

CHAPTER ONE: AIKPONOBHOA IS BORN

Every battle you have to fight is an opportunity for the glory of God to be revealed. The greater the obstacles, the greater the victory.”

— Lailah Gifty Akita

Aitebebbhekefo was born at a time when education was virtually non-existent in rural communities. Her parents were farmers. She was a very pretty young girl. She grew up in the small mud house and participated in farm work with her parents. She was born into a polygamous family. She had a fair share of what it meant to be raised in a polygamous setting. Aitebebbhekefo was loved by all that met her partly because of her beauty, hard work and also because of her very respectful and humble disposition. She was a victim of very poor cultural practice in the villages at that time. While she was still a very young girl, a man had indicated interest of wanting to marry her when she gets to the age of marriage. This was a regular practice in rural communities. The lady will usually not make any input in what literarily bothers on her person. Whether the lady likes the man or not was basically inconsequential. What was perhaps necessary is that the man in question had the well withal to assist the family of the girl he was planning to marry. The thoughts, emotional feelings and demeanour of the girl were not relevant in the bargain.

Aitebebbhekefo was eventually betrothed to man who was much older than her. And a few years later, the “marriage” took place. Aitebebbhekefo had to painfully leave the love and care that was inherent in her family to a new land/terrain where she was not sure how the environment was going to look like. Was it going to be a harsh environment? Was she going to have as much love and care as she had in the father’s house? And many more questions than answers. These issues occupied a very central part of her mind. To say she was scared is probably to say the least. Initially, Aitebebbhekefo was accepted by all in her husband’s place. She saw love and care. Her fears were allayed. She was in a polygamous setting which was not radically different from what obtained in her father’s house having also come from a polygamous background. The fear and trepidation gave rise to hope and confidence that she was safe albeit for a short period probably unknown to her.

She soon settled down fully and got into farm work very quickly. Her work in the farm was exemplary. The experience she gathered from the father’s house became very useful in the husband’s place. The financial position of the household soon improved. She later started a trade and was also into tailoring having learnt the act of tailoring from the father who was also a tailor. She combined trading, tailoring and farming. She was happy and life became very sweet. However, that joy was soon to be short-lived. Aitebebbhekefo was unable to conceive. The other women made her a laughing stock. She became depressed and disenchanted. Joy had given way to sadness and sorrow. Initially, the husband was sympathetic to her ordeal. But before long, the husband also became a thorn in her flesh. The questions from the

husband were on why she could not get pregnant. This is the same fate suffered by women in all developing countries. Once the woman cannot get pregnant, then the fault must be from the woman. No one bothers to know the fertility status of the man. The situation is made worse when the man already has other children from other women. However, most of these actions are borne out of ignorance. Who says that it is not the man that actually has the problem; having other children notwithstanding? It is logical to think that the other women who bore children for the man may have been super fertile. It is equally logical to think that the man may have developed the fertility challenges after he had other children. After all, situations can change at any time. The woman is never given a fair chance. At the time Aitebebbekefo had these challenges, there were no hospitals around to evaluate her fertility status. In any case, even if there were hospitals around at the time, men don't ever believe that they have issues. It is always the woman. That was the confusion Aitebebbekefo found herself. She would cry from morning till evening and would not sleep at night. It was a very terrible moment of her life. There was no more zeal to continue with the farm work, tailoring and trading. It was a bleak moment loaded with all manner of negative thoughts. This pain and sorrow continued for about five years after which she was eventually thrown out of the husband's house. This action sparked off further confusion and frustration in her. After all the only reason she was married was to bear children and work in the farm. And since the main purpose was not achieved, then the option left for the husband was to send her packing. This action in a rural setting was largely a common occurrence. Women are made to pass through terrible ordeals for no fault of theirs. Having been sent packing, she had no choice than to pick her few things and head for the father's house.

Aitebebbekefo got to her parents' house an unhappy and frustrated woman. It was a sorrowful moment for the entire family. The jewel of the family had been battered and traumatized. Aitebebbekefo had lost so much weight and she was basically a shadow of herself. But one thing worked for her. The parents were still as loving and supportive as they were before she got married even though it was a moment of grief for them. They provided a shoulder for her to lean on. Painfully, in her village, she again became an object for discussion just as she was in her former husband's place. Facts presented for discussion in the village were not even clear to the person initiating the discussion. There were more lies than facts. Stories were cooked up all in a bid to rubbish Aitebebbekefo and make her feel terrible. She had to bear a lot of things. She was not a Christian at that time and so lacked the privilege of carrying everything to God in prayer. She suffered the pain and shame. The only friends at this time were her parents. The parents did not disappoint her. They kept encouraging her. After some months of encouragement from the parents, Aitebebbekefo started to regain her self. Her beauty slowly came back. Joy had started coming back. Once more, she knew the meaning of smile and laughter. She resumed her tailoring business. Things eventually stabilized and she became happy again.

Before long, men started coming around to ask for her hand in marriage. Aitebebbekefo was scared at this time. She did not want to pass through the ugly experience she had passed through. Consequently, she was turning down all the proposals. Again, the parents were readily available to guide her. They kept encouraging her about the need to forget the

previous experience and push it behind and then move forward with life. Eventually, the parents were able to convince her and she eventually accepted one of the men that were coming around. The acceptance was covered in fear, trembling and trepidation. The reasons for these were quite obvious. The man that eventually won her heart was coming around with a Volkswagen car. The man was much older than her and was just about average in terms of comfort. But Aitebebhekefo had been placed in a situation where she lacked the luxury of time to make “shakara”. After a few visits by the man, the deal was concluded. She had agreed to marry the man but not without first telling the man her story. The man heard the story and still loved her. The traditional wedding was low key and it was rightly so for a family that had to refund bride price to former in-laws. Then Aitebebhekefo moved to the new husband’s place. This was another village setting where the men and women were very hard working. Aitebebhekefo soon studied the trend and got into farming and trading. She had a source of comfort and consolation in the new home. Her own mother was from this village. Luckily for her, her grandmother was still alive. The grandmother provided a source of consolation and encouragement for her. A preacher had earlier come with the gospel of Christ to this village and Aitebebhekefo’s grandmother had embraced the gospel and gave her life to Christ. She was very zealous in the Lord and was given to evangelism. Naturally, the first person she needed to preach to was her grandchild. The simple message of salvation was thus given to Aitebebhekefo by her grandmother and this was gladly embraced.

She got integrated fully into the new family. She soon joined in the farm work. She also continued to do her tailoring jobs. She was quite hard working. She bought a bicycle (Raleigh model) with bicycle number DJ43209 and plate number 042086 at the cost of 12 pounds in 1961. The bicycle was quite a useful tool for her with respect to the farm work and also in taking her wares to the market. Aitebebhekefo was quite good with respect to tomato and cassava farming. And the Lord indeed blessed her efforts. She was making good money from the farming and tailoring jobs. She was quite supportive to the husband. She became happy and comfortable. However, the happiness was going to be for a short period.

The challenges of life reared its ugly head again. A year had passed and no pregnancy. Now almost two years and still no pregnancy. Aitebebhekefo became really worried. She asked herself certain questions. Was she the one having problem? Was it her husband? But she thought that her husband who already had children from three wives was very unlikely to be the source of the challenge. Confusion took over her reins again. But this time around, she took the challenge with equanimity. She was now a Christian and she could pray that God intervened in her situation. And truly, after about two years, she missed her period. The only way of ascertaining that one was pregnant at that time was to wait for the tummy to protrude. And this was indeed the case for Aitebebhekefo. After a few months, her tummy was coming out. Some sceptics were saying it was needful to watch this woman who has not been able to get pregnant in about seven years to see if she was actually pregnant. Eventually, she delivered a live male infant. The sceptics had been proved wrong. Aitebebhekefo was indeed pregnant and had now delivered a baby boy. There was no better name for this new born baby than to name him Samuel-God has heard. This was an appropriate name under the circumstance because Aitebebhekefo’s experience was pretty much the same with Hannah’s

story in the Bible. God has heard her prayers and removed the reproach. She became fulfilled and happy. God has indeed proved his faithfulness in her life. Those persons that had written her off before as barren had a change of mind and their attitude also changed towards her. Aitebebhekefo developed more confidence in God. This experience gave her a firm understanding of whom God is and that foundation was probably what she needed to stay firmly rooted in God. She now understood that what matters in life is who God says you are. That became her creed. She presented this belief to whoever cared to listen that even when men have written you off and discarded you, God can take you up and make something beautiful out of you. She now became a source of encouragement to those that had lost hope. Indeed through her encouragement and life story, some women who had been declared barren gave birth to children. With these experiences and the subsequent events, Aitebebhekefo then concluded that perhaps God made her to pass through the experience for two principal reasons. Firstly, so she could know God and understand the attributes of God. Secondly, so that she can be a source of encouragement to women that will ever pass through a similar experience. This became a strong tool of evangelism for her. She had a song that became popular with her. "What a friend we have in Jesus..."

Women who were passing through trials and hadn't known God felt the need to come to God who has been presented to them as a burden bearer. And truly, God proved to these women that he was indeed a burden bearer.

Aitebebhekefo then joined the choir and became very active as a chorister. She had a very melodious voice and she featured as lead singer in most church programs. Within a short period of joining the choir, she started composing songs in her native language. Practically all the songs she composed were drawn from her life experiences. She had a characteristic way of presenting her songs each time she was called upon to lead praise worship or give special number during church meetings. She would introduce herself and briefly mention her life experiences and the song to be presented will be borne out of such experiences. In addition, she would refer to God by series of names before she goes on to present the song. It was not unusual to hear her refer to God severally as "Uzoya", meaning the one that delivers from pain and sorrow. In all, her most popular song at that time was "Orona ji men yelere, ebo re mon ahu ye", meaning God has used these various life experiences to show how powerful He is. Everyone that heard this song always got encouraged one way or the other.

Aitebebhekefo started ruminating over what may have caused her to wait for about seven years before having her first child. She was doing a self audit whether it was due to the sin she may have committed. While this was going on, she got pregnant the second time. Unfortunately, after a few months she had a miscarriage and lost the pregnancy. Luckily for Aitebebhekefo, she got pregnant a third time. Again, few weeks after she missed her period, she started bleeding. At some point, the bleeding was quite profuse. Even though others around her were so disturbed that she was going to have a miscarriage, she encouraged herself in the Lord. She committed the entire situation into the hands of God. She would always say, I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to perfect that which I have committed unto His hands until the appointed time (2 Timothy 1:12). This became the slogan for the third pregnancy that was to eventually result in the destiny child.

By faith, rather than go to the hospital, she went to meet a pastor that was passionate for her members. This pastor once pastored her but had been transferred to a different church. While this pastor was in her church, he took Aitebebhekefo as his daughter and had special love for her particularly because of the faith and resilience she had demonstrated over the dark years. She got to the pastor's place and gave her complaints. The pastor immediately made a pronouncement- you will not lose this baby. Then the pastor demonstrated faith akin to the kind of faith the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated when he healed the blind man with sand mixed with spittle (John 9:6). It was raining torrentially at this time. Yet the pastor defied the rain and went to patent medicine store and bought some capsules. The pastor said "I don't know how exactly this medicine will work, but as you take it by faith, the bleeding will stop". Aitebebhekefo, who had tasted who God is, immediately built up her faith and took the medications. Right from that moment, the bleeding stopped. This was another major miracle. She left and continued singing praises to God. It was not unusual to hear Aitebebhekefo repeatedly saying "ogboluo bhe bhe", meaning God has done another one. She carried the pregnancy to term and delivered a bouncing baby boy-the destiny child. This time she thought and said that God had demonstrated how merciful He is and had completely forgiven her all her sins even if indeed she had sinned against God. Aitebebhekefo felt this way because while she passed through her ordeal, some persons were of the opinion that the situation may have been caused by the sins she committed. This was pretty similar to the life of Job in the Bible when the friends wrongly accused him that he was passing through the ordeal he passed through because he had sinned against God. (Job 4-23). Thus, an appropriate name for this child of destiny was "forgiveness mercy". The new born was also given another name "Aikponobhoa". God had indeed forgiven Aitebebhekefo and had mercy on her as demonstrated by the birth of her second child. With the forgiveness and mercy, she had three other children-two girls and a boy. Her joy became full and she was glad. Aikponobhoa grew up and was highly favoured by God and by men and he was a source of great joy for the family. Aitebebhekefo continued to praise God and eventually waxed her musical album to mark her 75th birthday. She did this because God had indeed been merciful and gracious to her. Virtually all the tracks in the musical album were based on testimonies emanating from her personal life experiences. With this she became a fulfilled woman, a singer, a composer and an evangelist of some sort.

With a yearning to know more about God, Aitebebhekefo took a course at the Assemblies of God Mission Bible School as a lay pastor. She completed the program within record time. Aitebebhekefo's spirit of excellence remained outstanding and she continued to work hard. Seeing lack of a formal education as a handicap, Aitebebhekefo entered the adult education program in 1978 and obtained the first school leaving certificate in 1980. The result was an excellent result as she scored 72% in arithmetic, 84% in English language, and 56% in General paper. The average was therefore 70.9%. The certificate has been jealously preserved over the years. This also became a tool for her to use in encouraging people to realize that virtually all goals in life can be achieved by anyone, provided there is a determination to achieve the set goal.

CHAPTER TWO: AIKPONOBHOA MOVES TO HIS MOTHER'S VILLAGE.

