisions. These ought to guide every important de-

cision that we have to make in our life. The aforementioned conditions that influence our choices are merely secondary. The primary guidelines are here below discussed.

i) Ethics not Convenience

In the evolution theory, Charles Darwin argues that we have a natural inclination for self-preservation. It would, therefore, look more natural to do what is convenient to us. However, in proper decision making, we may not have to do what is convenient for us, but we may have to follow particular standards not only for our own good, but for the good of others. Ethics does not necessarily infringe our personal good, but it paves way for fairness and benefit to the entire species and society.

There are often difficulties in defining ethics and there are various differences in how different scholars define ethics. It is usually easy to say what ethics is not than to say what it exactly is. Ethics is based on well-founded normative standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do. Ethics is not merely about our individual feelings. It is not exactly the same as religion since there are religions that have practices that are not ethical. It is not even about laws of society since in human history we have experienced laws that are not ethical. These include the pre-civil war slavery laws and the old apartheid laws. Ethics is not what ever society prescribes. Nazi Germany is a clear example of a morally corrupt society; thus, ethics is not about social norms. Ethical principles ought to be universal in character, yet enduring in validity.

All the decisions that we take ought to respect the physical and psychological integrity of others. This is the apex of ethics. As we advance our choices, all human persons must be treated equally irrespective of their race, color, tribe, sex, education or religious affiliation. No person should be the means, but rather the end. It is not ethical to use others in attaining our goals. Otherwise we shall have treated them as mere objects. Ethics is the visible nature of love and love is the visible nature of God. We can, therefore, infer that treating others ethically leads us to an encounter with the divine.

Down the isle of our history, various individuals have advocated ethical living and these have remained significant figures. Often times when people reflect on the works of icons like Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther, Nelson Mandela, among others, they do not pay attention to their religious affiliations, political views, background and the times in which they lived. What is similar among all of them is that they stood out in moments of moral crises. In practice of an ethical living, Abraham Lincoln has been described as a highly spiritual man despite following no form of organized religion. In the National Cathedral of Washington DC is a statue of a pious and genuflecting Lincoln. The kneeling posture is a true reflection of an ethical form of leadership.

He is a true definition of an ethical leadership because he invited the society to an ethical living in times of moral dilemma. An ethical living is simply to do for others what you want others to do for you. This is exactly what Jesus talks of as the greatest commandment in

Mathew. 22:38 when he commands to love others as we love ourselves. The import of this command is that you should not use others, but work with others to achieve your destiny.

ii) Virtues not Appetite

A virtue is a quality between two extremes. We can simply say that virtue is in the middle. In virtuous living, we strain ourselves not to be at the extreme. The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 is fundamental to our definition of virtues. The weakness of the young son is not to ask for his share, but his challenge is based on loose living. He was motivated by appetites in his spending. If he had spent moderately, it would be a virtue of generosity which is a good, but because he went to the extreme, it turned out to be a vice. Prodigality is a vice which often results from being driven by appetites.

There are different categories of virtues, but what is most important is that a virtue is the meeting point between reason and appetites or natural urges. The God given gift of reason, therefore, exerts on each person a noble responsibility of living a virtuous life irrespective of the religion or other factors that form the human person. In our decisions, we must try hard not to be driven by instincts, but to use our God given gift of reason. St Augustine of Hippo notes that 'It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels'.

Virtues may include prudence, courage, justice, generosity, temperance, patience, magnanimity, among others. Virtues are so important that if only the world under-

stood and practiced them, there would be no need for the baggage of religion. This is true because through organized religion based on creed, man encounters God, but through virtues all creation is one with the divine. Virtues make us one and this is the reason virtuous people like Daniel, a famous Biblical figure, would not be harmed by lions when he was thrown in their den. Similarly, St Francis of Assisi, a 13th century saint, worshipped God together with other wild animals without being harmed because he did not interrupt their harmony. This implies that the world needs a stronger practice of virtues more than organized religion.

Therefore, all our decisions must depend on virtues than appetites and when this is achieved, we shall all profess one creed of non-violence. The message of non-violence is at the centre of all evolution because it breeds harmony. Non-violence is the desire of all creation because even in a group of wild animals, robbers and students, those that are violent against fellow members of the group are not liked. The members of the group always desire that there is harmony which is hinged on virtues. Decisions based on virtues lead to happiness in life which is the desire of every human person.

iii) Right Reason not Popular Reason

When we are confronted with different choices and we have to make a decision, we respond more to external pressures than our right reason. The pressures from the environment and the people who surround us can influence our decisions. Pontius Pilate turned out to be one of the worst of judges the world has had as he knew what was right yet he could not stand by it. In Mathew

27:11-26, we see that Pilate finds nothing wrong with Jesus, yet because of the pressure from the people, he hands him over to the mob to deal with him.

When we follow popular reasoning instead of proper reasoning, we are not different from Pilate and we shall soon regret our decisions. However, it is not true that all the reasoning of the majority is wrong all the time, but we have a duty to subject it to scrutiny and see how correct it is.

Right reasoning must not only be logical, but true as well for our inferences to be right. We must ably zoom into the future and assess the consequences of our decisions. Looking at prominent leaders who stood against the forces of the current in times of moral crisis, and have not only become legends, but also saintly figures, Abraham Lincoln stands tall. For example, reflecting on the civil war in 1862, the situation was not well for the union and he was at cross roads. While his wife suffered mental instability and chronic depression, his son Willie died suddenly. Even when the union was massacred at the second battle at Manassas where no human person would keep the struggle, the popular opinion suggested that the union keeps the struggle.¹¹

On the contrary, Lincoln issued and published the “Emancipation Proclamation” in the same year. This document advocated freeing four million slaves in the confederacy. It also gave the union armies a moral cause to fight for. Lincoln’s hard decision to reason rightly than popularly

was instrumental in ending the civil war which had made the Yankee and the Confederate press to be flooded with human blood.

Although Lincoln was assassinated three years later on 15th April 1865 and 100 years later J.F.Kennedy was assassinated, and yet again three years after Martin Luther King Junior died for the same cause of human rights, their blood was not lost in futility; it was the right cause. This is a demonstration that often right reasoning may come with challenges, but they are soon forgotten by the joy of its good fortunes.

The consequences of popular reasoning may seem pleasing for a while, yet their unbearable effects last for centuries and can degenerate society to irreparable levels.



You are what You Eat

*I don't think of all the misery, but of the
beauty that still remains*

-Anne Frank

Religion and science agree that the human person is made up of the mind, soul and body despite the differing explanations on how these three interact. This accounts for the spiritual and physical nature of the human being. Unfortunately, the brain, fed by neuro-chemical signals by the synapse, influences the thoughts in the mind. This can in turn affect the purity of one's soul. It is on this ground that Ludwig Feubach, a 19th century philosopher, notes that "Man is what he eats". What we feed our brains with influences the nature of our thoughts.

