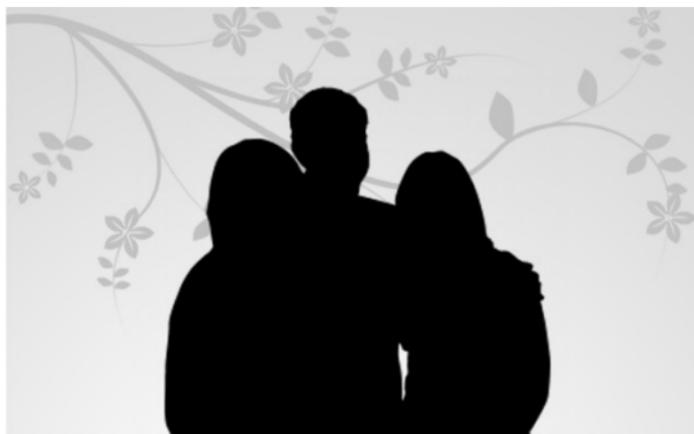




PRINCIPLES FOR TEENAGERS

Maxwell E. Ogaga



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Bible Translations used-

BBE- Bible in Basic English

MSG – The Message Translation

RSV – Revised Standard Version

NLT- New Living Translation

NIV- New International Version

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INTRODUCTION

As we entered the Year 2010 God began to speak to us corporately in our church fellowship about the need to focus on teenagers and the youths. Personally, God had started instructing me to hold specialized seminars for teenagers to prepare them for Destiny fulfillment.

This work is a result of the various seminars held for the empowerment of teenagers; I believe this work will birth teenagers with great destinies that will affect and influence society positively

Make it happen in your generation.

Maxwell E. Ogaga

Nigeria

Chapter One

Teenage Psychology Who is a teenager?

The trouser is sagged, the hair style is wild. The mouth is busy with the chewing gum. There is also another whose sight are keenly set on the future. Not everyone who is young is a teenager. Teenagehood refers to numerical definition and this is between ages 13 and 19. All teenagers also fit in the premise of adolescents. This is the stage of development before maturity. A lot of changes occurs in the body at this stage. There are also emotional and physiological changes. At this age, the average teenage always has mood swings.

This population is huge in terms of population and there is always the feeling of invisibility during this age. Teenagers wrongly assume they are always right and that

no bad thing can happen to them! This is the age group that understands the latest trend in the music, fashion and internet technology industry. At this age, the average teenager spends more time with peers than with parents and other relatives. It is at this stage in life that habits are formed. Most young people who make it through this stage successfully end up becoming successful adults. Teenagehood is six tough years that usually dictates how the rest of the years would be.

The temptation to indulge in vices like thuggery, drug abuse, premarital sex and several other vices happens at this stage. A successful teenage years is a recipe for a fantastic adult life. Guardians and parents understand this and it explains why they are relentless in ensuring they always are in touch with happenings in the life of a teenager.

The 21st Century Teenager.

Does this describe you?

A person who can't remember what the Father said but never forgets a phone number. A youngster who receives her allowance on Monday, spends it on Tuesday, and borrows more from her best friend on Wednesday. A geek that can operate the latest computer without a

lesson but cannot make a bed. A student who spends 12 minutes studying history and 3 hours watching African Magic or Super Sports. A person who loves two kinds of fine music--loud and very loud! An enthusiast that has the energy to talk for hours but is usually too tired to dry the dishes. A teenager that loves his guys/girls but tolerates their siblings. A boy who can sleep till noon on any Saturday when he suspects clothes/house is dirty. An original thinker who is positive that her mother was never a teenager! Someone who can hear a song by Tuface played three blocks away but not his mother calling from the next room. A person who is always late for church but always on time to watch football matches. Someone who can spend hours online chatting but gets a screen headache from 15 minutes of writing a paper on the computer! Is this you?

Ask any teen what is bothering them, and you'll get a range of responses: problems with friends, not getting along with parents and family, being stressed out about money and their future--not to mention teenagers who face pregnancy, addiction, abusive relationships, and depression. Circumstances such as these affect teenagers on a daily basis and have a lasting impact on development.

You are uniquely designed by God.

