



BOWEN UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY IWO

BOWEN UNIVERSITY

8th CONVOCAATION LECTURE

by

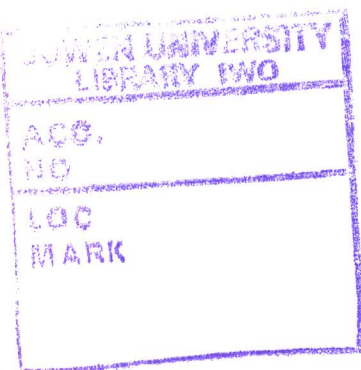
Dn. NEBOLISA O. ARAH

NOVEMBER 1, 2013

BOWEN UNIVERSITY

8th CONVOCATION LECTURE

Titled: BE DIFFERENT



by

Dn. NEBOLISA O. ARAH
CEO, Agate Tower Ltd. Ikoyi Lagos

NOVEMBER 1, 2013



Today is about you. Today is a day for your parents, for family and for teachers who helped nurture you. Indeed, today is for all who have supported, encouraged and prayed to see it. Today is a culmination of the days of study, stress, panic and anxiety. Today is a moment of achievement and success.

We offer our congratulations to the Faculty and staff at Bowen University who have positively impacted these graduates, who challenged them and have delivered in line with Bowen University motto....godliness and excellence. To the faculty who demonstrated, modeled and counseled these graduates to choose wisdom and get understanding we doff our hats. Very distinguished invitees, ladies and gentlemen, let us applaud the faculty and staff of this great university.

I remember my own graduation ceremony at UI almost 36 years to this date. I did not have family with me. I was serving in the NYSC in Jos at the time. Only a young lady then was my guest. She turned out to be my wife subsequently. Indeed I saw the picture we took at the event only last month. I don't remember if there was a graduation address, or what the theme was. Nothing then could have pointed in the direction things turned out. None of us could have scripted the wonderful story we now know.

THE FUTURE

Some of you may know by now what you do well and love doing.

Or even what you intend to become or where life's work will take you. My suspicion is that the greater majority of you don't have a clue. Many of you are still unsure because we live in a society where graduate unemployment is in the high double digit. Many of you may be considering options of NYSC or graduate studies, setting up your own businesses or taking up



employment. You may change your mind several times in the days and months ahead. Wherever you go and whatever path you choose, one thing you must not forget is that the rigorous education in Bowen has prepared you for life.

As you look to the future, focus on finding what is relevant.

Learn to challenge the status quo.

Be bold. Be disciplined. Be focused. Get the big picture.

Use your treasure wisely in serving others. Remember that it is in true service that relevance comes. The need to serve has never been greater in our communities, society and country.

Don't remain idle. Don't waste your time.

Don't join the crowd to do evil.

Be different. Be positive. Be godly.

Be determined to make a difference.

Have a purpose that is greater and beyond money, position, popularity or fame. Seek opportunities to serve. Join with others to make positive impact. That way like oasis in the desert, we become pools of refreshing water.

The world you are entering may be so much different from the walls of Bowen you are leaving behind. When I left UI there were many more options for the graduating student. I had options of remaining in the Plateau, going to Zaria or joining the business world in Lagos. Little did I know that after the period of my graduate studies that Lagos will become home for our family. Your time is different.

UNCERTAINTY AND CHALLENGES

The times you are being thrown into have different and difficult challenges. You have to contend with the:

Abysmal power sector challenges, insecurity,

Monumental corruption, a struggling economy,

Lingering gender inequalities,

Unethical conduct at all levels, misplaced values,



Fundamentalism and extremism, high human misery index, Poverty, disease, hunger, deteriorating social infrastructure, Poor education and health care facilities to name a few.

This is the bad news. The good news is that you belong to the group that must fix these challenges.....that must make the society better. I am encouraged that if Lagos that was once broken can be fixed, then there is hope.

We must fix our country.

We must fix our economy.

We must fix our infrastructure.

We must fix power. We have no other country.

We can't give up. We owe it to the next generation.

We owe it our children.

How? Be different. Stand out. Value change begins with an individual. We can't do it all at once. We must continue to chip away at the challenges. We must continue to press on. You must take responsibility even though we face an uncertain future. Don't fear uncertainty. Embrace it. Use it. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group said “uncertainty means that nothing is predetermined. Uncertainty means that you can challenge the future with the force of your intellect, youth and compassion”. Be people of character. Be ethical.

