

the
Extraordinary
Gentleman

Man and the Three Fields of His Life

A Handbook for Christian Men

SELORM AGBLEZE

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Gentleman

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WARNING!!!

MANY MEN MAY BE TRANSFORMED BY THE TRUTHS
IN THIS BOOK, HOWEVER, MEN WHO ARE AFRAID
OF TRUE REFINEMENT MAY TURN TO PRETENCE.
THE ONLY TRUE TEST OF AN EXTRAORDINARY
GENTLEMAN IS THE SUSTAINABILITY OF HIS
CHARACTER.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

AMP - Amplified Bible Version

KJV- King James Version

NET- The NET Bible

NIV- New International Version

NKJV- New King James Version

RSV- Revised Standard Version

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I love you all !!!

DEDICATION

To the Glory of God

&

To my late brother and “son-at-heart”,

Alfred Kwaku Doe Agbleze,

I long to see the Gentleman you are in the arms of
God.

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THE OPENING CHAPTER

Beloved Alfred,

The world as you know it has changed. Beyond the many changes I could talk about, one of particular importance to me is what has become of the state and qualities of being a man, in short, manhood. Technological advancements, increased information access and various societal changes have altered the traditional roles and responsibilities of men. Further, much of what may have started as an important development in human welfare and correction to the place women occupied in society has assumed bewildering scopes. Specifically, in some circles, it appears to be a quest to erase manhood. Manhood is epidemically losing relevance, even in the church. I, therefore, find it a duty to write you this letter, especially now that you are at the gate of manhood. This letter is to share with you a map of the treasure chest of true manhood, which I stumbled upon.

If you ever need the words of this letter, they will equip you to live the balanced and fulfilling life of a true Christian man. You can read this letter through, quickly and fast, like the storybooks we shared, but this letter will better serve you if you study it with its biblical references. Do not hasten to be done with this letter and after which forget these words that are dear

to my heart. Do well to return to this letter again and again, especially as you arrive at various crossroads on your life journey as a man. I am sure that you will better appreciate and criticize this map once you are actually at each key milestone on the journey of manhood. Be kind enough to share this with your friends and all who need the details of this map; you might not know just the depth of kindness you will be doing to the world around you.

God bless you and joyful reading.

THE CONCEPT

Value systems

Men, throughout their growth and development, are exposed to various circumstances that are either common to all men or somewhat peculiar to them. Their reactions to these circumstances are varied. However, these circumstances leave trails that tint the lens of their minds' eyes. All men, therefore, have tinted lenses through which their minds' eyes see the world around them. These lenses vary in thickness, colour, and in shades of countless colours available. In essence, men see the same things differently.

With this preamble, I would like to introduce to you the subject of **value systems**.

All men have, as if it were, a complex, connected, coordinated and constantly evolving network of information that has been bred over their life span of learning and experiences. They employ this network of information to analyze and interpret other incoming information in order to determine the appropriate response(s). This network of information is what we

will call a **mindset**. For those who understand the basic workings of a computer as it is currently, the mindset is the programme that is written and stored in the computer, and the computer is the mind. Therefore for the mind, which is the computer, to work, it will need the mindset, which is the programme. The computer works by using a programme that has been written into it to interpret incoming input or instruction and produce an output or result by processing the information. In the same way, the mind of a man processes information by using the mindset to analyze and interpret the incoming information and to determine the appropriate response. The judgment or understanding that a man has of any information or situation is therefore affected by his mindset.

Furthermore, a man's mindset consists of the network of his past learning and experiences. Therefore, given that a man's learning and experiences change with time, his mindset also changes with time. As a man learns new things through studies or experiences, his brain makes new connections between his past and new learning, changing the structure of his mindset and affecting the interpretation he gives to a particular piece of information. Therefore, a man may change the interpretation he gives to the same piece of information with the passing of time. This change may occur to

varying degrees from small to large.

When a man analyzes and interprets incoming information with his mindset, the interpreted information takes the form of a picture that is seen by his mind's eye. This picture is what the man regards as the meaning of the information. The unique picture of a particular situation which is a result of the mindset's interpretation of information is what we will call **perception**.

Additionally, there is a part of the mindset that attaches a determined measure of importance to any incoming piece of information. This is the part of the mindset that we will call the **value system**. In essence, when a man's mindset interprets information, it produces a **perception** which is the picture of the meaning of the information. This picture is however labelled with a tag that indicates to the mind the level of importance of the picture. As such, even though certain people may share a similar perception of a particular situation and react in a similar way to the situation, the gravity of their responses depends on the importance or the value attached to the information in their mind by their value system. For example, two men may consider a particular offence of car snatching as a crime and therefore, both conclude that such an offence should be punished

with a jail term (hence, they have a similar perception). However, the gravity of punishment that each of them might recommend may differ because of the difference in weight (value) that their value systems attach to the car snatching offence. The first man may suggest a 5-year jail term as the appropriate punishment, while the other might suggest a 10-year jail sentence with hard labour.

The differences in jail sentences proposed by the two men mean that though the two men in this instance believe that car snatching is a crime that has to be punished, they have different perceptions as to the severity of the offence. It could be that the second man (who proposed the more severe sentence) has been robbed once or more, and these experiences have tinted the lens through which he sees the whole situation. As such, his value system attaches more weight or severity to the car snatching offence, thus, prompting the more severe sentence that he proposes.

Figure 1 attempts to illustrate the operation of the mindset and value system in a diagrammatic form.

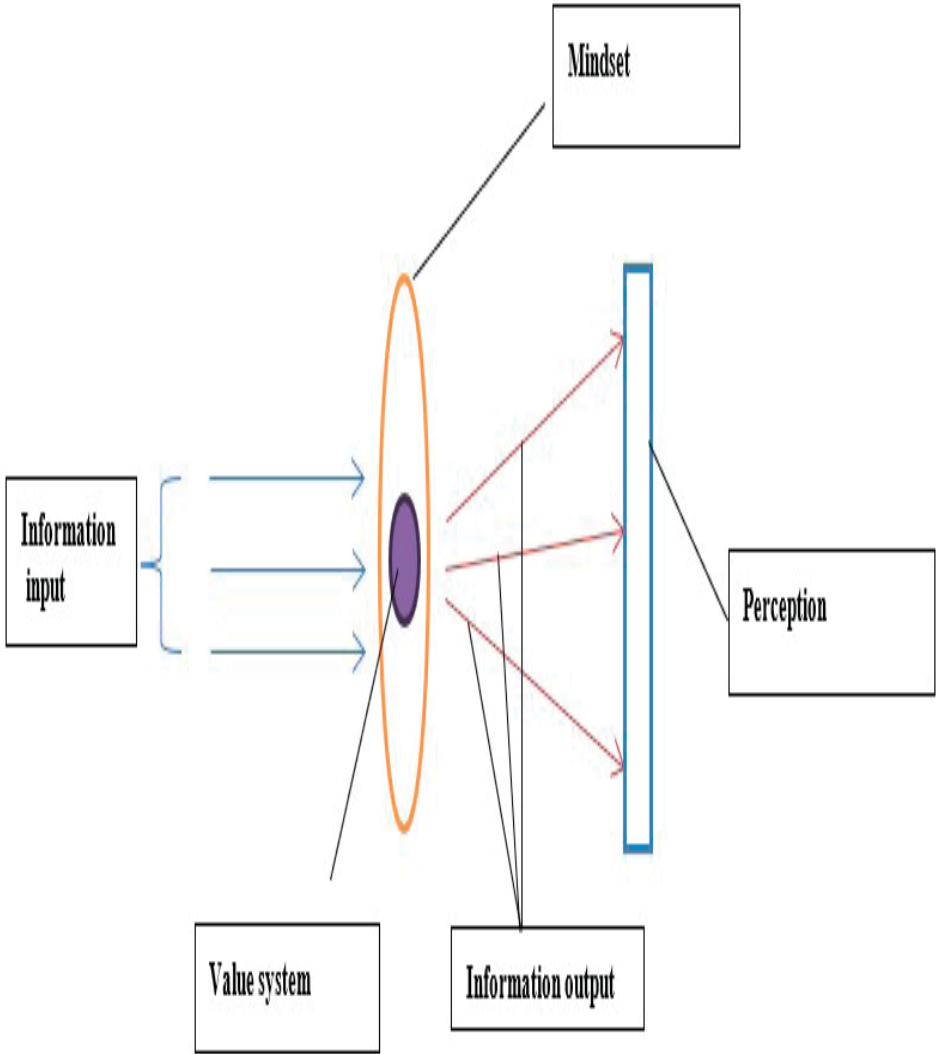


Fig 1: The Value System

The Crux of the Matter

As the spine is cardinal to the body, so is the value system cardinal to a man's personality. Since the Extraordinary Gentleman is a subject of personality, it is important that anyone who desires an understanding of this concept grab it by its spine! Thus understanding how the value system influences or to a large extent, determines the personality of a man is of prime importance.

As discussed earlier, the value system refers to the part of the mindset that attaches a determined measure of importance to any incoming piece of information. As such, the value system of a man determines what catches his attention and what turns his head in disgust, what spurs him on and what brings him to a halt, what wins his smile and what draws his tears. It determines his friends and his enemies, what he puts his money in and where he puts his faith – it is both his strength and his weakness.

The judgments passed by people about a man are also primarily determined by the value systems of those passing the judgments. That is, what the people passing the judgment value compared to what the man values. What people think, feel and say about you, therefore, depends on their value systems and yours. If you value what they value, you are of value to them. By extension, God's judgment of a man will also be determined by the

man's value system in relation to God's. If you value and live by what God values, you become valuable to God. In essence, what a man values or attaches importance to throws on his image before men and God (Jer 2:5; Ps 115:7-8; Ps 106:19-10). The rule of the value system is, therefore, this:

What you value determines your value

Key quotation

Thus says the LORD: "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, **and went after worthlessness, and became worthless** (Jeremiah 2:5, RSV).

Insight 1: The extraordinary mindset¹

By faith, Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born because they saw that he was no ordinary child...

(Heb 11: 23, NIV)

There was something uncommon or extraordinary about Moses at birth, and that was his beauty. It is believed by bible commentators that this uncommon beauty seemed to be an indicator of the great destiny Moses had, and as such, his parents were ready to risk hiding their child against the command of the Egyptian king.

¹ An earlier version of this *Insight* was first posted on the blog: cxgentlemen.wordpress.com

But there was something else about Moses that distinguished him from many men, his mindset. Moses had a mindset that was embedded with the right value system, and this made him a candidate for the extraordinary manifestations of God to him and through him. Moses understood how to value what God valued and had accurate knowledge of the value of God's rewards. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt because he was looking ahead to his reward. (Heb 11: 26, NIV)

With this mindset, Moses undertook the right actions, which made him the right person that God could use in implementing His will (i.e. the redemption of His nation).

By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible (Heb 11:24-25).

Moses had a mindset that gave him the desire to live beyond sin and to enjoy pleasures that were outside the will of God. Beyond denying himself these pleasures, he was ready to take risks because of his trust in God and His promises. Moses was living his life for God.

How did he achieve this? Simple! He understood the value of the rewards of following the will of God rather than available alternatives. Knowing the superiority in value of God's will over available alternatives made his choices much simpler though seemingly "difficult".

Our choices will be much simpler, wiser and more rewarding if we understand the value of God's reward vis-à-vis the available alternatives and, again, if we really know and appreciate the value that God offers now and in eternity. How much of God's promises do you know? How accurate are your valuations of God's rewards?

The Value System and Man

As indicated earlier, the mindset of a man evolves with his experiences and learning. Similarly, the value system of a man also evolves with his experiences and learning. This evolution of a man's value system can be observed through changing dispositions (attitudes and behaviour) or, in a broader sense, his personality. This evolution may be seen in the different way a man may respond to a particular situation currently as compared to how he would have responded to the same situation in the past. Something has changed in their value system, either caused by experience or by something they have learned or both.

However, although many of the changes in a man's

mindset and value system are determined by experiences that may be unique to the man, a great percentage of these experiences are common to men. This may be a result of shared cultural and genetic dispositions. Furthermore, the increased connection between men across cultures has exacerbated this tendency of shared experiences. As such, men at similar stages in life tend to share similar value systems. This common value system, therefore, creates a level of predictability of men's disposition at different stages of their lives. Consequently, to be a successful man, one must understand the predominant evolutionary pathway of a man's value system and use the knowledge to your benefit.

A great thinker, Balthasar Gracian, once wrote: "At twenty, man is a Peacock, at thirty a Lion, at forty a Camel, at fifty a Serpent, at sixty a Dog, at seventy an Ape, at eighty nothing at all"². The symbolic representations of a man's nature at each age by Balthasar Gracian highlight men's dominant disposition at each stage of their lives. We will leverage these representations to explain how a man's value system evolves. In the discussions that follow, the numbers twenty to eighty do not represent a man's conventional ages but rather represent stages of a man's life. As such, a man may be twenty years old but be operating at stage thirty and vice versa. We start with stage twenty,

² Gracian, B. (1637) *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*. Translated by J. Jacobs. Available at: <http://www.online-literature.com/gracian/art-worldly-wisdom/>.

Twenty: The peacock

At twenty, the man is a peacock. A peacock is a bird known for the male's extravagant eye-spotted tail. It usually spreads out its decorated tail in a display to attract the female for mating³. Twenty represents the stage at which a young man is experiencing the effects of puberty. At twenty, the man values his newly acquired masculinity in thought, speech, looks and action. Therefore, his value system attaches more importance to information that promotes his idea of masculinity. He is ready to flaunt his masculinity at the least opportunity and does all in his power to make sure that it is visible enough to merit recognition, especially by the opposite sex and his peers. In effect, any action or circumstance threatening his masculinity display is greeted with sharp signs of displeasure. He audibly displays this displeasure through his mostly newly acquired outspoken personality. Disobedience and pride are usual inclinations at this stage.

Thirty: The lion

A lion is a large predatory cat known for its strength and skill at hunting prey⁴. It usually hunts in a group and is commonly depicted as the “king of the jungle”. Thirty for a man represents the stage just after the

³ Wikipedia (2017) *Peafowl*. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peafowl>.

⁴ Wikipedia (2017) *Lion*. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion>.

storms of puberty have calmed down. At thirty, a man values strength, pursuit and conquest. At this stage, he moves from displaying to deploying. He begins to use his masculine strength to pursue conquests or achievements. He is obsessed with results; he wants to prove his manhood; he wants to prove to himself that he is in has what it takes to be a man. His self-opinion matters to him, and he surrounds himself with people who reinforce his image of himself. He is his first audience and will do all it takes to please this all-important audience. Risk-taking and industry are common dispositions at this stage.

Forty: The camel

At stage forty, a man is a camel. A camel is a mammal with long legs and a humped back⁵. The camel thrives in harsh desert conditions. It is the usual mode of transport in the desert, carrying both humans and goods. A camel has several adaptations that permit it to thrive under difficult conditions. These include a hump for storing fat that can be converted to energy when needed, flat hoofs to prevent sinking into the desert sand, sealable nostrils against inhaling desert sand, and other adaptations that reduce water loss drastically. It is also a source of milk and meat⁶.