To have the right reason which is paramount in living a purposeful life, we need to feed our brains with the right information. If we feed our brains with negative stories, movies and literature, we subsequently yield from our minds negative thoughts. We have the power to choose what we feed our minds on because it becomes our reality. Once in a church for Sunday prayers, I picked a hymn book in which there was a small card with the following message:

Watch your Thoughts, they become your words

Watch your words, they become your actions
Watch your actions they become your habits
Watch your habits, they become your character
Watch your character, it becomes your destiny

Reflecting on this message, I realized what we feed our minds determines our entire being. If we are to take right and good decisions out of right reason which lead to a life of significance, we must feed ourselves with the right information.

What our mind consumes is what we believe. Unfortunately, recent works of renowned American developmental biologist Bruce Harold Lipton suggest that a person's belief helps organize genes and DNA. Previously, school level biology has held the theory of genetic determinism, where genes are said to control life. In Lipton's book *The Biology of Belief*, which is based on research in the field of epigenetics, our perception of the environment controls the gene activity, but not the genes controlling life. The occurrences within our environment cause the brain to release information-containing neurochemicals and vibration signals which are sent to the fifty trillion living cells in our bodies. These are translated into biological responses in the cell through the action of protein perception receptors in the cell membrane. Thoughts and intentions are important in forming the reality we live in.¹²

Consequently, this explains the severity of the impact of negative thoughts. If we feed ourselves with negative information and in turn generate negative thoughts, this influences our genetic makeup and this becomes hereditary. This has made our time to be referred to as a Phe-

nobarbital Age which is defined by ulcers, the nervous breakdown and tranquilizers. Instead of feeding ourselves with useful thoughts, we burden ourselves with media propaganda and how we can cope with the trend. It has all together been worsened by the outburst in social media platforms, where we spend hours scrolling through people's lives, experiences, outings, parties, subsequently abandoning a great majority into worry than transforming their thoughts.

I have a passion for music and despite having no opportunity to study it in school, I took personal efforts to learn Music. Having learnt through sharing from some of my friends who were more knowledgeable, I decided to teach others who sought my assistance. One Saturday evening as I conducted a music class, some two students who seemed absent-minded perplexed me. At the end of the lesson, I was moved to ask one of them what could have been making them restless as I conducted the lesson. With a little hesitation, she told me that one of their friends was pregnant, and that she had invited them for a "Sex Revealing Party". Unknown to me before, for curiosity's purpose I inquired what this was all about. She explained that her pregnant friend would meet their family doctor for a scan to ascertain the foetus' sex, and that upon coming back, a party to celebrate news of the sex of the yet to be born child would be held.

So, the girls' trouble all through the music class was instigated by the thought of what they would wear to be smart for the party. The kind of words the master of

ceremony (MC) would use just could not make it to my mind. I nearly asked the kind of words the young girls would use to congratulate the pregnant friend, but the conversation was cut short; they were in a hurry.

In this era of painting wrong images on social media so as to appear to be in a higher social class, all photographs of the sex revealing party are loaded up on social media platforms. Soon after comes the special session of photo night. This is where the expecting woman carries a luggage of all the trending maternity wears to the photo studio or a beautiful compound, purposely for a photo shoot. On a puzzling note, some socialites hire clothes from boutiques just to misrepresent that they have a variety of maternity wear. When their social media platforms are flooded with photos, the viewers are forced to elevate their social class. Finally, there comes another day of the baby shower which makes pregnant young girls as restless as a rat in a maze. By the time the mother gives birth, the stress arising from organizing parties has had different psychological breakdowns.

There is no doubt that the attendant stress and tension affects the growth of the baby, yet all this stems from allowing to be driven by propaganda psychology. Those who make it through even make it hard for the young girls who have no capacity to show off how successful their marriages are. All the unrest we have and worries are caused by what we feed our minds on.

In another perspective, Daniel was a prominent biblical figure who was anointed by God far beyond any other person in human history. God chose him in his child-

hood and God was with him all through. He is one character who manifested incomparable strengths, both in words and actions, yet at the same time when he fed his mind on negative thoughts, he finally became what he ate. While reflecting on 2 Samuel 11:1-5, I remembered what we used to refer to as “Optical nutrition” in high school.

²One evening David rose from his bed and strolled about on the roof of the kings house. From the roof, he saw a woman bathing; she was very beautiful. ³David sent people to inquire about the woman and was told, ‘She is Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam, and wife of Uriah the Hittite, Joab’s armour-bearer.’ ⁴Then David sent messengers and took her. When she came to him, he took her to bed...

When David saw Bathsheba, it was just by the use of the eyes; thus, with the senses he fed himself with nakedness in verse 2. The sensory receptors carried on the signals with the synapse to the brain that finally ended up into the mind as thoughts of inquiring about the woman in verse 3. Finally in chapter 4, David became the nakedness he had watched by striping himself for Bathsheba. This may sound easy in mere words, but given the glories that David had, this was practically impossible under normal circumstances.

Unfortunately, David did not only become the nakedness he had watched, but his inner man ran short of the glory of God that reigned in him. He became naked of Gods’ graces and planned for Uriah’s death. This shows us the multiplier effect of what we feed our minds on. Our life, therefore, is a sum total of what we feed our minds on.

When God made the human person, he made him in his own likeness. Man was made a little lower than the angels and because of this, our thoughts can build or break; they can kill or give life. Our thoughts are like a two edged lance; thus, we have a duty to control what we feed ourselves on. We can only control our thinking by controlling what we feed our minds on. Down the isle of human history, useful thoughts have set a pace for a better world while negative thoughts have damaged humanity to irreparable levels. Marcus Aurelius, a great Roman Emperor noted that “A man’s life is what his thoughts make of it”.

In Uganda, 2018 seemed to be the eve for the end of time in Uganda; institutions waged cold wars against institutions, for example, the cold war between journalists and security agencies. Several cases abounded of journalists brutalized and dehumanized by the police, resulting in unprecedented uproar by the media fraternity and media rights civil society organizations compounded by dragging the Uganda Police Force to the courts of law.

In his September 2018 State of the Nation Address, President Y.K. Museveni expressed concern about journalists who were more motivated by the unavoidable and largely inconsequential negative occurrences in Uganda as compared to the good things his government had done. Despite opening new factories, commissioning roads, hospitals, schools, among other facilities of national importance journalists did not pick interest in these. He, expressed concern over their motivation in looking out for the unavoidable minor negative occurrences.

In response to the president's concern about the motivation of reporters, many journalists used their social media platforms in response. One common answer was 'We report what the public is interested in'. When I contrasted the response of the different journalists on their social media platforms as well as the news they often broadcast, at most of the media centers, the journalists' response was indubitable. Most local radio and television stations feed their listeners majorly with the negatives in our countries, yet we know very well that we are a product of what we feed on. When the public is fed on hatred and a broken social and political structure, we breed this in our thoughts and finally produce hatred against ourselves, others and our nation.

This is where the tragedy of the current generation is, because negatives have formed our thoughts and our being that we look out for negatives only. We look out for negatives in the people we live with, limiting our appreciation of their strengths; hence, affecting our relationship and what we can achieve out of combined effort. In our families, religions and social structure, we look out for the negatives, preventing us from cherishing the positive attributes with which we can build society. Consequently, we feel everything has fallen apart and we end up into mismanagement and stealing public property.