“What children need most are the essentials that grandparents provide in abundance. They give unconditional love, kindness, patience, humour, comfort, lessons in life ... most importantly, cookies”. ~Rudy Giuliani

The activities in his birthplace were such that little Aikponobhoa needed to move to his grand parents' house. This was at the tender age of one. This action was to allow the mother engage in serious farming activities. It was only logical to think this way. The grandparents were old and therefore were not expected to engage in serious farming activities. In the circumstance, the little boy was detached early from his mother. He had to face the uncertainties and vagaries of life albeit without his consent. That seemed like a bleak future. The little boy soon got integrated into the life with his grandparents. As he got older he soon discovered that the grandparents were very caring and loving. With time, he started making friends and became a happy boy. Aikponobhoa was loved by everyone. He was such a lovely boy. Primary school did not start until his right hand taken over the head could touch the left ear. This was at the age of six or thereabout. This is a sharp contrast from what obtains today when a child of 2 years is made to start school. While in primary two in the village school, the primary school was closed down. Reason for the closure was that there were so many schools in the state and there was need to close down some schools and merge them with others in order to enhance efficiency. Aikponobhoa's Primary school was thus affected. This was the beginning of stress. The elders in the village where Aikponobhoa's primary school was located attempted a trick that was supposed to compel the government to vacate the order with respect to the closure of the school. This was supposed to help in retaining the school as every community saw it as a thing of joy to have a school even if it was a primary school. Again there is a sharp contrast between this era and what obtains now. Today there are schools in every quarter. At that time, private school was alien to persons in rural community. What was the trick put in place by the elders? They directed that everyone must go to a particular primary school in another village. This school was not a particularly big school. The elders forbade parents from sending their wards to the other school that was located in another village. This second school was bigger. The thinking was that if the first primary school could not accommodate all the pupils, then the government will be forced to reopen the school that had been shut. This trick did not work. The second school was finer and closer than the first. Most parents defied the orders from the elders and sent their children to the second school. The implication was that it was only a few students that went to the primary school recommended by the elders. Of course the school was able to accommodate everyone that went there. The type of resistance demonstrated by the parents that sent their children to the second school can still be found today. A group may take a decision adjudged to be in the best interest of the greater majority. Some persons will however embark on a selfish mission without minding the effect on the greater majority. An analogy can be drawn from here with respect to corrupt politicians we see daily around us. The funds meant for everybody is stolen by a few for personal aggrandizement.

Aikponobhoa's grandfather was a disciplined man. He was a man of purpose and order. Once the elders decided where the pupils were going to go to school, he was not going to disobey

that order. He always believed that since he was amongst those that took the decision, then he was ready to abide by that decision even if it was not convenient. Are we still able to get men of integrity today? Little Aikponobhoa had to attend a primary school that was quite some distance from the house. The grandmother would hand him over to senior pupils to look after him. This was certainly an interesting period. Little Aikponobhoa usually closes from school around 1pm and then he would stay with neighbours until the grandparents returned from the farm. Siesta was never organized. At least there was no pattern. If the little boy was tired after school, he could sleep off anywhere. There was no fixed pattern for lunch. If this period was stressful, the period from about age ten was even more stressful. At this age, it was considered that little Aikponobhoa has attained an age when he could go to farm. Incidentally, the primary school was somewhat on the way to the farm. The modality was simple. Breakfast at home and lunch in the farm. The young Aikponobhoa would put the clothes for farming in his school bag. After school, he would then remove his school clothes and change into his farming clothes. And because lunch was going to be in the farm, Aikponobhoa will practically run from the school to the farm. There are advantages for getting to the farm in time. First, lunch will be “served” in time. Secondly, his grandmother will not scold him. Any day he got to the farm late, of course, it meant he was playing on the way to farm. He will be scolded. His grandfather was a very soft man. He had no capacity to flog his children. His grandmother was however a disciplinarian. She could actually flog Aikponobhoa for coming late to the farm. Thus, it was a characteristic feature that soon after school, little Aikponobhoa was going to run from the school until he got to the farm. The lunch was a routine of roasted yam and palm oil. This was a period of preparation for a life that was going to succeed. On the way from the farm, the young boy would carry his load on his head and run along with his grandparents. This was a daily routine. On Saturdays, the farm work was from morning till evening. Sunday was church.

Some difficult moments were experienced by the boy. Some bigger pupils in the school would love to intimidate him. A particular boy would always bully him. He will literally be running from the boy until other persons would come to rescue him. There was a particular incident when the same boy met Aikponobhoa by the toilet where he had gone to urinate. Of course this was a pit toilet. As soon as the young boy saw Aikponobhoa he dragged him and said “you will die today”. This he said to him because they were just alone and no one was there to rescue Aikponobhoa. Then Aikponobhoa looked around and he did not see anybody. Perhaps he could not also see God because of his tender age. However God saw him and gave him strength. When Aikponobhoa saw there was no escape route, he encouraged himself and faced the young man squarely. And then the fight between the two young boys started. Before you could blink your eyes and open them, the other young boy was on the ground and Aikponobhoa was in charge. He gave the boy the beating of his life. Then he now felt like a champion. He turned to warn the boy that he did not want to see him intimidate other pupils again. The boy who was a bully and had terrorized everyone in the school became ice cold all throughout his stay in the school. Indeed the boy suffered a form of depression in the later part of his stay in that school and even after school. And this affected his personality and had a poor performance. The young boy literally was a failure as he could not even gain admission into a secondary school. At that time gaining admission into secondary school was not automatic. It was quite competitive. Aikponobhoa was now seen as a saviour. Everyone was singing his praise the way they sang for David after he defeated Goliath. The popularity of Aikponobhoa soon made some persons to become jealous of him. From nowhere, a particular lanky boy in the school came up and started harassing Aikponobhoa practically on a daily basis. It was like “who is this obscure person coming from nowhere to be a champion in the school”. It got to a point that Aikponobhoa would be scared to go to school. At times he actually missed school by feigning sickness. Each time this new terror encountered

Aikponobhoa, the only option left for Aikponobhoa was to plead with the boy with almost anything. He thoroughly messed Aikponobhoa on several occasions. The boy could tell him "answer me yes sir whenever I talk to you" and Aikponobhoa had no choice but to agree. This continued until a particular day when the battle needed to be fought and won or lost. Suddenly, Aikponobhoa remembered how the first boy terrorized him until he rose to the occasion. With this understanding and revelation, Aikponobhoa made up his mind that he was going to resist any further acts of harassment from this young man. On this particular day, the young boy met Aikponobhoa at the back of the toilet all by himself. The back of the toilet had become the battle field of some sort. Then the young boy came and tapped Aikponobhoa as was his habit. He was shocked at the response from Aikponobhoa. Aikponobhoa said to this young man "you dare not touch me like that again". This young boy did not believe that Aikponobhoa could answer him like that. He asked Aikponobhoa if he knew who he was talking to and Aikponobhoa answered that he knew him very well. What was going to be the last fight was soon to commence. Aikponobhoa had the conclusion that it was either a do or die situation. The fight started. The other young man was over confident. Aikponobhoa prepared a simple fist with his right hand. Some "forces" directed the punch right to the nasal bridge of this young and the young boy started bleeding profusely from the nostrils. The boy was terrified. Aikponobhoa was also terrified. Aikponobhoa then ran to call one of the teachers to the scene. The teacher got a piece of cloth and applied it over the nose. There were no refrigerators at the time in order to get ice packs. The bleeding however stopped. This young boy was shocked beyond what words could describe at the turn of events. Indeed he had been humiliated. Aikponobhoa had scored yet another point and his fame went everywhere in the primary school. Aikponobhoa thought that the battle had ended. Little did Aikponobhoa know that the incident that just happened was going to precipitate into a more major attack. When the young boy got home, he narrated the experience to the mother. The mother was literarily mad. The mother of the young boy boasted that she was going to deal ruthlessly with Aikponobhoa for attempting to kill her first son. It was the turn of Aikponobhoa's group to go and sweep the school premises the next morning. In those days, the boys in the schools were usually shared into groups and each group will take turn to sweep the school. The young boy's mother became aware that it was the turn of Aikponobhoa's group to sweep the school that week and that Aikponobhoa would be returning home in the morning after sweeping in the school. Her plan was to lay an ambush of some sort. Innocently, Aikponobhoa was running home to go and prepare so he could go back to school. Aikponobhoa did not bargain for the scene he met on his way home. Here was this huge and lanky woman ranting and pacing up and down and making a boast that she was going to deal with Aikponobhoa. Her son then pointed and identified Aikponobhoa from the group of boys that had gone to sweep. The woman then ran violently towards Aikponobhoa with all her strength so she could grip and possibly thoroughly squeeze him. Aikponobhoa got confused and could only possibly look up to heaven for guidance. Should he run backwards or run towards the woman. A divine insight came upon him. He immediately decided to continue in the forward direction which was towards the woman. Then he was to run fiercely and run past the woman. Then as the woman made to grab Aikponobhoa, the Lord magnified Aikponobhoa's strength akin to the way He magnified the lepers' footsteps as recorded in the Holy Bible. The woman saw a tiny little boy that had been magnified albeit unknown to her. She came with all strength to grab Aikponobhoa. Suddenly Aikponobhoa increased his speed and the woman missed Aikponobhoa because of the sudden increase in

his speed and this woman then “caught” air instead of Aikponobhoa. And because the lady had built up so much energy with which to grab the little Aikponobhoa that same force rotated her violently and she fell. Great and embarrassing was the fall. She did not only fall. She equally hit her head against the stub of a nearby tree. Aikponobhoa then continued to run home and he held his peace. This is like the scripture that says “The Lord will fight for you and you shall hold your peace”. When Aikponobhoa got home, he recounted the experience to his grandparents. The grandparents went to meet the woman in the evening. There were some squabbles. Eventually, it became obvious that the two families needed to become friends as it seemed this was a divine way of connecting the two families. She confessed that the encounter showed that Aikponobhoa was not an ordinary child. Thus, whether willingly or by coercion the two families became close. In particular the two young boys that initiated the fight became very close friends. They remained good friends until they left primary school and actually continued up to the first year in the secondary school. Out of the ugly situation, the Lord worked out something that was nice and beautiful. The two previous encounters in school and this recent one set Aikponobhoa apart as one that had extraordinary powers. But the truth was that Aikponobhoa was simply an ordinary young boy whose affairs were being piloted by an extraordinary God. The other students now respected Aikponobhoa and was loved by everyone whether truly or out of fear. The young Aikponobhoa knew that he was just an ordinary pupil in the school but was enjoying the respect and acceptance that came from the encounters. Aikponobhoa became popular. But Aikponobhoa did not allow the popularity to affect his performance in school. He continued to do well academically. He eventually gained admission for his secondary school education. At this point, Aikponobhoa was about thirteen years old. At this age, he was considered strong enough to move back to his place of birth. He was now strong enough to participate in active farm work hence he had to go back home to meet his parents. What he was doing in the grandparents place was passive work. Now it was time for active participation in farm work. Thus another phase and style of life started.

CHAPTER THREE: BENEFITS OF STAYING WITH GRAND PARENTS

“Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it.”
— *Albert Einstein*

Aikponobhoa learnt a lot from staying with his grandparents. What became dearest to him as he grew up were the parables (words of wisdom) the grandparents always told him.

Aikponobhoa soon knew how to communicate in parables and that also went a long way in shaping his life positively. Some of such parables are reproduced here in esan language, the literal meaning given and the lesson to be learned from it defined accordingly.

1. Aha gua ne ebaregbanemin akpagha fie hoa. Literarily meaning: When you are looking for leaves in the bush to wrap items, the tree with very fine leaves will not be bothered. Lesson: If you are sure you have not committed an offence, when various efforts are put in place to detect the culprit, you will not be bothered.
2. Are gbento, ailenji ehae nae: Literal meaning: Even when you have removed the entire hair from the head, you are still able to define the boundary of the forehead. Lesson: to be learned Even if a senior person comes down to your level to interact with you, it does not mean that you will not recognize him as your senior and give him his due respect. In most issues of life, it is always pertinent to define boundaries.
3. Ene wue ekowa mienlinmin, ene ki wue ole ki? Literal meaning: If those that slept inside the house saw spirits, what of those that slept outside the house. Lesson If you have support and you say things are difficult for you, what of the person who does not have any form of support?
4. Alelo khuo ho ole. Liberal meaning: You pet a woman in order to sleep with her. With a gentle attitude rather than forcefully, you can always be given what you want.
5. Oiyio sesi are zeman obo non yin hue. Meaning that it is not out of a good intent that the man with cleft lip and palate is left alone to eat the entire meal hitherto meant for everyone. Lesson : When one has become irresponsible, the people prefer to ignore him completely
6. Oiyio tuopka mon ejakase. Liberal meaning: Is not only one person that has a station that is always the first point of contact. The lesson: Everyone has a point of strength and a point of weakness. No one has monopoly of strength.
7. Onon wue ole ina bhamen non yeye, ole nan bhamen non man man ro. Literal meaning: The man that says he does not want to enter the very light rain usually ends up entering the rain when it has become very heavy. The lesson: When you neglect or refuse to fix small errors, you invariably have to grapple with the stress of fixing big errors.
8. Yanmu yan mu eba fo. Literal meaning: When you get carried away with the good food, remember that as you eat it quickly, in no time the food is exhausted. Lesson: When good opportunities come your way, do not ignore others and assume that that good opportunity is for ever. It may just be a temporary phase of your life.

9. Eba nai le airankon ghale. Literal meaning: The food you forbid, you do not use your teeth to share it for people. Meaning: Define what you want and what you do not want very clearly and stay far away from what you do not want. Most issues in life do not allow you to stay on the fence.
10. Afe inogho, beze okho kho ifea? Literal meaning: If passing urine is not difficult, why does the fowl not pass urine separately from faeces? Meaning: It is easy to pass comments when someone else is making efforts. But when it gets to your turn, you soon realise that the process is not really so easy.
11. Uhon mo okpea oimen bhu kho kho. Literal meaning: The head of the old man is not good for a knock. Lesson: When you attain a certain age, there things that must not be associated with you any longer.
12. Abha nabhe wue fo, airiku si bhu hon mon re. Literal meaning: While still in the bush, you don't bother to remove dirt from your head. You only do that when you are through with the bush. Lesson: Don't behave as if you have arrived when you are still in a learning phase of life.
13. Onon la zen to bo ka. Literal meaning: It is the witch that confesses with his or her mouth. Lesson: When offences have been committed, people must take full responsibilities for their actions.
14. Egbuwa adere, obhiebhe ki sabo hen olen. Literal meaning: When the wall has collapsed, a small goat can climb it. Lesson: When you have devalued yourself, then you can be insulted by literally anybody.
15. Awenasikoko, abha wena sun manman. Literal meaning: When asked to come together, you are not asked to fuse together. Lesson: Even in the crowd, retain your identity.
16. Uko no lebhi ole riu wedin bheraen. Literal meaning: It is the pot that has the oil that is put on the burner. Lesson: It is the person who committed a crime that should be punished.
17. Ebaluemin alueminele ole zeze oruelolo aze khian oye fiore. Literal meaning: It is in keeping with usual habits and practices that a blind man turns to look at his back after walking some distance. Lesson: You may do certain things just to fulfil all righteousness.
18. Eken abun gbe bhoruelolo bhe ebae okin len len eken ole ki le. Literal meaning: When you have added too much sand in the food given to the blind man, then he will soon realise that there is sand in the food that he is eating. Lesson: Demonstrate moderation in everything you. Put in another sense, too much of everything is bad.
19. Etin ado ya, arobo veva fiole. Literal meaning: When the fight has gone to a level of being disgraced out of the contest, you may have to use two hands at the same time to throw your blow. Lesson: Certain situations will demand that you put in extra efforts in a task you are engaged in.
20. Elanmen noi mon akon ole kalo bhi isio oi. Literal meaning: The animal without teeth is the first to get to where local mangoes will be consumed. Lesson: Once you recognize your limitations, you don't need to wait for others before you begin your

preparations. You may need to start earlier than others so you can compensate for your limitations.