⁵ Bradford, A. (2017) *Camels: Facts, type and pictures*, *Livescience*. Available at: <https://www.livescience.com/27503-camels.html>.

⁶ Wikipedia (2017) *Peafowl*. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camel>.

Forty represents the stage after a man has satisfied himself by proving to himself that he has what it takes. At forty, a man values his ability to solve problems. After proving to himself that he has what it takes (at stage thirty), the man is ready to prove to others that he has what it takes. He achieves this by taking up responsibility in life, society and business. He puts himself to work, finding solutions to others' problems. Like a camel, the man operates with the tenacity to go through current situations and the capacity to prepare for the future. He aims at effectively combining his tenacity and capacity with a strong back to bear present burdens. Stability under heavy responsibility and usefulness to society characterize this stage.

Fifty: The serpent

Balthasar Gracian represents a man at stage fifty by the snake. Snakes are elongated, legless, carnivorous reptiles with well-adapted skulls and jaws that enable them to swallow prey many times their size⁷. Snakes are known for their ability to injure through their venom (This, however, applies to only venomous snakes). They can easily sneak away from trouble but also stand their ground to resist attack. Balthasar Gracian uses the snake to represent a man at stage Fifty.

⁷ Wikipedia (2017) *Snake*. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake>

Fifty represents the stage just after learning from the mistakes of stages thirty and forty. At fifty, a man values wisdom. A man at fifty begins to employ lessons from his experiences and learnings more intensely and begins to apply them in his dealings with the world around him. Deep thoughts become more critical, and the willingness to impart his philosophies of life is increased. Prudence or cunningness becomes pronounced at this stage.

Sixty: The Dog

At sixty, a man is a dog. Dogs have superior social intelligence and are known for their loyalty⁸. They exhibit playfulness and older domestic dogs also seem to interact freely with younger ones. They are commonly tagged as “man’s best friend”⁷.

Sixty represents the stage at which the man has “seen it all and done it all”. At sixty, man values the strength of his youth and the youthful desires that are now waning. Most pursue anything that makes them still feel young, while others go out to renew relations with friends of their youth. Yet still, others groom successors and delight in their protégés in whom they see their once youthful energy. Actualization or regret characterizes this stage.

⁸ Wikipedia (2017) *Dog*. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog>

Seventy: The ape

Apes are tailless primates with a humanlike appearance⁹ but do not have the complete set of abilities that humans have. Seventy represents the stage that a man accepts and lives in the fulfilment of his actualization or the pains of his regret. At seventy, man values forty. He values seeing the prime of his personality, and when he has the chance, he values advising other men about the way to keep the prime as long as possible. A man at this age is a shadow of his former personality. At this age, man values peace and orderliness.

Eighty: The nothing

Eighty represents the fading out phases of seventy. Many men do not see eighty; they are very much nothing by then. At stage eighty, man values beyond this life. Some think there is nothing beyond it, while others admit eternity. At this stage, however, man is lost to all that meant manhood to him. Much that makes him alive depends on those around him; his live and joy derive from them and how actively they can engage with him.

The lesson, therefore, is to know the different stages and the strengths and weaknesses of men at each stage. This will enable a man to limit or avoid the common misfortunes that befall men at the various stages of life. The preceding discussions illustrated the generic path many men take as they grow and develop. However,

⁹ Wikipedia (2017) *Ape*. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ape>

men who make a difference in the world through their lives are those who take the path less travelled.

The Path Less Travelled

The path less travelled is the path taken by great men who live extraordinary lives. To take the extraordinary path, a man at twenty should be a parrot at thirty, a lion with wolf instinct at forty, a camel with serpent wisdom and from fifty, an eagle in the fullness of its majesty.

Twenty: The Parrot

Unlike the generic path, he who takes the extraordinary path must be a parrot at twenty and not a peacock. Parrots are birds that are usually brightly coloured and sometimes multi-coloured. They are among the most intelligent birds. Some species can imitate human voices, while most parrot species can use their feet to manipulate food and other objects with a high degree of dexterity, similar to humans using their hands. Parrots' environment at their stages of development affects their behavioural patterns. Learning in early life is essential to all parrots, and in several parrot species, crèches are formed for young parrots.

At twenty, a man should value learning and his masculinity. The most important, however, is his learning. It is important at stage twenty to enrich oneself with knowledge. Knowledge is priceless and

the breath of prudent existence. It is the foundation of a fruitful and successful life. Additionally, intelligent nurturing of your masculinity gives you the advantage of first impression; people can see your value even in your appearance.

Furthermore, at stage twenty, a man's environment can profoundly influence his future personality. What a man's spirit, soul, and body are exposed to at this stage significantly affects how he turns out at later stages of his life. It is, therefore, wise for a man to control what surrounds him. These include, most notably, people and information. Wise friends and counsellors, usually called mentors, are most appropriate for this stage. A man at stage twenty must do his best to consciously nurture a rich learning relationship with these people, learning from their words and experiences.

Man consists of spirit, soul and body. As such, to develop the right form of masculinity, the right knowledge that equips a man's three dimensions should be acquired and put into practice for complete development. Even though it is important to value and put into practice what one learns, it is unwise to act mindlessly on what one has learned as a parrot mindlessly repeats speech. It is, however, double unwise to value a brainless display of masculinity. The parrot wears its adornment of brightly coloured feathers but is not blinded by folly to engage in vain displays like a peacock.

Furthermore, there are three partners in the production of a human being; the Holy One (God), the father and the mother¹⁰. Knowledge and blessings from these three must be adequately secured and protected at stage twenty. Their knowledge flows from a deep well of love, and their blessings are like bright petals that attract the bees of good fortune. There are circumstances where your experience or knowledge will not suffice, for when Solomon the wise observed, he saw under the sun that:

*The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,
neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of
understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but that
time and chance happeneth to them all
(Eccl 9:11, KJV).*

To wit, all men have twenty-four hours in a day and bad times and good times are common to all, but the blessings of God, your father and your mother, can turn chance in your favour and lengthen your seasons of happiness. Knowledge is acquired from these three through their instructions, but blessings are acquired through offering them love and faithful service. Never despise the laying on of a father's hand.

Thirty: The Lion with Wolf Instincts

Like the generic path, men at stage thirty must be lions, but this time, with wolf instincts. Wolves have

¹⁰ *Ancient Jewish Proverbs*, by Abraham Cohen, [1911], at sacred-texts.com

great vision and a sharp and excellent sense of smell and hearing¹¹. They can detect and avoid traps and poisoned bait. Wolves are notoriously difficult to hunt due to their elusiveness, sharp senses, their high endurance in a chase¹². They also have the ability to quickly incapacitate and kill hunting dogs¹².

At stage thirty, a man must value strength, pursuit and conquest. However, the manner of service he puts himself to is of overriding importance. A man at this age must avoid corrupt or ill services. Services are chiefly of two kinds, your career and your calling (purpose). Your purpose is the most prestigious of all services. The knowledge relevant to understanding the three dimensions of a man (i.e. spirit, soul and body) must be processed to produce a sense of purpose.

Purpose is a highly studied subject, and many books worth reading are dedicated to it. It is wise to study the subject of purpose in detail. To put the definition of purpose in Paul's words, purpose is the reason why Christ took hold of you (Php 3:12). Your purpose is a pursuit that drives you as you drive it and grants inexplicable satisfaction. Your career, on the other hand, is what you do for a living, that is, to generate income.

¹¹ Wikipedia (2017) *Gray wolf*. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graywolf>

¹² Roosevelt, T. (1909). *Hunting the grisly and other sketches; an account of the big game of the United States and its chase with horse, hound, and rifle*, New York, London, G. P. Putnam's sons, pp. 179-207

There are many that excel at various services and yet are never satisfied. Their success becomes a burden to them because they feel more committed but “emptier” with each success. Therefore, self-reflection and knowledge of the times are essential to synthesize the appropriate service to engage in. In the rendering of service, there are some whose purpose lies in their career (e.g. a teacher who raises God-fearing scientists). Others seem to have their career alongside the completion of their purpose (e.g. a banker who writes and sings spiritual songs). Yet still, others have their work embedded in their purpose (e.g. a full-time pastor paid by the church). The fulfilment of purpose is oftentimes reserved for the latter parts of one’s life. In the meantime, necessary and diligent preparation and grooming towards fulfilling one’s purpose are vital.

The various services that a man pursues at stage thirty are not devoid of risks. It takes the nose of a wolf to sniff out the traps set by man, the nature of the work or evil spirits. The ability to discern and manage these risks is critical. Additionally, an excellent choice of the service to engage in and the dedication of time and other resources to the chosen service is necessary to achieve success. However, if the game you are hunting is large, it is wise to hunt in a group. As such, it is wise to surround oneself with wise people at this stage.

People who come into our lives or we choose to be part of our lives are chiefly of four kinds; Confidants,

Constituents, Comrades and Commanders (Bishop TD Jakes proposed the first three). Confidants are people who are around you because they are into you. They buy into you as a person and therefore are willing to be by your side whether you are up or down, in victory or defeat, right or wrong. They are, however, wise enough to tell you when you are wrong.

Constituents, on the other hand, are those who are around you because they are for what you are for. They are people pursuing the same vision or destination that you are pursuing. As such, they are going the same place you are going and travelling the same path. They are only with you because you both have the same destination in mind.

Commanders, on their part, are in your life because you have a resource that can take them to where they are going. They are not in your life because you are going where they are going but because you have a resource or skill that they consider important in helping them arrive at their destination.

Finally, Comrades are those who are around you because they are against what you are against. They are those who are around you because you share the same enemy. They are only with you to see the greater enemy fall. As Bishop T.D. Jakes describes it; they are like scaffolding that is put in place to put up a building. Once the installation is done, the scaffolding

is removed. Once the enemy is down, the comrades leave. Unlike Comrades, the Confidants on their part are in for the longhaul¹². They are there to be with you, in essence, to the end of your life. They are not in your life to help with a particularly defined ‘mission’ but have come into your life because they have bought into you as a person. Constituents, on the other hand, are in your life because you are going where they are going, and when they find somebody else or something else that promises to take them there faster than you would, they will leave you for that person or something. Like Constituents, Commanders leave you when they find someone or something that promises to take them to their destination faster than you would. They may also leave you when they no longer need your resource or have found a resource of higher quality elsewhere. A key characteristic of Commanders is the loyalty they demand (sometimes unjustifiably) from you at the time they need your resource. Wisdom is to be able to categorize the people around you at stage Thirty into Confidants, Constituents, Comrades and Commanders, to love all of them as God has commanded us (Matt. 22:39) and to handle them as their categorizations demand.

Comrades are with you until the enemy is brought down, so be ready to let go of them in love when that time comes. Constituents may leave you when somebody or something better comes their way, no matter the time in your life that may be. Therefore,

do not build your life plan around them and be ready to let go of them in love. Commanders will demand your loyalty at the time they need you; your duty is to check if they are entitled to it. If they are, be a faithful servant (1Pet. 2:18). If they are not, give off your time and resource, only what you are willing to give them out of love. Confidants are in for you, so they may only leave you when they cannot have a sufficient supply of you or your friendship. Therefore, do not neglect your Confidants.

The friends you choose at this stage must be people who contribute to improving your effectiveness and efficiency in accomplishing your calling and or your career. Patience is the precious jewel that must guide a man's judgement and actions at this stage.

Forty: The Camel with Serpent Wisdom

Like the generic path, a man at forty must be a camel, but this time, with serpent wisdom. Snakes are known for their ability to injure and heal through their venom¹³. They can also easily sneak away from trouble or stand their ground to resist attack. Therefore at forty, a man must value service to God and men in wisdom.

By this stage, a man would have demonstrated to himself, his ability to conquer. Society would have also taken notice of the man's abilities. Thus, the man at this stage will not only be willing to take on bigger

¹³ Snake (2020) Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake>

challenges but will move from only conquering the goals he has set for himself to also conquering societal goals. Responsibility to society is therefore attracted to this stage. Many at this stage belong to society so much that they no longer belong to themselves. They are tempted to pursue the continuously higher goals set by society for them. On the contrary, others belong to themselves so much at this stage that they have no independence. They seem locked up in stage thirty and are still trying to prove to themselves that they have what it takes. They are therefore tempted to pursue the higher and higher goals they set for themselves without any real thought about their impact on the broader society. Wisdom is consequently principal at this stage in selecting which goals are worthy of pursuit.

Wisdom is of three kinds, divine wisdom (Jas 3:17), human wisdom (1 Co 2:5) and devilish wisdom (Jas 3:15). Divine wisdom refers to knowledge of the will of God for the moment and the situation. Devilish wisdom is the opposite. Human wisdom is knowledge of the current state of human learning and experience considered appropriate for a moment or situation. Divine and devilish wisdom are independent of each other. However, human wisdom is be influenced at any moment in time by either divine wisdom or devilish wisdom. Therefore, human wisdom can either be divinely or devilishly inspired.

At forty, a man should have gathered adequate learning

(from stage twenty) and experience (from age thirty) to make wise judgements in moments or situations. However, at every moment of decision-making where there is a clash between human and divine wisdom, divine wisdom must prevail.

How, then can a man acquire divine wisdom? The first source is the word of God. As the Bible says, “The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple” (Psalm 119:30, NKJV). Or in a more interpretive language, “Your instructions are a doorway through which light shines. They give insight to the untrained” (Psalm 119: 30, NET). The Bible also says, “Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (119: 105, KJV). Essentially, the word of God at its entrance gives light that indicates to the man his current position (lamp onto his feet) and what lies ahead of him (light onto his path). Additionally, the word can equip the simple, naive or inexperienced man with insight into matters that confront him.

To put it into more detail, the Bible says in Psalm 119 vs 98-100, “Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for I am always aware of them. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your rules. I am more discerning than those older than I, for I observe your precepts” (NET). In essence, reading, meditating on and observing the word of God are key sources of divine wisdom.

Therefore, the word of God can equip a man with wisdom like a serpent; the discernment to select the goals worthy of pursuit and to know the extent to which to pursue each goal. Further, there is a straw that breaks a camel's back; wisdom comes in handy in avoiding those additional straws. A man must help when he can and must do it out of a pure heart. However, it is vexation to the soul to make everybody's emergency your emergency. Judgment and discernment are important in selecting what emergency goals are worth responding to. This is important because some people are either just lazy or out there to use others for their selfish ends. Others may be under the influence of evil spirits. Hence, discernment is needed to avoid such unnecessary loads.

The increasing responsibilities that are attracted to this stage require a strong back to carry. Hence the need for a fortified mind and body. The increased need for wisdom and judgment requires a fortified spirit. Matters of the spirit life will be discussed in later portions of this letter.

Fifty: The Eagle

Eagles are large, powerfully built birds of prey with heavy beaks and heads.¹⁴ They also have extremely keen eyesight for hunting. In spite of their large sizes, eagles do not flap their wings much of the time to fly¹⁵. They

¹⁴ Eagle (2020). Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eagle>

¹⁵ Bald eagle (2019). Available at: <https://journeynorth.org/tm/eagle/EagleFlightLesson.html>

prefer to soar by using thermal currents of air. The surrounding terrain creates these warm air patterns. They will spread their wings and tail feathers, let the wind carry them to new heights, and then glide down to catch another upward thermal. Soaring saves eagles' energy because they do not have to flap their wings so often.