“I thank you, High God — you're breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration — what a creation! You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; you know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something. Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth; all the stages of my life were spread out before you, The days of my life all prepared before I'd even lived one day. Your thoughts — how rare, how beautiful! God, I'll never comprehend them!” Psalm 139:14-17 (MSG)

God's word is settled forever. Even if you cannot trust your best friend you can trust the word of God. You were fearfully and wonderfully made. God is a grand designer and He made you exactly the way you are right now and one of the things teenagers have to learn and accept is that we cannot all be slim like Agbani Darego (The former Miss World). I learnt of a teenager who almost starved herself to death because she wanted to

slim down. Brazilian model, 13-year-old Ana Carolina Reston died in 2006 from complications due to anorexia. Anorexia refers to excessive weight loss following huge food restriction and obsession with thin figure. Like your body the way God has made you, do not attempt to be like your friends, your body was made to fit your purpose. I remember when I was in secondary school - people used to laugh at my head. Now that I am grown up I wonder what was actually wrong with it then; your peers would always tease you about something being wrong with you but do not forget that the one who is teasing you is not a perfect person either. Our focus is to know and understand that God has specially designed your body, temperament and personality to be just the way you are. Accept yourself as the image and likeness of God - that is what gives you value.

Designed and Planned for

God did not just create you alone to be here doing nothing, floating and making all decisions by yourself. God has a plan for you and that was why He created you in the first place. This plan is called your PURPOSE.

We can simple say PURPOSE is the REASON why God created you.

For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29: 11 RSV)

Before you were born and given a name by your parents, God had already planned your life; you have to discover the plans and purpose of God for you. Below are key steps to discovering God's plan and purpose for your life.

1. Prayer

I strongly believe that no one can tell you your purpose more than the one that created you. It is the manufacturer that can best describe the product. God still answers prayers; He wants you to ask Him. If you ask you would receive.

Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things which you have not known. (Jeremiah 33: 3 RSV)

'Call to me and I will answer you. I'll tell you marvelous and wondrous things that you could never figure out on your own.' Jeremiah 33:3 (MSG)

If you would dare to pray, God will answer and show you great things about your life. See what Manoah, Samson's mother asked the Angel. That is the same question you should ask the Lord in prayers

“Manoah said, "Now when your words come to pass, what shall be the boy's mode of life and his vocation?"
Judges 13:12 (NASU)

2. Look Inward

If you are born again the Holy Spirit is within you and He is there as your guide. When you go to a game reserve where there are a lot of wild animals, you would need a guide to help you. that is exactly how life is there are a lot of wild friends, parties, associations and information that look friendly but they will devour and distract you, the Holy Spirit is within, the “still, small” voice that will let you know your purpose. When I was still in my early teenage years and much younger my Dad asked me one day in the village what I would like to be when I grow up, I replied 'I want to be like Apostle Paul’, he laughed and said I would be a banker, then he wanted me to read Banking and Finance. Today several years later, I am a preacher, travelling and writing. Within you is the Holy Spirit your greatest teacher. Listen to the voice within.

3. Abilities/Talents are pointers.

When God created you, He placed certain abilities and gifts within you, which are pointers to your purpose, if you pay attention to the things that you love and can do naturally without stress or someone compelling you, they can be indicators to your God-given purpose.

4. Ask Pastors and Mentors

Pastors, mentors and parents at times can direct you to your purpose, because of years of observation they might have been able to identify your gifting and abilities. But a word of caution here, do not rule your life on prophecies you must have to confirm with the Holy Spirit within you. I know of teenagers who have dropped out of school because their pastors said they were called. God is not against education, in fact the more educated you are the better God can work with you, that is basically the difference between Apostle Peter and Paul, both were Apostles but the level of education was different and their impact was also very different. Some parents make their children read courses that they (the parents) desire, not what the child is fitted for this is common with doctors, engineers and lawyers. It is important that the child study what he/she has been

designed for by God. Parents should also pray and ask God on how to raise their children to fulfill their God given destiny.

WISDOM QUOTES

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

? Ralph Waldo Emerson

All successful people men and women are big dreamers. They imagine what their future could be, ideal in every respect, and then they work every day toward their distant vision, that goal or purpose.

Brian Tracy

I believe that God has put gifts and talents and ability on the inside of every one of us. When you develop that and you believe in yourself and you believe that you're a person of influence and a person of purpose, I believe you can rise up out of any situation.

Joel Osteen

Chapter Two

T- Time Management

The teenage years is the season in your life where you think you have all the time in the world to play, party, watch movies and premiership football, put on Arsenal, Manchester United, Chelsea and/or Liverpool jerseys and move around town with your trousers below the waistline and your boxers showing. This approach to life as a teenager would definitely lead you the wrong way. One of Greek's greatest philosopher, Socrates said “it is not living that matters, but living rightly”. Always ask yourself what end living the life described above would achieve.

From scriptures, we are told to redeem the time. This means being time conscious and knowing how to buy back time so you can establish your future and fulfill God's given plan for your life. We all are given 24 hours

daily; both old and young people, rich and poor folks have 24 hours. What sets us apart from one another is how that time is used.