21. Ono bha mio nokhe oi mudian. Literal meaning: He that is not waiting for anybody has no reason to stop. Lesson: When you know that help is not coming from any other person to you, then work out your own coping strategy without waiting in vain for non-existent helper.
22. Ono len bu wedionlen diaye, oilen bore dehian re ye bho le. Literal meaning: The person that knows she is wearing a very short dress is usually very careful the way she bends to pick something from the ground in public. Lesson: Know the stuff you are made of and behave accordingly.
23. Ono are ye gua bha miu kpon reyo. Literal meaning: The person who would have been qualified to visit the palace does not have the required clothes to wear. Lesson: There are situations where people who have opportunities trample such opportunities under feet whereas those that ordinarily would value such opportunities never have the chance to receive such opportunities.
24. Ene mu kpa bha daghe, ene riu ukhiomeran ladaghe? Literal meaning: If those that took lanterns are not able to see, is those that are using the light from firewood that will see? Lesson: If people that have worked hard are unable to have a breakthrough, is it the lazy man that will have the breakthrough?
25. Emen ye ghe omon no rio bhekele opka ole asabo sienmon na. Omonu lemunebhiheke, soi ro bo sui ukpobodo, ole bhalen. Literal meaning: The monkey said that it is only the fetus in her womb she can vouch for that the fetus did not pluck some fruits along the way. Lesson: You can't be too sure that your child did not misbehave while you were not with him or her.
26. Oshioria wuoleghe unuo ya. Literal meaning: It is the person that is close to you that can tell you that your mouth smells. Lesson: When a friend corrects you, take it in good fate. Those that are not your friends will be mocking you.
27. Awe bha do, alien enajuotole. Literal meaning: when you say I am greeting you people, you are still able to identify the persons you are actually referring to. Lesson: Don't fool yourself by being in wrong group and think the goodies associated with the group will get to you.
28. Onabha tiebhikolo agbu upkuahkea, oki haosale. Literal meaning: When an uninvited guest breaks a glass, he is asked to pay for it. Lesson: If you attend a party where you were not invited, you do not earn any form of respect.
29. Aki aminzobo, aki len ejiakhian kisirene. Literal meaning. If you embark on a long journey to a town, by the time you start seeing sacrifices, you know that you are close to your destination. Lesson: Be in a position to always identify and utilize important landmarks in your life.
30. Ona yan ukpon da riefioebhoto, ono bha yanlen ki ri dia suale fia. Literal meaning: If the owner of a shirt keeps it carelessly on the floor, the one who does not own it will kick it away with his leg. Lesson: If you place little value on what you have, then others will not place any value on it at all. Learn to value what you have.

31. Ebekhueni iduregbe, eke oto oye. Literal meaning: When you see a bird dancing away, note that the drummer is underground near the bird. Lesson: When someone suddenly starts behaving in an unbecoming manner, then he is got support that is unknown to others.
32. Ebhe aribhughe, alien ono yanlen. Literal meaning: When the goat is on the street, you do not necessarily know the owner. Lesson: Don't underrate the seemingly poor man and treat him with contempt. You never know he may have powerful persons behind him.
33. Ai robo man agbon. Literal meaning: You cannot use your hand to just plan the earth. Lesson: Things may not always happen the way you have planned them. It is always desirable to have an alternative plan.
34. Abhalen ebhe non a yuna re mukhien. Literal meaning: You do not know the goat that will soon die so that you sell it on time. Lesson: Do not be complacent in dealing with the issues of life and expect that things will fall in place just the way you have wished it. Go the extra mile and have contingency plans in place.
35. Awo bhokhan ailughu, oki uwe ghe ole de lemin. Akiole enekale bhokibho, oki ole ole bhalen. Literal meaning: When a small child is told not to eat poisonous meat, he will insist on eating it. But when you now ask him about those that ate it in time past, he says he does not know. Lesson: Take seriously advice given by elders particularly when they are speaking from experience.
36. Oiyimen ki ze ito ya muonogbo. Literal meaning: Am not the reason that the cat got infected with black spots all over. Lesson: When a natural disaster has befallen you, don't try to accuse the innocent person falsely. Look inwards.
37. Aida eda khe amen non ro. Literal meaning: You set the basins outside before it starts raining if you plan to gather some rain water. Lesson: Always make plans and avoid last minute rush.
38. Ihoro to bo hanegbole bho gi. Literal meaning: The supposed melon seed without content usually separates itself from the lot when you throw the seeds up. Lesson: Sooner or later, your behaviour will show who you truly are.
39. Onon yan ihe, ole ka dehianre. Literal meaning: The owner of the load to be lifted is usually the first to bend down. Lesson: In life, before you start crying and shouting for help, you should be seen to have put in some personal efforts.
40. Emena noi mon erun mun, ehi khui ikhien naen. Literal meaning: The cow that does not have a tail depends on divine forces to drive its flies away. Lesson: When it seems you do not have helpers at all, look unto God the greatest helper.
41. Aka we agbon iribhidumonton, agbo miene khin wenan? Literal meaning: We are already complaining that we do not have enough persons in the small village called Idumonton and yet some persons are leaving the village for town for white collar job? Lesson: When you are aware that you have deficiencies, you cannot afford to be careless again.
42. Abhamie ja rioboi, ada riego bhu ugogo. Literal meaning: While working in the farm, because there is no better place to rest your left hand, that is why you rest it on your

left knee. It is not that it is very convenient. Lessons: Certain circumstances in life just have to be accepted in good fate.

43. Otabhena tabhe nan oimoe ekpen: Literal meaning: The man that speaks from the two angles of his mouth does not command respect: Lesson: We should all make efforts to be trustworthy. Otherwise, being untruthful in our dealings erodes respect.
44. Ono bha yang bon fo oijio oruelo. Literal meaning: The man who has two eyes while still on planet earth should not mock the man that is blind. Lesson: While you are still on planet earth, never mock at someone's misfortune. Who knows, you may have a worse situation tomorrow.
45. Aiwuo bho khan boa kue kien ewie. Literal meaning: Never task a little child "what do you think you can become tomorrow? Lesson: Do not look down on the little child today. You have no capacity to determine his future and his future may indeed be brighter than your own.
46. Ilobekemen, ole ri iyan ton, oda ebhe relobhokheole. Literal meaning: The man called "the way I perceive it within me" is the man that was roasting yam and asked the goat to look after the yam. Lesson: Be careful the way you trust people. Such persons may actually be evil and destiny destroyers.
47. Uda sa bo rahu yio oria mue ekpen rie. Beju ze egbe ele, ole ekpen re rekhaen: Literal meaning: You cannot compel people to respect you. Lesson: It is your conduct that determines whether you will be respected or people may just become afraid of you. To respect or fear you are entirely two different things. Desire respect and honour.
48. Ate so, aye esoa. Literal meaning: In telling your life stories, you say some and keep others. Lesson: In life, learn to be wise and don't say those things you are not supposed to say. Be sensitive to any occasion while making your comments.
49. Ane ne ebe fen lulu, ughama are gbole. Literal meaning: If you consider the offence of the rat, you would require a big hammer to kill it. Lesson: There is the need to apply wisdom when dealing with those that have offended you.
50. Awa no khuenin, egbe obono. Literal meaning: The dog that is pursuing the elephant is just disturbing itself. Lesson: It is senseless to embark on an obviously futile mission. Save the energy for something more meaningful/rewarding.
51. Onon wue ole ukpomon elo no soria, oazegbenin ihuenlo asabo gue. Literal meaning: The one that says he is the apple of another person's eyes must present himself in such a way that the eye lids of that person can indeed protect him. Lesson: For you to enjoy benefits of a relationship, it is needful to understand and obey the rules of the game/relationship.
52. Abha mie ba se mie ghe. Aki mie ba bha se mien, arie ba on aka mien khe. Literal meaning: there is nothing that we are seeing that has not been before. But even if there is anything that looks totally new, then it is added to what has been seen before. Lesson: Nothing is new under the sun. Be prepared to accept any situation in life and move ahead.

53. Obhioria ribhi siotien non olo no bha luen. Literal meaning: You cannot have a brother by the cherry tree and be eating unripe ones. Lesson: Ideally, you should not suffer when you have someone in authority.
54. Keke ore de. Literal meaning: different strokes for different persons. Lesson: We do not all have the same luck. Define your path and move ahead.
55. Obulu iromon re lobhegbe. Literal meaning: When you continuously thank the person working for you, then the work will be sweet. Lesson: Always learn to appreciate people when they assist you. By this way you can always get more.
56. Okhue men sele, ole aluo obhe bhe nan. Literal meaning: The person that learns to appreciate favour is the one that deserves more favour. Lesson: When someone has shown you kindness, always learn to say thank you. By so doing, you qualify yourself for more favour.
57. Ebelakpe leghe gbo unun afo. Literal meaning: The animal that ate the fruit had already cleaned its mouth. Lesson: Learn to understand the timing of events otherwise you will be coming in when such events are over. The attitude of coming late can make you lose so many opportunities.
58. Eyen fio nogbole bhoto, oghu kpo kpo. Literal meaning: The snake is afraid to face the person killing it instead the snake is looking the stick being used by the person. Lesson: When persons are scared of talking to your boss, they may end up facing you. You need tact to avoid being in the line of fire.
59. Oriari bhe gbade non are esen kpobo. Literal meaning: You cannot be by the riverside and be using saliva to wash hands. Lesson: It is stupidity for you to be managing in the midst of plenty. Identify your source and resources and tap into them.
60. Ue eva gbi iyan. Abha roton, aki ro hen. Literal meaning: A piece of yam will usually end up in either of two ways-either it is roasted or it is boiled. Lesson: Be prepared to accept the reality of the situation at hand and forge ahead
61. Igbo idia ba zen. Abha mionan ye we ghe ole mon igbo. Literal meaning: Money is like witchcraft. No body agrees that he has it. Lesson: Everyone has a way of complaining that things are not okay with him or her. That is one mechanism of driving people away from you so they do not disturb you with their challenges.
62. Ejabha se ole eko. Literal meaning: It is the places you have not been to that you call Lagos. Lesson: You only need to get close to someone and you will soon realize that the glamour you see from afar off is just a “make-up”.
63. Airunun wo mon no wan sibhi ghogho re. Literal meaning: You do not need to specifically instruct a wise son to leave the smoky environment. Lesson: You are expected to apply common sense in all aspects of life particularly when you tread in dangerous terrains.
64. Onoa sabo gbe olea ye deyon gbe. Literal meaning: It is the person that you can beat that you will still attempt to engage in a fight when you are drunk. Lesson: When you are making a boast learn where to draw the line. For example, even if you are angry, you cannot go and slap a soldier man.

65. Ebehan agbo ilo, obha han osenebula ilo. Literal meaning: What comes to men as surprise is already known to God. Lesson: Irrespective of what you are passing through, always recognize the place of God in your life.
66. Onon yio nai tioligbon de ase gia khian, ole to bo tie gbole igbon eghe non ki re run kpon ka bhi ghogho. Literal meaning: The slave who said he should not be called slave when they get to the town they were travelling to was the one that called himself a slave by drying his wet clothes with smoke. Lesson: Conduct yourself wisely and you will be respected.
67. Elo aka le akue lebae. Literal meaning: You eat the face of the one inviting to share a meal with him before you eat the food. Lesson: Look at the attitude of the person attempting to offer you something before grabbing the offer.
68. Ine khole are lazen. Literal meaning: You eat witchcraft out of shame. Lesson: Learn to know when your emotions are leading you into unreasonable or undesirable acts.
69. Eje de da we ole ose wie wie. Literal meaning: Whenever you wake up, that is your morning time. Lesson: Don't be too anxious about tomorrow or envy another man's progress. Your own turn will come. Just keep doing what is right.
70. Ejea wue, aikuabhor. Literal meaning: Where you are going to eventually sleep, you do not hurry to go there. Lesson: When your target is been clearly defined, don't become too anxious otherwise you may lose focus.
71. Aitebebehekefo. Literal meaning: You do not say all in your mind Lesson: Always be circumspect when discussing issues particularly to a "strange crowd".
72. Ateso, ayesoa. Literal meaning: You say certain things and you forget others. Lesson: You do not necessarily have to recount your previous bad experiences otherwise you end up stressing yourself needlessly.
73. Ono fiu ukpudo deo bhe ki bhalen onoa degbe. Literal meaning: The man that throws a stone into a market place cannot predict who exactly the stone will hit. Lesson: Be careful when you are planning evil. It may backfire on you or on people dear to you.
74. Abha len ede noa wea akho. Literal meaning: You cannot correctly say how tomorrow will be. Lesson: Do not be over confident in your successes today. Anything can happen tomorrow.
75. Okhue ekhie samen re kpeloa, ogun no lume min ki? Literal meaning: If the man assisting the goldsmith is complaining of heat, what of the goldsmith himself? Lesson: you cannot be seen to be complaining when the people helping you are already going the extra mile to ensure you are comfortable.
76. Eba do lu bhu wuo han men, olea tamo ogun. Literal meaning: It is what you have come to do in the goldsmith's shop that you tell him. Lesson: In an uncomfortable place like the goldsmith shop where there is so much heat, you do not have time for frivolities. You go straight to the reason why you came to the shop. In another sense, a student who is studying in a harsh environment will only be stupid and fooling himself by wasting time on inconsequential things rather than concentrate on his studies.