Like an eagle, a man from stage fifty must value mastery and majesty in his deployment of wisdom in all affairs of life, state and divinity. However, this must not be done in ostentation but in the moderation of grace. Grace in endeavours of humanity and divinity eliminates blemishes. It is the crown of perfection in the art of life¹⁶ and offers salvation in the afterlife (Tit 2:11). In simple terms, grace (i.e. elegance) in the way a man does things makes life a beauty. Therefore, a man must do each task with a touch of mastery and majesty. Completing each worthy task and completing it with excellence. In Christianity, it takes grace to be saved, for grace takes away our sins and decorates us with the righteousness of God himself (2 Co 5:21). As such, grace is important in the affairs of humanity and divinity.

Like the eagle, a man from stage fifty must soar above the winds of life, maintaining the divine gift of astute

¹⁶ Balthasar Gracian (1637), Oracle: A Manual on the Art of Discretion (also known as The Art of Worldly Wisdom), <http://way2goal.com/book/TheArtOfWorldlyWisdom.pdf> or <http://www.online literature.com/gracian/art-worldly-wisdom/>

discernment and the rare art of recreating himself in spirit, soul and body. Recreating himself keeps him relevant in the changing times. Therefore, know the times, and what must be done, then you will be the leader of many (1Ch 12:32). Never cease to learn, whether in issues of humanity or divinity, but be more selective in what you learn and what you apply - keeping in line with God's value system. Learning keeps you up-to-date with time and truth (Prov 19 vs 27), and as such, it has the ability to keep you relevant to the present generation and the one to come.

As with all eminence, a man from fifty must avoid the enemy of pride. Pride is the stumbling block at the peak of the success over which a man trips into oblivion. It is also a matter of duty for a man at fifty to nurture younger men that should excel in their chosen fields. The final act of a man who takes the extraordinary path is to take off majestically into eternity.

In summary, the Jesuit¹⁷ priest Gracian once wrote: “for a noble life, spend the first act in conversation with the dead: we are born to know and to know ourselves, and true books make us truly men. Spend the second act with the living: seeing and noticing all that is good in the world. Not all things are found in one region. In distributing the dowry, the universal Father sometimes gave wealth to his ugliest daughter. The third act belongs entirely to you: to philosophize is the highest

¹⁷ Member of society of Jesus

delight of all¹⁸”.

I will, therefore, like to present to you three stages that make up the life of an extraordinary man; **learning** (twenty), **living** (thirty and forty) and **leaving** (both depositing and departing; from fifty). In practice, however, these stages are interwoven. Sometimes it may be demanded that you engage in the three simultaneously.

Insight 2: Great Men Die Empty¹⁹

And as a man was being buried, lo, a marauding band was seen and the man was cast into the grave of Elisha; and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood on his feet.

[2 Ki 13:2, RSV]

When great men die without passing all they had to God, man, and society, they die with ‘power in their bones’. If no rare accident like the one in the above passage happens, their gifts will join the great pool of potential that fertilize graveyards worldwide. As discussed above, the true lives of extraordinary men are made of three stages, **learning**, **living**, and **leaving**. Passing on all one has is part of the leaving stage of life.

¹⁸ Balthasar Gracian (1637), Oracle: A Manual on the Art of Discretion (also known as The Art of Worldly Wisdom), <http://way2goal.com/book/TheArtOfWorldlyWisdom.pdf> or <http://www.online-literature.com/gracian/art-worldly-wisdom/>.

¹⁹ I first posted this *Insight* as an article on my blog: cxgentlemen.wordpress.com

Learning - A man must know and understand all that is around him through formal and informal education. He must consciously cultivate learning through conversation with family, friends, mentors, society, and God. Man is spirit, soul, and body, and the knowledge needed for maturing these three dimensions of being must be acquired and nurtured. A man must also, through this learning, identify and nurture his fields of interest, his talents and most importantly his purpose.

Living – A man at this stage must live by what he has learnt, practising and experiencing the totality of life; failing, passing, excelling and repeating these in different endeavours. He must distil his learning into industry and profession and become more responsible to family, friends, mentors, society and God. The pursuit of his purpose must, however, remain paramount.

Leaving - This stage is composed of depositing and departing. A man owes it to God, man and society to lead other men to excellence in their chosen fields, identified talents, and their purpose. He must not mould them into the likeness of himself but must ensure they become the best versions of themselves, and into the image of Christ who is the Ultimate Gentleman. He must pour out himself on earth within the limits permitted by God and then take off into eternity with the majesty of an eagle. He must leave the earth emptied of all things that can only on earth be

done so as to be filled with the fullness of the glory of God that is prepared for him.

The Dawn of Manhood

A Man comes to a period within the generic stages of manhood discussed earlier when he becomes aware of himself and his personality. This occurs as if it were a light shining through the darkness of the night and gradually, like sunrise, revealing the complete figure of his being. This phenomenon occurs at different stages for different individuals and is triggered by varied circumstances, either good, bad or both. I am not here referring to spontaneous reactions to the directions of hormones, especially at the gate that separates boyhood and manhood (adolescence), but a consciousness that prompts a desire in the man to take charge of his growth and development process. This phenomenon is what we will call the **Dawn of Manhood**.

The particular decisions that a man makes at the Dawn of Manhood are a reflection of the value system he has adopted. Many men before this time are exposed to different value systems in their many associations with family, friends and society. Hence they adopt one or a combination of these consciously or unconsciously. When the choice is conscious, the individual chooses the value system that permits him to be accepted by a

particular group whose membership he desires. Thus, the individual emphasises specific knowledge and experience sets that, in turn, shape his value system. When the choice is unconscious, then the individual's value system is shaped by knowledge and experiences that the individual exercised no conscious control over. Value systems adopted are unique because they are made up of a unique set of experiences and knowledge that the man has been exposed to directly or indirectly. However, careful observation of a man reveals the pattern of his value system that permits a level of predictability of his thought, speech, and deed. Hence, his personality.

At the dawn of manhood, therefore, there are varied choices in terms of personality that a man can adopt, but the most desirable is the gentleman. The definition of a gentleman varies with the purpose and across geographical regions. Thus, various books that have handled the subject of a gentleman usually choose a point of focus. Many such books choose etiquette. However, etiquette varies with culture. Further, the fact that many books written on the subject are from men of a close regional association may make their readers disciples of another culture rather than a gentleman in all circumstances. To avoid this trap, I would like to propose a typology of gentlemen that focuses on the dominant value system that governs the thoughts and actions of each category of gentlemen.

THE GENTLEMAN

A Case for the gentleman

Society has primarily been the kingdom of the man until recently when the subject of womanhood became so crucial that a lot of resources in the form of money and time through research, advocacy and support have been dedicated to issues premised on women. These efforts are in place to eliminate the destitute position of most women caused by society and, most times, blamed on men. These actions are great initiatives in their stated motives. However, the diversity of those pursuing this noble cause has introduced different motives into the agenda. In some sense, the activities pursued by some of these interest groups are either making women into men or making them into versions of women that seem to be the likeness of the very things they despise.

In spite of these shortcomings, these initiatives seem to have developed some of our counterparts, the women, into vibrant contributors to society and have changed the whole structure of homes, workplaces, religion, politics and other fields of worthy endeavour. With technological advancement and liberalization of

educational systems, strength is continuously going out of fashion, and information has become abundant. Hence, women have become more empowered to take on roles that were traditionally considered the responsibility of men. Notably, for the home where men were considered the head, with the responsibility of producing, providing for and protecting a family, women in our days can produce, provide for and protect a family single-handedly. Thus, leading to questions about the man's value at home.

Doubts created by the substitutability of men in many facets of life have raised questions about the difference and value of men. Manhood, though in its very essence is immutable in its prestige and honour, has been questioned by the insurgency of doubts and misconceptions. These doubts and misconceptions have plagued both men and women alike. In simple words, the wrong perspectives that both men and women have of what manhood means are destroying manhood's true and honourable meaning. These misconceptions have led to actions and inactions on all sides that have tainted the very beauty that nature and art intended for society. As such, in many circles, men are considered either as a source of the problem or are themselves the problem that women face. The relevance of a man in society is, therefore, fast waning. Many efforts in making society better are directly or indirectly erasing manhood. Society, I believe, has

arrested the wrong culprit.

To put it shortly, manhood is not the problem, but the conception held of its nature and art is. It is, therefore, crucial that manhood does not become the next victim of extinction. If every existence has a purpose, then manhood must live! It is my kind-hearted intention to present to you, not a vindictive defence of manhood but the promotion of this eminence in its pure form - The Perfect Gentleman - or in its complete and elevated form- The Extraordinary Gentleman. To achieve this, I would first present a typology of men.

The Spectrum of Manhood

Men can be categorized using different criteria based on the purpose of the classification. However, using the value system as a pivot of analysis, I would like us to discuss six types of men that may exist. Given our earlier discussions about how unique experiences shape the value system of men, the focus of this discussion would be to highlight how individual and environmental forces act together in shaping a man. The purpose of this is to move us through a session of self-reflection that highlights our values and where we would occupy on the spectrum of manhood. A key takeaway of this classification exercise could be that men are not only shaped by experiences that they are exposed to but also by their responses to the experiences. In this respect, a man can be classified based on the predominant value

system he possesses. The predominant value system, in turn, can be derived based on two key criteria; whether it originates primarily from nurture or from nature and the level to which the man involved exercises agency in shaping the final expression of the value system. Based on these two criteria, a man can then belong to a Deviant, a Generic, a Dandy, a Nerd, a Rigid, or a Perfect Gentleman category.

Primary source of value system	Nurture	<p><u>The Perfect Gentleman</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Value: excellence in thought, speech, and action • Key characteristic: mastery in both living by and influencing societal expectations 	<p><u>The Deviant</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key value: the ability to break norms • Key characteristic: predominantly negative attitude in response to circumstances present in society 	<p><u>The Generic</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key value: living by the status quo • Key characteristic: doing what “everybody” is doing or should be doing
	Nature	<p><u>The Rigid</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Value: obedience to self-made/adopted rules and principles • Key characteristic: Perfectionism based on made-up/adopted rules and principles 	<p><u>The Nerd</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Value: excelling at his chosen endeavour • Key characteristic: a personality built on his area of expertise usually with limited social skills outside his field of expertise 	<p><u>The Dandy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key value: satisfying natural inclinations • Key characteristic: Primary focus on his physical and social image
		High	Medium	Low

Level of agency in shaping value system

Fig 2: The Spectrum of Manhood

The Deviant

The deviant refers to a man who has been nurtured by society and surroundings but has developed a negative attitude as a conscious or partly conscious response to circumstances present in society or his surroundings. A deviant thus manifests as a man who does not value the accepted morals of society. As we have discussed earlier on, the wisdom of society is influenced by either divine wisdom or the devilish, and so are the morals of society. I need to point out that many of society's evolving morals reflect how the devilish is gaining ground in society. The diabolic resides quite comfortably alongside Godless but ethical morals. It is, therefore, increasingly becoming important for a man who desires to be instructed purely to seek his instruction from the bible as well as books and men known evidently for their inspiration by divinity.

The Deviant is a man who values notoriety and his ability to break norms and be the source of chaos in certain circumstances. Some of these men were created by society through the difficult circumstances that they were exposed to at various stages of their development. Hence, the Deviant may adopt his value system in his quest to demonstrate rebellion or to punish society. Many deviants may also be men who have mental deficiencies at varying degrees. Others may just lack understanding, a virtue of the spirit. Nevertheless, some Deviants are inspired by evil. The deviant's agency is

seen in the fact that he conscious or partly conscious enacts the behaviour in opposition to restraining forces from society (e.g., laws or ethics). But the agency is considered medium rather than high because his behaviour is primarily a response to stimulus from society and may not have existed otherwise.

Some deviants may be helped by human institutions that are able to reconcile them to society by dealing with the root causes, whether circumstance or disease. However, the fastest recoveries I have witnessed have been by the finger of God. Many sound-minded men may slip into this state by circumstance or disease.

The Generic

The generic, like the Deviant, is predominantly shaped by the nurturing of his environment. However, he poses little to no resistance to any accepted value of society and hence exercises no agency in what he has become. Basically, this is the man that society makes. He values the status quo, and as such, he lives a life that evidences what society dictates to him. He is not a friend to refinement and, as such, undertakes no effort to carve his own identity. He changes at the dictates of the times and circumstances. He usually has nothing that drives him except the common lusts of the eye and flesh and the pride of life. He is kicked around by the winds of life and the doctrine of men. Many Generics have their lives shaped by inventions, either ideological

or physical. Generics are exposed by the way they dress, speak, act and think; they usually do what “everybody” is doing or should be doing.

The Dandy

The Dandy is a man who is shaped by natural inclinations without a significant effort on his part to shape his response to these inclinations. The dandy, being predominantly shaped by nature, means that what he values may or may not align with what society values. This is because his natural inclinations may not always align with society’s standards of behaviour. Yet, the Dandy is his own first audience and thus places little emphasis on society’s standards relative to his inclinations. The dandy is therefore similar to the generic in that he exercises little to no agency in shaping what he becomes but different in the sense that he may actively dissociate himself from society’s standards. Nevertheless, the dandy is frequently restricted by his desire to be admired by a sufficiently large audience outside himself. Hence may tamper the expression of his nature to appeal to the limited but sufficiently large audience he desires. The Dandy is a gentleman of appearance. He values attention and will do anything to court these two as long as it does not erode his ability to express his natural inclination beyond his comfort. He feels inferior unless his total appearance is what he dreams of it to be. He is therefore driven by attractive,

expensive and ostentatious appearance. His identity, therefore, depends largely on what he wears. To support his appearance, he is usually concerned about his body. When he visits the gym, health to him is second to bodily appearance. Bodily structure and attractive appearance are important in creating an excellent personality, however, an uncontrolled obsession with physical appearance as evident in the Dandy is usually a cover-up for the emptiness inside. Many Dandies are cocky in behaviour, their heads and hearts are usually filled with hallucinations of being admired.

The Nerd

This is a gentleman of intellect and expertise. He values information, skill and conquest in his chosen field of endeavour. His success in his chosen field is what drives him. However, his intellect and expertise are usually a result of his natural gifts being shaped by some level of effort and development on his part. Being driven by success in the area in which he has developed his gift means that his personality is built around his field of endeavour. Usually, he feels like nothing without success in his field of endeavour. The Nerd wants to be constantly on top of his game and if anything looks like a distraction, he is likely to mindlessly get around it (usually by ignoring it) or by operating as far from it as possible. If the Nerd cares about any part of his body, it is usually the part that is needed in his endeavours or

profession. A Nerd is usually boring to interact with especially if you know nothing about his field or have no interests in common with him. The Nerd usually has either an overly ordered lifestyle or a well-messed-up one. Unlike the Dandy who is usually a man of the people, the Nerd is usually a friend only to himself or to those who have learned to live with his difference.