The danger of feeding ourselves with negatives spares no race or education level, and it is the reason we even fail to find something positive about ourselves. Instead of looking for the reasons why we can, we look for the

reasons why we cannot succeed. This then translates into the reality of our being and it is the reason Ralph Waldo Emerson said that "A man is what he thinks about all day long".

With the tragedy of the social media that spreads all uncensored news, we may look vulnerable to negative thoughts, but we can always choose to see the positive even in negative occurrences. William James, an American with exceptional mathematical and linguistic skills puts it well in his *Essays in Psychical Research* that "The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind". Paying the necessary attention to what we feed on is very important. Focusing on our life goals spares us the burden of feeding ourselves with negativity. We have a duty to distance ourselves from events, occurrences and people who feed us on what does not correlate our purpose in life. We must have a single purpose that we can redirect with correct thoughts.



Finding Meaning and the Means

He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.

-Friedrich Nietzsche

Having escaped the custody of personal fears, I always strived for nothing other than asserting and reasserting myself. While still trampling over fear in triumph, I started to share my experience with fellow students and the youth through public speaking. I embarked on public speaking because it was my life time desire though fear had frustrated my passion. During one of the sessions on “Starting from Ground Zero” at St. Paul secondary school, one kin listener, Eric, majestically came forward and asked: “I dearly love the message, but somewhere it sounds like it can easily be achieved by those who have the means unlike most of us who were born unlucky?”

Smilingly nodding my head, I thanked him for such a wonderful question. I was happy that he had represented hundreds of people who always have this question at heart relating to being born from less privileged backgrounds. I began my submission by quoting the works of an Australian psychiatrist and psychotherapist Victor Frankl: “When 60 students were asked why they had attempted suicide, 85% said the reason had been that life was meaningless.”¹³ In Victor Frankl’s theory of logo therapy, he opines that a person’s primary motivation is

search for meaning in life.

Consequently, having the means does not guarantee the meaningfulness of life. Quite often, we mistakenly think that we need to have the required resources at our disposal before we get onto our success journey. It is one thing to have the means and it is another to make meaning of the means. When we master the art of purpose and live our life intentionally, our eyes are opened and we begin to see opportunities where others see terror. We begin to find the means and possibilities where others swim into despair. A successful life is not about the means but is simply in mastering the art of ones' purpose in life.

While the students went for a short break after the first session, I strolled around the shelves in the library. Besides the section of books that are based on the curriculum, there was a shelf at the extreme end where non-academic books were kept. The non-academic books were justifiably dusty owing to the fact that students hardly picked them for regular reading. Suddenly, and almost inexplicably, curiosity drove my hand to a stale dust-coated and moth-eaten textbook that was on one of the shelves. As I struggled to endure the nose-irritating smell from the old book, my eyes descended on a section;-

Governments, guided by social scientists, used to say that if you just improve the socio-economic status of the people, everything will be OK, people will become happy. The truth is that as the struggle for survival has subsided, the question has emerged:

Survival for what? Ever more people today have the means to life, but no meaning to live for.¹⁴

I hurriedly signaled the teacher who was now asking the students to get back for our next session. I inquired whether it was permitted to use the book for our next session. I got one eloquent student who loudly read for us the above excerpt upon which we had an open discussion.

By mastering the art of purpose, we live life intentionally thereby finding life meaningful. Having the means points towards the availability of the resources, and this fact is attested to by the semi-official report submitted by the British government to the Stockholm Conference. It was entitled *Natural Resources: Sinews for Survival*. It read: "The most important of all resources are obviously the initiative, imagination, and brainpower of man himself."¹⁵

The above most important resources are present in every human person and these bear fruit according to the degree to which they are awakened. Given the natural gift of reason, we have the power to make proper use of the above resources. When we take the initiative to unleash this important resources, we have nothing to hold us back. We keep imagining how we would like to see ourselves in the future, how big our businesses should be, how big or how great one's congregation should be, if one is a pastor in making or even how amazing our families should be. When we imagine, we begin to focus all our efforts to that which we imagine and desire.

The greatest of all is the brain power. We are exposed

to formal and informal education so as to develop our brainpower. We read the works of great personalities which boost our brain power and we get engaged in developmental debates with peers and friends. However, it is important to agree to the fact that how much we invest in the brain determines how much we put out of it. This exactly conforms to Galatians 6:7 that “You reap what you sow”.

Importantly, the mentioned three most important resources need an effort if they are to benefit both the individual and the society. Even if we have the meaning to live for, and the means or resources; there should be work by every individual. Humans are by nature synonymous with work. Work has been in place since creation. It is only through work that we are who we are and that the world is what it is.

Albert Camus puts it more precisely that, “Without work, all life goes rotten, but when work is soulless, life stifles and dies”.¹⁶ He emphasizes the idea that work is part of life; thus, without work, life is incomplete and, therefore, it must rot. Worse still, if work lacks love in it, life is suffocated so it dies. This implies that whether we have the meaning to live for and the means or resources, we must work to support life. Work can only support life if love supports work. This fact is attested to in 2Thesalonians 3:10: “Let he who does not work, not eat”.

Similarly, E.F. Schumacher, a former economic adviser with the British Control Commission states three purposes of human work. He argues that humans work is to “produce necessary and useful goods and services;

to enable us use and perfect our gifts and skills; and to serve, and collaborate with, other people, so as to liberate ourselves from inborn egocentricity.”¹⁷

This is an invitation to everyone to not only consume but also produce. What matters in life is not what the society can give as President John F. Kennedy, put it during his inaugural address in his famous phrase, “Ask not what your country can do for you-ask what you can do for your country”. Most important is what one is ready to give to society in form of goods and services. But, one may ask, how can I give the goods and services if I do not have? The answer is categorically stated in the second purpose of work. We should be ready to use and perfect our gifts and skills. By the virtue of our being, we are gifted. We have that individuating potential in each one of us.

Exploiting our gifts perfects them and helps our skills grow. At this, the three resources that we mentioned must come into play, the initiative, imagination and the brain power. The difference only depends on how prepared we are in utilizing these resources. This readiness is stimulated by awakening that never defeated giant within us. It is that will power that can make a person journey from zero to a hero. The ability to be positive-minded that can change stress into strength. Above all, that is the ability that can make one see opportunities where others see despair.

The initiative, vision, and the brain power will always show us the right way. Using our gifts and developing our skills can always enlighten our way. Taking into ac-

count the time factor within which we must operate, our goals must be planned adequately. Our actions with commitment will always clear any obstacles. Having slogans and scriptural verses that instill a positive energy and nourish our motivations are equally important. St. Paul puts it well in 2 Corinthians 13:8 that “Love never fails”. The power of love has always performed wonders and so a strong love for what we do equally fuels our endeavors.