77. Aha man uwua bhoto, aki amanlen bhokhun noi da gor. Literal meaning: While building a house, you take measurements of both the foundation and the roof levels otherwise it may not be straight. Lesson: In life, you must make a comprehensive plan rather than ad-hoc plan otherwise you may soon get stranded in life.
78. Uu no gbu usiagbon, oni bhe gbe. Literal meaning: The death that is killing many people is not painful. Lesson: When you are not the only person affected by a tragedy, you do not have to single out yourself to be overreacting.
79. Akpa kpa muan aghozi. Literal meaning: The spider web has held the big animal. Lessons: Be careful always and never underrate situations. You may just be disappointed if you are over confident.
80. Ehoho sabor mu ikpido, ebe no kale ki? Literal meaning: If breeze can blow pebbles, what will happen to dry leaves? If a man that prepared for an even failed, what will happen to the man who is mindless and ambivalent?
81. Amen no gbu udo, iton okpe sio bhegbere. Literal meaning: The rain that is beating on a stone is only help to wash the stone and make it finer. Lesson: When men think they are creating obstacles against you, they are actually helping you with platforms to climb higher.
82. Ono ra kon gha elan men, oilen ebo no rio bhu nu huse ye. Literal meaning: The man, who used his teeth to share meat, is certainly aware of how much meat he held back in his mouth. Lesson; When you have done evil, you are certainly aware.
83. De na re bio ozuor, aki bio yi. Oyi ara, oki mue mon gbo ozuor. Literal meaning: Instead of you to give birth to a fool, is better to give birth to a thief. When the thief has stolen something, he will say it was the fool that stole it. Lesson: Always needful to have children who can read the signs of the time.
84. Aha bie gbe, aki bie ebianabiana. Literal meaning: When you decide to have so many children, you may get to a point where you cannot even tell the sex of the children. Lesson: Demonstrate moderation in all you do, otherwise, you may erode previous successes.
85. Oha bun gbe, Edo iye de. Literal meaning: When it has become so much, the Bini person will not buy it again. Lesson: Don't drive your point to a ridiculous extent otherwise your group may soon abandon you.
86. Abha ran mundu umen lomon, aki ramun do ogi lole. Literal meaning: If you don't want to eat the soup because there is no salt in it, at least you can eat it because of the magi cube in it. Lesson: Nobody should be described as being entirely bad. Always try to identify the good aspects in people and deemphasize the bad aspect.
87. Une noi yu une, ole okhuo da ro bo mue yen mon len. Literal meaning: It is the race that is not serious that the woman will remember to support her breast with her hands. Lesson: Always prioritize and define what constitutes an urgent situation and respond appropriately.
88. Eba lele, egbea da mionlen. Literal meaning: The type of meal you had is usually identified by looking at your clothings. Lesson: What you have inside of you can be identified by your behaviour.

89. Are vie, aida ghe. Literal meaning: Even while you are crying, you can still see. Lesson: Even while you are passing through hard times, you can still demonstrate your bowels of mercy towards people.
90. Abha ho na re bale no no bhatan aki ri ijoko si bhu ware wole ghe ebalele ri bhu ukikaka. Literal Meaning: When you do not actually intend to feed the short man, you remove the stool he could use to elevate himself and then tell him there is food close to the ceiling. Lesson: When a man has made up his mind not to assist you, he creates the perfect environment that will make it practically impossible for you to be assisted.
91. Uhonmin yan olea guanon bhe khere. Literal meaning: While you are eating porridge, it is the head of yam you look for. Lesson: In a gathering where the people do not like you, be very careful about your conduct. Whatever you say or do will be picked readily. Others may say or do the same thing without any problem but with you it can generate issues. The caveat is that you must know yourself.
92. Ebhi bha se muan ha, olea da hion sa gbo khan muokhan si bhore. Literal meaning: It is when you have not mixed the yam with oil you remove a portion for the man that forbids oil. Lesson: Prepare early enough to avert impending danger otherwise it can consume you. This draws a parallel with the popular saying “a stitch in time saves nine”.
93. Abha se fietin arie gbe bhi ihue? Literal meaning: The contest is just starting and yet you are already tired and hitting your own nose? Lesson: It is better to prepare adequately before embarking on a project. Otherwise, you may not be able to go far at all with respect to completing the project. That will bring dishonour to you.
94. Obhokhan ilen so owue mion lu ukhieman. Literal meaning: The little child is usually not aware when the pounded yam in his hand falls off while he is eating and dozing away. He can actually pick it up and eat it. Lesson: Do not be wise in your own way at all times. Take corrections and never assume that you can never be wrong.
95. Ikhon len amien. Aimin man khonlen. Literal meaning: When you are asked to eat, don't say we are full, rather say I am full. Lesson: In certain situations, it is always better for you to speak for yourself and let others also speak for themselves. Is one clear way of getting out of trouble.
96. Elan men naile, aira akon ghole. Literal meaning: You cannot use your teeth to share the meat you forbid for people. This is because invariably, the meat will get into your mouth. Lesson: We must be very clear in life about things we want and the things we don't want. We must learn to stay far away from those things we abhor.
97. Ne men gbo mon ikpnuon oye. Aigbe mon moan ekeleoye. Literal meaning: Help me to correct my child is usually verbalized. Please do not kill my child all in the name of correction is usually kept in the mind. Lesson: Read the actions of the person you are assisting and if you think he feels he does not truly need help, leave him alone. Otherwise, you might be seen as an intruder sooner than later.
98. Ejatanse, olea da juhonmon. Literal meaning: You have your head at the level of your height. Lesson: Wait for your turn. Don't seek to displace others so you can take their position.

99. Oase eghe okpa, okpa viele. Literal: The cock crows once it is time for it to crow. Lesson: Nobody can stop your destiny. In other words, you cannot stop a dream whose time has come.
100. Akhatare ebe kien ehen len, aile. Literal meaning: If you are told what transformed into fish, you won't eat fish. Lesson: You don't necessarily need to dig into someone's past. Take him as he is and spare yourself the trouble of digging into history. You may end up hurting yourself.
101. Ure bi agan gan mon len ako mien. Literal meaning: The snail is always seen with its shell. Lesson: Always carry your children along in all that you do. Never leave them alone for any reason. You must be close to your children or else they can be taken over by others.
102. Eghe nab ha sere mie ebo, oiye ebe aruen. Literal meaning: Before the white man came, the black man was not wearing leaves. Lesson: Nobody is indispensable. There is always a way out.
103. Obo nan kpo bona, obona kpobonan oki khia. Literal meaning: When the two hands wash each other, they soon get clean rather each washing itself. Lesson: There is a lot to gain from working together particularly in a synergistic manner..
104. Efen eva aku erumun gbe, oki hu so sebe eluo. Literal meaning: When two rats join their tails together, it becomes as big as that of the rabbit. Lesson: There is strength in unity.
105. Aha si adien, adien ssio olumun. Literal meaning: When you are pulling on the hook, the hook will in turn be pulling on the tree. Lesson: When people have committed a crime as a group, you will only need to get one member of the group and he will in turn confess the others.
106. Ekpekpen amunegbe ada mein okhokho oa sunurolo oki de hian re. Oiyiosi ohusebho. Literal meaning: Because it is desirable to respect each other that is why whenever the chicken gets to the gate it bows its head to enter. It is not that the under of the gate will not contain it if it does not bow its head. Lesson: Irrespective of where you find yourself, give honour to whom honour is due.
107. Keke orede. Literal meaning: We don't all experience the same things in life. Lesson: Our destinies are different. You may learn from someone's stories but do not tie your destiny to his destiny.
108. Aha gbo kpia, aki mie jia shole nan. Literal meaning: when you have beaten a man and dragged him away, he must be able to leave a trail to show where he passed through while he was being dragged as evidence that he struggled. Lesson: Don't just give up when you encounter difficult situations. Put in your best and let it be obvious to everyone that you did your best even if you fail. In other words, if you must fail, fail gallantly and not as a failure.
109. Aighae okhon khe onoiri bhuwa. Literal meaning: You do not leave a portion of a fight for someone who is not at home. Lesson: It is foolishness to put your trust in a man you have not even interacted with.

110. Aha khuen okale, ague unun. Literal meaning: When you have put seeds of corn in your mouth, you should close your mouth. Lesson: You still need to apply a lot of caution even when you think you have arrived otherwise you can still slip.
111. Aha de muo kpia, aki demue ezighi zighi. Literal meaning: When you attempt to seize a man, you should encounter spikes and thorns in his body. Lesson: Don't be easily jolted. Let people know the stuff you are made off.
112. Oboria khon oria. Literal meaning: You get satisfied when you feed yourself with your own hands. Lesson: You always have great satisfaction when you get results based on your personal efforts rather than depending on others.
113. Ekhon mon noa fuo mon ole okhomon. Omon a khon me ekhomon no hu non len, oki gbole. Literal meaning: A child should ideally suffer an ailment he can handle. If he takes on an ailment he can't handle, it will kill him. Lesson: This is like saying make your coat according to the size of your cloth otherwise you may actually be sowing trouble for yourself.
114. Ebafi bhu hon mon oi da min. Literal meaning: The blow directed at the head is usually very painful. Lesson: The attack that is directed at your personality is usually very painful
115. Amen bha gbe bhu hon mon oi ni bhe gbe. Literal meaning: If the rain does get to your head, it is not very painful. Lesson: In life identify your areas of priority and give it utmost protection.
116. Unu aretalor. Aha ru wedin talor amiokan. Literal meaning: You talk with your mouth. Once you start talking with your anus, you bring shame upon yourself. Lesson: There is a limit to which you can advise someone. If he persistently refuses to heed the advice, then he is left alone.
117. Jio omon da vie de ode viemin. Ade omon bha vie, aida khole nan bhuwa. Literal meaning: Let the child cry if he wants to cry. If he did not cry on the day he was born, he won't have been given a bath and taken into the house to announce the arrival of a new born. Lesson: Don't be reluctant to correct your child because he will cry or feel bad. The correction is for his good.
118. Ai wuomon ole la len. Ede non aki len, ibha kolen. Literal meaning: You don't tell a child your actions are not of any interest to me. The day he gets into trouble, the actions will necessarily be of interest to you. Lesson: Never leave your child uncorrected and think that his actions or inactions do not perturb you. When the child has challenges, you will be dragged into the matter.
119. Eba rie non mon rekhen olea rie non mon re khen. Literal meaning: It is not everything you give to a child to play with. Lesson: In relationship with your child, you must define your clear line of authority and be firm or else your child will become totally irresponsible.
120. Oiyi ilo na so yu gbo olea so vae. Literal meaning: Is not the same song you sing to the farm that you also sing while returning from farm. Lesson: Every phase of your life has specific requirements. Attend to them according to the demands of the season.

121. Ehen bhasaka olea da gia kuenre. Oa ki kafo, oiye gia kuenre. Literal meaning: It is better to fold the fish when it is not yet dry. It is practically impossible to fold the fish when it is now dry. Lesson; Correct your child when he is still young and amenable to corrections or else you may never succeed at correcting him.
122. Ni orin ikhia bhor re tan ne be kole, ono kole ki kuen olere hianlen. Literal meaning: Instead of the okro plant to be taller than the owner, the owner will bend the okro plant in order to harvest the fruits. Lesson: Even when your child has attained the age of maturity, you still have the duty to keep correcting him whenever he errs.
123. Ako muni he, oikhua. Literal meaning: When there is a combined effort to carry a piece of load, it is usually light. Lesson: This talks about the value of cooperation at all times. No one is an island. Learn to cooperate with others. It gives better outcomes.
124. Itu eva ino we nea hin maadese. Literal meaning: Two persons cannot be on the bed and they will be fighting who will stay at the centre. Lesson: Don't waste your precious time on meaningless arguments.
125. Aigbu gan bhe eve gbe. Ukpom okpa arie sibhore. : Literal meaning: You do not argue too much about whether a man has swollen scrotum or not. The easiest thing to do is to expose the area of the scrotum and the argument is laid to rest. Lesson: rather than waste precious time arguing about issues, identify hard facts that will help decide the issues one way or the other.
126. Ukpiri atuagbeokinfa. Literal meaning: When the rope is too tight, it snaps. Lesson: You need to have restraint in anything you are doing.
127. Ono bha len ejamen dagbole, oki len eje evuonlen dakale. Literal meaning: The man who does not know where he was beaten by rain should not forget where the sun came to dry him up. Lesson: You must never forget those who got you out of danger.
128. Oare na mun he, aki mu wuen re. Literal meaning: When you have been carrying the load on your head for a long time, there comes a time when you should put it down. Lesson: When you have been lifted up in life, you do not continue to punish yourself.
129. Ono ro okhuale ye de, ade len eka amen noa re suwa. Literal meaning: The man who went to the river with a basket will need to show how much water he brought home. Lesson: You should not embark on deceiving yourself when you are expecting results without any form of preparation.
130. Ada eda khe amen noa ro. Literal meaning: You keep containers to collect rain water before the rain starts. Lesson: Always make adequate preparation for any project you are engaged in otherwise you may be taken unawares.
131. Abha yio obhokhan noin jikon gha ghai. Abu omi ukpobunu regue ole. Literal meaning: You don't tell a child not to have very long teeth provided he is able to have enough length of lip to cover them. Lesson: You must be prepared to accept the consequences of foolish or dangerous decisions.

132. De no obhiobo re u, ebe fo bhe ewe. Literal meaning: Instead of the native doctor's child to die, all the herbs in the bush will have to be exhausted first. Lesson: When you have been elevated to a particular position, there are things that can no longer be associated with you or your children. Your children must necessarily reflect that things are well with you otherwise, something is basically wrong with you.
133. Oriaivie se noa avia aranen. Literal meaning: No matter the duration of your weeping, you cannot be shedding blood instead of tears. Lesson: That you are passing through a rough time in your life will not make the impossible to begin to happen. The earlier you accept the realities of life and make corresponding preparations, the better for you.
134. Obhajiale oki jia hunfia. Literal meaning: If you cannot swallow what you were given to eat, then you should be able to spit it out. Identify your space in life and make the best of the opportunity.
135. Odan men are ho ebhe no bhili. Literal meaning: You search for a missing black goat in the day time. Lesson: If you fail to realize that there is time for everything in life, then you are very likely to miss your location in destiny.
136. Ebagbe bha u, aimuo bhe ekpa. Literal meaning: If the animal you are killing has not died, you do not put it into the bag. Lesson: In life, always seek to pursue issues to their logical conclusions. It has great reward.
137. Aiye obuzo bhomon. Literal meaning: You do not forget to eat the meat in your plate of soup while you are eating. Lesson: Always identify the essentials in your life and safeguard them.
138. Emin ahe bhelo daghe elimin. Literal meaning: You need to put on certain things in order to be able to see the spirit ward. Lesson: A gift may be necessary to resolve certain issues. Identify such occasions and respond appropriately.
139. Airababor muo okhue. Literal meaning: You don't use bare hands to catch the squirrel. Lesson: Know when to apply great tact in achieving results.
140. Oria gbano oria opkodu. Literal meaning: The masquerade requires the services of another person to dress him up. Lesson: In life, you would always need the help of others at one point or the other. Never despise anybody.
141. Oe okpa kpa aze bhokedin nai da dere. Literal meaning: You take a step at a time in the boat for mashing palm fruits otherwise you will fall. Lesson: Learn to take one thing at a time otherwise you may have real challenges in life.
142. Ahadofie eraen, ighogho ve olea. Literal meaning: When you prepare fire in secret, smoke will expose you. Lesson: When you are committing a crime, you can only conceal it for a short period. Before long, there will be things that will expose you.
143. Ayebhado, alen ena juotuole. Literal meaning: Even though you are greeting a group of persons, those actually being greeted know themselves. Lesson: Do not just join a crowd aimlessly. Always define who you are in the midst of the crowd and know your place or position.