The Rigid

The Rigid is a gentleman of rules/principles. However, the rules/principles are usually self-made and rooted in his natural inclinations. Unlike the dandy who is a slave to his natural inclinations, the rigid exercises a high level of agency in responding to his natural inclinations. He would for example develop a classification for his natural inclinations as either good or bad and then develop ways to either express or suppress these inclinations. His final disposition is thus a cocktail of expressed and suppressed inclinations. The rigid is not a slave to his talents either. Even though he is likely to develop these, he is also likely to develop other aspects of his life, hence success for the rigid has a broader definition compared to the Nerd's.

The rigid in real life may appear to be made up of varying combinations of the Dandy and the Nerd. He is not obsessed with his appearance nor with expertise; he exists at various levels between the extremes. He is a man of manners; some self-created, others adopted

from society. His main characteristic remains the strict rules he obeys to maintain his chosen personality. He values perfection, however, perfection is what he says it is. Most Rigid take themselves too seriously and the only time something is done well is when they do it themselves. A Rigid usually has admirable qualities and achievements, yet their never bending “rules of engagement” makes them difficult to deal with. The disadvantage of this personality is that when time or circumstance erases the effectiveness of their rules, they either appear old-fashioned or become confused. Additionally, the fact that they are highly conscious in speech and action makes their lifestyle look like a well-rehearsed stage act, sometimes, a boring one.

The Perfect Gentleman

This is the gentleman in his purest form. He is a perfect combination of the Dandy and the Nerd. A man of lively refinement; a master of words and an expert of deeds. He is neither a man of the people (given to excessive attention) nor a friend only to himself, he is not even a man of rules; he is a man of the moment. The perfect gentleman is a man who has mastery in both living by and influencing societal expectations. His expertise is knowledge of the times and appropriateness of response. His adornments are his flexibility in thought and grace (elegance) in execution. The Perfect Gentleman values his ability to stay in control of himself (body and mind),

the situations around him and the appropriateness of his responses. He values conventional manners but puts them aside when time and circumstance demands it. Excessive manners are boring yet a man without manners is savage. The Perfect Gentleman cares about his body but for him, health comes before looks. To stay clear in his thinking, he masters distractions of thought, especially emotions. When emotions walk in, reason walks out, yet a man without emotions is a beast. The Perfect Gentleman acts by reason and not emotions, to him, emotions are wild packs of energy that have to be tamed and channeled into appropriate words or deeds. The summary of the personality of the Perfect Gentleman is represented in this adapted dedication that was made in Balthasar Grecian's book entitled, *The Perfect Gentleman*:

The Man Who Is Polite Without Affection

Confident Without Vanity'

Dignified Without Ostentation

Affable To All, Servile To None;

Who Never Deceived His Friend, Nor Turned His
Back To His Foe²⁰

That is a Perfect Gentleman. A man who combines the qualities of the Dandy and the Nerd just like the Rigid except for the fact that he does this with flexibility and

²⁰ Adapted from the book , *Perfect Gentleman*, www.archive.org/details/perfectgentleman00newyrich

correct timing. A close look at the Perfect Gentleman shows that he is a man that has gained mastery of both his body and his soul.

The body consists of his physical makeup while the soul consists of his will, thoughts and emotions. To be a Perfect Gentleman, therefore, a man must be able to have a nearly accurate knowledge of his body and soul and must be able to transform them within the limits of nature into a state of excellence.

The cardinal thing in being in control of yourself is knowing yourself; your dispositions, abilities and inadequacies. Know what triggers your emotions and learn how to avoid or minimize their unintended consequences. For when you act emotionally, you act mindlessly. Also, know the limits of your abilities; physical or mental, and avoid situations that are beyond them. It is even wiser to avoid doing in public, activities that stretch your abilities to the limit. When you accidentally stretch the bow beyond its limit, it breaks and you might never get the chance to hit the bull's eye with it again. Worst of all, you might be thought of as irrational. Know your limits and in private, increase their coverage and extent through learning and practice. Learn new stuff, especially those related to technology, critical thinking and basic mathematics. Also, learn to appreciate the different arts, it is a sign of good taste. Do not do any of these to the excess otherwise, they become boring to those around you. Perfection does not mean "the peak", it means "just right".

Do not hasten to do anything, especially to show your skills. Exhibition is for Dandies, and, after all, someone better might be around. Live your ability, do not exhibit it. Living is natural and dynamic, exhibition is artificial and static. Be sensitive, know “bad” days and avoid the public if possible. Knowing when to be still, quiet or quit is of great importance. Let elegance crown your entry but most especially your exit, but when elegance will look too colourful, try simplicity, she is the first cousin of elegance.

The process of your personal transformation must be conscious and controlled but it should be as natural as possible; until the transformation becomes your new nature. If possible, keep transformations hidden until complete, even butterflies hide in cocoons until all you see is their beautiful wings. When transformation must be done in public, it is important that the process is gradual, smooth and flexible. This prevents the transformation from looking like an awkward change in character. Only a change from damnation to salvation should be as quick as possible, your spirit is of eternal value and you cannot risk it to avoid mockery by mere men.

The Use of Change

No change is necessary until its effects are important in transforming existing situations. The life of a man is generically made up of three interlinked functional fields, his purpose, his marriage and his wealth. We

shall call these his Ministry, his Marriage and his Money (the three M's of a man's life), respectively. There are men who for natural or artificial circumstances do not partake in one or more of the three aspects of a man's life. For example, certain priests swear the oath of celibacy and so do not marry. The evaluation of their excellence as men should, therefore, be based on the two fields of Ministry and Money. However, in the absence of any such circumstance, a man's success in life must be measured by his performance in these three fields.

These functional fields, ministry, marriage and money have certain stakeholders in common and a man's success in any of these fields is affected by his ability to interact productively with these stakeholders. These stakeholders include people (men, women and children), society (institutions) and invisible forces (divine and devilish). They are stakeholders because they affect or are affected by the activities a man engages in to achieve his objectives in the three functional fields of his life²¹. They also serve as components of the functional fields through which a man interacts with the fields. A desirable change in the personality must, therefore, be a change that improves a man's effectiveness or efficiency in interacting with these stakeholders.

Transforming yourself into the purest form of man, the Perfect Gentleman grants you exceeding advantages in

²¹ Definition adapted from Freeman, R.E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston, MA: Pitman.

managing interactions with people and society, due to your mastery of the body and soul. However, mastery of body and soul is inadequate because a man consists of his spirit, his soul and his body. The Perfect Gentleman evidently knows and is in control of his body and soul but it is the reserve of a higher calling to be a master of all three dimensions. It is my privilege to introduce to you, **the Extraordinary Gentleman.**

Insight 3: Self-Reflection, the Pivot of personal change²²

In a quest to become a Perfect Gentleman or better still, an Extraordinary Gentleman, personal change is inevitable and self-reflection is the pivot of personal change and transformation. There exist various periods in the life of a man when he comes to a realization of his current inadequacies in dealing with particular situations. Such a period usually arises from changes in relation to people around him, institutions or even changes in the man himself. However, no matter the particular inadequacy the man is faced with, his circumstance falls into one or more of the three fields of manhood; Ministry (purpose), Marriage and Money (career and finances) or in the Man himself (that is his body, soul or spirit).

²² I posted the first version of this *Insight* as an article on my blog: cxgentlemen.wordpress.com under the title “Self-Reflection: A Pivot for Transformation”.

The various inadequacies that a man identifies in his life influence the way he deals with people (men, women and children), society (institutions) and invisible forces (divine and devilish) that exist in the three fields of his life. For example, a man can discover that his anger problem has become a limitation to his ability to interact with his family, co-workers or even disciples. This problem of anger becomes an inadequacy that affects his effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling his objectives in the three fields of his life. It, therefore, calls for personal change.

It is said that one thing that remains constant is change. A man who therefore desires to be a Perfect Gentleman or an Extraordinary Gentleman must be ready to undergo continuous sessions of change or transformation that can be exciting, challenging, boring or painful. As the Bible says, a man must be ready to... *throw off **everything** that hinders (him) and **the sin** which so easily entangles...* (him) (Hebrews 12:1, NIV). However, successful and useful changes are rewarding.

An important process in effecting a personal transformation is self-reflection. We will consider Self-reflection to involve a calm, conscious consideration of one's personality or issues that relate directly or indirectly to him as a person. As Proverbs 14:8 (NIV) puts it, "*the wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways*". A man must therefore, give thought to his ways, considering what has happened, what is happening,

what could happen, what should have happened, what should be happening and what should happen (what he has to do). This process involves identifying, analyzing and making decisions or resolutions on issues in his personal life, specifically in the three fields of his life. Successful implementation of our resolution is what is important in being transformed into Extraordinary Gentlemen.

I will like to share with you some characteristics and a simple way to do self-reflection. I hope it helps you in your own process of self-reflection and most importantly, I hope and pray that you pursue without delay every single resolution or decision you make and remain consistent in your progress.

Characteristics of self-reflection

Self-reflection must be:

Conscious – It must be a choice and a controlled process, not a time for your mind to wander around.

Truthful – Be blatantly honest with yourself, do not make excuses for yourself. After all, no one is listening

Biblical – All conclusions you draw from the process must have a scriptural or spiritual basis

Written – Major self-reflection sessions must end up with a written resolution

Implementable – Simple, understandable, measurable

resolutions.

Prayerful – Pray in the beginning (I am usually guilty of this), confess sins, pray for the will and strength to implement resolutions and be thankful in the end.

The process of self-reflection

1. Pray to begin the process
2. Consider your vision for life: (create one if you do not have one. Build it in line with God's will for your life and make sure it carries elements of what you want to be in relation to your Marriage, Ministry and Money).
E.g. I want to be an inspiring dad, loving husband, outstanding salesman, an incredibly spirit-led usher and a loving philanthropist from 2060 onwards. (And the LORD answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain upon tablets, so he may run who reads it" Habakkuk 2:2, RSV)
3. Consider your actions in the day or period under review if they align with or contradict your vision.
4. Tell yourself the truth. Humbly thank God and celebrate victories, take note of and learn from failures, but repent from sin(remember to confess sin and ask for forgiveness and the strength and will to overcome those sins).
5. Write out failures and corresponding resolutions,

especially during major self-reflection moments (remember Habakkuk 2:2 above). A way of dealing with chronic or repeated failures is to try to understand what challenges present in you as a Man, that is, challenges in your spirit, soul (mind and emotions) or body lead to such repeated failures. Dealing with such challenges or deficiencies in your spirit, soul and body is important in minimizing the frequency of such failures. And, the way to deal with them is to bring them before God continually, asking God for the grace and guidance to overcome. For, "...it does not depend on human desire or exertion, but on God who shows mercy"- Romans 9:16.

6. Pray for the strength and the will to accomplish your resolution (I usually write my prayer under the resolutions).

7. Go out and bring forth fruits that are befitting of your repentance (Matt. 3:8, Luke 3:8). The fruits that we are to bear as Christians emanate from our understanding of the word, acting on it in faith and not falling prey to the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth (Matt. 13: 19 -23). And all these three are a result of the work of the Spirit of God in us (Gal. 5:22).

— CHAPTER 3 —

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMAN (XG)

A Case for the XG

The Perfect Gentleman as we discussed is a man of the moment whose personality is a mastery of his soul and body. However, the Extraordinary Gentleman is a man of transcending excellence whose mastery first is of his spirit. The soul and the body are susceptible to changing fortunes, as such, many men once known for their excellence lose their status to the many ills of society or nature. Sickness, failure, financial collapse, or a broken heart, at devastating levels, have destroyed perfect gentlemen and thus exposed the corruptible nature of that personality. Therefore, even though the Perfect Gentleman is admirable, the advantage of the Extraordinary Gentleman is sustainability.

Proverbs 18:14 (KJV) asks, “the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity (any physical, situational or emotional anomaly); but a wounded spirit who can bear?”. Bryan Dyson, a former CEO of Coca Cola is

said to have once asserted that, the spirit of a man is like a glass ball if you drop it, it becomes irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. It is therefore exciting to note that many men do not notice their spirit and as such have not started juggling it in the air alongside the other aspects of their lives. It is important to live by the spirit but most importantly to avoid destroying it.

A Perfect Gentleman has developed his soul through experience and learning and yet the experience and learning are acquired through the senses of his body and as such he is ruled by his senses; he is carnal. This explains an important phenomenon. When all that the five senses of the Perfect Gentleman communicate to him is disastrous, he breaks down and loses control. For example, when a Perfect Gentleman encounter's the same trial that the biblical Job went through, he is likely to break down and lose all control. He can only be sustained when he switches to "the spirit mode". I am convinced that this is the reason why many people launch great comebacks after recovering from a near-death experience, especially sickness; they have switched to the spirit mode.

To understand what it means to switch to the spirit mode, one must understand the makeup of a man. Permit me to repeat this, a man consists of his spirit, his soul and his body. The body refers to his physical makeup; his arms, legs, internal organs, nervous system etc.

The body is ruled by a system called the “flesh” which is also called sinful nature, Gal 5:17(NIV). The flesh consists of urges, desires or passions that drive a man to act contrary to the will of God. Therefore, these urges and desires lead a man to engage in actions such as sexual immorality, impurity, depravity, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, orgies, and other similar things (Gal 5:19-21). In general, the urges, desires and passions that make up the flesh can be classified into three main groups; the lust of the body, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). However, the word “flesh” as used in the Bible, sometimes refers to the physical body, for example, John 1: 14.

The spirit is the non-material man; the man in the nonphysical form. In its purest form, the spirit of man is in the image of God. This is because God is spirit (John 4: 24) and the father of all spirits (Heb 12:9). The spirit of a man is only in its purest form if it is connected to God, his source. However, when Adam and Eve sinned against God, the spirit of all men became disconnected from God by default. The only way given to men on earth to reconnect to God is through God’s son, Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Hence, it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor 15:45, NIV). When a man accepts Jesus as his Lord and Savior, Jesus restores life

to the spirit of the saved man by reconnecting him to God.

The spirit of a man is ruled by a spiritual system. This spiritual system can either be a divine system or a devilish system. You choose the divine when you accept Christ as your saviour; you renounce your sin and opt for the divine life by asking for the gift of the Holy Spirit. In essence, if you choose the divine system, you need the Holy Spirit to guide you, if you choose the devilish, you get a demon to ride you. All our talk of the spirit or the spiritual system from this point onwards will refer to the divine unless otherwise stated.

The soul, on the other hand, is the interface through which the spirit of a man interacts with his body. It is usually said to consist of the thoughts and emotions of a man. Unlike a man's body and spirit which are each governed by a different system, the soul of a man at any moment in time is influenced by either the spiritual system or the flesh (i.e. the governing system of the body). Hence, the soul at any time is either spiritual or fleshly. There is, therefore, a continual battle between the spirit and the flesh (Gal 5:17) for dominion over the soul. Each of these systems wants to impose its value system on the soul. The system that is ruling the soul at any moment determines what is important to the soul. The dominant system, therefore, influences the thoughts and emotions of the man. The war between the spiritual system and fleshly system however only

occurs in the soul of a saved man. When a man is not saved, his spirit is disconnected from God and is dead (has become ineffective). It, therefore, loses its ability to exercise governance over the soul. The soul of an unsaved man thus becomes completely dominated by the flesh. The unsaved man is therefore uncontrollably and sometimes unconsciously subject to the dictates of the flesh²³.

