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Leaving Legacies: Each of
Us Can Change Our World

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Chapter 1

The topic for our deliberation this afternoon is Leaving Legacies: Each of Us Can Change Our World.

I must confess that it's quite a heavy topic, especially for young people 21 on average. Legacy is a topic for the old generation it's something you think about when you're 80! I reckoned that it's either the world is changing, or the topic was a mistake. Perhaps there was a mix-up. The President of the Geriatric Club is coming in next week to address this body and his topic was mistakenly assigned to me! However, I have conferred with the Director of this event and he most assured me that there is no mix up. That leaves me with the only other option the world is changing! And because the world is changing, young people now talk of legacy!

There are hidden possibilities in our topic of deliberation and we must take a deconstructivist approach to the topic if we must mine the purport. (This approach might not be unconnected with my legal training!) I will break apart the topic and mine each broken part for all its worth.

The talk of leaving legacies raises a conceptual irony. It trains our mind to a subject which young people again have no business with, and don't want to contemplate death! You can't



leave a legacy unless you're gone, can you?! Our topic may therefore be said to have a morbid undercurrent. It is a gentle reminder of mortality. It shreds the linear equation of death. When we think of death, we imagine the human race on a long queue into the chambers of death.

At the head of the line are the oldest people, followed by the older people. Of course, at the back of the line are the young. By the time it's our turn we reckon, we should be 70 years old, at least. And so death is at least 50 years away. We are on an escalator that is moving slowly, we imagine, to our final destination. And our knowledge of Physics convinces us that death uses a linear equation a linear progression format. This in itself is a betrayal of ignorance about Time, but we shall leave that for now.

Unfortunately, death obeys another set of laws. It is more likely to use a random equation than a linear one. Indeed at some level, we see the Theory of Chaos in operation. In terms of pickings and speed of processing, death would seem more intelligent and more efficient than we give it credit! When the philosopher-king stated, "Teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom," he was alluding to the issue before us human mortality.



Unnumbered days, he says, derogate from wisdom, and belie a belief in invincibility. If you're not numbering your days, you must believe you're immortal.

Note that he said “Teach us to number OUR days.” You have your days and you therefore have responsibility over your life. It means you cannot blame anybody for anything that happens within those days.

But there is another logic hidden here. If you have your days, the simple logic is that there are other days that are not yours. My faith tells me that those days belong to God. My focus is not religion but the principle embedded in the logic of our pursuit. It would seem that “our days” are part of a larger set of days. If so, “our days” amount to no more than a lease over which we have certificates of occupancy. Our leases will expire. The deep purport of this is that we are accountable to the Lessor of days, the Giver of Days, aka Ancient of Days. You are accountable, and must be held responsible for your actions and inactions in your days.



And so we have the following so far:

1. The world is changing
2. Your days are numbered
3. You are responsible
4. You are accountable



Chapter 2

By the time I perorated the second part of the title of this lecture, I suddenly realised how young people can leave a legacy. I also knew what legacy they can leave. The answer is in the title. The title of my lecture if I must remind you again is, “Leaving Legacies Each of Us Can Change Our World.”

In effect, if a young man can create a change, then he can leave a legacy. This solves a major problem and ensures that a young man can determine not to die unsung. It takes legacy creation out of the exclusive preserve of the old. It democratises the notion of legacy creation and shatters demographic barriers.

This would seem to make sense when we consider the life of Alexander the Great. He fits our model of mortality of youth because he died at the age of 32.

And he left a legacy. There are monuments that still bear his name The Port of Alexandria in Egypt, for example. And all those who named their children Alexander are numbered among his legacy trustees. Their children are franchisees of the Alexander brand name.



Alexander saw the world beyond the Hellenistic confines of Ancient Greece. He was an internationalist, with a vision of a global empire. The constituent members of this empire received Greek education, Greek military training and Greek culture yet maintained their national identities.

In business today, we will call this type of vision Glocal – global aspiration, local flavor. When HSBC Bank says it's the world's local bank, it's conceptually not far removed from Alexander's thinking. UBA in Nigeria would later call itself Africa's Global Bank. And Zenith Bank picked up the refrain as “Nigeria's Global Bank”. They are all Alexander's philosophical franchisees.

There are other examples I could cite but because this University is situated at the intersection of the spiritual and the temporal, permit me to cite two examples from Scriptures who fit our bill.

The first is a nationalised Egyptian named Zaphnath-Paaneah, popularly known as Joseph. He became Prime Minister at the age of 30 and was credited with far reaching macro economic policies.



He introduced internally generated revenue (IGR) in the form of taxation to Egypt, created trade surpluses not unlike China today, and conceptualised full value chain agricultural economy. Politically, he centralised power in the office of the King and even introduced land reform. He was a change agent.