144. Mu megbe khere khere ran munde okhiotua iye. Literal meaning: Dress me slowly because I am in a hurry. Lesson: When you are in a hurry to do things, you are very likely to commit many errors. The lesson therefore is that you should take things calmly and you will be fine.
145. Obhokhan bha len ele, akiru ujonmeraen man lele. Literal meaning: When the little child does not know rainbow, you demonstrate it to him with fire. Lesson: He that refuses wise and gentle counsel, is usually thought by harsh methods.
146. Ebhi na mien bhegbokhin olea re lan mokhin. Literal meaning: It is the oil that is produced by the cricket that is used to fry the cricket. Lesson: In any business endeavour you find yourself, that business must be self-sustaining otherwise that business endeavour is not worth the efforts.
147. Ebho oria ahonamen roi. Literal meaning: You desire that it should rain in your town. Lesson: In life, you must make efforts to do what will benefit your own family and immediate community.
148. Elegen oria olea guai. Literal meaning: When tilling the soil, you place the soil in between your own feet. Lesson: Learn to resolve your challenges before attempting to resolve the challenges of others.
149. Onosolease oitua. Literal meaning: The person whose instructions will be carried out is usually not in a hurry. Lesson: Once your position is clearly defined on issues, you do not need to bother yourself. You just relax and await the final outcome.
150. Onorio osuke, oilen bore nae no we ye. Literal meaning: The man who is married to a cripple is the one that designs a method of sleeping with the cripple. Lesson: In life, once you have decided on a difficult route, you must also design coping strategies otherwise you may soon end up in frustration.
151. Onuwabhagbe, olele isa bole. Literal meaning: The man who is not sold out from his family, cannot be conquered outside. Lesson: This is like saying “a man’s enemy are within his house”. You should be careful while dealing with strangers but don’t be careless when relating with members of your household.
152. Onobha gbe bhu uwa, oigbe bholele. Literal meaning: The person who has not learnt how to dance at home cannot suddenly start dancing in public. Lesson: In any endeavour in life, one must understand the value of adequate preparation otherwise one is bound to end up in failure.
153. Ewen wan are gbe efen no ribhe gba khe nai dagbekhea. Literal meaning: You require great care to kill the rat by the clay water pot otherwise you will end up breaking the pot. Lesson: In responding to insults or challenges in life, one should always seek to apply great caution otherwise the person may end up hurting himself.
154. Arun utan men eyen hiun ukpo kpo, ono oran ki tan gbe na ki da mien one eyen abha ye sabor gbole. Literal meaning: If you cut a very long stick because the snake to be killed is very long, the stick will end up being too long and unable to achieve the aim of killing the snake. Lesson: In life, don’t be rash at taking decisions on the spur of the moment or else you are bound to fail in most cases.

155. Ona lenlen, olea gbe bho kholen. Literal meaning: In war situation, in most instances you end up killing the person you know. Lesson: Be careful of people who you think are close to you. They may actually be the one to plan your downfall.
156. Okhuo khua alumeman noi da fikpe. Literal meaning: It is better to quickly pound the yam while it is still hot otherwise the pounded yam will have seeds. Lesson: It is always good to adopt a timely approach to any endeavour in life otherwise the gains derived from the efforts may actually be worthless.
157. Aiyio ona gbe noi ivie. Literal meaning: You do not tell the person who is being beaten not to cry. Lesson: You may be able to maltreat someone, but you can't stop him from telling his stories.
158. Aikoko gbo ono khe hio omon kua. Literal meaning: The man who pours away the soup meant for a group of persons is usually also beaten by a group of persons. Lesson: Before you decide to offend a group of persons, you should think of the possible consequences which might be varied and diverse.
159. Omon non men bhunu oise man. Literal meaning: The sweet soup is usually not enough for the pounded yam. Lesson: The good things of life are usually short lived. We all need to apply discretion.
160. Abha mie ebe rele noi ifo. Literal meaning: There is nothing that has happened that does not have an end. Lesson: In life, when you are faced with challenges, always remember that those challenges are for a period. They will surely come to pass.
161. Are mien akon bio olanmen eisike egbe, ese ye van. Ea van fo eye gbo hanlen. Literal meaning: Even though the teeth and tongue are pretty close they still quarrel. After the quarrel, they also settle. Lesson: Even the best of your friends can offend you. What will however sustain the friendship is the ability to quickly resolve the differences or disagreements.
162. Ukpe bhi son khere ole ria uwedin an. Literal meaning: It is the little faecal matter that soils the perineum. Lesson: The little things we ignore in life usually turn out to be more important or relevant. Never forget your days of little beginning.
163. Ase ayon ori ne ki ase. Literal meaning: Let us be preparing the solidified pap while waiting for the market to commence. Lesson: Learn to take issues in bits so you don't lose focus.
164. Aha gbe gbeobhe ese, aki ane egbe iconi cona. Literal meaning: When two friends have defrauded each other, they pass routes that will ensure their paths don't cross. Lesson: In friendship, it is desirable that both parties are faithful to the relationship. If this is not the case, before long they will be involved in acts that will make them uncomfortable to sit in the same place.
165. Iton ilo bhe gbe. Literal meaning: Dirt doesn't stick permanently on your body. Lesson: Do not be unwilling to engage in activities you consider being dirty if such activities will help to stabilize you in life financially and otherwise. The stain and pain from the activities will only be for a season.
166. Edi izo jie olea re len emuan ta. Literal meaning: Truths are usually revealed during playful discussions. Lesson: Take every discussion about you seriously. You

may gain wisdom and understanding or corrections from what appeared seemingly to be a joke.

167. Oiyee ede no obhokhan gbu uko ebhi anonlen. Literal meaning: It is not the same day a child breaks the container of oil that you ask him. Lesson: You may commit an offence and seemingly get away with it. But note that there is always a day of reckoning.
168. Ono yan ugbo, ole ye yan ebio men men no rib ho. Literal meaning: The owner of the farm also owes the lizard inside the farm. Lesson: For any actions you have decided to take, you must also be prepared to accept the full responsibility- whether good or bad.
169. Eda among hon oinan. Literal meaning: It is never too late to say “congratulations”. Lesson: Learn to wait for your turn for the blessings of God and don’t envy others. When it is your time, the Lord will do it and men will congratulate you.
170. Abaren are gha elan men. Literal meaning: You share meat with the same hands with which you slaughtered the animal. Lesson: What can be done now should not be postponed to a later date.
171. Aha gba afian men rio okhun amalu jie du wa. Literal meaning: When you have shot the bird upwards, you have actually aided the bird to head home. Lesson: Be careful when you think you are creating difficulties for some one. You may actually be helping him.
172. Ono bhatuemen zoe no kemen. Literal meaning: The man who refused to greet me made my journey quicker. Lesson: When people don’t greet you or associate with you out of envy, just continue what you are doing. They are actually assisting you by removing all manners of distractions from you. At least if the man had greeted you, you may spend a couple of minutes to exchange pleasantries. Now that he refused to greet you, you can convert those minutes to something more useful.
173. Airo ofu kin uwa. Literal meaning: You don’t convert a nice place to your house and remain there when you have your own place. Lesson: Always learn to value what is your own. You may copy someone else to improve on what you are doing but don’t lose sleep because you are not exactly like the other man.
174. Efun uwa oi mon ebhi. Literal meaning: The rat at home does not have oil. Lesson: This is similar to saying that a prophet is not honoured at home. So do not be surprised whenever your immediate folks despise you.
175. Okhuo imo ose se na aho elegen olen. Literal meaning: A woman cannot be so beautiful that while having intercourse, you now decide to use the thighs rather than the vagina. Lesson: The truth must be said irrespective of who is involved. A man that cannot speak the truth is not worthy to live.
176. Aigho okhuo fo akue ve ebhe naen. Literal meaning: You first size up a woman before you prescribe the type of goat she is to use to pay her fine. Lesson: Learn to always analyze any business venture critically before committing your resources into it.

177. Ejehi okhin, abha se bho fo, ebi ilo. Literal meaning: If you have not gotten to where destiny has defined for you, your day will not get dark. Lesson: Have your focus properly defined and strive towards it. Even if there is a delay in achieving it, be optimistic that you will achieve your goal. You will get there.
178. Afe no koto ole ria ukponan. Literal meaning: It is the last drops of urine that usually stains the dress. Lesson: Watch how you finish your race. The ending of a task is probably more important than the beginning.
179. Abha mie eba luo okhonmon ye, aki wue ole eraan. Literal meaning: If there is no other thing to do to the sick man, you put off the fire he is using to get some warmth. Lesson: People must be punished for their errors irrespective of how minute the punishment may seem.
180. Otuo okpa tomin mio oleken. Literal meaning: The same person digging the well is not expected to also pack the sand. Lesson: Always learn to believe in the spirit of team work. It brings better results.
181. Aha bio omon, omon bio oria. Literal meaning: A parent first gives birth to a child. Later, the child will give birth to the parent. Lesson: Never neglect to care for your children. Later on in life, your children will now be caring for you as though they were your parents.
182. Ikhue min adenegbe, ikhen ye denegbe. Literal meaning: When the sound of the drum has changed, the dance steps should also change. Lesson: In life, you must learn to make adjustments in order to accommodate changes and challenges that may come up.
183. Omen men ye ghee ran no le fiele oleopkpa ole len len. Oni ki to khian nin, ole bha ye len lo oni. Literal meaning: The mad man says that it is only the small fire he ignited that he is aware of. He says he is not aware of the fire that is now ravaging the entire bush. Lesson: A man who does not consider the far reaching consequences of his actions or inactions is akin to a mad man.
184. Onobha mie ebota oki huean. Literal meaning: The man who does not have anything to say should learn not to say anything. Lesson: You must not talk at all times. Rather than say words that are foolish or meaningless, it is better to keep quiet. Otherwise, you may end up embarrassing yourself or embarrassing others.
185. Ekhole lu uhi ki, oluo no diakole. Literal meaning: If the foolish actions of a foolish man are not embarrassing him, the actions surely embarrass those close to him. Lesson: In taking your decisions or actions, always think of how it will affect those related or close to you. You may not be directly affected but it sure can affect others.
186. Be ejomon ze egbele, olea re khuale. Literal meaning: You carry a child according to his or her anatomical configuration. Lesson: You are treated the way present yourself. There is need to properly package yourself and then you can earn respect.
187. Ono ru ufienmen fie eman, odiakhe ehoho. Literal meaning: Anybody that decides to stake yam with a fragile sticks should await the arrival of the wind. Lesson:

Don't seek for easy ways out by seeking for short cuts. Sooner than later, the consequences of the short cuts will catch up with you

188. Eyen no otuon okpa daghe, olei ebi. Literal meaning: The snake seen by one person is a python. Lesson: You cannot afford to give a private interpretation to what is open before all. That may succeed, if the information was available to only you.
189. Elan men ad eve, okie ele onogbelanmenan. Literal meaning: When an animal has big scrotal sacs, it becomes the gain of the butcher. Lesson: In life, what appears to be difficulty for one man, may indeed be blessing to another person.
190. Oiye ajia hoe edin na ata. Eke na mien fan oleata. Literal meaning: It is not how long you searched for palm fruits that matters, but the quantity harvested. Lesson: This is like saying not how far, but how well. In whatever you do in life, let quality service and excellent spirit be the watch word.
191. Aire emonlen koka. Literal meaning: You cannot rely on his words to go and plant corn. Lesson: Always try to maintain your integrity. If your life is laden with untruthfulness, sooner than later, you become someone that cannot be trusted for anything.
192. Oa yena guane min bho khun akia guanole bhotor. Literal meaning: When he tells you to search for the missing item upstairs, just move downstairs to search. Lesson: It is not good to push yourself to a point where you are regarded perpetually as someone who is not a witness of truth.
193. Ugen imen okho kho bhe gbe, oki bho fia. Literal meaning: When the feather is no longer good for the hen, the hen drops the feather. Lesson: In life, you must recognize the most appropriate time to drop some habits, people, culture, practices, etc.
194. Ugben no ribho obo, obha jia da zono ribhoe. Literal meaning: It is because of the thorn in the finger that the one in the leg has not been removed. Lesson: Talks about prioritization. Know the things should do now that will grant you access and speed to achieve more.
195. Ekelebha ria eria, elolo igbamevie. Literal meaning: If there are no deep thoughts in your mind, you don't weep. Lesson: Issues that are painful to a man are those issues that get to the very depth of his soul.
196. Ejo oboh da leno to, olea da horie. Literal meaning: A native doctor is able to disappear only in the areas he is familiar with. Lesson: In making an unusual move, ensure that you are familiar with the terrain; otherwise the entire process may become clumsy.
197. Ono si ke otue, ole kikeke vae vbo tue. Literal meaning: The person that stays very close to the church is usually the last to come to the church. Lesson: Is good to have confidence. But when this action makes you to jettison the habit of adequate preparations, then the person is bound to fail.
198. Unoko yio oran nan bha len bhe gbo. Literal meaning: The unoko tree is not hidden in the bush. It is well known by all. Lesson: You must distinguish yourself in

all that you do so that your worth is readily known by all. This is like saying a golden fish has no hiding place.