“Making good use of the time, because the days are evil”.
Ephesians 5: 16 (BBE)

“Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times! Don't live carelessly, unthinkingly. Make sure you understand what the Master wants. Don't drink too much wine. That cheapens your life. Drink the Spirit of God, huge draughts of him” (Ephesians 5:16-18 MSG)

Evil days determine that, we make good use of our time, if we do not make good use of our time we would be caught up in them. If you do not use your time properly you would have people who would take that time of yours and use it to introduce you many evils things like smoking, sexual vices etc. That is careless living. Have you noticed that it is easier to learn a vice than a virtue! Both are time related; and while one points at judicious time use, the other does not.

Be wise in your behaviour to those who are outside, making good use of the time. Colossians 4: 5 (BBE).

I can tell your wisdom by the use of your time. Your behaviour will tell me what or who you have been investing or spending your time with. God gave everybody 1440 minutes daily and a fresh start when they were born what they did with the time would determine how their future and end would be. What are you doing with yours?

How to manage your time

There is a chapter dedicated to goal setting, I will deal with the basic dynamics of goal setting in that chapter. But the basic way to control and manage your time is to write out the list of all the activities you want to carry out in the day, arrange them in a scale of preference (order of importance), place a time limit against each task. Then always carry this piece of paper with you to guide you throughout the day. Another alternative is to have it on the notepad of your phone since we all carry our phones around. This is a basic success habit that even some adults are trying to learn now; it would be to your advantage if you can start it as a teenager.

What you do with your time will determine how far your life will go. If you invest your time positively you will have a great future and would be able to fulfill your God

given destiny, if you spend your time you may not be able to actualize the reason you were created. How do you know if you are spending time or investing time? Whatever you do with your time that adds value to your spiritual, physically, materially, financially, socially or any other area of your life is INVESTMENT, on the contrary,, any activity you are engaged in that will take away from you in the areas listed above is SPENDING. Now the line of wisdom here is what may be investment at certain seasons in your life would be spending (lost) at other seasons. For instance, it is good once in a while you take out time with your friends either to watch or play football, or watch films that will add to your ability to interact socially, but if you do this during exams or everyday when your purpose is not to be a professional footballer, even professional footballers do not play every day, you are wasting (spending) your time.

“Choose your friends with caution; plan your future with purpose, and frame your life with faith”.

Thomas S. Monson

“If you hang out with chickens, you're going to cluck and if you hang out with eagles, you're going to fly.” ~ Steve Maraboli,

Let your time contribute to your future. – Maxwell E.

Ogaga

Steps in managing your time

1. Make a list of all the things that you need to get done in a given time period (day, week, month, etc.)
2. Realistically approximate the amount of time each task will take to complete.
3. Factor in easily overlooked tasks, such as transportation time and preparation.
4. Eliminate any non-essential items. (These are things that are not very important to you).
5. Prioritise the tasks in order of importance and urgency. (Which should you do first?)
6. Set about accomplishing these tasks as soon as possible; avoiding procrastination.

Tips:

Don't feel bad saying "no" to requests for your time that will just add extra stress to your life. Saying "No" is a skill you need to learn. Ensure that when you are turning down a request, you do so assertively and not aggressively.

Schedule time for people, including yourself. Create some personal time by waking up half an hour earlier or going to bed half an hour later than usual; Learn to say no to non-essential demands on your time.

Managing your time Academically

1. Buy a calendar with large squares for writing extensive notes about your daily obligations, including your class schedules. Keep a small organizer or notepad with you to write down items to add to your calendar at home.
2. Read all class syllabuses thoroughly at the start of the term. Mark down the dates when assignments are due and exams are held for each course/subject on your calendar.
3. Determine which courses/subjects require a large amount of reading. Keep novels or other textbooks with you to read on breaks between classes.
4. Make a list of any problem-solving assignments (test, examinations, term paper or home-work) you'll be doing and map out a study schedule on your calendar so you won't be caught off guard when work is due.
5. Find out about and mark on your calendar all social and academic club events or sporting and school events you will be required to attend.
6. Take into account long weekends and holidays and

mark them on your calendar. Decide which projects or assignments you can work on at home and on vacation.

7. Create time for exercise during your week, as a way to relieve stress.

WISDOM QUOTES

“Time = life; therefore, waste your time and waste of your life, or master your time and master your life.” Alan Lakein

“Time is really the only capital that any human being has, and the only thing he can't afford to lose” .Thomas Edison

“A man who dares to waste one hour of life has not discovered the value of life”.
Charles Darwin

Chapter Three

E- Expectations Explained

The Bible declares that 'the expectation of the righteous will not be cut short.' See Proverbs 23:18. What are you expecting in life? Your expectations are your goals, dreams and visions. The teenage period is the right time to learn how to set goals. You should have three basic areas you need to set goals:

Spiritual Goals: How you will grow your relationship with God and serve with your gifts in church or fellowship.

