

CHAPTER ONE

THE BIG DIVIDE: MOVEMENT VS STAGNATION

“There are many ways of going forward, but only
One way of standing still.” - Franklin d. Roosevelt

In the introduction we learned that life is best epitomised in and through movement. Survival is inherently dependent on making the right movement at the right time. The dictionary definition of movement reads: “an act of moving” or “a change or development”. Stagnation is “a state of not flowing or moving” and “lack of activity, growth, or development”. It is clear that stagnation is an absence of movement, and perhaps this is stating the obvious, but this contrast is very important to note and acknowledge, as this awareness is critical in how we view, justify, and promote stagnation.

Some of the synonyms for movement are progress, effort, advancement, development, growth, drive, leap, and activity. A few synonyms of stagnation are inactivity, stuck, inertia, immobility, sluggishness, and unproductivity, to name a few. Stagnation and immobility jeopardises our survival in various areas of life.

If a dangerous land animal is chasing you, you can jump into a river for your safety; however, you cannot stay in the river indefinitely as you may expose yourself to the danger of being swept away or overstaying may make you vulnerable to aquatic monsters. Someone once said if you and a few people are in the wild, ensure you have someone whom you can outrun. When the wild animals attack, all you need to do is to keep running (moving) and ensure that you are not last in the fleeing pack.

Movement can take many forms. A child in the womb must continually move in order to exercise, grow, and develop; however, more importantly, the child moves to stay alive and the movement also serves as assurance that the child is still alive. A child in the womb must not be stagnant, so lack of movement is a cause for fear and panic for any pregnant mother.

A car that moves, no matter how slow, eventually gets you to your destination. There is a common saying that “better late than never”; if you keep moving you may arrive late, but you will surely arrive. If you want to never arrive, stay stagnant.

We can see some of the everyday contrasts between movement and stagnation in the following examples and all of us at one point or another face these situations:

◆ EXERCISE AND INACTIVITY

There are people who exercise, and people who wish they could exercise, but for various reasons are not able to, and then there are people who have no interest nor intention to exercise. People who like or even love exercise will always find a reason to be active; they would use every opportunity from everyday activities or chores and incorporate them into some form of workout. On the other hand, those who hate exercise will find all reasons to avoid any form of activity. Some of the contrasting attitudes that are adopted by the two types of people are shown below:

◆ STAIRS OR NOT

At any given opportunity, active people would gladly take the stairs instead of using the escalator or elevator. Every time a person who has this attitude faces a choice between stairs and an easier and more convenient alternative, their answer is always an instinctive: “stairs it is!”

The shunner of exercise will avoid the stairs if there is an easier option. Such a person sees absolutely nothing wrong with waiting a good five to ten minutes for an elevator, and it matters little if the person is going up or downstairs, the attitude remains consistent; it is “stairs: not a chance!”.

◆ CHORES

There are people who avoid chores or errands that involve physical activity; if they have an option to pay someone to do the chores then they would take it. If there are no means to outsource labour for the chores, they burden other family members, such as spouses or children.

Those who love performing chores have an attitude that says any chore or errand is a welcome activity to stretch, stay active, and do something different. They view errands as an opportunity to see new things and to appreciate the joys of being able to move around.

◆ KEEPING FIT

Someone once said, “You cannot inherit a six-pack ab by merely gazing continually at a picture of one.” There are people who like to keep fit and they make time and effort to work on their fitness, and they will train beyond the pain barrier as they put miles on the road, extra weights on the bench, cycle until they run out of sweat, read up and try every new training concept that they come across.

Some of us would go to great lengths to avoid working on our fitness; we would even have innovative and skillful ways to side step (no pun intended) any opportunity to risk moving our fitness even a notch. The most famous words for this group of people are: “Next year I want to start the year properly and kick start it with a killer fitness programme.” Some would even go as far as purchasing a new training gear, complete with colourful and fashionable training shoes. There are those who are brazen in their anti-fitness campaign, they do not even care to feign a desire to work out; instead, their favourite line is: “We are all going to die one day so why bother.” Just because we are going to die someday does not mean we must neglect our bodies, which the Bible calls the Temple of God.

◆ **Boredom and Creativity**

There is a foreign concept (to me at least) called boredom. This is a dullness of heart and mind, which leads to one feeling uninterested in anything, and a perception that life is offering nothing meaningful, let alone exciting.