Whom the World Needs

*Our real freedom comes from being aware that we do not
have to save the world, we must merely make a difference in
the place where we live*

-Paarker Palmer-Philosopher

Once from an evening lecture in Cosmology, my Polish bald-headed lecturer with some countable strands of faded grey hair flapping down behind his hairy ears involved me into an argument. His first question was: "Joseph! Do you need the world?" I was so quick and excited to answer "yes!" As he smilingly gazed at me, he posed another question: "Does the world need you?" My answer immediately graduated to the superlative level and boldly exclaimed "of course!" He swiftly changed the conversation and asked me to come with answers the next time we would have a lecture. He referred me to Hannah Arendt's book *The Human Condition*.

Eagerly and anxiously craving to find out what these simple questions were about, I galloped right to the Library and found the book. I suddenly came across a phrase which read: "Things and men form the environment of each of man's activities, which would be pointless without such location; yet this environment, the world into which we are born, would not exist without the human activity which produced it."¹⁸

I realized that this phrase answers the two questions. In the first place, it mentions that man needs the environment and the things in that environment.

Therefore, it follows that a human being and his activities can only find meaning as long as is in the world. If the world were not existing and the things in it, man's life would be merely void. Man needs the world because it makes life possible. Man does not only want the world, but also needs the world to satisfy his interests, find meaning in life, actualize all the aspirations, and all possible dreams can only be fulfilled in line with the world.

Therefore, it is fitting to assert that the world makes man what he is. It is in our day today experience that we value what we need, and to that which we need, we also give value. A student needs scholastic materials such as books. Therefore, the needs turn out to be a necessity to the one who needs them. The core reason why a student needs scholastic materials is because they are a means to add him knowledge. Arguably, we need something as long as it adds value to us.

Similarly, the world will need man as long as he adds value to the world. We do not add value to the world by mere existence, but we add value to the world as long as we help it to meet its goal. The world has a dream and has a goal of continually becoming better. From the above quotation, we realize the world would not exist without human activity which produced it. God created the universe and gave man a duty to make the world. The world constitutes the environment in which life is possible. Therefore, the world makes life possible. So, man has a duty to help the world achieve its dream of

making life possible and better.

When we look around, the world is full of wonders, whether artificial or natural. Sometimes it is good, friendly, lovely. At times, it is complicated and paradoxical. For centuries down the aisle of history, man seeks to find his position in the world. From the time of the early philosophers, man seeks to know why some things are the way they are and why others happen the way they do. The world is in continuous movement and change.

There are two things that are so true with the continuous change and movement in the world. Firstly, humanity has voluntarily used the God given reason and creativity to contribute to this continuous change. Great personalities of the world have contributed to the movement of the world to greater heights. The actions of great men like Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon and reformers like Martin Luther, have lubricated the chains of the world to keep moving forward. They added flavor to what naturally existed. They genuinely gave back to the world what it deserves. The world from eternity has been designed to be in change. It must keep going forward with those who are ready to use their talents to contribute to this forward movement.

Unfortunately, the fact that the world has to move forward, it resists any opposing forces. All who fail to contribute to the development of the world in any aspect oppose a force stronger than them. Each person has a duty to comply with the forward movement of the world. Failure to do so will be like swimming up a heavily steaming water fall. Inevitably, the force of the world to attain its goal of becoming better will have to suffocate

any such person. For this reason, any human who is not ready to contribute to the growth of the world is not important to the world. The world does not value such an individual. It then proves that the world is not in need of that individual because he does not add value to it. Since the world strives to make life better, its chains of forward movement towards development are in continuous motion. If the lazy ones who cannot catch up with the speed of the world are not thrown at the peripheries of society, they will fall in the chains and will be crushed.

For us to be of value to the world, we must voluntarily contribute to the world's goal of making life better. Each individual should be very ready and strong enough to contribute to the development. It all starts with the willingness to bring change for the betterment of life. Bringing change does not begin after graduating or after being employed in some juicy national and international departments that make all men salivate. It all starts now, it all starts today, it starts every day of one's life and it starts the day one begins to conquer personal weaknesses.

Before any attempt to make the school administration better, to have better church leaders and to have the best political systems, one must make himself better. It does not begin with watering the stunted organization or overfeeding the malnourished and collapsing social structure, but it consists in cultivating the self. It is grounded on fearlessly liberating personal potentials from the chains of failure and ignorance than paying excess attention to pleasures that come to pass. The impact of a personal effort in transforming society can

never be underestimated.. It lasts a life time while work done for you by others may never last. The trick of personal deliverance and development is the strongest weapon which moves people from grass to glory.

How to Escape the Tragedy of Schooling

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change our selves

- Victor Frankl

A decade of the global economic crisis witnessed a lump sum of national and international reports on the global economic upheavals in the year 2018. Youth unemployment was a global outcry, both in the developed and developing countries. Climate change equally rendered mother earth helpless as she stood with one leg in the grave. The fight to better the situation became more personal. Having lost hope in the role of education, many youths in Busoga sub-region resorted to offering cheap casual labor in Asian-dominated factories and sugarcane plantations. Dropping out of school and early pregnancies were more than obvious.

In a capitalistic economy, this crisis was a beacon of hope to the bourgeoisie. It was in the wake of this crisis that the Youth Chaplain for the Diocese of Jinja ran a campaign dubbed “Youth Empowerment Campaign”. This was aimed at providing various skills to the youth which included soft skills, financial literacy and small enterprises mainly to alleviate youth unemployment. Having served diligently with the youth ministry, I was

assigned to re-evangelize the importance of education in personal and social development.

We had run the campaign for nearly two months when we awoke to a silent chill. We drove through dusty hills and valleys towards the rural shores of Lake Kyoga. Gazing through the windscreen, much of what we saw were dense forests and “Cows Crossing” signposts. Wind was howling around like a wolf as the car shock absorbers creaked through the potholes of the country road. However, the journey was brightened up by the smiles and shouts of “Bye! Bye!” by children in rugs as the car was tilting to one side like the deck of a slowly sinking ship. Boys in shorts and shamelessly bare chests were petting malnourished dogs as they skipped down the hill with jerry cans of water. After heaving a sigh, we interfaced with “Young Money Maker (YMM)”, a sounding youth group at the time.

Since we had traveled with the youth chaplain, we shared in the warm welcome and the cordial respect he was accorded. The skinny and freckles YMM chairman welcomed our team with the sweetest of words and an exceedingly expansive smile. As beads of sweat raced through his thinning hair, his bald black head radiated the thin sunrays that made their way through the dense canopy of the Muvule tree under which we sat. Having made a disavowal that he was not the speaker of the day, and that his role was only to welcome the visitors, he was brief.

That his speech was relevantly concise and precise sent the audience into a clapping fit, ululations and chorus

comments. Soon after, there was dead silence. When I pulled myself up to speak, an uncharacteristic silence descended on the audience so much that one could have easily had the benefit of hearing his neighbor thinking. I swept the audience with a look of confidence that sent the audience even more silent; branches and twigs littering the ground was all that could be heard.

Eagerness is that sat across their faces; they impatiently thirsted to hear from the special team that worked with the Youth Chaplain. “Dear fellow Young Money Makers, our topic tonight is Education is the Key,” I bellowed.