Financial Goals: How you would save and invest from your pocket money, a word of caution ? any form of gambling is not an investment, a lot of teenagers especially males are involved in gambling during football matches. They gamble on who scores first, which side

would win and what the final scores will be etc.

Academic/Intellectual Goal: How do you want to graduate, what will be your score next term or next semester? Which book will you complete reading?

Others may include career, financial, relationship, family, home, friends, personal development, health, appearance, possessions, fun and recreation, travel, self esteem and service/community.

*And Jesus was increasing in wisdom and in years, and in grace before God and men -
Luke 2:52 BBE*

“It is not enough to take steps which may someday lead to a goal; each step must be itself a goal and a step likewise”. - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Goal Setting Basics

Traditional goal setting wisdom has taught us that a good goal should have the following qualities.

- a) **Written:** Please never write the goals in your mind. Rather write them on a sheet of paper and paste them on the wall of your room or behind a note

you always carry and a conspicuous place on your phone. The Bible says 'Write the Vision" Habakkuk 2:2 and 'What thou seesth write".

- b) **Challenging:** Whatever goal you are going to set, let it be the goal that has the ability to wake you up to get going when no one is there, do not set cheap and little goals. But a word of wisdom here; start small and grow big. A person who does not like reading before cannot say he wants to finish reading a book in one day. It would be wise to start with a chapter.
- c) **Believable or Realistic:** Let the goal be something you can achieve and be realistic in setting goals, do not set abstract or unreal goals.
- d) **Specific:** Write things specifically; do not say for instance, I want to be more spiritual, that is not a goal. You can say, "I want to pray more, so I would pray ten minutes every day", that is better and you can track or monitor your progress.
- e) **Measureable:** From the example I gave above, let the goal be something you can measure, a chapter a day, ten minutes for reading, let all your goals be

measurable. So it is easy to record when you start and finish.

- f) **Have a specific deadline:** Without a deadline it is no goal, it is a wish. Whatever goals you want to accomplish when do you hope to get through with it today, tomorrow or next tomorrow. Have a deadline, the final day you would celebrate the victory of that accomplished goal. For instance when I had the idea of this book I set a deadline of when I want to finish writing and publishing even before I even started.

You can also have short term, medium term and long term goals. A short term goal can be from one day goal to what you what to accomplish in three months, medium term can be what you want to achieve from three months to a year, long term can be from one year above. Wisdom demands that your short term goal should lead to your medium term goal and then both should contribute to the overall achievement of the long term goal which should be in line with your God given purpose.

WISDOM QUOTES

In life, as in football, you won't go far unless you know where the goalposts are.

Arnold H. Glasgow

A goal is a dream with a deadline.

Napoleon Hill

In everything the ends well defined are the secret of durable success.

Victor Cousins

Most "impossible" goals can be met simply by breaking them down into bite size chunks, writing them down, believing them, and then going full speed ahead as if they were routine.

Don Lancaster

Chapter Four

E- Ego; Deal with it

The teenage years is when young people are growing to become adults and one of the hallmarks of this period is the human ego. In Christianity, we would refer to as pride or stubbornness. At this stage, listening advice is very difficult, there are lot of issues you would be handling, but one of the things you must get a hold of is pride. To be able to fulfill your destiny you need to walk with humility of heart and receive wisdom and advice from parents, elders, pastors and mentors.

If you do not deal with pride in your life, it would be difficult to access the help of God to be able to fulfill your destiny (James 4:6). One of the most common symptoms of pride is refusing to heed counsel and wanting to have your way in everything, if you go this way, you would not be very successful in life. This period

is well described by King Solomon.

Verse 11 There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers.

Verse 12 There are those who are pure in their own eyes but are not cleansed of their filth.

Verse 13 There are those--how lofty are their eyes, how high their eyelids lift!

Verse 14 There are those whose teeth are swords, whose teeth are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among men. (Proverbs 30:11-14 RSV)

Do not be counted among this generation. Honouring your parents is key to being free from the spirit of pride, even Jesus the son of God was subject to his earthly parents

“Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart”.
Luke 2:51 KJV

The effective way to be delivered from pride is subjecting (been obedient) to those in authority, whether at the

home, school, church and government. Refusal to submit to instituted and Godly authority is a sign of pride and that must be quickly dealt with.