GODLY CHARACTER

In most professions, character is perhaps the most important trait we seek and expect in others.

Character inspires trust in others.

Character gives confidence for others to follow.

Character keeps us pointed in the right direction.

Character will keep us doing the right things.

Character ensures we are disciplined in the pursuit of our goal.

Character gives understanding that there is no right way to do a wrong thing.

Character reminds us that dishonest gain will never last.

So it is pointless and fruitless to take the risk or the route of dishonesty. Character undergirds the fact that you will never go wrong doing what is right. Moral clarity isn't a substitute for dealing with complexity. It is a necessary first step. Short cuts always lead to problems. Competence and character are a powerful combination. Competence you have obtained from your education at Bowen. Character you have inherited from your parents, family, community, and church. This powerful combination will keep you doing the right thing as you move forward in life. Use them well.

Don't forget the Word. Don't leave home without it.

Consult it daily. Read it. Study it. Meditate on it.

Memorize it. Apply it.

Use it well and there's a guarantee of good success.

SERVICE

As we congratulate you on this unique day, the expectation is that you consider dedicating your life to one of character and service. Money isn't everything. Riches aren't either. Neither are trappings of position, fame or popularity. You are charged to go out there and inspire people. Go out and be a worthy ambassador of Bowen. Live for the ideals of your institution. Show your parents and teachers that the last four years were not wasted. Let them see the transformation that has taken place in your lives. Demonstrate to them that a good name is worth more than silver and gold. Raise the bar. It is said that 'all Nigerians have a price'. Show that this erroneous belief does not apply to you. Dare to be a Joseph, a Daniel, a Deborah, a Dorcas, a Lydia. Perform your duties diligently. The promise is that you will stand before kings. Be people of character. Be different.



THE CHALLENGE

As I begin to round up this address, I remember two major quotes that have had an impact on my life. Most business professionals know Warren Buffet, the billionaire and oracle from Omaha, Nebraska. Not too many people remember Charles Munger, Chief Operating Officer of Berkshire Hathaway, who is Warren Buffet's number two. Charlie Munger once said to a gathering of this type in the US and I quote:

"You're not going to get very far in life based on what you already know. You're going to advance in life by what you're going to learn after you leave here"

Find your passion and stick with it. Be fearless and principled. Fear God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So get understanding! Never stop learning. Keep at what you get the opportunity to do. Be the best you can be. I never dreamt on my graduation day I will rise to be CEO of a bank or that I will sit on boards of private or publicly quoted companies locally and overseas. By God's grace, He made that possible 12 years after my graduation and did much more that will be immodest for me to mention here. The same God can do it for you too. But you don't have to be a CEO to find satisfaction in your career nor is it promised you. Find relevance and satisfaction in everyday activity doing your best, then promotion will come. Joseph, David, Daniel and many others before you found out this secret. You too can!

The second are words from my old school anthem:

*"Remember where you come from
Wherever you may chance to go
Uphold your supremacy to do or to die for the right....
For the Lord will surely bless you"*

Significance and relevance come from work not idleness.

So serve. Don't be lukewarm in your service.

Don't be indifferent. Be different.



Service and significance equal success.

Don't be deterred by the inconceivable or impossible.

Don't tell God about the mountains before you.

Speak to the mountains about your awesome God. Remember, nothing is too difficult for Him. In matters of principle, stand like a rock. Be different. Trust God. Depend on God. He is a prayer away.

CLOSING

Great success does not come over night. It takes years of toil and hard work. You are in a race. Not a 100 or 400 meter dash, but a marathon with uphill and downhill obstacles. You must run it with perseverance, poise, on timeless values and principles to win.

Thankfully, the prize is not only for the top three finishers.

It is for all who press on and breast the tape.

The prize is for all who never ever give up.

The prize is for all who persevere.

The prize is for all who have godly character.

The prize is for all who know their God.

The prize is for all who serve.

And you know what, they shall do great exploits. It is to this service that the Lord enlists you into today.

Congratulations to our graduates, their families and teachers.

Now a tweet to end: "From the best faculty to the best graduating students, all the best from God".

God bless you all for listening.

NEBOLISAO. ARAH

November 1 2013

