

Remarkable Father, Senator Michael Atijosan Emmanuel Onunkun OON

The year was 1973. A few months under the age of 11, I, along with three older siblings, were preparing for the Common Entrance Examination to different Secondary Schools. Our father obtained the forms for Methodist High School, Okitipupa and Manuwa Memorial Grammar School, Iju-Odo—two of the best Secondary Schools in Okitipupa Division at the time—for each of us.

A few days to the first examination, Baba, as we address him, counselled us, saying: “On the day of the exam, you will see people who are much older and bigger than you, as some would have finished Secondary Modern School.” He added: “Once you are well prepared, do not be afraid. The exam is between you and your paper, not between you and others. Fear will make you forget even what you know. Focus on your paper and you will pass.”

I applied Baba’s counsel and got admitted to both schools. Being human, anytime I worry about an impending examination or interview, I always remind myself of Baba’s counsel: “*Prepare well, and do not be afraid*”, and it has been working for me. After all four of us got admission to Secondary Schools that year, Baba opened a Bank Savings Account for each one of us with ₦100 each. He, then gave the Account Passbooks to his wife, Màmá Nurse, for safe keeping until we turned 18.

What love, motivation and lesson in forward-thinking and prudence! Years later, I extended this lesson, reasoning that if I put £1 away daily for each of my children, over a few years, they would have a substantial sum that they could have for themselves when they turn 18. I even told my kids that I got the idea from their granddad’s initiative in 1973. And, they appreciate this ‘*Savings*’ lesson I learned from their Grandpa! “*Little drops of water...*”

Baba, the last time I spoke with you to ask for further clarifications on some of the stories you told me in previous interviews I conducted with you, I promised you that I will document the story of your ancestors and your life in a book—your book—for generations behind you. I am glad to say that I have kept my promise to you, Baba. Your book will be released on the day of your funeral, Deo Volente.

These are but two of many lessons I learned from a remarkable father, my first role model!

So you lived for 98 years

And people said to me

He lived a full life.... Rejoice!

Rejoice? Lived a full life?

How could they understand?

Is 98 years a full life?

It hurts, it hurts, yes, it really stings!

So 98 years is a full life?

David said: "No, it isn't!"

"No? How?" Yes, "No, it isn't!"

You lived less than 2½ hours

And Peter agreed with David

How is 2½ hours a full life?

It hurts, it hurts, O it really stings!

If a man dies, can he live again?

Jehovah will call, and you will answer

He will long for the work of His hands

He will wipe out every tear from our eyes,

The sting of death to joy of resurrection becomes

How comforting this assured hope!

(Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8; Job 14:15, Revelation 21:4; John 5:28,29; 1 Corinthians 15:54,55)

— Dr Temitope Jos Onunkun