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God”. (Romans 13:1 RSV)

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for any honest work (Romans 13:1 RSV)

Wisdom from the Wisest Man that Lived

Solomon was the wisest man that lived. Except Jesus Christ no one has been able to equal his wisdom and that was a promise made to him by God, let us see the several proverbs he wrote and get some wisdom tips.

“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate”. Proverbs 8:13

“When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom.” Proverbs 11:2

“By pride comes nothing but strife, But with

the well-advised is wisdom.” Proverbs 13:10

A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you're looking down, you can't see something that's above you” – C.S Lewis

Chapter Five

“No” is a Good Language

The teenager years are the years you would be faced with a lot of options and opportunity to say, “yes” to a lot of things. But this is also the same time you should learn to say “No” and also know that “No” is not a bad language but a good one.

A lot of teenagers in the scriptures and in life who made it excellently to the top said “No” to certain things that would have hindered them from fulfilling their God given destiny. Imagine people like Daniel and the three Hebrew boys, they said no to the kings' food, and also when they were told to stop praying to God, Daniel said “No” and continued to pray to God as his custom was. When they were told to bow to the Golden image their response was “No”. (Daniel 3)

This was not the case of Samson who said “yes” to everything, even to Delilah who later made him lose his vision, power and therefore could not fully fulfill his God given destiny. There are a lot of things that will attempt to rob you of your God given potentials, not only girls but also boys, it would be wrong to be in a relationship in your teenage years. It would take all your time and distract you from your studies. Teenage years is a time to say “No” to relationship with the opposite sex. You have to say no to sex, alcohol, drugs, laziness and excessive sleep. In return, you then say yes to hard work, diligence and focus.

Lots of teenagers see drinking as a sign of adulthood and even teenage girls now are involved in smoking and drinking, you need to learn to say emphatic “No” to alcohol. The sign of adulthood is maturity and taking responsibility for the fulfillment of your God given destiny. I like this quote “Drinking can trap a young person in a vicious spiral of artificial highs and ever lows”. The author is unknown.

Some teenagers in the guise of avoiding stress and dealing with issues at home or at school tend to take alcohol or smoke. Even “Christian” teenagers indulge in this. An article published in the New York State Journal

of Medicine says “When drugs (including alcohol) become the means of easing difficult situations-academic, social, or interpersonal- the necessity of learning healthy coping skills is removed. Usually the effects are not felt until adulthood, when establishing close personal relationships that often prove difficult, leaving the individual emotionally isolated”. A lot of adult today cannot live or lead good and great lives because they were addicted to alcohol or smoking; a dangerous habit they picked up during their teenage years probably.

“Give beer to those who are perishing..” Proverbs 31:6

The Bible says, “Where there is no vision the people perish”, that simply means beer is for visionless people, a teenager with vision would not be found around the beer parlour or drinking or smoking in secret, learn to say “No” to alcohol.

In this age where a lot of teenagers are exposed to sex and sexual materials you must learn to say “No” to such books and magazines, a lot of young peoples' phones have all kind of images. We must have the courage to say “No”. In the United States according to research reading “romance novels” has become an addictive habit for

some 20 million people. Romance novels especially for girls do not paint the actual picture of marriage according to God's plan. There are fine Christian novels in the bookshop you can have access to if you love to read novels. But I would advise you read books that will enhance your critical thinking ability. You would also find a lot of information in Biographies and Autobiographies of the people you will like to be like. If you read sexually explicit materials, it will stir that desire in you that would likely lead to fornication and adultery when you are later married.

“Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts”. (2 Tim 2:22 NLT)

Some of us have to say “No” to too much television viewing, surveys indicates that by age 18, the average American youth will have watched some 15,000 hours of Television. That is about 625 days of television watching. Some young people cannot resist the temptation of staying glued to African Magic or other film or sports station all through the day at the expense of their mental development. Ben Carson, one of the world's best neurosurgeons had to give up his television watching habit to be able to make excellent grades in school and then rose to become one of the best surgeons

in the world.

Excessive Television watching habits may lead to one or all of the following ?

1. Low academic performance;
2. Poor reading habit since you do not read often and stimulate your brain;
3. Laziness;
4. Exposure to indecent scenes and foul language

Deliver yourself from slavery, do not be a slave to television viewing, soap opera and premiership/championship matches. You have to make sure you apply the principles of time management which we have dealt with in previous chapter. See what Paul said in I Corinthian 6: 12 from two different translations of the Bible.