Suddenly, their mood changed much faster than lightning; a whiff of discontentment descended and wafted among the audience going by the murmuring heard. On inviting them to freely share with me what all this meant, Chris, whose looks and facial expressions were the true definition of despair, eloquently submitted his concern:

It is past one decade now when our teachers in lower primary used to say education is the key. At various occasions, many political figures made that phrase an anthem that it would never go unsung. Soon after, our parents seemed to have learnt the song. We listened and equally believed. About two decades of the same song, we got the key when the padlock was changed! My father even sold off half of his land just to take me to Makerere University with the hope that I would get a good job and buy more land. I am now a loss to my father who believed in that song of education is the key. How relevant is it to sing the same

song when graduates abandon their certificates and find part-time jobs for survival. Why would we still have hope in education when many graduates end up in the streets of Kampala to find a living even in unethical businesses? Even the elders who sang the same song have refused to leave offices for young people, even after reaching retirement age!

His submission moved quite a number of them; that he spoke their predicament attracted thunderous and deafening hand clap. I invited the gathering to once again offer Chris a loud hand clap for such a brilliant argument that was central to our discussion. I added “we have a vivid understanding of Chris’ argument since it requires no rocket science for us to understand the situation of the youth, both nationally and internationally. It is for this reason that we are here today.”

With a more vibrantly emphatic tone, I said: “Dear fellow Young Money Makers, our topic to night is schooling, but education is the key.” My emphasis attracted some mocking laughter from a section of the audience.

Chris’s submission represents widespread failure by most people to know and understand the definition of education. Many graduates do not know if they merely schooled or were educated. An understanding of these facts spares education from false accusations of inadequacies or failure to meet its primary aim.

Education is one part of humanity that has continually undergone evolution together with man. It has taken on different forms, meaning and purpose from one generation to another, and from one culture to another. It has also crossed geographical boundaries since an-

tiquity. Considering the traditional forms of education, these were purposely to ensure survival; hence, they comprised of trans-survival values such as production and reproduction. There was a rise in the liberal form of education that had its origins from the ancient Greece. This new form of education was later incorporated into a systematic structure which also aimed at developing the mind. This was in the view that a developed mind would easily make the world a better place to live in. But, the big question is whether people who have gone through school have a developed mind that can make the world a better place.

Due to the value attached to education, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights asserts that everyone has a right to education and it shall be at least free in elementary and fundamental stages. In the same manner, governments have emphasized education as the only way to development and ensuring sustainability. The government for the Republic of Uganda made education a human right in the 1995 constitutional review and made primary education free by offering programs such as the Universal Primary Education in 1997, Universal Secondary Education in 2007 and the Loan scheme at institutions of higher learning in 2013. Education, therefore, has been formed, reformed and emphasized both globally and locally, as the sole means to socio-economic development.

Unfortunately, there has been a loud outcry both at the international and national platform that education continually seems insufficient to meet the intended goals. The current socio-economic conditions have posed chal-

lenging questions to the quality and relevance of education. The ever growing weaknesses of education have been made explicit by increasing unemployment, poverty levels, underemployment, and skills mismatch. As a result, many individuals, corporate groups, non-government organizations and religious groups, have come up to address this challenge of increasing inadequacy of education in meeting its purpose. This is on the ground that education has globally become so inadequate in addressing the challenges of the contemporary period. As a result, attempts have been advanced to address this global challenge both at the international and national levels. For example, in 2018 the Ugandan government ran and emphasized the “Re-skilling the Youth” programme where young educated, but unemployed youth were encouraged to join vocational institutes and take up new practical courses.

Notably, this cannot be blamed on education; it arises from failure to understand the difference between schooling and being educated. The world is facing a shortage of educated people, and yet it has a dire need of learned people. When one is educated, he finally becomes learned when he can practice moral responsibility and moral excellence. Unfortunately, we have a huge majority of schooled members who lack creativity and moral excellence; hence, cannot contribute to development. Humanity has in the recent past altered the nature of education while upholding the traditional definition of education.

The recent trend seems to suggest that to be educated is simply joining school, where one is awarded a certifi-

icate which indicates high grades, but yet the candidate who obtains such is completely uneducated. Unfortunately, this calamity of schooling rather than education is attested to at all levels of education, including university education. The certificate often implies that the candidate was exposed to some information and probably was able to cram and reproduce, but when they were not educated. This is grounded on the fact that education does not serve its substantial purpose. Understanding education requires reviewing its historical background.

i) The Roots and Meaning of Education

Etymologically, the term education is derived from a Latin word *educ* which literally means “to bring up or to draw out”¹⁹. *E-ducere* is meant to bring out the highest excellence possible to man. It was synonymous with “child rearing”. This etymological meaning is important as we realize that education in the right sense is centered on drawing out a person from the wrath of ignorance, and also to bring up, which involves nurturing into a desired outcome. Our common purpose is to make the world a better place to live in; thus, for one to claim to be educated, he/she must be a fully developed human person who is ready to contribute to a better society, both in production and reproduction in the various forms.

Throughout human history, education has been a powerful tool in reshaping society. Right from hunting to food gathering and agrarian communities, education focused on personhood and community. It was, therefore, intended for the social and economic wellbeing of both the individual and the society. Education was; thus, aimed at

ensuring continuity of the species. In the 17th and 18th centuries, where there was a great outburst in science which was ushered in by the renaissance era, education is highly appreciated as it made society better to what we have today. Besides understanding what education exactly is, we need to understand what could have gone wrong that we have over-schooling and over-skilling co-existing with under-education and under-skilling, while there is an increase in skill obsolescence resulting from long-term unemployment.

The idea of formal education can be traced back to the rise of philosophical thought in ancient Greece. Just like any society, ancient Greece initially attributed everything to some supernatural powers. It was around the 6th century B.C when Thales, the great philosopher, started to rationalize and explain things in naturalistic terms. This was a liberal approach as opposed to mere belief. This liberalism persevered through different political and geographical phenomena to the time of Plato in the 5th century. Plato turned out to be the most famous writer of his time, and also trained young people from the school which he called the *Academia*. It is from this that we derive terms like “academy” and “academic”.

This *Academia* aimed at the pursuit of knowledge through the study of the five liberal arts such as logic, rhetoric, geometry and arithmetic, music, and astronomy.²⁰ These emphasized accumulating knowledge for the knowledge's sake. It stressed the cultivation of the mind than practical skills. It was for those in the Aristocracy which was a high social class for the rich. This made the Academia to be for leisure; thus, the Greek word

skole/schole which means leisure . It is from *skole* that we get the English word school, the Latin word *Scola*, Germany term *Schule* and the Kiswahili meaning *Shule*. These various translations show us the impact of a deformed understanding of education as a form of leisure than bringing out the highest excellence in man as we desire; schooling was not for any material gains. This is the very reason we have many schooled people who claim to be educated. On the contrary, the slaves had to spend their entire time doing laborious work, but it involved skills and crafts, which were vocational skills.