The other person I'll like to introduce was an internationalist like Alexander. His vision was a global confederacy made up of tribes and tongues but joined by one common destiny. He died young (aged 33) but his political philosophy spread around the world - USA, Brazil, Mexico, China, Philippines, Germany, Nigeria, Italy, France, Britain, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Russia, Egypt, Lebanon, India and so on... His political philosophy was radical for his day. He started a movement on the power of an idea. No man is irredeemable; everyone deserves a second chance. He empowered the poor, but did not believe in class warfare like Karl Marx. He shunned the two main parties - the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democratic Party - and ran as an independent candidate who never contested an election. He was assassinated by the Establishment on trumped up charges. He was accused of sedition and treasonable felony and sentenced to death.



His ideas have influenced education, language, culture, politics and economics globally. He is none other than Jesus Christ.

The moral from these two individuals is that ideas change the world. And you must have a passion for reform if you want to be a change agent. From Gandhi, to Martin Luther King Jr., to Karl Marx, to Adam Smith, to Einstein - ideas change the world.

But ideas not only change the world, they change our individual worlds. This is the 2nd translation of our topic of deliberation. When you change the world through ideas, your world also changes. There are consequences to being an idea revolutionary. Those consequences are both positive and negative. You will lose some friends definitely. You will have to cope with envy. Fame will come. And so will some other pressures. This is the reality of life and if anybody tells you otherwise, he's lying to you. Ideas change your world.

From the foregoing, it would seem that when young people talk about changing the world, we should be asking, "What is the big idea?" What's your Big Idea? Your big idea must be something you are passionate about, something that means a lot to you.



In recent times, we have seen powerful ideas change the way we live and our world experience. A young man had an idea of a computer on every desk in every home. His name is Bill Gates. He went on to become the world's richest man. (Ideas change your world remember?!)

Another young man saw the potential in a direct business model. What if we cut out the middleman, he said. His name is Michael Dell of the Dell Computer fame. He started his business in his university hostel.

Yet another young man imagined a world in which technology is so simplified just point and click. His name is Steve Jobs. The graphical user interface (GUI) that made this possible was not his invention. It was created in Palo Alto by Xerox. But Steve Jobs adapted it for the masses. PC users call it Windows.

The single unifying force in all these three examples is a desire to empower people and make life easy. Because these are living, breathing examples, we know that this principle works as an iteration: Empower others. Make life simple. Change the world. Change your world!



Henry Ford had a vision of an affordable motor car. He empowered others and made car ownership easy. He created the first car assembly plant. He changed the world and died rich. He changed his world!

Henry J. Heinz did not want women bleeding tears as they grated radish. He created a food empire and changed the taste of the world with tomato ketchup. He became a brand name and changed his world.

From the foregoing, we can conclude that as long as people and compassion are at the centre of your idea, you can change the world.

What is your Big Idea?

The Big Idea is the key to purpose. All the people that were purposed in Scriptures (including Judas) had ideas, or worked on ideas, or were part of an idea. Some saved ideas, others made ideas possible, or progressed ideas. Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, David, Esther, Moses, Jezebel... they were all idea machineries. You can't have purpose unless you're part of an idea.



Now purpose is a very big philosophical topic. It has a cosmological foundation.

The reasoning goes something like this:

There are 100 billion stars in our galaxy. Our Solar System occupies the equivalence of the suburbs of our galaxy, and our planet, Earth, is the only life bearing one in this Solar System, which consists of Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and a planetoid - Pluto. (When I state that our planet is the only life bearing one, I define life as life as we know it, i.e. biological life. My definition does not envisage other known forms of life). The Earth is the only habitable place for life as we know it and all attempts to discover life, even in primitive form, on other planets has so far proved unproductive. We have been beaming cosmic Hellos into the universe through the SETI radio telescope for years. So far, no one has returned our call. SETI is the acronym for Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence.

The planets orbit the Sun - a thermo-nuclear plant, 1,470 km in diameter. It's one of the very small stars in the universe. It is 5 billion years old and would probably burn for another 5 billion years.



Our knowledge of the Bible posits that the Adamic generation, the one to which we belong, is barely 6,000 years old. The mathematical possibility of our existence in what is at least a 14 billion year old universe is, you must agree, remote and extreme. Yet we are here, and not only here, we have consciousness - or else we will not be pondering our existence. And we take consciousness for granted.

Science has no clue as to what was before space, time and matter were created the moment just before the Big Bang. And the Bible also leaves us in the dark. The only recourse we have is Genesis 1:1; "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." That simple statement is a major scientific and philosophical conundrum but let's let it be for now. The point being made is that science cannot answer the question of purpose. It cannot answer the simple question: "Why are we here?" Again that leaves us with recourse to the Bible (and quite possibly other ancient religious texts that I am not aware of). The critical question is, can the Creator create something without purpose? The answer would seem to be Yes! We are told in Scriptures that we were created for His pleasure! Therefore there can be existence without purpose, though an existence without purpose does not imply a non-purposed existence.