The Spirit Mode

Switching to the spirit mode means living by the spiritual mindset rather than the fleshly mindset; operating by the spiritual value system rather than the fleshly value system. The spiritual mindset is the kind of mindset discussed in Luke 1:17 and is also referred to as the “*wisdom* of the just” in the KJV²⁴. The Greek word translated as wisdom in Luke 1:17, *phronesis*, means moral or intellectual insight. It is derived from the Greek word *phroneo*, which means “to be mentally disposed (more or less earnestly) in a certain direction” (Strong’s Greek dictionary²⁵). As such, living by the

²³ The tricky part about this is that, the flesh itself is a subset of the “world” (the governing system of the unsaved earth) while the world is a subset of the devilish system (1 John 5:19). Hence a man whose soul is governed by the flesh is governed by the devilish system, but, with a long leash.

²⁴ I first encountered this particular knowledge in a message by Chris Oyakilome (PhD) entitled the three kinds of wisdom

²⁵ Strong Greek dictionary embedded in the Power BibleCD 3.7

spiritual mindset means 1) being able to attach a spiritual value to any incoming information and 2) being mentally predisposed to things that are valuable spiritually. The Bible describes switching to the spiritual mode in an interesting way. To switch to the spiritual mode, you have to “Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life (*i.e., the fleshly life*) and is corrupt through deceitful lusts and be renewed in the *spirit of your minds*” (Eph 4:22-2, RSV). Therefore, switching to the spirit mode means being renewed in your mindset and, by extension, your value system. The value system is the cardinal portion of our mindset, given its crucial role in interpreting information. The renewed mindset is acquired when the Holy Spirit illuminates the spirit of a man. After the illumination by the Holy Spirit, the newly acquired mindset then has to be consciously nurtured through reading, meditating, and living by the word of God and through prayer. This exchange of information through reading the word of God and prayer leads to the development of a deep relationship with divinity and is what makes a man sustainably spiritual. Prayer ensures that a man has an effective spiritual life because it transforms him more and more into the nature of God, who Himself is Spirit.

For,

The more time you spend with divinity in effective
 communion,

the more you put on divinity.

On the other hand, the knowledge of the word of God, whether the written word as in the Bible or the revealed word supplied by the Holy Spirit grants a man insight, like the insight of a knowledgeable attorney. This is because the knowledge of the word of God grants a man the knowledge of his position in the spiritual realm and, as such, his rights, privileges, and responsibilities. This wise application of his rights, privileges, and responsibilities, in turn, makes the man efficient spiritually. Prayer, therefore, empowers living by the spiritual mindset while knowledge of the word of God supplies the richness and quality of this spiritual life.

There is one caveat, though; prayer and engagement with the word of God must be done under the guidance and collaboration of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 14:15). It cannot be achieved by relying on the human mind alone (Pro 3:5-6). For example, setting strict rules for oneself about prayer and the word of God. How, when, and how long to pray or read the word of God. Successful operation by the spiritual mode comes from our continued ability to rely on the spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is the instructor of the spiritual life because he is conversant with that life. Any man who tries to live the spiritual life by his mind alone, not by the Holy Spirit's leading, will sooner or later be lost in wonderland and make a shipwreck of his life.

Insight 4: Becoming a Gardener of the Word

As discussed above, an important part of building the spiritual mindset involves consciously nurturing the mindset through reading, meditating and living by othe word of God. The word “gardener” in our title, “Becoming a Gardner of the Word”, is chosen to present the meticulous care and love that the seed of the word of God needs to be nurtured with to ensure maximum fruitfulness. In this *insight*, I would like us to discuss a few steps that can be employed to nurture the word of God.

Step 1. Clear the weeds: *Therefore put away all filthiness and rank growth of wickedness...(Jas 1:21a, RSV):* like every good gardener, prepare the land of your heart and mind for the word of God. This can be achieved by clearing weeds of sin or weights that easily beset you and can limit the growth of the word of God in you. As Jesus said, when the seed of the word is sown among thorns, it gets choked by the faster-growing thorns and becomes unfruitful (Matt 13: 7, 22). Like the one discussed earlier, a good and complete session of self-reflection is an important starting point for identifying and clearing these weeds out of your heart and mind.

Step 2. Cultivate the land and receive the seed:... *and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls (Jas 1:21b, RSV):* a meek heart and

a humble mind work together, like a tilled or cultivated land; it is loose and well aerated and permits the growth of roots and germination of seeds. Cultivate your land by adopting the heart and mind of Jesus Christ. Jesus was meek at heart (Matt 11: 29) and humble in mind (Php 2:5-8). In the spirit of humility and meekness, recognize the word of God's ability to save you and accept the entirety of the word presented to you. Of course, this does not mean you should accept without verification any interpretation of the Word of God. Erroneous interpretations of the Word of God can lead to it not being effective in our life. The word of God is only obliged to fulfill what God has sent it to do (Isa 55:11).

One challenge you can face in receiving the word of God is if it is delivered to you by someone who himself or herself is, evidently, not able to live by the word. What do you do? Do you accept the word? Well, a useful yardstick may be present in Philippians 1 verse 8; *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.* Accepting a true and pure word of God, should not be based on the vessel through which it is delivered to you. Note that the emphasis is on the quality of the word delivered and not the quality of the vessel. Thus, do not

accept or reject a word based on the quality of the vessel delivering it alone, but more importantly, based on the quality of the word itself as judged by Philippians 1:8. As Jesus said, *The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach* (Matt 23:2-3, NIV).

Step 3. Supply water and nutrients: *...but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it* (Heb, 4:2, NKJV). After you have received the word of God on cultivated soil (a meek heart and humble mind), then it is time to supply it with water and nutrients, that is, faith. The natural source of water and nutrients for the word is faith, and the active ingredients of the faith fertilizer are works. For without works, faith is dead (Jas 2:17) and becomes ineffective for the growth and fruiting of the Word. As the Bible says, *“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror: for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was”* (Jas 1:23-24, NKJV). When we understand the word of God by the illumination of the Spirit, we do not forget what the word of God said about us and to us. When we believe the word of God as true and believe that he who has spoken it is also able to fulfil it, then we have mixed the word with faith. Works then happen when we take action in line with the word of

God and the witness of the Holy Spirit. This process of understanding, believing, and acting in line with the Word leads to the growth and fruiting of the Word in us. However, whatever we do in the spiritual life must be done with the leading and collaboration of the Spirit of God. This is because it is He who causes us to will and to do His very will (Php 2: 13; Heb, 13: 21).

Step 4. Undertake good husbandry practices to promote and preserve fruiting: *You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain...* (Joh 15:16). To promote successful fruiting, there is the need to undertake good husbandry practices. To do this, the Bible advises, “...add to your faith, virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pe 5: 1-8, NKJV).

Step 5. Persevere to harvest the fruit of righteousness: *Now all discipline seems painful at the time, not joyful. But later it produces the fruit of peace and righteousness (or peaceful fruit of righteousness) for those trained by it* (Heb 12:11, NET). The painstaking process and activities needed in being a gardener of the word of God are not always joyous, however, when the

word is fruitful in us we become fruitful spiritually. At maturity, we harvest holiness and happiness²⁶ in all aspects of our lives. There is, however, a period of waiting between the fruition of the tree and the ripening or maturity of the fruit. Therefore, do not give up when the fruits you bear do not yet seem beneficial to you. For in due season, you will reap the reward of the hard work if you remain faithful (Gal 6:9).

Insight 5: Faithfulness²⁷

Many people profess their loyalty, but a faithful person – who can find? (Proverbs 20:6)

According to Hebrews 11: 32-40, Men of faith conquer systems and situations and move the systems or situations in line with the will of God. They do this to fulfill God's purposes as is declared or promised through his word (vs. 33-34). This means that God has access to the earth through their faith. He, therefore, works through them to fulfill His will and overall purpose in each season.

The verse goes on to say that, these men were transformed by their faith in God. Their weaknesses and undesirable circumstances were turned around into strengths. God increased their power in the battle He had chosen for them and worked wonders and exploits through them.

²⁶ Supported by John Wesley's notes, Power BibleCD for Heb 12:11.

²⁷ I posted the first version of this *Insight* as an article on my blog: cxgentlemen.wordpress.com

However, despite the greatness that God gave to these men of faith, they adopted a humble heart. They were ready to sacrifice anything, even their life and fame (vs. 35-37), for the name and glory of God; they remained faithful.

For many of us, the question will be, would we be faithful despite the successes or pains we may experience as a result of following God? Will we remain persistent in the will of God, in spite of pain or success?

If it has to do with success, remember;

Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth,
honour and life (Proverbs 22: 4, NIV),

However,

...God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble
(James 4:6, NKJV)

If it has to do with pain, then remember;

...do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you...let those who suffer according to God's will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:12-19, RSV).

Trials bring out the glory of God in us. In trials, continue to do what is right (remain faithful) and entrust your soul (thoughts and emotions) to God in faith, knowing and trusting in his faithfulness (2 Timothy 2:12-13; Hebrews 10:23).

Faithfulness is persistence with and in the will of God
despite success or pain.

Faithfulness is the evidence of our faith.

The XG

In the preceding discussions, we have explained that even though the Perfect Gentleman is admirable, the advantage of the Extraordinary Gentleman(XG) is his sustainability. The XG operates by the spirit mode. Hence, even if all that the five physical senses communicate to him is negative, the XG, like Job, is sustained by his spirit. The Extraordinary Gentleman, therefore, values the spiritual and eternal. “For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Ro 8:5). In practice, the XG values divine wisdom and the fruit of the Spirit (NB.: The use of the word ‘wisdom’ from this point forward will refer to divine wisdom unless otherwise stated).

In its simplest definition, wisdom refers to the knowledge of the true reality and appropriate action within the will of God. Applying this kind of accurate knowledge in line with the will of God makes the XG a man of the moment and the future. He is outstanding among his compatriots. At the same time, he is ahead of his generation in thought and action.

Additionally, as the sure way of knowing a tree is by its fruits, the most certain way of learning a spiritual man and thus an XG is by the fruits he bears. The fruit of a spiritual man, which refer to the evidence of spirituality in the form of behaviour found in an XG are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:20 RSV). The fruit of the Spirit guides the details of the thinking and actions of the XG, adding grace to his thinking and actions and thus giving them inexplicable beauty. The fruit of the Spirit, therefore, makes the XG effective and efficient in his thought and action. Most importantly, the fruit of the Spirit represents the prime tool by which the XG interacts with the people or stakeholders in the three functional fields of his life. The fruit helps him to effectively and efficiently manage his relationships and interactions with people, institutions, and invisible forces in a way that is pleasing to God and rewarding to himself and those around him. The fruit of the Spirit is like a pair of gloves on the hand of the XG through which he touches the world around him. It prevents the people from being hit directly by the immense greatness in XG's spirit and also protects his spirit from unhealthy direct contact with the world around him. Patience, for example, allows the XG to be tolerant of those less mature as Christians, while love means that the XG can reward evil with good to people who go out of their way to offend him.

Although the XG values his spirit above his body, he is not a man that neglects his body. He only values his spirit's health above the body's health while still realizing that his spirit needs the body to remain on earth to accomplish his purpose. As said by Rev. Dr. Nyuieko Avotri, every man has a message (purpose) and a horse (body); the horse is needed to carry the message to its destination. Hence, the well-being of the body is essential. To achieve a balance between the health of the spirit and the health of the body, the XG adopts this mindset; "physical exercise has SOME value, but godliness is valuable in EVERY way. It holds promise for the present life and for the life to come" 1Ti 4:8 (NET). This ordinate or proper but not excess care for both his spirit and body spills over to his soul. It is said that a healthy mind lives in a healthy body; however, an extraordinary mind lives in a healthy body and spirit. The XG maintains excellent emotional health. He does that firstly by exercising the fruits of his spirit, which helps to reduce his tendency to enter emotional turmoil. He also draws encouragement from the Word and from brothers and sisters in the faith. He is, therefore, scarcely troubled, moody, or frustrated.

The Extraordinary Gentleman is a man as his Creator made him to be; a man who understands that he is a spirit, lives in a body and has a soul. A man who comprehends all the three dimensions he is made up of and their interlinkages in a way that allows him to

coordinate their activities effectively. The Extraordinary Gentleman is therefore identified by his seemingly effortless excellence in the fields of Marriage, Ministry and Money. In marriage, he is both a great dad and a wonderful husband; in ministry, he is an excellent servant of God and a confident leader; in the field of money, he is outstanding at generating, gathering, managing, growing and distributing wealth. The excellence of the XG in these earthly affairs is evidence of his spiritual maturity. He is a spiritual gentleman, yet he does not live a spiritual life that makes him of no earthly use. He is not worldly either, that is, he is not given to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. He has all the qualities of the Perfect Gentleman, but his exceeding excellence is his sustainability due to his spirituality. All his abilities flow from and are sustained by his spirit. Therefore,

The Extraordinary Gentleman is a Perfect Gentleman
at the peak of perfection.

Very few men look as all-around as this description may seem, and many of the few men who look as all-around as this description may have some private failures of their own. However, with the will, patience, and the help of God, many achievements can be made.

In summary,

The Extraordinary Gentleman lives a balanced life by
his spirit.

Insight 6: The Fear of Failure and the Freedom to Fail²⁸

Having spoken about the all-round excellence of the Extraordinary Gentleman, it is plausible for us to think that being or trying to be an Extraordinary Gentleman will mean you would have to live a life free of failures. No, it is not a life devoid of failures. It is more about mastering failures; overcoming them or using them to your advantage by learning from them. As the Bible says, “for a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again...” (Proverbs 24:6, NKJV). Hence, I would like us to take a close look at failure.

For men, especially those that have the instinct to pursue excellence in all they do, the fear of failure is an age-old disease. Given that being an Extraordinary Gentleman is about the pursuit of excellence in all circles of life, that is, in Marriage, Ministry, and Money (the 3Ms of manhood) and in the three persons of your being (spirit, soul, and body), the fear of failure is sure to be one thing that might plague our minds. It could be that you have failed to achieve this all-round personality or that you are losing the all-round personality you once had. You might have failed in one or two or even all three functional fields of manhood or are beginning to realize a budding or emerging failure in either your body, soul, or spirit. This is normal, and it is one of the

²⁸ I first posted a version of this *Insight* as an article on my blog: cxgentlemen.wordpress.com

most shared feelings of men. It is also one of the reasons why the souls and bodies of many men see little or no rest; the fear of failure.

As Dan Benson wrote in his book “The Total Man”²⁹ (which is the main inspiration for this *Insight*). The fear of failure that a man may entertain includes;

Not providing for my wife and kids
 Either losing my job,
 or not attaining promotion or salary raise
 Not getting married
 Not reaching my goals in life
 Seeing all I have worked for collapse in my face
 Being a failure at business or sex.

I believe that as you read this *insight*, or read through the list above, some of your own fears may begin to race across your mind. Indeed, sometimes, you may do anything not to be reminded of the very existence of failure. This is because as Eric Hoffer said, “there is no loneliness greater than the loneliness of a failure. The failure is a stranger in his own house”, and that may be one of the worse feeling any man can ever have. However, I will side more with the comfort in Eric Hoffer’s other statement, “There can be no real freedom without the freedom to fail”.

