

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

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Every experience of life is packed with lessons for better life experiences. The past is filled with lessons for the present and the future. If you miss it you will have your hands full of problems. You are expected to learn from your good and bad experiences.

Every experience is a teacher. And you must listen to your teacher and work with what he teaches you. Some say you don't need the past to get into the future. But I say your future is connected to your past. The steps you took that resulted in yesterday's failure if repeated will result in another failure. So you see that your learning from the failures of yesterday will help you not to fail in future. Again you will discover that if you do not learn the lessons inherent in each experience, you will continue to experience frustrations and disappointments. The struggle continues when lessons are not learnt.

How well you handle the past determines your future to a large extent. You must take out time to deal with each experience to make sure that you learn all the lessons contained therein. This calls for hard work.

What have you learnt from your past failures, disappointments, losses, promotions, demotions, acceptance and rejections? Why are you where you are today? Have you ever tried to find out? The reason why you have not moved forward or having a repeat of experience is because you have not learnt anything from the past. You can't expect to have a different result and experience when you are applying the same method. Same input will bring same output. A different approach and method will bring a different result and experience.

There is a difference between studying and learning, between reading and learning. When you read you read just for knowledge sake, and you don't take interest in details. When you study, you are concerned for details. You want to know all that is to be known about the subject. You can study without making use of what you studied. Learning involves not only studying, but also application of what has been learnt. A learner is a researcher. A learner takes notes as it applies to him or herself. A learner learns not just to know and to teach others, but to use it in his or her life. **Learning from the past therefore, involves studying, analyzing and drawing lessons from all of life experiences with the aim of avoiding pitfalls, making adjustments were necessary and having a better future.**

The reason why you are rising and falling, progressing and retrogressing is because you have not learnt anything from your past.

AN EXAMPLE

John has a greed problem and does not yet know it or acknowledged it. Because of greed, he gets duped because he was promised money he did not labour for. He had to advance some money to get the promised money. After advancing the money, he discovered he has been duped.

After a long while, John got himself into another problem. Because he wants to make all the money he needs in a hurry, he over-quoted for the contract he should have gotten and made some good money. He lost the contract to a less greedy fellow.

Because of greed, John will not tithe. When he does tithe, it is not the actual tithe, but what he feels like giving God. One day, God blessed him with a sum of N500,000. To give God N50,000 tithe was too much for him to do despite all the messages he has been hearing about tithing especially within the period the money came into his hand. At the end of the day, he had a little accident within the town. He brushed somebody's S class Mercedes car. After the entire repair he had to do to his and the other fellows car, he had spent N100,000. The devil collected more than what he refused to give to God. Meanwhile, he is beginning to worry about the way things have been going in his life. He thinks somebody must be behind all his problems. *Does this sound like you?* As a result of problems like this and many more, he lost his business. So John decided to work for another company.

Because of his experience, John was given a good position in the company. Greed still working in him, pushing him to embezzle company money which when caught will make him to lose his job and land him in prison. Do you think that John has learnt any lesson from his past? How can he ever go forward and remain prosperous except he learns his lessons.

One of the problems I have identified with man is insincerity. We never want to call a spade, a spade. You need to sincerely look at your experiences not to apportion blames, but to learn lessons from them, and make all the adjustments that are necessary for you to move forward in life.

"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor. 10:11-12)

The bible contains a documentary of all that happened to the Israelites in their relationship with God. This documentary, the bible says is for our education that we avoid the errors and sins of the Israelites. In other words we are expected to learn from history. It will be stupid of you to fall into the same error twice. Learn from your past experiences in business, academics, relationships, family life, and in your relationship with God. **Life is a school. Your future is connected to the lessons from the past.**

MOVE FORWARD

Man is created to be progressive. No one wants to remain on the same spot. Everybody wants improvement and a better life. Nobody wants to be static or move backwards. When one finds himself in any ugly situation, he will do everything within his power to get out of that situation.

Financially, academically, matrimonially, spiritually and business wise, you may be down, and wondering why things are the way they are. And you desire a change, wanting to move forward, but do not know how. I will by the grace of God show you how to move forward to that place you desire to be.

1. REVIEW THE PAST TO FIND OUT WHY YOU ARE WHERE YOU ARE.

You need to review the past to find out why things went the way they went, and why you are where you are. It is not enough for you to pray that God change things and not allow it to happen again. You must enquire to find out why things are the way they are. Review the past to avoid making the same mistakes again. Review the past to avoid pitfalls and improve your life.

There are dimensions to problems that we face in life. By dimensions, I mean angles to problems. Each time you are faced with a problem, in your review of it, look at these six dimensions. At the end of your examination, you will find the reason and forces behind the problem.

a. Spiritual Dimension.

There are spiritual dimensions to problems of life. You must understand that the spiritual, influences and controls the physical. The spiritual state of a man determines to a large extent the happenings in a man's life (business, marriage, financial, academics, spiritual and health life). You must therefore start with your spiritual life if you are sincere about learning from the past.