"Everything is permissible for me"-but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"-but I will not be mastered by anything". NIV

“But some of these things aren't good for me. Even if I am allowed to do them, I'll refuse to if I think they might get such a grip on me that I can't easily stop when I want to”. TLB

Do not be a slave of anything that will stop you from fulfilling your highest dreams, John Mason has a book titled “Let go of whatever makes you stop”. Learn to say “No” is a good language to learn.

Chapter Six

A-Academic Excellence is the Goal

During your teenage years, one of the most important goals you should have is excelling academically. This is your learning years, the years you have to learn so you can earn properly. You cannot remove the place of education in destiny fulfillment; the focus of this age is your education. Do not toy with your education at this stage, do not skip classes, do not idle away your time and do not be so spiritual that you drop out of school.

This period in the life of the teenager is when they are so tempted to make quick money that at the end of the day; they find it difficult to stay in school. This time brings with it many temptations and trials one of the key characters you have to develop in this period of your life is FOCUS. The ability to stay focused on your academics and finish well, do not exchange your school and lesson

period for either watching or playing football.

Apart from academic development in school, you should use this period to learn how to read good books and develop good reading habit, borrow books from those ahead of you schedule a reading time table and read. There is no substitute for developing great reading habit at this stage of your life. I read an interesting quote a long time ago, it says “pity a man who has a favourite food and not a favourite author”. If I ask you what your favourite food is, some of you would quickly mention a local, international or continental delicacy. But if I ask you who your favourite authors are? It might be difficult for you to state one. One of my favourite authors is John C. Maxwell I love reading all his works; he challenges me to be the best that I can be with my abilities and potentials.

As a teenager set goals, on what you want to read, and set academic goals.

Start your own library with your pocket money, take out some money and buy books. I started my personal library as a teenager and today I have loads of books, when you enter my apartment the first thing that welcomes you is my book shelf. I rather spend more

money on books than clothes; because the information contained in the books can enable me buy up the boutique selling the clothes tomorrow, because information (knowledge) is power.

When we say academic excellence in the context of this book, it is not just in the four walls of the classroom, I am talking about holistic (all round) development, read motivational, spiritual and financial books. Daniel understood by books that is what the scriptures says (Daniel 9:2), learn to read so your aptitude can be developed but above all do not be so full of potentials and abilities that you run out of school. Like we said, during your teenage years, the goal is academic excellence (your education), choose the right course and graduate, be a symbol of academic excellence in your school. There is no subject so difficult that you cannot make it, you have the spirit of God in you.

WISDOM QUOTES

“When I get a little money, I buy books. If any is left, I buy food and clothes.” — Erasmus

“I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book.” ? Groucho Marx

“It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it.”
? Oscar Wilde

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.” ?
Dr. Seuss.

Chapter Seven

G - God Connection

When a plug is not properly connected to an electric circuit, it does not produce power and it cannot function properly, that is the same thing with a teenager who is not properly connected to God. God is your source, He created you and if you are not properly connected to Him, then you cannot function and you cannot fulfill your God given potential on the earth.

The teenage years is the time of our life when we would love to try a lot of things including running away from fellowship (church) and even if we go we want to because it is our parents church, or we want to hang out with the girls (or boys), or just make fun of the pastor and the 'old-school" elders, I remember even as a teenager, how I used to laugh at Sunday school teachers, then I did not know that I could have used that time to

grow in my knowledge of God.

Use this period of your life to grow in fellowship with God, use it to serve God in any department in your church in line with your passion, invest your teenage years in God and you would not regret it, God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

You must ensure that sin does not block your connection cable (spirit) with God, make sure you live a sin free life and do not let sin have dominion over you.

Yes as a teenager you can get close to God, God is not far from you “so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually find him. He doesn't play hide-and-seek with us. He's not remote; he's near.” Acts 17:27 (MSG)

Just talk to God He is near you, He will hear and answer you, He is not far from you, teenagers in the Bible like David developed a close relationship with God, that God was proud of them and used them to impact their world positively. Draw near to God and He would draw near to you. Regardless of the sin that you have committed, God is willingly and able to forgive you. Confess your

sins to Him, ask for his mercy and forgiveness and Jesus would wash ALL your sins away, He would remember them no more, you will be a BRAND NEW CREATURE, new in ALL things, why not pray that prayer now?

How do you draw near to God? Through His word and prayers, I remember as a child the first gift I got from my father was a copy of the Bible, I cherished my Good News Bible. Sometimes ago, I was in Ghana and I walked into a bookshop, then my son was less than a year, But I bought a copy of Ghanaian Good News Bible for him, right now as at the time of publishing the second edition he has started reading it. Find God through his Word. Ten minutes a day is a good start. Never leave your house without reading a passage in the Bible and praying. The books of Psalms, Proverbs, John and Timothy are good books to start with, and then I recommend Daniel.