In the middle age, liberal education took on a religious dimension which modified it with Christian ideas. This scholastic period faced its end by the collapse of Constantinople and the great Roman Empire in 1453. The people of the Greeko-Roman times migrated to Europe with important manuscript. The liberal education further developed in a foreign land of Europe and it greatly affected literature, philosophy, art, music, politics, science, and religion, commonly referred to as an intellectual rebirth.²²

It is these avenues that launched the great renaissance period in the 14th century in the late middle ages, starting from Italy. In the 17th and 18th centuries, liberal education took up a scientific dimension from men like Francis Bacon and political perspective from John Lock. With these perspectives; it now emphasized improving the body, mind and spirit. Jean-Jacque Rousseau, a philosopher, writer and composer whose political thought influenced the enlightenment of Europe argued

that education meant natural development, but in the 19th Century, it took up a psychological function by philosophers such as Froebel, Pestalozzi and Herbart.²³ Education; thus; attained its universal function, where it changed from benefiting a few individuals to the entire community.

In Africa, the western educational thought came with colonialist and European civilization with both political and religious ambitions like training junior civil servants and strengthening church membership respectively.²⁴ Education, thus takes up the name Western Education because of the cultural, religious and intellectual aspects it picked in Europe before it came to Africa. Various historians attest to the fact that education was not primarily intended for the good of Africa, but was, firstly, to enhance missionary evangelization.

ii) Definition of Education

Education as defined by UNESCO during the 1974 conference in Paris is the “entire process of social life by means of which individuals and social groups learn to develop consciously within and for the benefit of the national and international communities, the whole of their personal capacities, attitudes, aptitudes and knowledge”.

In 2015, UNESCO emphasized that education should impact basic numeracy and literacy skills which take into account skills, knowledge, values and attitudes. By so doing, it encourages critical thinking and fosters the desire and capacity for lifelong learning that adapts and shifts in local, national and global dynamics.

According to the Uganda National Education Policy Review Commission of 1987, basic education for national development (BEND) should impart practical skills to the student to enhance productivity and eradication of unemployment. Additionally, Gerald Bennaars a well-known educationist with a personal attachment to social education and ethics describes education as a process that enables one to be creative, dialogical, reasonable, and practical and human-oriented such that one is able to rectify the situation.²⁵

After such an extensive discussion, I invited the entire youth group to have a think-tank on the definitions above. Linnet, who was so curious all through the discussion, commented on the definitions. She noted that the definition by UNESCO invites those being educated to develop “the whole of their personal capacities, attitudes, aptitudes and knowledge”. She added that the second definition points towards productivity and eradication of unemployment, while the third emphasizes being creative, dialogical, reasonable, and practical and human-oriented such that one is able to rectify the situation. In her personal view, she admitted that “if we had many educated people the situation for the youths would be better both nationally and internationally. Majority of the people have merely schooled.”

Chris stood and challengingly inquired: “If majority of the people are schooling, who is to blame? If I may ask, why did the missionaries bring us education which cannot help? Yet, education should bring out the individual from ignorance by offering the necessary skills that can bring about productivity and eradicate unemployment, under-

employment and foster development?”

As the discussion rolled on, we realized that it is not important to blame anyone for our fate. The motives of the missionaries were quite clear; they taught people how to read and write so as to help them in their work of evangelization and civil servants to work for colonial governments.

Upon attainment of independence by the colonised, missionaries and colonialists handed over schools that perpetuated their interests.²⁶ This, among others, brought to light the reality that only writing and reading was enough for one to be in the civil service. It is over fifty years since most of African states attained their independence yet they have not been able to reduce schooling to promote education of Africans. It therefore has to be a collective effort to decolonize the education system, make strides away from schooling to an education that is necessary for transformation of society.

Now that we have realized that majority have walked down the wrong path of schooling than education, we must be conscious not to walk by the sides, because we may fall in the trenches of the wrong path. Even when the “whole Sodom has sinned, there is one Lot who will not be destroyed” as in Genesis 19. We can go through schools without schooling, but when we are being educated. Some of the people who have been educated are those who have transformed society. Graduates who cannot do anything to make the situation better, should not claim to be educated because they have a duty to be creative and productive before they can claim to be

educated.

There is yet another cold war among majority of young people who feel that the elders are a stumbling block to the young generation. Besides a continuously blamed education system, the elders have been accused of refusing to retire, rendering the young unemployed. But, even if all old people retired from their jobs to give room to the youth who are 70% of the African population, would it solve the challenge of youth unemployment?

It is a puzzle that takes us back to the need for creative thinking to rectify the situation than accuse any one for having changed the padlock after we got the key. Worst of all, some who claim to have gotten the key were not attentive enough to establish whether they had the right or wrong key.

Despite that, it is worth celebrating that liberal education, known as Western education, develops the mind. Taking the analogy of a baby, during its development, it is not enough to provide the necessary food and it develops. The baby takes an effort from stage to stage such as crawling, walking and even other activities. One big challenge is that we imagine an education system that will provide all knowledge and then all skills and capabilities without effort by the candidate. Even when the candidates put in effort, it is not geared in the right direction. The effort is in literacy and numeracy, which culminates into passing an examination and having a certificate, yet this is merely basic; it cannot be completely said to be education. Choosing to be educated

primarily starts with academic excellence, but does not stop there. It is also exemplified in the student's willingness and commitment to being an agent of social and economic development right, from society up to the international level, without watering down core community values.

Therefore, a student has a duty to ensure that he/she obtains these skills and is equally productive. This duty does not begin when one is in a high institution of learning or after. It begins right away from childhood and this degree of responsibility can be best blended and branded in high school. In high school, one can show that he will be educated or simply receive a certificate of recognition that he/she has been exposed to some information. High school is a time of transition from childhood to adulthood, it is vital in education. Sociologists have long recognized that adolescence marks the start of socio-economic career. They attribute this period to school performance and aspirations that support education attainment.

Despite this, children are not helped to develop informed aspirations. This is not ideally the responsibility of education or of the teacher, but the entire society and the key individuals in the life of a child. A 2015 School to Work Transition Survey (SWT) conducted in Uganda identifies that when young people were asked about their primary goal in life, 37.4% indicated "having lots of money", while 10.1% identified with "making a contribution to society". For such an error, we have no moral duty to accuse the education system, but children must be guided by all those who have a role to play in their

development which is not limited to education.

It is arguable that misperception of education by majority of the young results in people who have gone through school, but completely innocent of ideals such as integrity. It turns out that the most qualified managers have appeared on front pages of local and international news for embezzlement or financial mismanagement. They have simply become experts in stealing from the common pool; they live as though the world ends with them. In the second decade of the 21st century and with the emphasis on Sustainable development Goals, there has been a greater emphasis on health care delivery. On the contrary, it is not news when medical doctors steal drugs from government hospitals. This is a representation of individuals whose goal during school was to have lots of money after school; such people steal public resources without hesitation, consequently stifling national development.