- You need to find out if you are in relationship with God. It is an open secret that God uses problems to draw the wayward sinner back to himself. Could it be that God allowed what happened to happen in your life in order to bring you back to him? Failure to return to the Lord will lead to further frustration, until you bow your knee to him in total surrender. So if you are not born again, you need to give your life to Jesus Christ right now.
- If you are born again, you need to check what law or instruction of God that you are not obeying. Disobedience brings a lot of calamity to a man. The curses we find in the Bible are for those who are disobedient to the laws and commandments of God. At the root of every agony and pain, is a broken law. Find out the law of God you are not following.

"Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him." (Eccl. 8:5-6)

If you are not following the procedure, principle or laws of God for doing a thing, problems and frustration will be the end result. According to the above scripture, frustration and failure will continue except one locates the right principle or procedure, and walk in it. This is why we need to always review the past to move forward.

- You need also to check if there is a curse or an unbroken covenant working in your life. It may be a generational curse or covenant that you inherited from your family that needs to be addressed for it to be broken. The word of God must be used to address such curses or covenants in the name of Jesus Christ. Your faith in the word of God will get the job done. Every covenant and curse must be denounced and broken verbally in the name of Jesus Christ. Fasting may be necessary depending on how you are led by the Spirit. If you entered into a covenant with the devil before now, you must denounce it and break it in the name of Jesus Christ.

b. Mental and attitudinal Dimension.

A man's mental attitude is more important than the problems of life. Attitude determines how a problem will leave a man. Problems will either leave you better or worse than it met you. The Bible teaches that a man is what he thinks.

"For as he thinketh in his heart so is he...."(Prov. 23:7)

Attitude is the way a man thinks. It is a man's mental disposition. Attitudes are formed based on the interpretations we give to the things we see, hear, smell, taste and feel. A positive attitude enables a man to be successful in life. A negative attitude hinders progress. The way you think reflects in your actions, words and moods. Enthusiasm is a reflection of a man's thoughts.

"As in water face answers to face so the mind of man reflects the man." (Prov. 27:19)

So your life is basically a reflection of your thoughts. Your experiences in life, marriage, and academics and in business are only an end product of your thoughts. You need therefore to review also your attitude and mental disposition to work, business, partner, spouse and God in other to find out why things went the way they did, or why you are where you are. Wrong attitudes produce wrong actions and words. May be the reason you are always having problem with your boss or business associates is that you are too negative or not enthusiastic about your work. May be you do not believe in the product you are selling, therefore you don't have the conviction necessary to make good sales. Could it be you don't know how to smile, or handle the pressures of life, that it affects you to the point that you wear weary and unwelcome face always? This definitely, will

affect your sales and your job. People want to deal with cheerful people at the desk or on the field. Check very well to be sure that it is not your attitude that is the problem. If it is, you need to work on yourself to change your attitude. Be positive always.

c. Work Dimension.

To solve the problems that confront you and move forward to a new level in life, you must look closely at your attitude to work in the past. If the problem is in the way you attend to your work, and you do not know it, the problem will continue to repeat itself. Check your work ethics. Do you always go late to work? Are you a lazy worker? Do you always excitedly look forward to the time of closing? Are you creative in your work? Do you work only when you are under pressure, or when somebody is on your neck? Do you work for work sake or you enjoy working? What is your packaging like? Are you interested in details? Do you do small things well? Can you say that you are improving regularly in the way you do your work, packaging of your business, product and services, and in your knowledge of your profession? You must always update or you will be left behind. People are looking for new things. So you must be ready to change with the times. Learn to offer incentives to your customers to keep them and attract more customers. The world of business is a competitive one; therefore, you must do something extra to remain in business.

d. Wisdom Dimension.

Wisdom, the bible says is the supreme thing in life. All failure problems are a wisdom problem. We fail because we didn't know the right thing to do, or we didn't do the right thing. So, you need to check whether you suffered from a wisdom problem or not.

*"Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. **Though it cost all you have, get understanding.** Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honour you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendour." (Prov. 4: 7-9)*

Check your method and approach to your business and life generally. I am sure you will find out a lack of wisdom in a certain area. Be a reader to acquire wisdom. Invest in knowledge. The bible advises that we don't mind the cost of knowledge and wisdom. Pay any price for wisdom, it will richly reward you. Upgrade your knowledge from time to time. Don't remain on the same position knowledge wise year after year. Let this year be an improvement of last year. And aspire that next year will be an improvement of this year.

Do not allow pride to stop you from asking those who are doing better than you how they are making it. Don't mind what the devil tells you they will say. What people say is not important. What is important is what you become with the knowledge you will acquire from them. Think of tomorrow when you consider this suggestion. Today, you may be the one asking them questions, tomorrow, you may be the one they are asking questions. Bury your pride and go to those who have the answer to your questions.