For you answer our prayers. All of us must come to you. Though we are overwhelmed by our sins, you forgive them all.

What joy for those you choose to bring near, those who live in your holy courts. What festivities await us inside

your holy Temple.

You faithfully answer our prayers with awesome deeds,
O God our saviour. You are the hope of everyone on
earth, even those who sail on distant seas

Ps 65:2-5 NLT

Chapter Eight

E-Excuses Kill Potentials

You are not too small to make something positive out of your life, do not strangle your dreams with thoughts that you are too small. In life, numerous examples abound of young people who have made so much difference even in the scripture, David, Daniel et cetera. Josiah was eight years old when he started to rule a nation.

Your background is not an excuse, the level of education you have is not an excuse, and excuses will kill your God given potentials. A man was once asked why he was successful. He answered it was because “I never gave nor took an excuse”. A lot of people will tell you why you cannot, but you have to tell them why you can because NOTHING is impossible. The scripture says 'All things are possible to him that believes". While I was younger, a teenage Benin girl then popularly called “child of God”

launched her musical album in her early teens. It is a rare feat because most young people her age are still busy

Everything is possible for him who believes." Mark 9:23 (NIV)

God has designed and invested in treasures you, we have this treasure in earthen vessels. 2 Corinthians 4:7. There are abilities, skills, talents and potentials on your inside, do not give excuses all through your life and go to the grave with all that God has placed inside of you. Teenagers who make up their mind to be different and stand out do not give excuses. Start writing that book today, write that poem today, go and sing that song today. Time will not wait for you, you will not be a teenager all the days of your life, what will you make of your teenage years.

Excuses will make you procrastinate and postpone what you can do today till tomorrow, and like we usually say in School, "tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow" and it never comes.

It wasn't easy being a girl in the 1400s, but Joan of Arc didn't let that stop her from becoming a national heroine in France. Joan was a peasant girl who led the [French](#)

army to several important victories during the Hundred Years' War after claiming to have visions from God. She was later captured by the English and executed for heresy. This happened all before the age of 20!

Deal with every excuse that is limiting you right now, take a sheet of paper, write your goals and then write the excuses stopping you from achieving them, take a critical look at it, then think a way through it.

No matter how old you are now. You are never too young for success or going after what God has created you to become. Here's a short list of people who accomplished great things at different ages

- 1) Helen Keller, at the age of 19 months, became deaf and blind. But that didn't stop her. She was the first deaf and blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree.
- 2) Mozart was already competent on keyboard and violin; he composed from the age of 5.
- 3) Shirley Temple was 6 when she became a movie star on "Bright Eyes."
- 4) Anne Frank was 12 when she wrote the diary of Anne Frank.
- 5) Magnus Carlsen became a chess Grandmaster at the

age of 13.

- 6) Nadia Comaneci was a gymnast from Romania that scored seven perfect 10.0 and won three gold medals at the Olympics at age 14.
- 7) Pele, a soccer superstar, was 17 years old when he won the world cup in 1958 with Brazil.

Chapter Nine

R - Review Peer Influence

Who is influencing you? Why are they influencing you? Where is their influence in life going to take you? These are three fundamental questions you must ask yourself. There is no doubt that as a teenager, you are going to experience some of the greatest peer pressure in your life during this time. But, if you cannot handle this season, then when you are an adult, you will also not be able to handle the peer pressure that comes your way.

You can have negative peer pressure and positive peer pressure, but most times we tend towards the negative peer pressure more than the positive. There would be a lot of pressure at this stage of your life to skip school or church, disobey your parents, carry funny and crazy haircuts, steal, smoke, drink, have pre-marital sex, experiment with all kinds of things. These pressures will

come; you have to be very decisive at this stage of your life to ask yourself, what do I really want out of my life? Where do I want to end my life? If I follow this path will I get to the destination of my dream?

If you follow someone whose future is not certain obviously you will also end up that way. Review your peer influence, review your friends and the group that you listen to. Whoever has your ears would have your head!

Wisdom Keys

Do not be afraid of your friends

Some teenagers go out with young people they cannot challenge or talk to, in your midst of friends have a voice and let them be able to respect your decision. When you say “No”, let it be clear that you mean “No” and simply walk away. If when you are around your friend you discover they are doing something bad but you are afraid to say “No”, then you are in a wrong group.

Choose your friends wisely

When making choice of who should be your friend, be very careful, find out about them, their background and behaviour first, because sometimes it is very difficult to

pull out of friendships when you are already too deep.