We need to agree that education is for the better not for the worse both to the individual and society. Hence, the absence of a moral conscience is a sign of schooling not education. When education is frustrated, one ends up into schooling. Escaping the tragedy of schooling, therefore, consists in three primary factors:

- i. Knowing the meaning of education
- ii. Knowing what education offers
- iii. Setting one's aspirations

In knowing what the various education levels offer to the learner, data here-below from a 2013 Uganda Bureau of Statistics report was shared with the YMMs.

Estimated unemployment rate by education level

Level of Education	Level of Unemployment
No formal schooling	1.0
Primary	1.2
Secondary	4.1
Post Primary/Secondary Specialized training	4.7
Degree and above	11.8

Source: *UBOS, 2013. The National Labour Force and Child Activities Survey 2011/2012*

The data above seems ironical, yet very true and relevant in our discussion. In Uganda, unemployment has always been blamed on a poor education system. Though common sense and other reports seem to suggest that the more one is educated, the greater the chances of being employed, this statistics suggests the contrary. The challenge lies in people who are joining schools and graduate without knowing what the different levels of education are capable of offering.

We realize that those without formal schooling are normally employed almost at the same level like primary school drop-outs. The advantage with this group is that

they have nothing to look up to, except finding their way out in the informal sector for a living. The challenge is found more among those at the secondary level. They forget that all they should expect are basics in literacy and numeracy. The skills at this level may not necessarily translate into the demands of the job market, and it is the reason why if one is not creative, one may not appear to be any different from a primary school drop-out. The dilemma comes with those who join vocational training schools and other post-secondary training institutions. These candidates always receive the necessary skills for the job market. However, ahead of them is the requirement to train for skills demanded in the job market to reduce the tragedy of skills mismatch. These candidates are ever ready to present themselves for employment. The worst blow to education comes at the next level, the graduates.

Graduates are the most admirable, yet most vulnerable to unemployment. Graduates should be the drivers of economic development because university education is purposely for knowledge generation and dissemination. The dilemma comes when university graduates begin to accuse the education system for having failed to skill them. They demand the education system for what it has not to offer.

This is like expecting to pick grapes from figs. They forget that employable skills are in vocational schools and post-secondary training institutions. Graduates have a

duty to be innovative in the various professional fields and should create jobs so as to employ those who have the skills from post-secondary training institutions. There is evidence that all universities help the students to develop skills of knowledge generation and dissemination which is the apex of innovation. Innovation is the key to a better society and is an indicator of an educated person.

However, the biggest challenge in developing countries lies in graduates who do not know the meaning of education, and how the various levels of education impact on the candidate. This goes hand in hand with one informing and shaping his or her aspirations for a better society than making lots of money. With such a mindset, one is able to escape the tragedy of schooling enjoy the fruits of education. Certainly, this reduces the mistake of demanding education of what it does not have to offer.

Being a Master of Your own Destiny

Destiny is not a matter of chance ; it is a matter of choice. it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved
-william jennings Bryan

The question as to whether human persons are a product of fate, design or choice remains one of the pivotal points from which our lives take shape. Interestingly, the same question is pedaling world philosophies and schools of thought which shape our societies. Majority of people who believe that we are a product of fate do not only take the responsibility away from themselves but also eliminate any third party who might have played a role in any occurrence which they attribute to fate. In attributing occurrences to fate, things are said to happen spontaneously without any reason but often because of luck. Occurrences are more coincidental without anyone acting or failing to act thereby contributing to a given outcome.

Thomas Aquinas the great philosopher and theologian of the medieval times talked of God as an intelligent designer in his work titled; *Suma Theologica*. He argues that God has pre-conceived this world and determined what it should be. This is also known as a principle of pre-determinism. He uses his notion of the law of nature to argue that the laws of physics such as gravity, planetary motion where planets and other heavenly bodies keep moving without being controlled were designed by

the intelligent designer. Bringing down this principle of pre-determination to our individual lives, believers call it grace. Though we might not be deserving of it, God merely designed that at a particular moment, such a thing shall happen. In this age of Pentecostalism, the term grace is widely used and understood as unmerited divine favour.

The third notion of choice has also shaped different perspectives and philosophies such as existentialism and nihilism. The proponents of existentialism argue that our existence is a result of choices we make. These range from choices on relationships, partnership, fellowships, pursuing our dreams, among others. This branch of philosophy emphasizes freedom to choose with responsibility. On the other hand, Nihilism comes from a Latin word; Nihil literally translated as 'nothing'. If precisely put, such thinkers argue that there is nothing which exists that can infringe man's freedom. Such individuals seek to break off any social controls, customs, beliefs, or avoid attributing anything to any superior authority. This particular line of thought gives absolute precedence to individual freedom and choices. It takes an individual as an absolute master of himself.

While as there is no particular school of thought or philosophy which gives us the absolute truth, it is important to pursue our destiny with a clear understanding of how fate, design and choice play a role in our lives. With the God given gift of reason, we ought to be masters of our destiny though this does not imply that as masters, we need neither God nor man. Bearing in mind that God is the creator and intelligent designer does not take away

the fact that he has designed us as rational beings who ought to use our intellect for his greater glory. In being masters, we need the environment around us and this includes all manmade and natural beings where humans make part. Upon this background, we ought to be masters of our destiny and the things around us and human beings should only serve a particular role towards our destiny but should never be central to it.

Additionally, the society expects every individual to be responsible and to ever be working towards our destiny. An example is the Luganda greeting, “*Gyebaleko*”. Often times when one is to attach a higher degree of respect, one may say “*Gyebaleko Ssebo*” for the male. Or “*Gyebaleko Nyabo*” when addressing a female person. Literally, “*Gyebaleko*” strictly means ‘well-done’. However in the broad sense, “*Gyebaleko*” is a greeting. Given the fact that language is an essential element of culture, it is logical to infer that Kiganda culture takes every adult to be responsible and to be or have been doing something.

Consequently, even when someone finds you seated and probably doing nothing or even having done nothing, there is an assumption that you have been working. It is an indicator that a person acknowledges that you are responsible and you are doing or have been doing something essential to your destiny.

Inferably, society expects us to ever be working as masters to our destiny. Irrespective of what you may be enduring or facing at every moment of your life, society appreciates that you are a responsible master of your destiny. No matter the circumstances such as economic,

social, health, which one may be enduring, it is necessary to remain a master and work unceasingly. Similarly, the English phrase, "How are you?" which is often taken as a greeting simply shows that somebody cares about you but it does not mean that a person is really interested in knowing how you are. Even when the going is not fine, when a person says, "How are you?" the most spontaneous response is, "I am fine". This is an indicator that someone cares about you but it does not imply that they are interested in knowing your problems and probably taking them up or helping you address them.

Even in the event of being realistic and sharing out your problems, those who care may console you, give you some assistance or even connect you to individuals who may be of help, but it remains a personal duty to be a master of your destiny. With this kind of understanding the societal expectation vis à vis our role in shaping our destiny, we work with untiring determination and endurance. Many people who do not take a central role in mastering their purpose often invest a lot of effort in justifying their failure and other hindrances. It pays nothing to justify one's failure. The most important thing is to do your best and let the world judge as it so wishes. Interestingly, while working your way to the top, people who matter will hardly talk yet those who don't matter will always talk. With the confidence that you can always do better, even where there is failure or tribulation, remaining focused makes you a master of your destiny.