What is lacking in you is contained in another. Someone has the answer to the questions of your heart. Someone has the gift you don't have. Someone has the talent and skill you don't have. Someone has the knowledge you don't have. Find that person and collect what you need from him or her. That is the way God planned that we live life.

e. Association Dimension.

Life is a collection of relationships. The people we relate with affect us positively, or negatively. Friends are influence. This you must understand. Most of man's problems come from association. The people you move with determine to a large extent the direction of your life. If you check very well you will discover that your close associates have had an influence on your lifestyle, vision, focus, language, character and way of thinking. You're drinking habit, smoking, carousing, wild life, immoral lifestyle, values and philosophy; you got them from your friends and family either partially or totally.

Your partying life could have been your undoing. It could be that because of the friends that surround you that is why you always mismanage your finances. **Your lack of focus and concentration is as a result of several interest groups that are suggesting one thing or the other to you.** When you are not focused, your productivity level drops, your interest in the job or profession disappears, and enthusiasm to work and to continue in the same field disappears. So you need to check out who your friends are, and the contribution each person is making in your life. **Redefine every relationship to determine what kind of relationship to have with each person.**

Do you have friends who are in the same profession as you? You need them to rub minds together in order to solve problems that crop up, and improve in your field. Do not see them as competitors. You need them to survive and improve. Professional problems should best be shared with professional colleagues. You don't share accounting problems with a farmer. Neither do you share a managerial problem with a street trader. You meet the wrong people, they give you wrong counsel. Who are your friends and counselors in time of trouble and difficulty?

f. Management Dimension.

Many times we think that our problem is lack of enough money to do business and run our lives. But the truth is that, we are bad managers. Some people are wasters of God-given resources. They spend on virtually anything that appeals to their eyes. They don't manifest self-control. Their appetite rules them. Financial management is a must for all that plans to succeed in life.

Do you consider yourself a good manager? You need to check the way you have been managing your company, family, time, resources, workers and equipment. How do you treat those that work for you or under you? Do you pay well to match their input? Do you pay as at when due? Refusal to pay as at when due could trigger some dangerous prayers from your staff against you, which will eventually affect your company, especially when it is your habit.

"Do not hold back the wages of a hired servant overnight." (Lev. 19:13)

"He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich - both come to poverty." (Prov. 22:16)"

"Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labour." (Jer. 22:13)

May be you have suffered for the reason just discussed. All you need to do is to make sure that you always pay as at when due.

Do you have the ability to make your workers do their job well without having to force or threaten them? Do you have tact? Have you communicated the vision well enough to motivate follower-ship? Do you have a clear focus of where you are going, or what you want from your staff? People will always follow a man who knows where he is going. Where are you going? Make it clear.

You must work on yourself to be a good manager. If your problem has been managerial, change will not occur until you recognize it and make the necessary corrections. Manage your time well. Manage your men and materials well. Manage your money well. Manage your private life well. **If all is not well in your marriage or relationships, it will reflect on your work.**

2. LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES.

"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor. 10:11-12)

Your mistakes contain lessons for today and tomorrow. When you learn from your mistakes you don't make them again.

STEPS TO LEARNING FROM YOUR MISTAKES:

- a. Analyze the mistake(s) you have made and the consequences suffered or still suffering. Write everything down on paper.
- b. Identify **why** you made the mistakes and **how**.
- c. Find out how you can avoid such mistakes in future.

NOTE: The future is connected to the past. The lessons from the past will help make the future a better one and free one from the errors of yesterday.

- d. Learn the lessons inherent in the mistake and consequences.
- e. Determine in your heart to apply the lessons learnt, and never to fall into the same mistake again.
- f. Free yourself from the guilt, and settle down to live with the consequences you cannot change. When mistakes are made, certain consequences cannot be

changed by man. It takes God and sometimes within a period of time to change. If you start worrying about that, you only complicate your problem. Let go and let God deal with it. When wounds heal, the scar remains. Don't worry about the scar, just let the healing take place in your mind and entire life, and you will be happy you did.

3. GO FOR KNOWLEDGE.

Having identified the problems, you need to search for solutions. You need to study, attend seminars where necessary, listen to tapes, and be counseled by qualified personnel to be able to identify how to overcome the problems identified.

It takes committed people to move forward. There is no substitute to information in the school of success. Remember that wisdom is the supreme thing, and that there is no price too much for knowledge. The Bible teaches that we,

"Buy the truth and do not sell it." (Prov.23: 23)

Spend your energy and money searching for knowledge to overcome and move you forward in life.

4. BOLDLY CHANGE WHAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED.

Having concluded your research, all that is left is implementation. You need to boldly make all the necessary changes, even in areas you would not have loved to make changes. What should be uppermost in your mind and heart is success and progress. As long as you don't want a repeat performance, you just have to change what is necessary and not just what you think you can change. Pray for boldness and courage if you lack them. Just make the changes with all your heart, and we will celebrate with you in due season.

Apply this teaching not only in your present situation, but also in future experiences. Always remember that there is always something to learn from the past.