Boredom begins with inactivity, not just physical inactivity, but more importantly, the inactivity of the mind. An idle mind is a mind in stagnation and that is why it breeds boredom, which fuels a lack of interest in life in general, and if this continues, it can lead to dysfunctional habits, which lead to a dysfunctional life. Therefore, a dysfunctional life is an enemy of progress and derails a destiny.

It is impossible for a creative mind to suffer from boredom. God created a mind to create; that is why creativity is one of the best ways to keep the mind young, fresh, and productive. A creative mind will never suffer boredom, just as a wise man will not suffer fools.

In order for our minds to remain active and creative, we need to keep our mental faculties continually engaged and stimulated in a meaningful and positive way; we can do this through reading, watching shows, partaking in games, writing, thinking innovatively, developing creative ideas, learning new skills, studying, listening, and speaking.

The key is to keep our creative juices flowing and our minds creatively active through positive and impactful stimuli. For example, there are people who read, but they only read gossip columns; it is good that they do read, but the content of what they read is not meaningful nor useful; it is a way of killing time. Learning a new skill keeps the mind fresh, engaged, and developing, and it has motivational benefits.

◆ **COMPLAINING AND “SOLUTIONING”**

Complaining is one of the easiest sports that any person can partake in; it does not require any skill or talent. The tools for complaining are a mind, a mouth, and an attitude of pessimism and fault-finding. As easy as complaining might be, and how often harmless it may appear to be, this is one of the surest ways to fail in life. Numbers 11:1 says, *“The people began to complain to the Lord about their troubles. When the*

Lord heard them, he became angry and sent fire on the people. It burned among them and destroyed one end of the camp.”

From this passage of scripture, we see the fire of God consuming some of the children of Israel for their penchant for complaining. For some reason they appear to have not learned their lesson, as many of them eventually missed out on entering and possessing the promised land because of complaining and murmuring. God has good plans for us, but we can complain ourselves out of His noble plans. The strange thing with us humans is that when we invite failure because of our complaints, instead of owning up, we add salt to the wound by blaming others or even God for our self-inflicted wounds.

GOD HAS GOOD PLANS FOR US, BUT WE CAN COMPLAIN OURSELVES OUT OF HIS NOBLE PLANS.

“Solutioning” is definitely a bad grammar word; however, it is the greatest antidote to “complaining”. Complaining does not offer solutions, thus people who want to achieve something meaningful in life shun those who complain. Instead of complaining, solutioning sees the trouble or problem as an opportunity to generate new solutions. If the attitude of the Israelites in the wilderness was for solutioning, then they would have used their troubles to understand God and His ways better.

It is often in the midst of trouble that our faith is tested, and if we pass the test, great testimonies result from what seemed to be an insurmountable mountain. A murmurer sees a mountain as an insurmountable obstacle, while the solutionist sees a mountain as an opportunity to climb higher and see new opportunities beyond it. A solutionist thrives in the midst of trouble, problems, obstacles, and opposition.

◆ **WORK AND LAZINESS**

Excessive reasoning often hides laziness; a lazy person would invest time in finding intelligent-sounding reasons for why they cannot do

something. If the sluggard cannot find a reason to get out of a task, he would resort to procrastination, knowing that if something is deferred to a future date, the future can remain in the future for as long as it serves the interests of the sluggard. The book of Proverbs is rich in wisdom and two passages of scripture that deal with laziness are nothing short of gems or pearls of wisdom, and these are stated below:

Proverbs 26:15 presents an award-winning level of laziness; it says, *“Lazy people are too lazy to lift the food from their plate to their mouth.”* This is beyond comprehension, even when food is placed in front of him, a lazy person can starve to death. Many people have been given great opportunities, however due to laziness they shunned or ignored those prospects because they involved too much work.

Proverbs 20:4 says, *“Some people are too lazy to plant seeds. So at harvest time, they look for food and find nothing.”* This is an attitude of a lazy person who expects to be rewarded for laziness, an impossibility of impossibilities.

Proverbs 22:13 says, *“A person who is lazy and wants to stay home says, “There is a lion outside, and I might be killed in the streets!”* Just when you think you have heard all excuses, and this one floors you. Laziness can make a person creative with excuses; however, no positive result could ever accrue from lazy hands. Laziness is free yet costly.