199. Abha gba azanama oi tia aboki. Literal meaning: Except you flog the Yoruba man, he does not call you “my friend”. Lesson: When things are too simplified, the worth may not be readily valued.
200. Ikeke iye gbe. Literal meaning: The back is not part of the body. Lesson: As humans, we lack the ability to know evil being plotted behind you even by people you think are your friends. Thus in all things, you need tact and wisdom.
201. Onotie mon ria men aye tieoloria. Literal meaning: When a person recognizes me as somebody, I will also recognize the person as some body and vice versa. Lesson: This is summarized in the saying that “respect begets respect”.
202. Oyaziwolo. Literal meaning: Hardship makes you strong. Lesson: Difficult situations are expected to make you strong.
203. Uwa okhon ye. Literal meaning: The real battle is in the house. Lesson: If you are not betrayed by your own people, then you are very likely to overcome most time.
204. Okhuo aye ghe ebokpea alu ole sabo ye luole, uki riu ukoko no ukpobhunu khere no feo bho. Literal meaning: If a woman says whatever a man can do she can also do it, you give her a bottle with a small opening to urinate inside and no drop of urine should be on the floor. Lesson: Respect people’s abilities and never trivialize them.
205. Obhokhan no due elan men rie bhe ke omon no khua, obha tue oboa, oki tue olan menan. Literal meaning: For the child that stole a piece of meat from a very hot pot of soup is either he burns his hands, or he burns his tongue since he has to quickly swallow the meat. Lesson: Any how you want to look at it, evil will never pay. Evil done by men usually leaves a scar.
206. Ogboria miolemin, igue adamionlen: Literal meaning: The man that is in the habit of always obtaining things from you is always found on his knees. Lesson: Be careful when someone is always on his or her knees begging for one favour or the other. Beware: it may be a scam and the person begging you may actually be better off than yourself.
207. Ade ebekhon bha sue ebhe, airelen ebhe isabogbikhen. Literal meaning: If the goat had not been bitten by “soldier ants” no one would have known that the goat could dance. Lesson: It is good to have challenges at times because oftentimes, they bring out the best in you.
208. Efen no ri khen jio onogbo oiremon suwa no tare ebesunu. Literal meaning: The rat that plays into the arena of the cats will not live to tell the story. Lesson: Avoidable errors must be prevented at all cost otherwise the consequences may be too devastating.
209. Ebe no kae ade fia, oki kin igbuhi ne ebe no se ribhu okhuoran. Literal meaning: The falling of a dry leaf is a warning to the living ones. Lesson: You do not necessarily need to learn from your own mistakes. You can learn from the mistake of others.

210. Ono nu une dan oa len ghe oro de kion omuo ole. Literal meaning: Anyone who wrestles with the pig should see dirt as a unique companion. Lesson: Be careful the type of company you keep. Such company may have the capacity to create a permanent dent on your image.
211. Oria no ye olei hugbe no re lu re khan oria, oki len ghe olei ye khere gbe no re rag bon khian. Literal meaning: He who feels too big to be a follower will be too small to be a leader. Lesson: Never despise anybody. Humility is the key to making it in life.
212. Ono bha ragbon, oadibhe liminan. Literal meaning: If you didn't want to come into this world, then you may as well have stayed in the great beyond. Lesson: For a man to be a failure in this world, it was better if he was not born.
213. Oiyamen na koko bho oto are gbo oiele. Literal meaning: You do not have to rely on the water gathered from the ground to make your ogbono soup. Lesson: In life you must make personal efforts if you must succeed. You do not have to rely on the efforts of others to make it in life.
214. Okhue ye ghe eku ukpe aki gbe bhagbon noa da loka be ehunhon len. Literal meaning: The parrot says there is no need to each corn and the chaffs since it has got only few years on earth. Therefore, the bird goes only for the pulp. Lesson: Life is short. Do not be unnecessarily hard on yourself. Create some moment and enjoy life.
215. Ono hen ikeke atanakpa oa yere ghe atanakpa elanmen no le elamen non. Literal meaning: The animal that decides to ride on the back of the tiger must remember at all times that the tiger is a carnivorous animal. Lesson: When you decide to align and benefit from a wicked and dangerous man, you must understand the principles of total loyalty, otherwise you may get hurt.
216. Ono wue eghe ose wie wie, odia khe ohan men osemuan. Literal meaning: The man who decides to sleep in the morning should await hunger in the evening. Lesson: you must make efforts to plan for the future otherwise you must be prepared to suffer in the later years of your life. Plan to avoid the pains and agony of not having a plan for the future.
217. Oran si ke oran ada len ghe emenlen sasamin. Literal meaning: Is because the trees are close that you know that the monkey is smart. If the trees were far apart, the monkey would have had to run or walk there but certainly not jump. Lessons: You certainly need the help of others to demonstrate your attributes and abilities.
218. Are khan oje abhala. Literal meaning: When you follow the king, you become fair. Lesson: When you move with good people, the goodness will rob off on you. Know the company you keep.
219. Ukpoka de fio bhe eja da ro ko, azeken yan len. Literal meaning: When the corn has fallen in a proper location, the next thing is to add soil. Lesson: When providence has resolved issues for you, you must quickly recognize it and take the opportunity.
220. Osene bula noi jia jemaen uhon mon na jiu ufenmen. Literal meaning: We pray to God that no man will ever send us on the type of errand the arrow was sent. Lesson: Whenever the arrow is sent on an errand, it does not return. When it comes to

carrying out instructions and directives, you must learn to use your discretion wisely. If you consider that it is not safe to embark on a particular trip you consider dangerous, you can refuse to go for that sort of errand. Wisdom is the key.

221. Abha ye oka iyoka. Ojebe bhunu man man oka. Literal meaning: Even though all cobs of corn are recognized, the cob with leaves at the tip is the real cob of corn. Lesson: In any endeavour of life, it is always good to distinguish yourself. Don't go with the crowd. Set yourself apart for honour.
222. Ono len ebe ebhe khin ole ebhe to bhu unoenlen. Literal meaning: Cola nut stays long in the mouth of those that know the value of colanut. Lesson: Recognize those things meant for honour and treat them accordingly.
223. Onon len lo ivie olea ri vie kuenan. Literal meaning: You offer gold to the person that knows the value of gold. Lesson: Don't do something of great value to an irresponsible person otherwise the value placed on such object is quickly lost.
224. Ofen non ribhu uwa ole yio ofen no ribho olele ghee bale ribhu uwa. Literal meaning: It is the rat at home that told the rat outside that there is food in the house. Lesson: Be careful with people of your household. Oftentimes, they may be the one to betray you. Be careful the way you repose confidence in people. They may disappoint you.
225. Onon imuo ahu ole ye ghe opia imun. Literal meaning: The lazy man is the man that keeps complaining that the implements are blunt. Lesson: The lazy man that is bound to fail will find any reason under the sun to justify why he is failing.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MIRACULOUS HEALING

“Miracles never cease to amaze me. I expect them, but their consistent arrival is always delightful to experience.” – Mark Victor Hansen

A time came when Aikponobhoa took ill. It started like the ordinary fever. In those days, the old men and women were the doctors. And there were no health centres. The closest to a health facility were delivery homes. There was only one method of treating fever irrespective of the type of fever. The first reaction when you report sick is to ascertain you were not playing a trick. Aikponobhoa complained to the grandmother that the body was hot. She felt his body and it was actually very hot. Probably, if there was a thermometer, that temperature will be in the neighbourhood of 40 degrees centigrade. Having confirmed that Aikponobhoa was not playing a trick, the treatment had to commence. The treatment was the use of “dogoyaro” leaves. The leaves will be boiled with plenty water for a long time. Thereafter, some of the water is given to the sick person to drink. There was nothing like dosage. You could be given several cups within a short period. Even if you were vomiting as a result of the fever you will be harassed until you drink more of the special water and retain it. Then some of the water will be used to bath the sick person. Lastly, a thick cloth will be used to cover the child over the very hot pot so that the steam from the dogoyaro leaves will be inhaled by the subject. This method of treatment had often worked for several persons and had also been used on several occasions for Aikponobhoa. Thus there was a great expectation that Aikponobhoa would respond. This was not the case however. Rather than Aikponobhoa to get well, he was getting worse. The fever and vomiting persisted. It got even worse when Aikponobhoa now started having associated severe abdominal pain. For any abdominal pain, the diagnosis by the old people in the village is “worm infestation”. Of course that diagnosis will come with some scolding even in that terrible state of health. It was common to hear comments like this: “you are always eating sweet things; why will worms not disturb you”? Whether this was appendicitis or other common intra-abdominal conditions, that was not relevant at that time. The treatment for all abdominal pain was therefore to go to the chemist and purchase antihelminths. The person selling the drugs had no idea about what he or she was really selling. Nobody talked about expiry date of the drugs. The drug may have been in the store for some years. In any case, that was the treatment for abdominal pain at the time. Aikponobhoa took the antihelminths but there was no response. The fever, vomiting, anorexia and abdominal pain persisted. These were features very typical of appendicitis. And several young people with similar symptoms had died in the village. It was generally considered that the child may have been poisoned. Aikponobhoa began to lose weight. The grandparents began to lose hope considering what had happened to other children whose illness took this pattern. This event happened some weeks before harvest thanksgiving and Christmas. Aikponobhoa already got his clothes for both occasions. The grandmother initially tried to be strong so she could encourage Aikponobhoa. But it got to the point when she could not hold back the tears. She started weeping uncontrollably. She had given up and thought that Aikponobhoa was not going to make it. On the other hand, Aikponobhoa was weeping not necessarily because of the illness, but because he might not be able to use

the new clothes for harvest thanksgiving and Christmas celebration. This state of hopelessness continued for days and for weeks. Practically everybody had given up. The grandparents were so scared and they could not go to farm anymore. They will sit from morning till night looking at Aikponobhoa. Prayers were offered virtually every minute. If only God would hear and answer. Then on one Saturday morning, which was a day before the harvest thanksgiving, things took a different turn for the better. The fever and vomiting stopped. The abdominal pain also stopped. Then Aikponobhoa asked for food and pap was immediately presented. He took the pap and there was no more vomiting. Then he had eba for lunch. Aikponobhoa regained himself back in a most dramatic manner. No one could explain how Aikponobhoa received the healing. But one thing was clear to everyone even the heathen, that the healing could have been done only by God. The clothes for the harvest were still in the tailor's place. The grandmother did not bother to collect the clothes because she had actually given up that Aikponobhoa would be alive to attend the harvest thanksgiving. But suddenly, Aikponobhoa got a divine touch. He had been healed completely in a manner nobody could fathom. Then Aikponobhoa suddenly remembered that he had gone to take measurement in the tailor's place. He then asked the grandmother about his new clothes. The grandmother was too excited to hear this. She was then convinced beyond any doubt that Aikponobhoa had been healed completely. Her tears gave way to joy and excitement. She ran to the tailor's place and got the clothes. Aikponobhoa was set to attend the harvest thanksgiving. In the evening he ate pounded yam. In the morning, he demanded for rice and the request for rice was granted. This was against the usual practice. On days of ceremonies like harvest thanksgiving or Christmas, even though rice was prepared in the morning, eba was for breakfast while the rice was reserved for lunch. In any case, in the village those days, rice was only prepared on Sundays or during special ceremonies. But on this Sunday morning, Aikponobhoa demanded for rice. He ate plenty rice and the only thing the grandparents could do was to keep thanking God. They all went to the church for the harvest thanksgiving. That was the best thanksgiving the grandparents have ever had. It was excitement all the way. They danced and praised God for his divine intervention and for turning their sorrow into joy. That was the end of the fever and abdominal pain. This was the pointer to a future full of miracles and divine guidance. Aikponobhoa was then seen as one that had come to stay and the grandfather named him "Odigie" meaning someone who is standing firmly. Christmas celebration that year was equally the best the family ever had. Aikponobhoa eventually finished his primary school and then gained admission to secondary school. By the time he gained admission to secondary school, he had to go back to meet his parents so he could be assisting with farm work. That marked the end of the stay with his grandparents even though he was always coming to visit at regular intervals.

CHAPTER FIVE: RELATIOSHIP WITH SIBLINGS

Like branches on a tree we grow in different directions yet our roots remain as one. Each of our lives will always be a special part of the other."

—
Anonymous

Growing up in the small village was quite interesting. The first child of Aitebebhekefo was Samuel, the second was Aikponobhoa, the third was Jane, the fourth Okpeahio and the fifth Omonigho. It was quite a closely knit family. An unfortunate incident happened. When Jane was about two years old, she had major thermal burns. She ran into a heap of rice chaff that was being burnt. And because there was no adult nearby to quickly extricate her from the fire, she suffered major degree thermal burn. Eventually Jane died. That was a very big blow to the family. Aitebebhekefo encouraged herself in the Lord and soon gave birth to Okpeahio. The birth of Okpeahio aided in mitigating the very harsh effect of the demise of Jane. Samuel and Aikponobhoa were the ones helping with farm work. Samuel used to like football very well and on some occasions he could actually refuse to go to farm and go to the field to play football from morning till evening. On the other hand, Aikpoobhoa was quite humble and never resisted any invitation to go the farm or follow the mother to the village market. At about the age of two, Okpeahio was sent to the grandparents so as to enable Aitebebhekefo concentrate on the farm work. It was now Samuel and Aikponobhoa that had to stay together and work in the farm. Everybody was staying in one small room. We all ate together from the same plate. There was nothing like sharing the meal into portions. The idea of eating from the same plate brought in very close bonding in the home. After a few months Aitebebhekefo gave birth to Omonigho. Omonigho became a source of great joy as she was basically seen as a replacement for Jane. Right from when she started verbalizing, Omonigho loved singing. Whenever the mother was coming from evening service, neighbours would immediately know from the loud voice of Omonigho singing joyfully. One of her favourite song was "the peace, the peace, the peace I possess, the peace that Jesus giveth, the peace I possess". Little wonder, when Omonigho was of age, she joined the choir. Samuel had this quite mien and he was also very kind. He ensured nobody intimidated the younger ones. Samuel's act of kindness has remained up to today. He always seeks for the well being of all and he is ready to take risk in order to protect others. Eventually, Omonigho also went to join Okpeahio in the grandparents' place. And following the usual pattern, when Okpeahio and Omonigho were up to the age of being able to work in the farm, they had to come back to meet their two senior siblings. They all worked together with the support of their mother to fend for themselves. Occasionally, some support came from the other children of their father. It was a challenging moment. But with hard work and determination on the part of everyone, they remained one big happy family. Okpeahio could be mischievous at times. There was this particular day that he was to be denied food because he did not go the farm. Aikponobhoa was the one that prepared the meal. Everyone had eaten but Aikponobhoa was busy and so had to keep his food in the kitchen. Okpeahio came through the back door into the compound, went to the kitchen and ate the food; that was meant for Aikponobhoa. And after eating the rice, Okpeahio screamed and said

“have I not eaten now”? And he ran away. Aikponobhoa decided to pursue him. However, fortunately for the two of them, Aikponobhoa could not catch up with Okpeahio. It was a fortunate thing for Aikponobhoa because perhaps if he had caught up with Okpeahio, he could have committed murder with the amount of anger that was pent up in him. Okpeahio was fortunate because he was able to escape the beating. Eventually, their mother came back and pleaded with Aikponobhoa to forget about the incident and forgive Okpeahio. Okpeahio was forgiven and peace returned once more. Thus living together in that small room was fun and all the children were close. That of closeness has continued to pervade all facets of their lives.