²⁹ Benson D. (1977), *The total man*, Tyndale House, Wheaton.

What am I driving at? Simply, the fear of failure leads to either hesitation or haste. Many men are hesitant to take action in a field of their life because they are afraid of going wrong and carrying the “failure” tag. Others hurriedly rush through life pursuing their definition of success in order to flee failure. However, no matter what your situation is, fear should not be the driving force of the life of an Extraordinary Gentleman,

“For God did not give us a spirit of fear but a spirit of power and love and self-control”

(2 Tim 1:7, RSV).

No matter the field you are failing in or seemingly likely to fail in, remember for each failure God will provide an opportunity for recovery. “And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it (1 Cor 10:13, NIV)”. “From six calamities he will rescue you; in seven no harm will touch you (Job 5: 19, NIV).

Therefore, as Extraordinary Gentlemen, we shall not hesitate under the spirit of fear, saying like the lazy man, “there is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!” (Pr 22:13; 26:13 NKJV and RSV) nor shall we, by the spirit of fear make haste for “whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way” (Pr 19:2, ESV). But we shall be confident in all we do, inspired by the Spirit of sonship and adoption (Ro 8: 15), which says,

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”
(Romans 8:28, NKJV).

For even failure has in it the reward of instruction for the wise.

ACCESSORY KNOWLEDGE FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMAN

To live in this state of excellence as an Extraordinary Gentleman, a man must be equipped with knowledge profitable for the spirit, soul, and body. For, “desire without knowledge is not good...” (Pr 19:2, ESV). Hence, I will attempt to elaborate on some of the knowledge that may serve as catalysts for the translation of one to this excellent state. However, this letter does not contain the full details of these jewels of knowledge. I might treat them in deeper detail in subsequent letters.

Desire the Ideal, Live the Practical

Be not righteous overmuch, and do not make yourself overwise; why should you destroy yourself?

Eccl. 7:16 (RSV)

It is prudent in life to live perfectly without being a perfectionist. In the pursuit and accomplishment of endeavours, men, especially Christian men are tempted

to be perfectionists instead of living perfectly. Living perfectly involves living the will of God while admitting the errors in you and in others and moving on in faith and love, working to correct the errors in you, and helping others to overcome theirs where possible. On the other hand, being a perfectionist involves blindly pushing for the ideal state even to the destruction of yourself and others. Living perfectly involves undertaking all activities within the three fields of a man's life to the best of one's abilities without pushing the body, soul, or spirit of yourself or that of others towards unsustainable ideals. This is the life of a Rigid, not an XG. Every ideal that you pursue in life must be sustainable. Living as a perfectionist involves pushing yourself and others beyond the limits of nature and art to satisfy your wishful thinking, this is unwise and unsustainable.

However, do not disdain or discredit idealistic ideals, especially in the Christian walk, just because you are not yet able to achieve them. The mere belief in them stirs up in a man a constant growth that transforms him toward the ideals he admires. A forceful living by them, when your spirit, soul, and body are not exercised in them, wears the soul and the body and breeds self-pity and a wounded spirit. Transforming into and living as an Extraordinary Gentleman, unlike the Perfect Gentleman, is more of the Holy Spirit's effort than the effort of the man. Learn to listen and collaborate with

the Holy Spirit and patiently watch your life transform before you gradually. Live to your best as God grants you the strength and trust God to finish the rest. Therefore,

Desire idealistic ideals but live practical ideals

Gentility

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle... – Jesus Christ
(Matt 11:29, RSV& NIV)*

*To speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all men.
(Tit 3:2, RSV)*

Gentility refers to elegance by virtue of fineness of manner and expression³⁰. This is a cardinal virtue of a gentleman and is a fruit of divine wisdom (Jas 3:17). Although gentility has long been associated with the rigid obedience to etiquette or manners, true gentility is made up of being affable (1Th 2:7; 2Tim 2:24), humble (Matt 11:29) appropriate and patient (Tit 3:2; 1Pe 2:18) in speech and action towards all people no matter their estate. A true gentleman does not discriminate between individuals concerning who is fit to receive the beauty of gentility and who is not. Gentility dwells on the considerations of the fact that all men are prone to errors, and the knowledge that we, ourselves, are not perfect. Gentility is a sign of trust in God. Think about

³⁰ Wordweb computer dictionary software

it, the only reason why a man will not make haste and in the cause of his haste make a lot of avoidable mistakes (Prov 19:2) is because he knows that all things work for the good of those that love the Lord (Ro 8:28). After all, he who believes will not be in haste (Isa 28:16). “All things” in Romans 8 verse 28 means that, some things that even seem undesirable, work for the good of a man that loves the Lord and is called according to His purpose. For even if the righteous man perishes, he is only being taken away from calamity (Isa 57:1). Gentility in word turns away wrath and stalls quarrels (Pr. 15:1; Tit 3:2), gentility in action prevents strife and breeds beauty and respect. For it is to the honour of a man to avoid strife by overlooking offence (Pr 19:11; 2 Tim 2:23-24). Therefore,

Gentility is the preservative to elegance in speech and
in action.

Integrity

*The integrity of the upright guides them, but the
crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.*

Pr 13:6(RSV)

Integrity refers to moral excellence in all aspects of life. It is the first supplement to faith that is demanded by scriptures (2 Pe 1:5) and as such, it is the first evidence of our faith in Jesus Christ. In the RSV it is referred to in 2 Pe 1:5 as “virtue”, in the NIV it is referred to as

goodness and in NET it is referred to as “excellence” (and also is referred to as uprightness in most of these versions). Integrity is the quality of complete moral stature and incorruptibility, and this is demanded of a true Christian man as written in Tit. 2:7(RSV). Integrity in its entirety is rooted in honest intent and is of great value to God (1 Chron 29:17, NIV). Hence our thought, speech, and action as men must be guided by honest intentions (Pr 13:5 -7). In so doing, the man of integrity is delivered from the traps that ensnare men into a state of moral decay (Pr 28:18). A man of integrity who is also gentle towards men is trusted by those who know him and this gives him a valuable group of people who are ready to stick their necks out for him in times of trouble. However, a man who has cold integrity that lacks kindness and tenderness will have no man ready to die for him (Ro 5:7)³¹. A man of gentle integrity, therefore, walks securely (Pr 10:9), thrives in the land that he finds himself (Pr 2:21) and leaves the invaluable asset of a good name as a blessing to his children after him (Pr 20:7). Therefore,

The integrity of the upright preserves him on this side
of eternity

Versatility

That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly

³¹ Supported by John Wesley’s note on Ro 5:7 Power BibleCD version 3.7

equipped for every good work.
(2Tim 3:17, NKJV)

In line with the recommendation from Paul to Timothy as stated above, an XG must be versatile in his dealings in all three fields of his life, just as scriptures are versatile in equipping a man (2 Tim 3:16). Versatility refers to being skillful at different things as well as adapting to different functional requirements while remaining excellent at each of them. You do not have to be a jack of all trades and yet you cannot afford to be a master of only one. There are various skills needed to undertake the activities that exist in each of the functional fields; Marriage, Ministry, and Money. Additionally, the technology and the institutions that facilitate these activities are constantly changing. It is therefore important that a man equips himself continuously with the necessary knowledge, skills, and training from scripture, experience, and wise counsel that enable him to adapt to the fast-changing and complex systems of the world. Indeed, this requires constantly building and adapting your body, soul, and spirit with the knowledge, skills, and training necessary to remain excellent in all the three fields of your life. However, all adaptations must be within the perfect will of God, anything that tilts your value system against the perfect will of God is not worthy of pursuit. Versatility makes you more useful to the people around you and keeps you relevant in the face of changing situations. It is like being many

men in one, for a man of many excellences equals many men, and variety in excellences is the delight of life³². A versatile man is like a man with nine lives. Therefore,

Versatility is the perfect substitute for multiplicity

Marriage, Ministry, and Money

If someone aspires to the office of overseer (bishop or pastor), he desires a good work. The overseer then must be ...the husband of one wife,... free from the love of money,...he must manage his own household well and keep his children in control without losing his dignity (1 Tim 3: 1-4, NET).

Marriage, Ministry, and Money as we have discussed earlier are the three fields of a man's life and the factors by which a man's success must be measured. It is therefore important that a man who pursues excellence is well-instructed in these fields of life.

Marriage

Marriage in simple terms is a negotiated union between a man and a woman to be recognized as a family within the principles of the Bible, witnessed by a Christian community, and giving the individuals the right to sexual intimacy that may or may not lead to the birth

³² Balthasar Gracian (1637), Oracle: A Manual on the Art of Discretion (also known as The Art of Worldly Wisdom), <http://way2goal.com/book/TheArtOfWorldlyWisdom.pdf> or <http://www.online-literature.com/gracian/art-worldly-wisdom/>

and raising of children. Marriage therefore ultimately leads to the creation of a family consisting of a husband, and wife with or without children. The man is the head (Eph 5:23) of the family, the woman is the heart of the family (Pr 31) the children are its members.

The man's first duty in marriage is to be the spiritual head of the family; the iconic figure of the family in the presence of God or in biblical terms, the high priest of the family. He must have so close a relationship with God and frequent in-depth sessions with Him about his family, enough for God to grant him exact spiritual knowledge and wisdom concerning his family. For example, the father must be informed when any of his children are in spiritual or physical disorder, distress, or danger by the communication from God through His Spirit to the spirit of the man. The married man must have a place in God through His son Jesus Christ all to himself, like the captain's deck, where he steers the ship (i.e. family) on the stormy seas of life. The father must therefore steer the family from his secret place. The secret place refers to the man's personal prayer time about the family.

The duty of man is to bring to pass the will of God on earth by serving as an ambassador of the kingdom of God. The duty of a married man is to bring to pass the will of God in the family by serving as an ambassador of God to the family. This only happens when the man wins the trust of God as the head of the family through

faith and obedience. For without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb 11: 4). Additionally, the proof of a man's love for God is obedience (Joh 14:21). It is through the personal prayer sessions that God may reveal the current state and His vision for the family to the man (Jer 33:3). The first ministry of a married man is, therefore, his marriage; this explains why the test for the ability of a married man to cater for the church of God is his ability to manage his family (1Tim 3:5).

The husband is a source of identity for the family. A major duty given to the first man by God in relation to a family of living things was to supply identity (Gen 2:19), and the very first duty performed by the first man in the first marriage is that of giving an identity to his wife (Gen 2:23). It is interesting to note that whatever man called the animals, or birds or even his wife was his sole prerogative and whatsoever he called them, that was their name (Gen 2:20). What an authority! However, the reason why God could trust man with this duty without fear of failure was that man at that time was perfect in knowledge through his uncorrupted nature and was in a close relationship with God. As such, the husband must be "well saved" and in a close relationship with God. Just like Jesus Christ prepares, cleanses, and gives an image of beauty to his bride (the church) by his word (Eph. 5:26), the words of a man to his wife must be words that build her into the desired image. Therefore, as a husband, "Let no corrupt word proceed

out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification (building up), that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Eph 4:29, NKJV). Or in more detailed terms, “Let no foul (or) polluting language, (nor) evil word (nor) unwholesome (or) worthless talk (ever) come out of your mouth, but only such (speech) as is good (and) beneficial to the spiritual progress of others, as is fitting to the need (and) the occasion, that it may be a blessing (and) give grace (God’s favor) to those who hear it” (Eph 4:29, AMP). Every word from a man to his wife must be judged by the characteristics above. Additionally, the first responsibility of a man to his children is to give them an identity. The father achieves this by training and disciplining, and guiding the children (Pr 1:8, 4:1-2; 4:11; 3:12; 1Th 2:11; Eph 6:4), giving the child the right mindset and value system that distinguishes him or her and gives him or her excellence (Pr 1:9).

Further, sharing, nurturing, and attracting love should be the foundation of every word and action undertaken by a man in relation to his wife or children (Eph. 5:25-26; Pr 3:12). Additionally, the man must honour his wife (1Pe 3:7; 1Co 7:3) and conduct himself with dignity towards his children; not provoking them in deed or word (1 Tim 3: 4 AMP, Eph 6:4). More importantly, the man must win the love of both his wife and children. It is unwise for a man to accumulate love from strangers and outsiders but spurn the love of those that are close and matter most. For the sake of love and

the integrity and sanctity of manhood in Christ Jesus, a man must not destroy his house by adultery, usually called “affairs”. For whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul (Pr 6:32).

In conclusion, the family for a man, therefore, consists of the elements of being a spiritual head, a husband, and a father as discussed above.

Insight 6: The Extraordinary Husband:

Lessons from Adam³³

Of all humanity and manhood, I dare to say that the most lambasted man is our great-grandfather, Adam. Many comedians make fun of him as he is used in representing the weakness of manhood. Oh, but I bet to differ.

This man out of whom we all came, I believe, represents the life of an ideal husband. This I say because a critical look at this man’s life shows that he is a strong man within and without. It’s true, Adam had the best opportunity you can think of; he had a beautiful garden crowned with a beautiful woman, filled with everything he could ever need. He had the Most High as his father, companion, and provider. However, along the line, he messed up everything by disobeying his Creator.

³³ The first version of this *Insight* was posted on my blog: cxgentlemen.wordpress.com under the title “The Extraordinary Husband: A Case for Adam. Written by Richard Ofori

In effect, he lost everything he had and now had to start all over again, from tilling the ground to providing for his own needs and that of his family. What was his initial reaction? He blamed his Creator for giving him a wife who caused the whole mess. What did he do to his wife? He gave her the sweetest name available then, Eve. Eve from the Amplified Bible means living spring.

Lessons from Adam

- 1) **He did not cry over spilt milk.** After losing a very wonderful condition, he went on to work to still be there for the family.
- 2) **He did not direct his frustration toward his wife but his God, who knew about events in his life, whether good or bad** (Anyway, he could have done better by acknowledging his disobedience and asking for forgiveness)
- 3) **He did not rain insults, curses, or beatings on his wife.** Rather, he called her Eve, meaning spring of life. Interestingly, before the incident, his wife was called “woman” and then after Eve. They did not have children before, but they went on to have children after the incident.
- 4) **Though he blamed his God, he did not break contact with him.** He reconciled with his wife and nourished his family in the way of the creator.

Men, let's be strong in all situations. Like Adam, God is and will cloth us to cover our weaknesses even when we fail. As descendants of Adam, let's be extraordinary husbands.

Remember, being an Extraordinary Gentleman is not about that one great thing that you do that totally changes and pushes you into a new light of being. Being extraordinary involves the little choices and decisions you make in every situation, even after a significant failure.

Insight 7: How to Fight with Your Wife, Like a Christian³⁴

One thing that has always “scared” me has been the fact that someday, as a man, I might have to experience a not-so-beautiful part of the one I love as a wife and will be faced with the inevitable choice of speaking or acting; what do I do?

I tried to write this article once, but I got stuck on the way. However, ideas from Dan Benson's book, “The Total Man”, has helped, so I adapted the title of that chapter of his book.