But why would I have a consciousness of purpose if I am made without purpose? Why does the question of purpose gnaw every heart? There is thus a dualism. I am created for pleasure and so without purpose, but I have a consciousness of purpose. We can only resolve this problem by stating as follows: My purpose finds context in God's pleasure. I am allowed to choose to have a purpose but that purpose can only be meaningful within the context of God's pleasure. This resolves the Judas problem. He made a choice to betray Jesus. That betrayal, however we see it, made salvation of mankind possible and is therefore within the context of God's pleasure though it didn't please God! It is written, "For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." I am therefore accountable and have life at His Majesty's pleasure. I can be terminated anytime! Without purpose and accountability, we are life debris, prone to suicide. We can drink ourselves to death, rob, cheat... do whatever we please. We are life's nomads, roaming the surface of the earth until we expire. But if we have purpose, and are accountable quantities, then we live! Purpose turns existence into life!

We do have records of purposed inanimate objects however. The earth we are told by Isaiah was created to be inhabited and not in vain. I therefore come to an inescapable conclusion:



All creatures are purposed but not all creatures have purpose. The reason is quite simple: Purpose is a choice. Without freewill, we cannot exercise that choice.

The very notion of purpose and being purposed raises serious dialectical issues. Did Hitler have a purpose or was he purposed? Religion would say both. Indeed, religion would go as far as to state that a man who can orchestrate the extermination of six million Jews was purposed by an evil force. In other words, the issue of purpose and purposedness takes on a moral hue.

But had we asked Hitler what his purpose was, he might have replied that it was to restore the pride of Germany after the humiliation of World War 1. There is thus local determination of purpose by an individual, and there is purposedness by the powers that be God and Satan representing good and evil. A man with purpose is purposed, it would seem. But if I'm purposed by a power beyond me, am I still responsible? The reconciliation of this question is dependent on the determination of the energy source who is motivating you? You still bear a moral burden because you exercise a choice of motivator.



The choices you make determine your motivator. The easy test for the source of motivation from our Hitler case study is whether your big idea does good to many without harming others. May we then conclude that individual determination of purpose less morality is meaningless and may lead to infamy.

But how about the issue of will and determination, in fulfillment of purpose? No purposed individual can succeed without purposefulness. Purposefulness recognises that time is limited. And if purpose must be accomplished, then the issue of efficiency of resources is thrown up. You can't be purposeful without direction, or plan, or drive, or focus, or determination. All humans without these factors are life nomads.

And so we come full circle. We can now safely state that the Scripture, "Teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" is a principle of purpose. It bespeaks timeousness and consciousness. We cannot change the world without a consciousness of self, or our fellow man.

In modern terms, the passage implies that there is wisdom in marking your birthday! And we can deduce from this that purpose comes in the natural order of existence.



Purpose does not come by illumination. It comes by realisation. Therefore, whatsoever your hand finds to do, do with all your might. That is the door to purpose. In other words, purpose is a journey. Joseph realised his purpose after a long journey. It was to preserve his family lineage. David realised his. He said, "I now know why God made me King. It is for the sake of His people." Purpose cannot be discovered. It can only be realised. The process of realisation is full of trials, and pain and turmoil. These things mold our character. Without character we cannot handle purpose. Therefore purpose is a journey and the journey is a process.

Without doubt Hitler was a purposed individual. He was a liberator of his people from shame, much like that son of a woman of easy virtue in the Bible, Jephthah. When you consider his passion, oratorical skills, intellect and vision, he was destined to be a great ruler. But he allowed ignoble sentiments and dark emotion to corrupt his calling, and like Darth Vader, he turned to the Dark Side.

There are four morals here:

1. Our passion is a pointer to our purpose



2. Our gifting, and talents, and skills will enable us to deliver purpose. We must use them.
3. Talent is not purpose. It is a tool of purpose.
4. When we don't rise to nobility, or when we allow dangerous emotions to take over our being, our purpose is corroded.

We might even state that Dark Energy cannot purpose us unless we tap into it. It's a choice. And neither can God. We determine our purpose first before we can plug into an energy source. And when that happens, we become purposed taken over.

Moses almost made the same mistake as Hitler. Dangerous passion masquerading as righteousness led him to commit murder at the age of 40. He almost lost it! Immaturity cannot handle purpose. You risk early termination. Ignoble passions always manifest as righteousness.

But exile saved Moses; the idea of an Egyptian Prince in the backside of the desert, tending to sheep, humbled and sobered him. Egyptians detested shepherds. Moses was brought up as an Egyptian. He was saved by the training that came from what he detests.



He would later become a political shepherd, leading his people across the backside of the same desert. Our difficulties are our trainers for our roles in life. Don't run from difficulties.

In conclusion, Yes! We all can leave a legacy. Yes! We all can change the world! We just have to find that one big idea, and then purpose through realisation.

Thank you!