CHAPTER SIX: SECONDARY EDUCATION

“I have always believed, and I still believe, that whatever good or bad fortune may come our way we can always give it meaning and transform it into something of value.”

— Hermann Hesse

Aikponobhoa went to a village secondary school. While he was making a choice of the secondary school to attend, there was no body to guide him. So when he saw his friends and relations pick one particular school, he equally chose the school. This was a school he hardly knew anything about. He did well in the entrance examination and subsequently the interview. He was then admitted. He went into boarding school. It was when he got to the school he knew the kind of school he got into. The seniors in the school were very brutal. They treated human beings as animals. To say it was not a good learning place is stating more than obvious. Then Aikponobhoa became very unhappy and was most unwilling to continue in that school. He would seek for any reason not to attend school. He told the mother he didn't want to continue schooling anymore. The mother had to plead with him and promised that after the first year she was going to ensure that he did not go back to the school. That sounded reassuring and Aikponobhoa then braced up and continued albeit amidst suffering and torture. But there was so much uncertainty about the school he had in mind that he was going to change to. This mission school was well known for excellent academic performances. Aikponobhoa was told that he will only be able to change to that school if he performed very well in all his examinations in the present school. There were three terms. He performed brilliantly in all his examinations. He was the third overall best. Thus, changing to the mission school became relatively easy.

Because Aikponobhoa was in the boarding house in the former school, he equally requested that he needed to be in the boarding house in the new school. The mother however declined the request. Aikponobhoa needed to be a day student so that he could actually come from home to school on some occasions. Consequently, a room was given to Aikponobhoa in town in one of the uncle's house. The room was adjoining a kitchen. The effect was that most time whenever they were cooking in the kitchen, Aikponobhoa won't stay in the room until the cooking was over. He was asked to stay in this place because he was not going to pay for the accommodation. And the reason for asking Aikponobhoa to be a day student was simple. Aikponobhoa would be expected to come to the farm after school on some occasions. It was much easier for a day student to have that flexibility in terms of leaving school compared to a student in the boarding house.

The next thing that troubled Aikponobhoa was whether he will be able to maintain good academic performance. On this, he resolved he was going to study hard so he could retain the good academic performance. The hard work indeed paid off. The first semester he did excellently well. This became a great encouragement for him and the impetus to work even harder. In no time, he became distinguished in the class and he became very comfortable academically. But one thing he did was to ensure that he did not allow the good performance to encourage laziness or make him become arrogant, rather it brought in sagacity.

Then the big blow. Aikponobhoa's father died while he was just in form two in the secondary school. The father died while Aikponobhoa was on vacation. On that particular day, he had just returned from the farm and was peeling cassava. Then there was a loud cry. Aikponobhoa's father had just died. Then he thought this was a bleak future. He was just in class two preparing for to go back for third term. Aikponobhoa wept bitterly. This was a man that was so meek. He did not beat him one day. And he would never allow the mother to beat him. He was used to playing with his children and ensured school fees were paid on time. Who was going to do all these? There were many questions that certainly lacked answers. Aikponobhoa's mother was discouraged only for a short period. Their mother then had a meeting with the first and second born. The main focus of the meeting was to define the new problem and also define the solutions. The family was a polygamous family and Aikponobhoa's mother was the fourth wife. The mother assured them that they could attain any level of education they wanted to attain. Only one thing was needful. The children must cooperate with her in doing farm work. This was agreed and the battle for survival started. Their mother promised them that as long as they were ready to work with her, then she was not going to remarry even though she was very young. And indeed some men were already coming around to discuss issue of marriage with her. But the woman was resolved. Even when friends were telling her that she was too young to stay without a husband, her clear message was that she was now married to Jesus and her children. Her position was further strengthened because of the cooperation she enjoyed from her younger brother who at that time was studying outside the country. The brother encouraged her to stay focused on the children and that even though he was in school outside the country, he was going to do some work and support the sister as much as possible. He kept the promise. Then the stage was set to embark on a journey whose end only God could define.

Aikponobhoa's elder brother was schooling far away from home, while Aikponobhoa's school was about 7kilometres from home. Thus, Aikponobhoa was the one more affected with the issue of farm work. He now needed to leave the room in his uncle's place in town to come home to be staying with the mother and be going to school from home. Then another tough phase started. Most times, Aikponobhoa would walk to school. At times, he will be allowed to use the bicycle. However, using the bicycle was usually with a condition. Any day Aikponobhoa was allowed to use the bicycle, he was expected to come to the farm after school to help the mother carry the load from the farm. Thus, it was left for Aikponobhoa to decide whether he would be willing to go the farm after School or trek to school for a distance of about 7 kilometres. Oftentimes, Aikponobhoa opted for the latter option. On few occasions however, when Aikponobhoa was tired from the activities of the previous days, he will ask for the bicycle. With that, soon after school, he would then ride the bicycle to the farm to get the loads that have been kept for him in the farm by the mother. Most evenings after returning from school, Aikponobhoa was still expected to participate in cooking the meals. The mother was quite strict and the rules were very clear. If he did not participate in the cooking, then he could as well forget dinner. These were certainly tough moments. Aikponobhoa however resolved to continue to work hard. Siesta was completely alien to him. The only time for academic work was at night and with a bush lamp. Aikponobhoa would read almost all through the night. He was quite good in memorizing most of his school work. On a particular night, Aikponobhoa had finished memorizing all his notes and he still had stamina to continue. He then opted to memorize a literature text. After memorizing the first two chapters however,

fatigue set in and he had to stop. The hard work in the very harsh environment paid off. All through to class four in the school, Aikponobhoa remained on top of the class.

Aikponobhoa was equally active in church activities. He was a member of the English choir while the mother was a member of the native choir. Aikponobhoa demonstrated his brilliance in the native dialect by converting most English songs to the local dialect for the mother who was the head of the native choir. Aikponobhoa was indeed blessed with the gift of interpretation. As young as he was at that time, he became a regular interpreter for the pastor in a church that was filled with members who didn't understand English language. Aikponobhoa became a great asset in the church and he was greatly blessed by God. He became loved and appreciated by all.

By the time Aikponobhoa passed to class five, the mother was counselled by friends that Aikponobhoa needed to move closer to the school so he can study better being that he was now going into his final year. The mother agreed with a proviso however, that Aikponobhoa must come home during weekends, mid-term breaks and vacation in order to help with the farm work. Aikponobhoa agreed with the terms and so he was permitted to rent a house in "town" closer to the school. He was staying with four other students in the same boys' quarters of two rooms. In Aikponobhoa's room, they were three. It was like a hostel of some sort. They read together and discussed difficult issues together particularly topics in mathematics. The five students were all of like minds having the drive to succeed. Such drive ultimately paid off. As young as they were at the time, they understood the reason why they were sent to school. The reason was to study hard and excel in their academic activities. They worked tirelessly to achieve that objective. Thus, they were not given to social vices and such other misdemeanours that were characteristic of boys of their age. This attitude of being focused and disciplined was to pay off later in life.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SAVED FROM ELECTROCUTION, DROWNING AND MOTOR VEHICULAR ACCIDENTS

“When you look closely to the path you have travelled on, you will realise that God was always with you, directing and protecting you every step you took.”

— Lailah Gifty Akita

Aikponobhoa now moved to town and was living in a rented apartment. This was an independent life where there was literally no control. The young Aikponobhoa however continued to study hard and the effects of the hard work were always reflected in his continuous assessments and other examinations. He realized quite early in life that he hadn't a father and he needed to work hard to continue to encourage the mother.

In the new place in town, there was electricity. This was completely new to Aikponobhoa. He was a science student and knew something about electricity from physics and chemistry. He has heard stories of how people get electrocuted. Aikponobhoa has always been an inquisitive young boy. He has been imagining in his head how persons who are electrocuted react in the process of electrocution. He did not have the answer. Every night he sees the electric bulb, the question would always come to his mind. He asked a few friends but they could not provide the answer for him. This was not surprising because most of his friends were equally from rural areas where there was no electricity. With the frustration and confusion in his mind, Aikponobhoa resolved that he was going to personally carry out an experiment to determine the course of action during electrocution. On this particular night, Aikponobhoa decided to embark on an experiment; albeit a dangerous experiment. He wanted to find out how a cockroach would behave were it to be electrocuted. So he put up his bush lamp and then removed the electric bulb from the socket. He got a broom stick and hung a live cockroach on the broom stick. He then inserted the cockroach into the position where he had removed the electric bulb. He was holding on to the broom stick while using the other end to use the cockroach to touch the electric live wires. The cockroach was however not electrocuted after several attempts. Aikponobhoa got frustrated, connected the electric bulb back and abandoned the experiment. Little did he know that he could have been electrocuted in the process of the very dangerous experiment. But he was not electrocuted. God's favour and destiny preserved him. He later got to know that the dangerous experiment could have ended his life but for God's intervention.

During one long vacation, Aikponobhoa followed a pick-up van to the river to get water in drums. There was no pipe borne water in his village. It was the usual practice to get water from water tankers or arrange with pick-up vans to get water from the river in drums. To have the opportunity to enter into a car was something practically non-existent in the villages at that time. So, it was a great achievement for Aikponobhoa when he had the opportunity of entering the pick-up van albeit to act as a motor boy. The driver of the pick-up van needed some hands that would assist him

when he gets to the river. Aikponobhoa and few other boys volunteered to follow the driver. Of course they were not going to be paid for the trip and their services. Impliedly, it was sufficient payment to have the rare opportunity of entering a vehicle. They eventually got to the river and helped to position the drums in the trunk of the pick-up van. While the drums were being filled with machine, Aikponobhoa decided to test the waters. He was trying to imagine the depths of the river at various points. First, he was walking on ordinary ground at the bank of the river. Later, he stumbled unto some rocks. E was enjoying the discovery. And then suddenly, his right foot went deep into the water and there was no support anymore. He was going to tilt over into the river because he had lost balance. However, God in his infinite mercy provided an instant rescue. One of the boys who were at the river with Aikponobhoa, immediately held on to Aikponobhoa's shirt and then pulled him back. If that young boy was not available at that moment to pull Aikponobhoa back, Aikponobhoa would have drowned. The incidence of losing balance and the rescue that came happened within few seconds. When Aikponobhoa got home, he relayed the experience. The entire family became ecstatic and thrown into great joy that God has indeed preserved the life of Aikponobhoa.

On one occasion, Aikponobhoa was going to take a trip from one town to the other. He had gone to watch an inter house sports. He was able to pay the taxi fare to the town where the inter house sport was taking place. After the sports, Aikponobhoa had a challenge of how to get back to the town where he was schooling. Most other persons he came with had gone. He was basically left alone and he did not have transport fare. He was confused and stressed. While he was standing by the road in the utter confusion, he saw a pick up van whose driver had slowed down while trying to negotiate a bend and on a rough terrain. Aikponobhoa, out of frustration and confusion jumped into the pick-up van which was heading in the direction of the town he was supposed to be going to. Aikponobhoa's calculation was that on getting to the town, he will bang on the pick-up van and the driver will be compelled to stop. Little did Aikponobhoa know that he was toying with a very mean person. When he got to the town, he shouted that he wanted to stop, but the driver refused. He shouted several times but to no avail. In fact, the more Aikponobhoa was shouting, the more the driver increased the speed. Many things then ran through Aikponobhoa's mind. Was this man going to take him to a very far place before dropping him off? But the thought that was most frightening was whether the driver had a plan to use him for rituals. None of the options sounded nice. Then Aikponobhoa got his brain to work out a plausible solution. The best solution in the circumstance was to jump out of the vehicle. Aikponobhoa however, needed a safe place to do this. This was a tarred road but had some failed portions. He got close to the edge of the trunk and was calculating how he was going to jump out. Then the opportunity came. The driver reduced his speed when he got to a failed portion of the road. Aikponobhoa did not need any prophet to tell him that was the time to act. Immediately, he jumped out of the moving vehicle. In the process he sustained some bruises. By the following day the mother became aware of what he went through. Aikponobhoa was eventually taken to the hospital. Aikponobhoa continued to do well and he eventually sat for the West African School certificate examination. He enrolled for 9 papers and he passed all the papers with very good grades and he came out with Grade 1. This was one of the best results in the entire school. It became obvious to Aikponobhoa that despite the challenges and difficulties he had in school, what God had said concerning him must surely come to pass. It is not of him that wills or runs but is of God that shows

mercy. Aikponobhoa had borrowed a motor cycle from a relation to move from the village to his school in order to collect his result. He went on the trip with a friend who was a classmate and equally did well. In fact, they had the same first name and had stayed in the same apartment as day students. There was so much excitement. Then it was time to get back to the village. And so they mounted the motor cycle with so much joy and excitement. They rode the bicycle at a very high speed. And this was on a road that was not so good. Of course, the combination of a bad road and dangerous speed on a motor cycle was enough prescription for a motor vehicular accident. Aikponobhoa and his friend were thrown off the motor cycle when they were trying to pass through a failed portion of the road while on speed. God was indeed kind to these two innocent secondary school leavers that have just obtained the results of an excellent performance in the school certificate examination. They sustained only minor injuries. They were lucky that they fell on sandy portion of the road and not on the tarred portion. If they had fallen on the parts of the road that still had tar, just anything could have happened to them. Aikponobhoa was very grateful to God that the motor cycle was not damaged because that was his major concern despite the pains he was having at the time of the accident. Thus while Aikponobhoa's friend was rejoicing that they sustained only minor injuries, Aikponobhoa was more concerned with the fact that the motor cycle was not damaged. This weird reaction on the part of Aikponobhoa was borne out of the fact that he could not have imagined how he was going to raise the money to fix the motor cycle if the motor cycle had been damaged. God was gracious unto him and also preserved his life and also preserved the borrowed motor cycle.