Going back to the point I made in the first paragraph, I don't know if you share the dilemma or have experienced it already. But what do you do in such a

³⁴ I first posted this *Insight* as an article on my blog: cxgentlemen.wordpress.com

situation? As an Extraordinary Gentleman, the only way you are permitted to do anything is by employing the most excellent way. Even when it is about fighting (arguing, no blows allowed!) with your wife, you have to fight excellently. Do not get me wrong, I wish I could believe in a marriage without disagreements and without anything that would cause me to wonder, “why under the heavens did I marry this woman!” but I hear it is inevitable. As a friend who got married just over a year ago told me (and I am paraphrasing), it is not easy to live together with a woman when the two of you grew up under totally different conditions. Sometimes even the way she eats can be irritating.

I believe the following guides might help us pursue an excellent path toward conflict resolution. But first,

Prepare for the fights

I don't mean the boxing gloves or a sharp cutlass, not even looking forward to a fight, but being aware that fights will come and therefore weaken the effect of their surprise appearance by:

- 1. Recognizing that, some days, she will forget her “Makeup”:** All of us have a “weight” or “sin” that easily beset us, and though we might work every day to reduce or eliminate it, patience and time are investments that must be made (Heb 12:1). You are not perfect either, and that is one reason why you

must expect to be offended especially by the one with whom you are likely to spend the most of your private time. Expect some unpleasant surprises, but do not hope for them. Expecting them may make it easier for you to accept them when they happen.

2. **Talking everything out:** Don't try to tolerate or wait to see if she will change on her own; maybe she does not even know she is hurting you. Tell her everything as plainly as possible but say it in love (speaking the truth in love Eph. 4:15) and gentleness. The aim is not to tell her how wrong she is but how better the marriage will be when the fault is minimized or eliminated. As much as possible, do not store up any issue; otherwise, it will blow up nastily one day. However, be sensitive to the time and manner in which you raise the topic for discussion; at least, avoid discussing it publicly, not even as a joke. When the fight becomes inevitable, make the fight safe by:
 3. **Making rules for the fights:** Not the type of rules that determine who wins the fight, but rather the kind of rules that make sure that no one wins the fight. The only one ever permitted to win a fight between a married couple is the two of them. After all the two shall become one. Examples of rules could include, attacking the problem, not the person, no calling of names (especially in public or before the kids), No accusations (you always..., you never...),

and of course, no blows!

4. **Discussing the results of the fight:** Find a short period to cool off after every fight, then issues raised during the fight must be discussed most preferably on the same day, for do not let the sun go down while you are still angry (Eph 4:26). Do not assume you already understand what each other said while you were arguing, clarify what each other meant and make resolutions on how to avoid a fight on the same issue.
5. **Forgiving each other:** Forgiveness is a true healer, and the man should be the first to ask for forgiveness, even if the fight was only 1% your fault. After all, you are the head and the leader of the family team, so you must take the initiative. It would help if you also shared all that the other said that hurt you so that she could freely ask for forgiveness. And don't forget to forget. Do not ever raise what you have forgiven as an issue in another fight. Forgive each other just as in Christ God also forgave you (Eph 4:32)
6. **Celebrating your victory over divorce:** Celebrate each amicable resolution, even if it is with a hug, for the lack of a resolution is a source of dissolution (divorce). Conflict resolution after a fight is an integral part of life, especially if it has to do with the one you are going to spend the rest of your life

with; celebrate the resolution and renew your love towards each other.

The Extraordinary Wife

Unlike the popular belief that the wife is the neck to denote support to the man who is the head, I believe that the wife's supporting role is better played as the heart of the family (Pr 31:10-31) especially given the fact that notions of manipulation have leaked into the "neck-hood" of the wife. The wife, like the heart, is central to the living system of the house (Pr 31: 10-31). She has her rest only in the comfort of her husband and children (Pr. 31: 15-19). If you doubt this dear brother, just take a glance at Mama (our sweet mother), and like the heart, which pumps warm and nutritious blood to all parts of the body, the wife supplies nutrition and warmth to all the members of the body including the head (Pr. 14: 21-22). As such, as an ill heart affects the countenance of the whole body, I believe the mood of the wife largely affects the mood of the house as a whole, yet the bad mood of a man may be shielded off by the cheerful mood of the wife (Pr 14:1). The wife must be one that the man can trust (Pr 31: 11-12) for a betrayal by her is as deadly as a heart attack. It is, therefore, unwise for a man to marry a woman whose integrity lacks confirmation in his spirit.

The right woman for an XG must understand the times

and how to take advantage of them (Pr 31 vs 15-16). She must know when to be a girl, a lady, a woman, a wife and a mother. She must be excellent at switching these modes to preserve liveliness in the family relationship. Above all things, the wife must be a woman of the right values and must be able to teach these to the children (Pr 31:1; Pr 1:8 RSV). Though the man might instruct the child in the right way, it is the wife that at most times, takes the time to teach the child the details of the instruction.

The true value of a heart lies in the intentions behind its actions and not in the actions themselves. In the same way, a true woman must be judged by the values on which she runs her life. For example, she must value internal beauty that comes from a true heart of humility beyond the external that comes from physical effort (1 Pe 3:1-4). Yet, she must not neglect the external beauty (Pr 31:22) for it might cast a shadow on the beauty within. A woman of true transcending character is a jewel of honour; however, when a woman is obsessed with her beauty and charm, she is transient and is likely to make a shipwreck of the family life (Pr 12:4).

The Extraordinary Children

The states of the children of a family are largely evidence of the interactions between the father (head) and the mother (heart). As such, children derive

their identity mainly from their parents. They are also affected by the external environment made up of people, institutions, and invisible forces. The parents must put in place spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical strategies to train the child in the way he/she should go so that when he grows up he/she will not depart from it (Pr 22:6). The parent must take a keen interest in observing the development of their children, and monitoring the content of the media the children are exposed. Parents must regulate the content of such media where possible. This might be unpleasant to the child in some cases; however, for the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb 12:11, RSV). Among all things, a child should be taught obedience and honour to parents (Eph 6:2-3) and helped to develop a personal relationship with God (Ps 78:5-7). Love, patience, and trust in the care and transformational powers of God are cardinal virtues that parents must live by to raise God-fearing and God-loving children, especially when a particular child seems not to heed the voice of his parents. These virtues will help the parents cope and wait for the hand of the Lord. Therefore, like the members of the body, the children are instructed and nourished by the head and heart. The children are also essentially the family's primary physical access to the future generation. The children are, hence, the hands by which the family reaches out and affects the

future generations to come. Therefore,

The family is a body; the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and the children are the hands (members).

Insight 9: The Extraordinary Father: A Character Study of God³⁵

In the past *insight* entitled The Extraordinary Husband: a Lesson from Adam, we learnt husbandhood from the first husband. In this *insight*, we will learn about fatherhood from the first father. And hence, a character study of God.

The Bible is decorated with pieces of golden wisdom on fatherhood displayed by God to all his children, especially his firstborn, Jesus. In this discussion, we will attempt to unearth some of the wisdom for fatherhood embedded in God's disposition towards his children as written in the word of God.

1. *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."* (Jer 1:5, RSV)

God acknowledges and bonds with us even before our birth. He sets us apart as his children and plans for our life. Being a great father begins with acknowledging the gift and power of procreation given to us by God, knowing that we have children

³⁵ I first posted this *Insight* as an article on my blog: cxgentlemen.wordpress.com

to be born to us and that we have a responsibility to guide them into the purpose of God for their lives. God's disposition in Jer 1:5 requires that we know our children before they are born to us, through prayer and supplication by faith and not an assumption, opening our spirit to communion with God concerning our children and their purpose. This is not necessarily to come with clear directions, like the name of the child, the sex or school he or she should attend, but this is to raise our spiritual consciousness of and bonding with the coming child. It is also to grant us prior spiritual insight into our child's unique nature and/or purpose.

2. *For he received honour and glory from God the father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory, saying, "This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased"* (2 Pe 1:17, NIV)

Let your children and those around you know that you love them (your children). Do it in deeds and in words, yes, especially in words. Words even seem to be where God started, in public, concerning Jesus. He publicly declared his love for his Son. This gives your children an important sense of being valued. Your children need this in a world that may look down on them in many ways. The honour and glory they receive from the knowledge of being loved are essential in building their self-esteem and confidence. It also plays a vital role in the choices

and decisions they make in life. Love your children from birth and let them know it in word and deed.

3. *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all that he himself is doing..." (Joh 5:19-20, RSV).*

Instruct your child in the way he or she should go, but giving an example is the most critical way of teaching a child. For children, especially those who are confident of their father's love for them, what daddy does is an important indication of what is acceptable now and in the future. Apart from indicating what is acceptable, the examples portrayed in your lifestyle are also essential in shaping your child's understanding or conceptualization of fatherhood and, thus, manhood in general. As James Robin says, a father's blessing to a child is sometimes in word but always by example. What examples are you setting for your children?

4. *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46, RSV)*

God is repelled by sin in man, and not even his beloved Son was an exception to this rule when he, Jesus, carried the sins of the world on the cross. Set the boundaries clearly at home, what can be done

and what must not be done. Let your children understand the need and rationale for these rules at home and outside of the home. Do not hesitate to punish disobedience, but punish disobedience because love demands it. Be sure to turn back to your child's offences in love for him or her to understand that punishing him or her was not for pleasure but a sure way to lead him or her down the path of life. Let them be continually assured of your love.

5. *And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name... (Php 2:8-9, RSV).*

The child needs to feel a continual growth of your confidence in him or her. The best way to achieve this is through a conscious increase in the quantity but most importantly, the quality of responsibilities you give him or her. Additionally, some of these responsibilities, especially those that are to raise the child into excellence, must be rewarded and celebrated when accomplished. Failure in any of these tasks should not be treated as an end but as a source of learning that should make the end better. Teach your children to learn from their mistakes and give them encouragement when the going gets tough. If they do not succeed at first, let them try again where possible. When Christ felt like “giving

up” on the assignment His Father had given him (Gethsemane), the Father strengthened him, and when Jesus had accomplished the task, he rewarded him with a name that is above all names.

There are more of these gems in the word of God, and as you spend more time studying your Bible, I pray that God will open your eyes to more truths of fatherhood and manhood as a whole.

Ministry

A ministry is a selfless undertaking that the Spirit of God evidently inspires and that leads to glorious results in the lives and society of men. The total concept of ministry is encapsulated in Isaiah 61: 1-4. The ministry is the purpose for life that must be inspired by the Spirit of God and as such, one must be chosen and equipped for it (Isa 61:1). The Holy Spirit communicates this to a man in different ways. Some men receive it through dramatically inspiring experiences such as visions and dreams (Gen 37: 5-10; 45:7; Jg 6:11-22); others receive it by the authority through the laying on of hands (1Ti 4:14); others just see it in the word of God (Da 9:2-27) and are moved to get it done. Yet still, others just have it as a passion for which they feel gifted to pursue (1 Sam 17: 23-54).

A ministry must, however, offer one or a combination of spiritual, psychological (mental), emotional, physical, or fiscal liberation, inspiration or healing (Isa

61:1) or a reconciliation of people to the favour of God. In the end, ministries must arouse people's genuine joy and praise of God. The ministry may also be of the form that reminds the people (both reconciled and alienated) of their judgment and that of their enemies, bringing the reconciled people to the knowledge of their state of righteousness (Isa 61:2-3) and the need to continue in it. The ministry must also equip men to undertake exploits that bring glory to the name of God (Isa 61:4; Eph 4:11-12). Thus, bringing glory to God by fulfilling his perfect will should be the bottom line of every ministry.

As there are varied ways in which people are called to ministry, so are there different ministries into which a man may be called. Manifestations of these include servants or ministers (e.g. Ushers and technical men), those who exhort (e.g. counselors), rulers (e.g. deacons and other leaders), givers (e.g. financiers), those who show mercy (those who volunteer time and energy to help those in need) (Ro 12:7-8, KJV). Other more easily recognised manifestations include Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers (Eph 4:11). There also seem to be many examples of people who have the gifts and ability to exhibit varying combinations of two or more of these categories of ministry. Additionally, as expressed in 1 Co 12:6, there are diversities of operations in these ministries. People who belong to the same line of ministry might function or manifest it in diverse

ways. One Evangelist might own a globally recognized ministry focused on crusades, while another may focus on child evangelism, moving from one remote area to another. It is unwise to covet another man's operation, for if the whole body were an eye, what part would be for hearing? (1 Co 12:17). The diversities in ministries and their operations are necessary so that the church, which is the body of Christ, might be complete and function excellently (1 Co 12:11-31).

It is said that there are three temptations in ministry: girls, gold, and glory. These three, individually or in varying combinations, are the undoing of many great men. A man who commits adultery lacks understanding (Pr 6:32) and will not go unpunished (Pr 6:29). A man who is led astray by money or wealth also lacks understanding and will perish like a beast (Ps 49:20; Ps 49:10-13). Additionally, any man who becomes proud because of the fame or glory from his ministry will fall into shame (Pr 16:18; 11:2; 29:23). Therefore, in all your getting, get understanding (Pr 4:7), be not wise in your own eyes and in all your ways acknowledge God, for he resists the proud but gives more grace to the humble (Pr 3: 6-7; Jas 4:6). Any ministry that does not bring glory to God is either a selfish endeavour or devilish one. Therefore,

Ministries are the chisels with which God carves his glory for Himself in the lives of people.

Money

Wealth in Christianity is a matter of continuous debate, with different perspectives being dominant at different dispensations and in denominations. However, the fact is that how you deal with earthly wealth is cardinal in determining if you will be entrusted with heavenly riches, for “If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” (Lu 16:11, KJV) or in other words, “If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Lu 16:11, NIV). I do not think God or Jesus Christ would trust the true riches of the kingdom of God into the hands of a Christian who was not trustworthy in handling earthly wealth. It is, therefore, vital that a man understands how to prove his faithfulness with worldly riches and hence the need for discussing the field of money. The field of money refers to all legitimate efforts to generate, manage, multiply, and distribute earthly wealth in any acceptable form. It is not sinful to be rich, for money answers, all things pertaining to earthly needs (Eccl 10:19), and the blessings of God make one rich (Pr 10:22). However, the love of money is the root of all evil and inevitably leads to wandering away from salvation (1 Ti 6:10; Eccl 5:10), for you cannot serve two masters; God and money (Lu 16:13; NIV).

It works this way, money is a force in the ruling system of the earth called “the world”³⁶, as such, love of it means to love the world and enmity to God (Jas 4:4). Love of money occurs when your value system tilts in favour of money as opposed to the will of God. You begin to yield to the lusts of the world that are readily lying at the command of money. These lusts include gluttony, drunkenness, and greed in all things, even in things pertaining to the church. Thus, you begin to take decisions against the perfect will of God, trusting your riches and your new power in the world rather than the unfailing love of God. Hence, you begin to take decisions from the position of a wealthy and powerful man and not the position of a child of God. You have become a servant of money rather than a servant of God. The end of such a man is sudden destruction (Ps 49:6-14; 49:20; 33:16-19; 147:10-11). Therefore, the key virtue for a wealthy Christian should be integrity; the law of heaven concerning wealth on earth is this, “Do not trust in extortion and take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase do not set your heart on them”(Ps 62:10, NIV). The source and the result of a man’s wealth must be pure in the eyes of God.