The word “work” is scary for lazy people. However, everything that has been built by humans since the beginning of time involved some form of work. There is nothing called “lowly work” and that is why God says in Deuteronomy 28:12, the Lord will *“...bless all the work of your hand.”* In Colossians 3:23, we learn that *“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.”* Therefore, the blessing is not dependent on the nature of the work, only a lazy hand cannot be blessed. It is therefore not a coincidence that before God gave any other instruction to Man at Creation, He assigned him to work in the Garden of Eden, because work produces and replenishes.

If there is no work in the form of employment, start with what appears to be a hobby, or take opportunities to volunteer or create work by starting a small business. Many have stumbled into greatness through such, hence the Bible says do not despise the day of small beginnings. Start

working where you are and with what you have, remember God said to Moses, “what is that in your hand?”

◆ DEMORALISED AND MOTIVATED

To be demoralised is another form of stagnation, because there is very little, if any, progress in one’s thought process and actions under this condition. When you are demoralised or demotivated even the smallest or easiest tasks seems gargantuan and impossible. A demoralised person has the potential to draw others into that state, as we know the saying: “misery loves company.” The people that we hang around and what we expose ourselves to continually can worsen and prolong the state of demoralisation, no wonder Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 15:33: *“Don’t let anyone fool you...bad companions make a good person bad.”* The longer one stays stuck in demotivation, the worse it may get and the more the future is threatened as the state of demotivation can deepen and eventually spiral out of control if there is no timely intervention. A negative attitude towards life will contribute to a state of continuous demoralisation.

Motivated effort trumps talent, especially if the talented person is demotivated. Motivation drives a person to seek more, dream more, desire more, aim for improvement, and better results. A motivated person sees mountains as obstacles to conquer. Motivation breeds a mindset that always thrives in difficult times, because challenges are opportunities to explore new ways of thinking and doing. A motivated person is a person who stays on the move, that is why “movers and shakers” are generally people who are highly motivated.

The best way to get motivated is to continually encourage ourselves through the Word of God. In the Bible, we see this in 1 Samuel 30 when the Amalekites had ransacked and plundered Ziklag, and taken the wives and children captive. David and his men cried until they had no strength to cry anymore, and the men planned to stone him as they blamed him for the misfortune, but the Bible says, *“David encouraged himself in the Lord his God”* and because of this, God spoke and they pursued the Amalekites and recovered more than they had lost. The Bible has more than enough material to motivate us even in the direst of situations.

◆ PROGRESSIVE OR BACKWARD

There are situations in life that can set one back; there are decisions that we make that can take us backwards in life. However, it is more detrimental to have a mindset that is fixed on the past and this mindset is best revealed in statements like “we miss the good old days”. In the book of Judges 6, Gideon suffered from this type of mindset before the encounter with the angel of God. We hear him speaking nostalgically about the God of yesterday who parted the sea and performed great miracles. A negative mindset will keep us in the past and hankering for the past, and often, we look at the past with rose-tinted glasses and this prevents us from appreciating the present and definitely keeps us from attaining a great future. A mindset fixed on the past guarantees that you remain stuck.

Progress begins with a progressive mindset. A human mind is constantly working whether we are aware of this or not, and the mind even works when we are not conscious. A progressive mind is always looking ahead and seeks continuous improvement. This mindset always asks, “How can we do this better? Is there no better way of doing things or is this all we got?” The advancements that humanity has made since the beginning of time can be largely attributed to progressive minds. A progressive mind is always consciously at work and it will never rest until results are seen, and once the desired results are attained, this mind begins to explore new avenues and new ways of progressing to another level. It is impossible for a progressive mind to get stuck.

◆ CONCLUSION

The most striking contrast between stagnation and movement is that stagnation is passive while movement is active, and movement is intentional, while stagnation can be incidental.

A train is of little use if it remains permanently at the station. A grand ship is of no use if it remains permanently docked and never sails and explore the great seas. A sleek sports car that remains stuck in the garage will never provide the thrill that can only be experienced on an open road. A jumbo jet that remains under the hangar will never conquer the skies. Even a bird that is perched on a branch for too long invites a stone.

It is worth noting that an orchestra performs and produces wonderful melodies in response to the movements of the orchestra conductor; this is the power of movement. Without movement you will never gain ground.

Movement or stagnation can be mental, physical or spiritual. It can happen in the conscious and subconscious faculties. Life is about choices and consequences; make progressive choices always.