“Become wise by walking with the wise; hang out with fools and watch your life fall to pieces”. Proverbs 13:20 (MSG)

Talk with parents and adult mentors

Most teenagers run into troubles when they make decisions and they do not want to talk to adults, parents or mentors about it. They forget that in the multitude of counsel there is safety. One of the most useful keys I have operated till date is Adult-Youth partnership, as a teenager, have someone you can trust who is older than you and leverage on their wisdom and experience. When I entered university as a teenager I went to the house of Pastor Tony Atie in 2000 to be my mentor and he has been of great help, it has been over a decade of mentorship before he passed on in May 2014.

Do not hide your Christian identity

Let all your friends know you are a Christian and you will keep to the words of Jesus, there are some things they would never suggest to you. Be a practicing believer, like Daniel everyone around knew it was only in the area of his God that you can make him break the law, because he prayed always to God. Be consistent in your Christianity

and be a practicing Christian. Practice what you hear.

“Practice these things; devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress”. 1 Timothy 4:15 ESV

Leave the environment

If you observe a particular time, maybe when teachers are not around that pressure normally comes in school then head to the library, do not spend much time in any environment that will breed peer pressure. It is better you run for your life than give in to what would destroy your life. Many teenagers are no longer virgins because of peer pressure, do not be ashamed to be a virgin, you are a child of God. Be bold and courageous as a lion. Also recognise that there is need to be careful on social networks. Never get on platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, 2go et cetera without bearing in mind that what you do there is an extension of your life. Whatever you cannot do offline, do not do it online!

“..Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts”. 2 Tim 2:22 NLT

Ask God for help

Pray to God and ask Him for help, He is ever willing to help you.

“But keep yourself from those desires of the flesh which are strong when the body is young, and go after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those whose prayers go up to the Lord from a clean heart”.

2 Timothy 2:22 (BBE)

Glossary of Terms

Soap opera – Television or radio drama serial dealing typically with daily events in the lives of the same group of characters

Neurosurgeon - A physician who specializes in surgery on the brain and other parts of the nervous system

Interpersonal - Relating to relationships or communication between people

Procrastination - The action of delaying or postponing something.

Obligations - An act or course of action to which a person is morally or legally bound; a duty or commitment.

Holistic - Characterized by the belief that the parts of something are intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole

Aptitude - A natural ability to do something.

Circuit ? A roughly circular line, route, or movement that starts and finishes at the same place.

Are you a teenager?

Would you like someone to talk to, pray for you or counsel with you?

Or are you interested in developing your potential or Leadership Skills?

Then reach us today!

“Be the change you want to see”

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About the Author:

Maxwell E. Ogaga has been effectively mentoring, teaching and leading young people for over a decade. He runs two non-profit initiative aimed at mentoring and building young people ? “Spirit of Reformation Initiative- SORI” and “Dare 2 Dream Youth Initiative- D2DYI”.

He was named one of the 60 young change makers in Nigeria by Youngstars Foundation, Abuja and Federal Ministry of Youth in the Youth Works National project sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Youths, Nigeria.

In 2009, he was the only Nigerian delegate to attend and represent Nigeria at the World Bank Global Youth Anticorruption Summit in Brussels, Belgium and also in Nairobi, Kenya in 2010.

In 2011 he was named the United Religion Initiative Ambassador for Africa, and led a feeding campaign “Iplate project” feeding Somalia refugees in Uganda in collaboration with URI office in Uganda and the Somalia Embassy in Uganda. This led to a full page profiling and Interview in “Youth Vibes Column in Nigeria's Vanguard Newspaper.

Through the Spirit of Reformation camps several youths have been directly or indirectly imparted, these are yearly youth camps that take place every Easter. His work with young people cut across several nations especially within the African continent.

Maxwell and his wife Mary with their children Charis and Zarah currently reside in Bonny Island, Rivers State where they planted a church - Kingdom Development Christian Centre and also with the church pioneering THE DREAM CENTRE- A youth centre for Leadership and potential development.

The Book

Ask any teenager to tell you what bothers them, and you will get a range of responses: problems with friends, not getting along with parents and family, being stressed out about money and their future--not to mention teens that face pregnancy, addiction, abusive relationships, and depression. Circumstances such as these affect teenagers on a daily basis and have a lasting impact on development. In this easy to read book Maxwell deals with issues weaved around teenage Psychology, relationship with adults, choices and keys to handle them. He addresses all these with the acronym T.E.E.N.A.G.E.R

- T - Time Management.
- E - Expectations Explained.
- E – Ego: Deal with it.
- N - “NO” is a good language.
- A - Academic Excellence is the goal.
- G - God Connection.
- E - Excuses kills potentials.
- R - Review Peer Influence.



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