It is important to accept that while working your way to the top, not all people will be there to push you upwards. You may be shocked to realize that even oth-

ers are working hard to pull you downwards. At the time of figuring out the unknown destination, keep focused and remain persistent no matter how hard it gets. Swami Vivekananda precisely put it that “Take up one idea, make that one idea your life, think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success”. Every master must understand the primary object of his existence and commit his/ her whole life to it. This is one of the secrets that successful people have discovered and acted upon. Life circumstances may sway you from the purpose but the sun should never set before you recollect yourself to focus once again. It is through this single endeavor that you raise beyond the trials and temptations to remain the master of your destiny.

While as Jesus invited us in John 15:13, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”. In reality, we may never have a person to show us the greatest sign of love but we must be willing and ready to carry up our own selves. Interestingly, when you make it to the top, people will remind you of how they have been praying for you. Even those who worked for your downfall shall out of shame celebrate with you. Those who did not know you at the time of sacrificing your pleasures, enduring hardships and working towards your destiny shall call you ‘our own’.

In August 2020, Peruth Chemutai won the women’s 3000 meters steeplechase at the Tokyo 2020 Games in Japan. Though she had been less popular prior to her participation and success in the Olympic Games, Ugan-

We join the people of Mutai in Jinja
to congratulate Peruth Chemutai
upon winning Gold in the
2020 Tokyo Olympic games.

dans generally celebrated her success. Interestingly there was a congratulatory message that circulated over different social media platforms;-

Despite celebrating Chemutai's success with the spirit of nationalism, the people of Jinja sought to establish a closer link with Chemutai. Notwithstanding the fact that she originates from a totally different area that is about 211 kilometers from Jinja. The link was established on the ground that the word Mutai which is a name of a place in Jinja also forms part of the name Chemutai. This demonstrates how people can establish the smallest link with you after making it to the top.

However, before you make it to the top, few people may wish to associate with you. Upon having a breakthrough to your destination, even distant relatives, friends of your friend and those who did not know you before shall draw closer. This is a fact of human nature but before having that break through or reaching the apex of your destiny, work hard and expect minimal company. In case you should expect a lot of support and company before your break through, do it with a little reservation so that the degree of disappointment is also moderate incase the support you need is not accorded to you.

Being a master of your destiny is quite challenging.

You must compete with your very self, you play as the wrestler and the umpire, the judge and the accused, the hunter and the hunted, you fall and pick yourself up, it is nothing more than that. It is therefore unrealistic to say that one has graduated over being a master but it comes with constant practice, trials and failures but what matters is the consistence and the courage to remain focused. Just as David carried five smooth stones as he headed out to meet Goliath, here are your five smooth stones to hit your destiny.

i. Judge yourself not others

It is fundamentally important to have self-knowledge which helps in controlling one's emotions. With good emotional balance, you can distance yourself from the nuances of situations and be in position to assess your role as compared to projecting your thoughts. This is not only an indicator of maturity but a skill only possessed by those who are masters of their destiny. It is easier to judge others, however, judging oneself gives you the opportunity to examine yourself and have resolutions on how to make yourself better.

ii. Watch your Relationships

We often have friends who are dear to us and at times when they fall off our company, we feel so sad and guilty. We begin to question if something went wrong that our friends have abandoned us. Though at times friends may abandon us for different reasons, sometimes friends fall off naturally because they do not vibrate at the same pace like us. In mastering your purpose and being a true master of our own destiny, relationships that reflect a higher sense of your aspirations and motivations may

be of greater value to you. At this point, you ought to feel more about what goes on around you as compared to minding so much about what others feel about you. While as other people remain important, you ought to attach more importance to your purpose thereby attracting people who resonate with you as compared to binding yourself to those who make you sway from being a masters of your destiny.

iii. Practice Integrity

Integrity stems from personal discipline especially in situations where there is no third party to watch over you. An example is planning your next day and you decide that you will wake up by an alarm clock. After carefully calculating the hours of sleep you need, you set your alarm clock but as soon as it rings in the early morning, you simply turn it off and continue with sleep. Practicing to keep personal commitments equally helps in shaping your ability to practice integrity.

Practicing integrity gives you the capacity to keep by the word you give to yourself and others without taking self-pity and compassion. One of the easy ways to practice integrity is to be in touch with your physical and emotional strength while giving a word to yourself. At the time of fulfilling the commitment, you will be in position to remind yourself that you willfully planned to stand by that commitment and you have no reason to go against your word. In being a master of your own destiny, integrity is the smooth stone that has the power to bring down all your giant fears.

iv. Recreate yourself

The old English adage, “Work without play makes John a dull boy”, is very important to always remember. It is not also sufficient to ‘work hard and play hard’ because you can still burn out. While as it is good to work hard, it is more important to work smart. Without an experience of burning out, it might be hard to value the need to recreate oneself. However, if you have ever experienced a burn out or heard of it from a friend, you will greatly appreciate the need to always recreate.

Recreating entails, spiritual, physical, mental and emotional rejuvenation. While as playing is the commonly emphasized form of recreating oneself, it is important to find intimate moments with those you love. Similarly, find time to pray and have moments of silent meditation not as a spiritual activity but an intentional step to mental rejuvenation. While running between schedules, the mind is overcrowded, however, in moments of silent meditation, you are able to empty the mind and reorganize your thinking patterns. Importantly, take care of your physical self by eating recommended food stuffs, dressing appropriately and appreciating your physical self because it is from that body that all the mental and spiritual faculties reside.

v. Work to Inspire

Finally, in Palms 139: 14, “I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works”. This scriptural text makes us appreciate the individuating principle that sets each person apart. When you appreciate that you are an authentic artifact of the intelligent designer, you choose to stand out and live your life as

an original master piece. This gives you the potential to exploit all your gifts first for yourself and secondly for the good of those around you. This gives you the ability to inspire others no matter the challenges or confusion you may be enduring. Even amidst setbacks, while working out as a master of your own destiny, you ought to stand out to inspire others. This in turn creates inner power and boosts your vibe towards awakening that authenticity which makes you the person you are without focusing on conformity.

Being a master of your destiny is absolutely a number one principle for successful people. Every person has a single and unique purpose; hence, letting others cloud your vision blurs you from your destiny. When associating with a particular philosophy or school of thought relating to fate pre-determination by God or out of personal choices, it is necessary to appreciate that you have the God given gift of reason and you must subject the different notions to personal judgment.

Let your destiny be your sole motivation and let the schools of thought be subject to right reason. While as you need the support from people, be mindful to remember that sometimes you may not receive the necessary support you may need, however keep moving because you are the master of your destiny. Before your breakthrough, be ready to work out from scratch but besides working hard, endeavour to work smart. Always have the five smooth stones to help you bring your fears down and these include the ability to judge yourself instead of judging others, watching your relationships, practicing integrity, recreating yourself and working to inspire.

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