

The Importance of having a Vision

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Address given at the alumni Retreat and Reunion event at the Federal University of Technology Minna on the 2nd day of November 2019.

Good evening distinguished guests, fellow alumni, ladies and gentlemen. Once again, welcome to Reunion 2019.

My topic of discourse today is **The Importance of having a Vision**

I like to define vision as **a mental picture of the desired future that produces passion in the hearts of everyone involved**. It is the ability to imagine and plan a desired future before you arrive there.

The power of a clear vision cannot be overemphasized. It is one, if not the most important need of any people. In the corporate world today, every forward thinking organization fronts its corporate vision statement. The whole civilization, with its attendant advancement and breath-taking innovations, rest squarely on the power of clear vision. Everything we enjoy or loathe today was once a vision in the heart and mind of the people. The wise King Solomon who lived at about 880BC, said that without vision a person perish.

Vision is the only antidote for extinction. Without vision, an individual or organization, stands the risk of self-destruction.

It is, however, not sufficient to have a vision; clarity is a fundamental element of any vision. A blurred vision is almost as good as no vision. Every vision needs to be clear and unambiguous.

That brings me to say, it is not just enough to see, it is even more important that you see clearly, it's not enough to have vision, your vision needs to be clear and compelling.

Looking back with hindsight at my days as an undergraduate in this very institution, I can say that almost everything I'm doing today, whether a pastor, architect or entrepreneur, was born out of the vision I articulated for my life. Now there are things that emerged in my latter days, but the personal vision that was hatched on the Bosso campus of this great institution is the bedrock upon which every endeavor and achievement I have made has been laid.

I however do recognize that people move at different paces in life. We can't all run at the same pace. Some of us are as fast like cheetah, while some may crawl like a snail. The most important thing is that if we keep moving with a clear vision, we will arrive at our destination.

It is also true that we don't all get to a heightened state of awareness at the same time. Some people are early bloomers while others are late bloomers. The most important things, however, is that we all bloom and we all can bloom.

I'm sure we all have heard the story of Kentucky fried chicken (KFC). It was founded by Col. Harland Sanders in 1952. As at 2015, KFC had 22,621 outlets all over the world, including Nigeria. They record revenues in excess of \$23 billion. The story of KFC, however, didn't start with such a great outlook as it has today. Col. Sanders can be aptly described as a late bloomer. He started out by faking his age at just 16 years, just to get recruited into the army and was discharged the following year. He got a job afterwards at the railway as a laborer and was fired for fighting a co-worker. In 1920, he founded a ferry boat company and later a lamp company that both failed.

Col. Sander's fortune began to look up when he was about 40 years old. That was when he started selling chicken dishes in a service station. Col. Sanders started inching towards success at about the age of 62 when he signed his first franchise for his recipe. He started to become a force to be reckoned with at about 75, but today, though dead, his business is known all over the world and is grossing billions in revenue annually.

Another case in point is a Nigerian musician, the late prince Fatai Olagunju, better known as Fatai Rolling Dollar. Rolling Dollar was reputed to have mentored great musicians like Ebenezer Obey and Orlando Owoh, among others. Rolling Dollar lived in a near poverty state until the last decade of his life, when the remix of his old song titled, "**Won Kere Si Number Wa**" became a national hit.

Some people shy away from alumni conferences like this, because they feel they are underachievers and are not where their colleagues are. I want to state categorically that life is in stages and phases. What a reunion like this achieves, beyond reconnecting with one another, is that it enables us gain courage from the stories of others and push us to craft a clear and compelling vision for ourselves. You need to create that mental picture and couple it with the passion to propel you to the place of great achievement.

American blind and deaf author and political activist, Helen Keller said, "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart."

She further said, "The most pathetic person in this world is someone who has sight, but no vision."

World renowned author of all-time best selling classic, Think and Grow Rich, Napoleon Hill said, "Whatever the mind of a man can conceive and believe, it can achieve."

In an address to Congress on the 25th of May 1961, President John F. Kennedy of the United States of America, declared that America would land someone on the moon and bring him back to earth before the end of the decade. Kennedy's vision was achieved, though posthumously, by the Apollo 11 mission, when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed their Apollo lunar module on the moon on July 20th, 1969 and returned safely to earth on July 24th 1969.

In his famous speech, he said, "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard; because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that is one that we are willing to accept, one we are willing to postpone, and one we intend to win, and win others, too."

At the time president Kennedy made the declaration going to the moon looked like an impossible daydream but his national vision opened up the frontiers of space exploration for many nations of the world today. It has now become fashionable for nations to send rockets and vessels to space and we have thousands of satellites orbiting the earth, enhancing communication, weather forecasting, minerals exploration and so on.

In sad contrast are events of our not too distant past. In the 1970s, in the days of the famed oil boom, a Nigerian leader was quoted to have said Nigeria had so much money and her only problem was knowing what to do with it. This was when a clear vision was needed, however, was lacking and look at where we are today. There was no clear vision.

Nation's like Singapore, South Korea and more have been elevated from being Third World countries to first world economies and Dubai, a desert land in the United Arab Emirates, has been transformed into the world's biggest tourism destination, on the strength of compelling visions.

It is possible that within someone listening to me today lies a business idea, an invention or discovery, or even a book that will revolutionize not only our country Nigeria, but also the world as a whole.

Leadership really begins with a clear vision. Nothing worthy of note has ever been built or achieved without a clear and compelling vision.

We must all begin to, if we haven't already, articulate:

- Personal and family visions
- Organizational and Institutional visions
- Community visions and
- A national vision

The power of a clear vision:

A clear vision will:

1. Help you marshal and manage resources
2. Define your company or association
3. Draw appropriate support and collaborations
4. Enable you to maintain discipline and focus
5. Enable you to attain immortality
6. Exceed the traditional boundaries of achievement

I must at this point, salute the leadership of the founding Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Technology, Minna, Prof Jonathan Osman Ndagi, for articulating a clear vision for this great institution.

This institution started on a little campus at Bosso, Minna but with the power of vision, the large expanse of land on which the permanent site is today was acquired, when it looked as if the University will never grow as large as it is today. A master plan evolved, capturing not only what we see here today, but also possibilities yet to be seen. Today, what was envisioned has become a reality.

The Federal University of Technology, Minna, in her 34th years of existence, has achieved great milestones, born out of the vision of her founding fathers and is still producing some of the finest graduates in the country.

It is now the time that we all - as individual alumnus, the university community and our nation Nigeria - begin to articulate a clear vision for ourselves, this institution and the nation, in order to guarantee our continued relevance in an ever-evolving world. We do need a clear, new vision!

We must begin to envision a better society for generations yet unborn and begin to plan for development that will catapult our society to the 'El Dorado' we desire. We must guard against bequeathing the legacy of a failed nation to the leaders to come.

Distinguished guests, fellow alumni, ladies and gentlemen, we must write a vision and make it clear upon tables, so that he who reads it may run with it. Articulate a clear and compelling vision for your life family, organization and nation and remaining true to it, and success will be assured.

It is never too late.

Thank you for listening.