



# Exhortation

*The Free Filling Station to reFuel your Encouragement Tank*

Equipping. Enriching. Empowering. Encouraging. Energizing . . . Exhorting People to Greatness

August 2006

## An ACUTE Imperative!

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn".

– Alvin Toffler

In today's fast-paced world - call it globalization, demand for higher *productivity*, depleting natural resources, increasing prices for basic human and societal needs, not-so-increasing wages, double income, escalating debt rate, widening gap between the rich and the poor, simultaneous (large-scale) wars, mass immigration, growing demand for *impenetrable security*, and so on and so forth - **the key to growth and survival is focused learning. This is because as the world becomes more and more sophisticated and insecure, only those who are steadily growing in wisdom, understanding and knowledge are bound to survive the increasingly growing complexities. We must consistently upgrade our thinking by reading and learning more about how to make things happen in our lives.**

This is why we exhort you this month to energize your *intentional* pursuit of wisdom, understanding and knowledge, especially in the areas of your life that is lacking growth. If you are married, ensure you are reading books that share proven techniques of how to maintain bliss in your marriage. If you are a parent with the real desire to enhance your parenting skills, knowing fully well that the contrary could result in raising children without the life skills to succeed in these troubled times, then visit self-help sections in bookstores and buy and *read* books that shares proven, applicable parenting techniques. If you want to grow spiritually, consistently dig deeper into the Bible, while pursuing corresponding explanations through numerous sources out there like books, internet sites, seminars, etc.

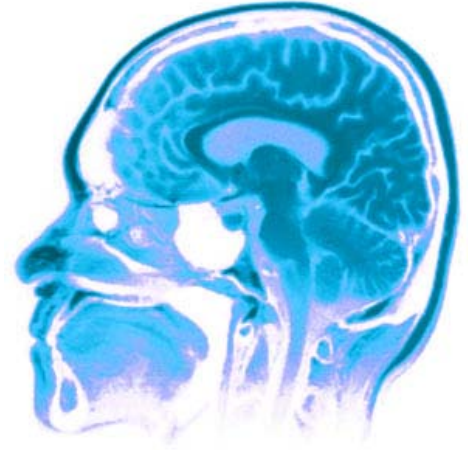


For Financial stress is **more due to the lack of financial planning than it is about insufficient income.** Marital stress and regrettably, **divorce, is more due to the lack of wisdom, understanding and knowledge about the concept of marriage than the statistical claim of incompatibility.** **Lack of career advancement and business growth is more due to the fear of taking risks or venturing into the unknown than our claim of limited opportunities.** Unruly children are results of parents **raising their children without the wisdom, understanding and knowledge necessary to raise awesome children in troubled times rather than today's violent environment.** So my friend, what is it that you need to learn, unlearn or relearn in order to enhance your personality? Is it about dieting in order to control your weight

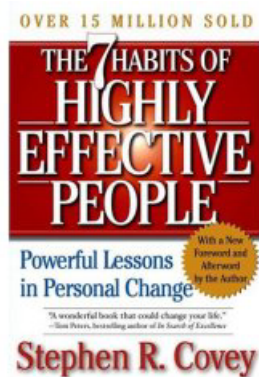
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and avoid high cholesterols, which leads to heart diseases? How are you doing with learning household budgeting in order to avoid financial stress, which is now the top cause of divorce in our societies? How are you doing with learning to see imperfect people like you and me perfectly so your love for yourself and others may steadily increase?

Reading is the act of examining and grasping the meaning of written or printed characters, words, or sentences, while learning is the act, process, or experience of gaining knowledge or skill. **Focused learning, which is An ACUTE Imperative for growth and survival, is the act, process, or experience of gaining specific knowledge or skill relating to a predetermined subject matter.** Focused learning, in effect, is when we purposefully direct our learning ability with a specific goal in mind. For example, one may choose to focus his or her learning efforts towards learning how to be unselfish, or how to discard bad habits and character traits that has accumulated over the years.



**The most important learning we could ever acquire, though, is the ability to listen.** For in so doing, we can better understand the area to focus our learning efforts afterwards. **Listening is the act of attentively gathering information non-judgmentally, and without inwardly preparing a response to the information while it is being transmitted.** A true listener, according to experts, withholds his or her response for a minimum of 4 to 6 seconds in order to allow the information travel past the amygdala, which is the emotional part of our brain, to the neo-cortex, which is the thinking part of our brain. The ability to accept feedback without being defensive, to apologize when we hurt others, and to forget about the past and strive for the future, are strongly recommended learning objectives.



Personally, instead of spending *scarce* time reading The Confessions of a Serial Killer, The Midnight Adulterer, or other horror or love stories, I chose to read The Seven Habits of a Highly Effective Person by Stephen Covey, Thinking for a Change by John C. Maxwell, Love and Respect by Emerson Eggerichs, Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman and Raising Awesome Kids in Troubled Times by Sam Laing. Like Alec Waugh said, **“there is so little time for the discovery of all that we want to know about things that really interest us that we cannot afford to waste it on things that are only of casual concern for us, or in which we are interested because other people have told us we ought to be”.** To better determine where you should focus your learning ability, or even whether you seem to be learning at all, humbly ask your spouse, children, parents, boss, coworkers, friends and other close associates.