Generating wealth as a Christian gentleman is so important that Paul did not fail to mention it to the

³⁶ The world the earth is frequently used interchangeably, however, it is also used in the bible to refer to the evil system that rules the earth (e.g. Jas 4:4) rather than referring to the physical earth itself.

early Christians (1Th 4:11-12; 2 Th 3:11-12). This is because it is essential for a Christian gentleman at the right age not to be dependent on the brethren or especially unbelievers for his daily bread. He, however, has to work with his own hands and earn wages so as to help family and the Christian brotherhood and all those in need (1Tim 5:4; Pr 19:17). Additionally, Jesus asked, “If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Lu 16:11, NIV). A man of worth, and as such and XG is a man who does not only generate income but can manage and multiply it as the two wise servants did in Jesus’ parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-18, NIV). The current state of affairs on earth also allows a man to adopt different investment and insurance vehicles for which a man can save, manage and multiply his money for the future (Pr. 6:6-8). It is therefore vital for a Christian man to know the various tools available to him for managing and multiplying money. Further, a man must understand and apply the heavenly and scriptural laws of managing and multiplying money. For example, though it is wise to allocate the money needed for the running of the family and to make provisions for the future, it is unwise to hoard money out of fear or greed, for money hoarded for these reasons is usually to the detriment of its owner on earth and in eternity (Eccl 5:13; Pr 11:24; Pr 11:4; Job 20:28; Eccl 5:10-15).

Moreover, a wise gentleman honours God with his

substance through tithes (for deliverance from devourers of wealth and for blessing, Mal 3:8-12) and offering (for deliverance in the day of trouble and for increase (Ps 50:14-15,23; Pr 3:9-10). The Christian gentleman must also be generous, for a generous man will be enriched, and he who waters shall also be watered (Pr 11:25; Ps 112:5). As such, it is important for a man to understand how to distribute wealth or money. Wealth can be distributed in both direct and indirect ways. The direct way involves the short-term supply of wealth to the one who is in need. However, the indirect wealth distribution strategy consists of building the capacity of the recipient to generate wealth or linking him or her to the right opportunities for wealth creation. Wisdom is to understand whether a direct or indirect help is most appropriate or when a varying combination of both is the best option. Generosity or distribution of wealth can be likened to sowing seeds which later grow to produce more fruits or seeds than what was sown (Lu 6:28). It is, therefore, important to sow seeds in fertile soils. He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed (Pr 19:17); I believe that God pays you with higher interest when you sow into the lives of widows, orphans, and strangers (by being hospitable). I also believe that God does not always pay cash-for-cash; most time,s he pays in higher values of things that pertain to life or godliness. In summary, a Christian man must not put his trust in his increasing wealth. He has to manage and distribute his growing

wealth in line with the will of God. For,

Man cannot serve two masters,

God and money;

so make God your master and money your servant.

Truth, Humility, and Righteousness

*You are the most excellent of men..., in your majesty
ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility and
righteousness*

(Ps 45:2-4, NIV)

There are three things that hold an Extraordinary Gentleman in place or keeps him consistently excellent I the three fields of his life; truth, humility, and righteousness. Truth is the eternally-tested structure of knowledge. In practice, it is God's opinion and will concerning each matter. On earth, therefore, truth is needed to equip a man with wisdom in his dealings with people (men, women and children), society (institutions), and invisible forces (divine and devilish). Guiding his dealing with these stakeholders with truth gives him excellence in Marriage, Ministry and Money. When the truth is applied according to the will of God, it yields divine wisdom and distinguishes a man in all his endeavours. Yet knowledge puffs up (1 Co 8:1), and pride leads to shame. Hence, the blinding glory of truth must be covered with humility to prevent calamity.

To understand humility, we will need to learn from Jesus Christ himself (Matt 11:29, NIV). The Bible says that Jesus Christ, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:6-8, KJV). Thus, humility involves not only having the right estimation of our worth before God (Jesus being equal to God) – Romans 12:3 - but also being willing to endure unjust humiliation (death on the cross for no sin of His) for God’s sake (or His purpose) – Matthew 5:11-12. Humility is essential for an Extraordinary Gentleman because it is the weapon for fighting the greatest enemy of all success; pride. When a man begins to see the progress of becoming an Extraordinary Gentleman through his assimilation and application of truth, humility should be his closest companion.

Finally, righteousness is being right with God, not falling short of his Glory. The righteousness of a Christian man is secured in his salvation through Jesus Christ. For Jesus became sin that Christians would become the righteousness of God through Him (2 Cho 5:21). Christians are, however, expected to demonstrate their acquired righteousness through their everyday lives. Jesus, who was without sin, became sin that all

who now are righteous through Him will live His life for righteousness on His behalf, for “...he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Cho 5:15). Hence;

The Extraordinary Gentleman is built on three pillars;
 Truth, Humility and Righteousness

Pillar 1: **Truth** – He enquires after the truth, listens to the truth, tells the truth, and practices the truth. Truth on earth is in the form of the written and the revealed word of God. However, it is important to remember that truth told with evil intent is worse than all the lies you can invent³⁷. That is the reason why even though the devil quoted the bible in tempting Jesus after the 40-day fast, the devil’s assertions had no validity (Matthew 4: 5-7).

Pillar 2: **Humility** – He is humble in all matters, no matter how great he is. Humility on earth includes honest respect for others no matter the state they are relative us.

Pillar 3: **Righteousness** – He is saved through Jesus Christ, has put on the righteousness of God (2Co 5:21) and lives a life of righteousness. Righteousness on earth is demonstrated by bearing the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness (Gal 5:

³⁷ William Blake in his poem Auguries of Innocence

22) and fulfilling the perfect will of God.

Insight 10: Pride, the Last Enemy³⁸

Pride is the opposite of humility and is one of the last enemies that a successful Christian would fight on earth. Discussions on pride might seem to be simple and straight forward especially in the Christian domain, where we are conversant with the fact that God resists the proud (Jas 4:6, 1Pe 5:5) and that pride comes before a fall (Pr 16:18). These verses in the bible might evidently prove why no Christian will “willingly” fall to the sin of pride. But like many other sins, many men might, in one way or the other, be struggling with pride. Not necessarily as a sin you commit, but take for example the times when it becomes a little difficult to differentiate whether a brother’s testimony was to glorify God or to tell you how he is more special to God than many of you seated in the pews.

Let’s start with a few questions, what is pride? Does anyone really want to be proud? What are the differences, similarities or relationships that exist in relation to self-confidence, self-esteem, pride, boastfulness and arrogance? Is there anything like false humility? I do not seek to answer all these questions in this *Insight* but to make them serve as food for thought.

³⁸ I first posted a version of this *Insight* on my blog: cxgentlemen.wordpress.com under the title “Pride”.

One classical example of Pride in the Bible is the biography of Uzziah, King of Judah, I love this illustration because it portrays to a large extent a complete working of Pride.

"Uzziah was sixteen years old when he began to reign... he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done... he set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper. But when he was strong he grew proud, to his destruction (2 Ch 26: 1-16)".

Uzziah, like many men, did all the right things, worked with the right people and the right God, and excelled in life until the wrong attitude came along, P-R-I-D-E!

What causes it?: A conscious or unconscious forgetting of where you came from and how you got to where you are or having a wrong perspective of where you came from and how you got to where you are (e.g. thinking I would always have made it; I'm from a good home). These, in turn, lead to an overvaluation of yourself as a result of your current successes and, thus pride.

What it causes: You demean to the contributions of those God put in your life to your success, by denying or devaluing their help. Then you find, usually, creative ways to owe them no gratitude, respect, love

or faithfulness. You refuse to listen to caution, and you ascribe to yourself more capability and responsibility than is truly due you (2 Ch 26:16 - 22).

God honours us with success by answering our prayers that are in line with his will and are made with the right motive or as an act of exercising his sovereignty. **But pride is the response perverted beneficiaries give for the honour God gives them.**

When pride becomes our response to the honour God gives us, he strikes us in a way that causes people around us and ourselves to hurriedly abandon the position of honour we ascribe or crave for ourselves (2 Ch 26: 20).

God's gifts are without repentance but they come with accountability. **When we are accountable for something, we do not own it, we steward it,** and as such the glory at any point for its success goes to the owner. To do this successfully, no matter the level of success you attain in each endeavour:

1- **Consciously as much as possible look for, recognize and inform yourself of the hand of God at work.** Pride is watered by wrong information or thought. Keep updated with the right information and thoughts. The right information or thought seeks to exalt God and not you. Your exaltation comes from God. Recognize and accept God's work as not a work

to glorify you but to glorify his name through you. Even *when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty* (Luke 17:10).

2- Confess openly a deep-rooted belief in the grace of God at work in you when the time is appropriate.

This will direct your mind and the minds of those who blindly push glory to you to the grace of God and also prevent you from adopting their thinking. Remember God will destroy the proud and those who fuel their pride.

3- Finally, know that you cannot force yourself to be humble by your own might. Hence you cannot do any of the above effectively by yourself. The Holy Spirit is your helper. Never forget to ask for His help and be ready to submit to His leading no matter the cost.

THE SUMMARY OF THE MATTER

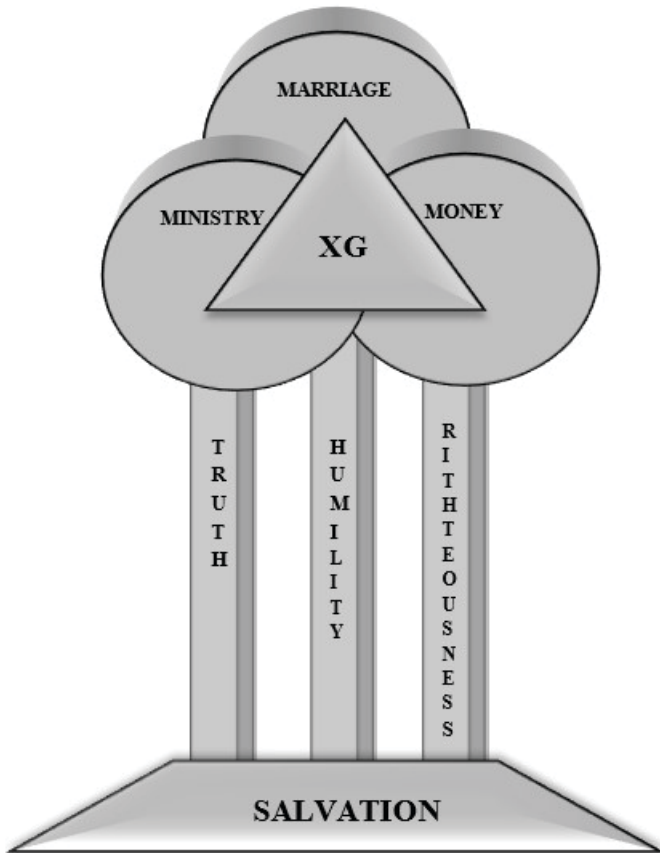


Fig 3: The Concept of the Extraordinary Gentleman

Figure 3 is an attempt to summarize the key elements of our discussion in a diagrammatic form. Hence, man is made up of spirit, soul and body (triangle). He is first a spirit in the image of God that has a soul and lives in a body. His life is made up of three interlinked functional fields, Marriage, Ministry and Money, and in these three fields, he interacts with people, society

and invisible forces. When a man, through his spirit, achieves consistent and distinguishable excellence by living a balanced life in the three functional fields of his life, then he can be classified as an Extraordinary Gentleman (XG). This can only be achieved if he has the right value system, which is God's value system. That is, if only he values and lives by what God values. Valuing and living by what God values can be achieved by being spiritually minded.

Consistency is key to remaining an Extraordinary Gentleman, and it can be achieved by living by truth, humility and righteousness. These three pillars produce virtues such as integrity and gentility, and the fruit of the Spirit.

Finally, a man can only get to the height of an Extraordinary Gentleman by starting from the foundation. He must be saved by believing in and confessing Jesus Christ as His savior and the Lord of his life. If you have not done this, choose to do it. In a short heartfelt prayer, accept that you are a sinner and that you have fallen short of the glory of God. Appreciate the gift of His son, Jesus Christ, dying on the cross. Express your belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in your stead, and ask for forgiveness and adoption as a son of God. Invite the Holy Spirit into your heart, have faith and thank God for accepting you as His son. By faith, step into the new life. You are Welcome! Find a bible believing church where you can gain fellowship,

guidance and accountability. Be baptized to proclaim the beliefs you hold dear in your heart publicly.

THE CLOSING CHAPTER

My dearest brother, it is impossible to pour out to you the burdens of my heart in just one letter. I trust that the Holy Spirit will give you a deep understanding of the various issues that I have touched upon in this letter. In my next letter, I hope to delve deeper into one or a few issues raised in this letter. I am trusting God to give me the will and strength to do so soon. Amen. May the peace of God keep your mind and your heart in Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Yours truly,

Selorm Agbleze

ABOUT CXG

The Conference of Extraordinary Gentlemen (CXG)

The Conference of Extraordinary Gentlemen is a repository of knowledge based on the word of God as stipulated in the Bible that offers practical ways to develop men into Extraordinary Gentlemen. It currently operates as a blog that carries information in the form of text, video, audio and one-on-one or group discussions. The CXG is to facilitate the development of activities that are geared toward:

1. The understanding of existing knowledge concerning the various aspects of the life of men for effective application,
2. Questioning of existing knowledge for the elimination of illusions and addition to the existing body of knowledge.
3. Facilitating the application of knowledge relevant to the development of men

The information on the blog is in the form of articles or contributions posted by the editorial board, edited write-ups presented by contributors, and invited contributions from experts in various fields etc. All

these are to ensure that the modern Christian man is equipped adequately to accomplish all the good works in all his fields of endeavour.

The blog is primarily divided into three pages, Ministry, Marriage, Money and the Man to reflect the man and the three fields of his life. Other supporting pages include My Story which carries true-life stories. These pages are loaded with information to enrich the Christian man to live the balanced and fulfilled life of an Extraordinary Gentleman.

Address: cxgentlemen.wordpress.com

the Extraordinary Gentleman

Man and the Three Fields of His Life

Who is a gentleman? Who is a Perfect Gentleman? Who is an Extraordinary Gentleman?

This book employs the concept of the value system to present biblical knowledge and insights into the topic of manhood. The book, among other things, discusses;

- The differences between the growth stages of an ordinary man and an extraordinary Gentleman
- The categories of men and their characteristics
- The three functional fields of a man's life

This book is perfect for;

- Men who want to live a more balanced and fulfilling life
- Women who want to understand men and identify the best
- Parents who want to raise extraordinary sons

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Selorm Agbleze (PhD) is a maturing Christian, academic and poet. He is the author of Conference of Extraordinary Gentlemen, a blog dedicated to supplying Christian men with relevant knowledge and insights to live a balanced and excellent life. He believes that men, especially Christian men, have not lived to the mandate assigned to them by God. It is his passion to see men transformed by the supply of knowledge and the word of God into the fullness of an Extraordinary Gentleman.

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