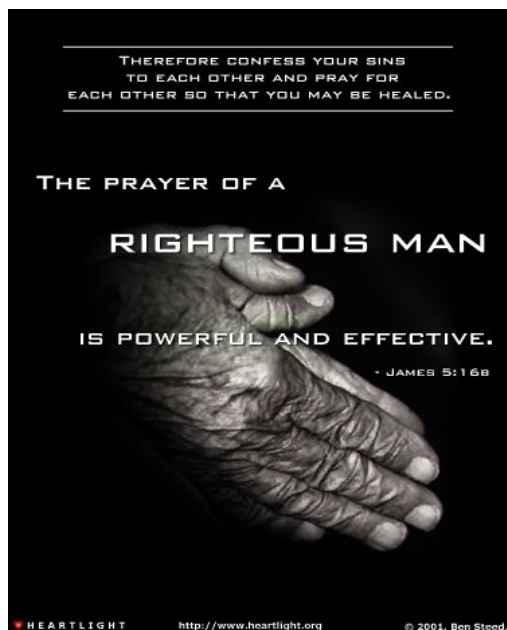
My friend, **focused learning is an ACUTE imperative for our growth and survival!** It is the first thing new born babies do as they 'learn' to breath, feel, feed, recognize faces and voices, and later on walk and talk. It is definitely meant to be a lifelong commitment until our very end. To learn below one's capacity, or to stop learning altogether, is suicidal mentally, spiritually, emotionally, financially, and eventually, physically, because our refusal to learn slowly liquefies and outdates every wisdom, understanding and knowledge that we may have. In fact, our whole life, and often the lives of those whom we cherish, withers away by our refusal to learn, even though learning is one of the major requisites of life that is wholly within our control. In retrospect, **when we stop learning, we stop growing. And when we stop growing, we systematically begin the process of dying, slowly. Therefore, when we stop learning, we start dying.**



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According to the Book of Proverbs, "If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer". Look at it this way: If you are not wise in your finances, you alone will suffer. If you are not wise in your relationships, marriage and parenting, you alone will suffer. If you are not wise in your career and business, you alone will suffer. And if you are not wise in your spirituality, you alone will suffer, both in this world, and in the world to come. Of course, those around you will likely suffer as a result of your refusal to learn, unlearn and relearn, but ultimately you will suffer the most, with the added pain of your victims weighing heavily upon you.

Sven Birkerts, in his book, *The Gutenberg Elegies*, wrote: "To open a book voluntarily is at some level to remark the insufficiency either of one's life or of one's orientation toward it. When we read we not only transplant ourselves to the place of the text, but we modify our natural angle of regard upon all things; we reposition the self in order to see differently. When we enter a novel, no matter what novel, we step into the whole world anew. For the space of our reading, and perhaps beyond, changes our relation to all things". Thomas Szasz also affirmed that "Every act of conscious learning requires the willingness to suffer an injury to one's self-esteem, which is why children, before they are aware of their own self-importance, learn so easily". In other words, we are being prideful when unwilling to read and learn.



Through Prophet Hosea, God lamented ages ago that His people perished for the lack of knowledge. My friend, God still laments today because many have deterred their own personal growth, and that of others around them because of their unwillingness to intentionally practice focused learning – an ACUTE imperative for growth and survival. I chose to, and continue to be honed accordingly. And it is a habit that I pray is adopted by my children and those around me so they may better cope with the escalating challenges of life. In the words of Apostle James, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." And according to Eugene Wilson, "Only the curious will learn and only the resolute overcome the obstacles to learning. The quest quotient has always excited me more than the intelligence quotient."

Finally, my friend, the Book of Proverbs asserts that wisdom is a gift from God, which we must persistently pray for, and consciously and consistently sought after. It further indicated that as our wisdom grows, it blesses our soul; but if unutilized, it slowly fades away. May God grant you wisdom as you start focusing your learning to enhance your personal effectiveness, as well as other areas of your life. Amen.

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Alex Nosa Ihama is a Freelance Writer, Motivational Speaker and a Consultant and Coach in Business, Leadership and Personal Effectiveness who **dispenses encouragement worldwide** through his website, [www.TheExhortation.com](http://www.TheExhortation.com), motivational speeches and articles, and Personal Effectiveness workshops and events. Together with his Running Wife, Stephanie, a Fitness Coach who currently train and motivate marathoners and long distance runners, they founded **The Exhortation World Outreach**.

Alex developed the Personality Dashboard®, which is a tool used to accurately discover and measure personality strengths and opportunities, and provides physical and remote one-on-one coaching sessions to a diverse group of people around the world, in order to enhance their personal effectiveness, marriage, parenting, relationships, career, businesses, finances and spirituality. He also facilitates quarterly Marriage Enrichment Forums, the annual Mighty Men Convention, and other events aimed at EQUIPPING, ENRICHING, EMPOWERING, ENCOURAGING, ENERGIZING and EXHORTING people to GREATNESS.

For more information about Alex and Stephanie, **The Exhortation World Outreach**, or to start receiving your *free* REGULAR dose of ENCOURAGEMENT, as well as BENEFIT from our ENRICHING and ENERGIZING Programs, Resources, Newsletters and EVER-GROWING knowledgebase, REGISTER now by sending an email directly to [alex.ihama@TheExhortation.com](mailto:alex.ihama@TheExhortation.com).