The next phase was getting into the University. Another challenging moment started.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ODYSSEY OF A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

“The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night”. – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Aikponobhoa wanted to become a medical doctor or a pharmacist. He was literally guiding himself. He did not have a mentor or a counsellor. Some persons that had the means attended JAMB (Joint Admission and Matriculation Board) lessons in order to prepare for the examination. Aikponobhoa lacked the means and he actually did not even understand the implication of not adequately preparing for JAMB. Thus he sat for JAMB with Medicine as his course. Unfortunately, even though he had very good scores in JAMB, the marks were not sufficient for Medicine. There was no body to help him push anything. The implication was that he was going to remain in the village for the next one year. At this point, because his school certificate result was very good, a local secondary school in the village engaged him as a contract teacher. He was being paid fifty naira every month. He would pay tithe of five Naira, remove five Naira for his personal use and keep forty naira. He had a cup in his room where he was keeping the remaining forty naira every month. He was disciplined and he never failed to keep that forty naira. He was actually saving for his University education since there was no father to look up to. Aikponobhoa was teaching Biology and Chemistry. Rather than going for JAMB lessons, he in the village combining teaching with farm work. He sat for JAMB the second time without any form of preparation. Of course it was not surprising that the scores he got now were less than the scores he obtained while he was in class five. Then there was a real problem.

In the midst of this bewilderment however, a new state University sold forms for entrance examination and medicine was one of the courses available in the school. Aikponobhoa took part in the entrance examination and he passed. Within a few weeks, he obtained admission letter. There was jubilation in the village and in the church. The mother's joy knew no bounds. In fact her name soon changed. She was now called “mama doctor”. Within a few days, Aikponobhoa's mother gathered the money for school fees and the non-refundable deposit. Aikponobhoa started making preparations to go to the University and read his dream course. Then the big blow. Two weeks to resumption, Aikponobhoa received a letter. He opened the letter and the contents were the least of what he wanted to see. The summary of the letter was that due to some exigencies, some names had to be dropped from the list of those admitted to read medicine. Aikponobhoa was later to understand that some “big men” brought in their candidates after the University already admitted according to the quota given to them by the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria. Thus the only way to retain the allowed quota without disappointing the “big men” was to drop some names. Aikponobhoa was thus schemed out of the list. He felt like committing suicide. He wept uncontrollably for days and weeks. The mother kept encouraging him. The mother kept telling him that since he did not commit any offence and this bad luck had befallen him, he will surely have course in life to rejoice that he did not go into that University. Some trust in chariots and some in horses but we will always

remember the name of our Lord. Aikponobhoa was however too young to appreciate the mother's position. He thought it was just a way to make him feel good. But the events which happened years later proved his mother to be right and probably were thoughts borne out of the spirit.

Aikponobhoa eventually got over the shock and went to the school to collect back the school fees he had earlier paid. He was not able to collect the non-refundable deposit. This was like double jeopardy. But life had to move on.

Suddenly Aikponobhoa heard they were selling forms in a Polytechnic and he rushed to the school to pick the forms. At this point, he was like someone sinking in a sea who would grab any available thing. This time around he was not going to read medicine. He opted for pharmacy. Just as he was about completing the forms, an undergraduate walked in. They exchanged pleasantries. He told the person that he was trying to complete the forms for Polytechnic admission. The person sought to know the course Aikponobhoa was going to study and Aikponobhoa said Pharmacy confidently. Then the young man laughed at Aikponobhoa uncontrollably. At first Aikponobhoa was confused as to why the young man should be laughing so hilariously. He was to be told later by the young man that Polytechnics do not offer Pharmacy. Then Aikponobhoa was literally thrown into a sea of confusion. He had always wanted to be a medical doctor or a pharmacist and had never considered any other course and he did not really know about other courses. At first he felt like not proceeding with the completion of the forms. Then his mind went to the two JAMB scores he obtained—one while in secondary school and the other when he was out of secondary school. He remembered that he did better when he was in class five than when he was out of school. He thought that the teaching and farm work were probably the things that distracted him. He then concluded in his mind that he was going to go for the Polytechnic education albeit as a temporary measure. At least he will be out of the village and out of farm work. Then he will be able to concentrate and read better for the next JAMB while in the Polytechnic. He then came back to himself and then asked the young undergraduate of any good course he could go for. The young man asked Aikponobhoa to go in for quantity surveying. Aikponobhoa did not have the faintest idea of what quantity surveying represented. However, because an undergraduate has advised him to go for that course, they completed the forms right there and the course of course was quantity surveying. After a few weeks, admission letter was sent to Aikponobhoa and he was admitted to read quantity surveying. One thing was clear to Aikponobhoa. Going to the Polytechnic was a temporary measure and that he was just passing through. He knew there was a destination. He knew there was the need to read earnestly for JAMB. Then there was a big challenge. In the Polytechnic, there were so many courses to read. It was thus a herculean task to combine about 12 courses with preparation for JAMB. Aikponobhoa had to fashion out a coping mechanism. He would join his classmates to go to class and read up till about 2am and they would disperse. Oftentimes, it was a group discussion because of the nature of the course (quantity surveying). When his colleagues were going to the room to sleep at about 2am, Aikponobhoa would then bring out his books to start reading in preparation for JAMB. He would read until 5am and then go to sleep for about one and half hours. He was determined to pass JAMB this time around. Then Jamb forms eventually came out and he picked the forms. He chose medicine as his first choice. And the reading continued. It was common knowledge that Aikponobhoa would always go to the back to stand to take his lectures. Because he would sleep for only one and half hours, the only way he will be able to take lectures without sleeping

off will be to stand at the back of the class to take his lectures. And this hard work paid off to some extent. He wrote JAMB and had very good grades. Painfully however, the scores were not enough for medicine but were enough for pharmacy if he had taken pharmacy as first choice. Aikponobhoa was not admitted. But he was quite happy. This was his best JAMB scores and that was encouraging enough. In the Polytechnic examination, he was not also lacking. In National Diploma 1, he emerged the overall best student. He got promoted to National Diploma 2. He did not lose the focus of going to the University. He maintained the same reading pattern. It was a tough moment but Aikponobhoa was now used to the hard way out. He got addicted to colanuts. Then JAMB forms were out and he collected the forms. This time, Aikponobhoa's faith was a bit weak. Instead of going for medicine, he completed the forms for Pharmacy because the previous three attempts were for medicine. He continued to work hard-reading for National Diploma 2 examination and JAMB at the same time. He completed the National Diploma program and in the second semester of National Diploma 2, he passed with 11 As and 1b of the 12 courses. Thus, he came out as the best graduating student. Few weeks to this final examination, he had written JAMB and result was being awaited. While they were preparing for the final National Diploma examination, a quantity surveying firm had earlier visited the school and told the department of quantity surveying that the company was going to give automatic employment to the best graduating student. When Aikponobhoa graduated as the best student, he was given a letter to the firm and without interview, he was employed. Aikponobhoa wore over-sized clothes which the mother's younger brother (who had just come back from the United States) gave to him. He went into the office with some air of confidence that he was wearing the best of clothes. But Aikponobhoa was shocked at the remarks of the owners of the firm. They were rather rude. The comment was "Young man, before you come to resume work next month, you must learn how to dress well and appear smart". Aikponobhoa echoed yes sir. He collected the employment letter but felt rather uncomfortable with the comments of the men. It was not entirely the fault of the men. Aikponobhoa was actually wearing over-sized clothes. He was only feeling happy initially because he was wearing clothes from a foreign land; the over-size nature of the clothes notwithstanding. But the rather rude comments humbled him. He received the employment letter with mixed feelings. On the one hand, he will have money to take care of himself and also assist the mother. On the other hand, it seems that the dream to go to University was about being killed. Of course the mother was quite excited that Aikponobhoa was going to resume work soon.

Incidentally, the very day he travelled to the city to collect the employment letter, a letter had been dropped at home with his mother. Aikponobhoa got home at night and the mother handed him a letter from the post office. He was wondering what the content of the letter could be. It was admission letter for Pharmacy. Aikponobhoa and most of his friends who came around were excited but the mother was not. The mother's mind was already on the fact that Aikponobhoa was going to resume work soon. Then confusion started. Aikponobhoa was bent on going to school but the mother said she did not have money for that particularly now that God had given him a job almost effortlessly. This was a dilemma. At this time, Aikponobhoa's uncle had returned from the United States of America. Aikponobhoa was somebody who did not want to bother anybody. Thus he did not go to complain to his uncle. He thought of ways of resolving the problem.

Aikponobhoa started to think about what he could do that will fetch him money withing a short time in the firsts instance. And thereafter he could then think of a more sustainable means of income. The need at hand was rather urgent. Suddenly, an idea dropped in his head. His village was very popular in the production of tomato at that time. And since he still had about three months before resumption, he considered the option of going into tomato farming since harvest will be in two to three months. Now the time was however short. Many people had already finished planting. The rains had also started in full force. With the rains, it meant that he will not be able to burn the bush after clearing. And because time had gone far, he will not also be able to prepare the tomato nursery. Thus he needed a solution urgently. For the clearing, he needed to do it in one day so that planting could commence the next day. To be able to achieve this, he had to get two of his friends to join him in what is referred to as “irogan”. Irogan means that if you follow me to work in my farm today, I will in turn follow you to your farm when you had anything to do. Aikponobhoa explained to his friends regarding the urgency since tomato planting season was almost getting late. So the following day, the three young men went to the farm to clear and pack the rubbish. Same day Aikponobhoa went to buy tomato nurseries from those that had excess after planting. By the following day, Aikponobhoa and his mother went to plant tomato. Then from the same evening, twice a day watering of the tomato commenced. The Lord blessed the efforts and the production was fantastic. A basin of tomato was harvested from the farm every other day. Thus, Aikponobhoa became confident that he will be able to go to school. One of the young men that followed him to work in the farm told Aikponobhoa that he did it for him gratis seeing the situation Aikponobhoa was passing through. But the second person was not that kind. He arranged for a day that Aikponobhoa would follow him to his farm. He took Aikponobhoa to a farm that had literarily been abandoned. The two young men worked from morning till evening. They had only roasted yam to eat in the farm. On the contrary, when they went to Aikponobhoa's plot, they had a good meal of eba and vegetable soup in the farm. Aikponobhoa worked till evening and all the hands were peeled. He felt bad but was happy at the same time because he was going to the University now.

Aikponobhoa's uncle who had just returned from the United States heard of the self efforts Aikponobhoa was making. He then asked Aikponobhoa to come to the city to be living with him and that he was going to assist him in the University education. Aikponobhoa felt glad that at last farming was over. Little did he know that even though his uncle studied abroad and had returned to work in a University, he was still very much into farming. The Uncle was working in a newly established University that had so much land. Thus, staff could apply to the authority of the University to be given some portion to farm in. Aikponobhoa's uncle had plenty of such land. From the city Aikponobhoa went to school and the uncle started assisting. Aikponobhoa was however expected to return almost every weekend to help in the farm work. In addition, he was always expected to be home during holidays or whenever the school was shut either due to students' unrest or industrial action by lecturers.

Aikponobhoa resumed school and settled down in the school hostel. He soon identified hard working classmates and they formed a reading group. Pharmacy was seen as a tough course and so Aikponobhoa needed to work hard. The hard work and the grace of God paid off. He finished his first year in Pharmacy and was the best student. With this performance, Aikponobhoa felt the need to transfer to medicine. Inter faculty transfer was advertised with certain criteria. For example, to change from

Pharmacy to Medicine, you should not have taken medicine as your first choice in JAMB and you should not have any carry over. Aikponobhoa met these criteria. He took Pharmacy as his first choice in the last JAMB because the three previous attempts were in Medicine. Thus he was aided by destiny in making the right choice by taking Pharmacy as his first choice. Thus he met this criterion. For the second criterion, God was at work again. Even though he had the best overall result, Aikponobhoa had a very poor score in one course. This was a multiple choice course. If he had failed two more questions, then he would have failed that course and that meant having a carryover. However, he had a narrow escape and so also met the second criterion. Thus, his application for change of course was successful. The letter of transfer however came several weeks into the semester. That meant that Aikponobhoa had missed several lectures. He however braced up to the challenge and copied all his notes. The sleepless nights started again. He needed to work real hard in order to meet up.

He was coping well and passing all the continuous assessments. Eventually, took the first MBBS examinations and he passed the three courses. He thereafter moved to the clinical class. The Uncle was doing his best in supporting him in school. The pocket money was usually not enough. It was not unusual therefore for Aikponobhoa to go to class in the morning without breakfast, take garri and groundnut for lunch and eba (without meat) for dinner. The experience was quite tough and painful. Along the line, Aikponobhoa's uncle gave him a camera to be using in school so as to augment the pocket money. The idea paid off to some extent. This however meant more work. He was soon to be known all over campus as a photographer. He had his initial challenges. There was an occasion he loaded the camera with a 36-exposure film. He did not realize that the film did not fit in properly. He was to discover later that all the shots he took were not actually captured. It was a big issue. He needed to go and look for every customer to explain the situation. In some cases he was insulted and in other cases he was almost beaten up. Some asked for refund while others asked for a repeat after some insults. He bore the pain and insults and continued the work of a photographer. At least he learnt some act of photography in a very hard way. And the struggle continued. He was covering weddings, birthdays and other occasions. Before long, his work became one of the best on campus and he became very popular. However, as the standard of living was increasing, it was becoming increasingly difficult to survive with the pocket money and profit from photography work alone.

One afternoon, Aikponobhoa was lying down and thinking about life generally. How will he be able to have a better life on campus? He needed to feed well to be able to cope with the rigors of medical school. Then suddenly God dropped an idea in Aikponobhoa's head. This idea was to later stabilize him all through his stay in the medical school. The idea was to the effect that some persons may be willing to sell their used books while others who can't afford new ones will be willing to buy fairly used books. By the following day, he needed to put that revelation into use. He went round the entire campus with advertisements asking those that wanted to sell their old books to send them to him so he could help to sell them for a commission. Within a few days, many students brought their fairly used books. Aikponobhoa then brought out the next set of advertisement asking people that wanted to buy fairly used books to contact him. Thus a big business started. Aikponobhoa was making good money from the commission. He got to a point that he actually had enough money that he could buy the books outright from the owners at the end of the semesters when the prices are usually very low. At this time, most students would require money to go

home and so Aikponobhoa could negotiate a very cheap rate. He would then keep the books until the beginning of the new semester when prices of books are usually very high. The students had just come from home and the prices could be negotiated better in favour of the seller. Aikponobhoa became so popular as a book merchant in school. At some point, students were even coming from other Universities to buy fairly used books. Aikponobhoa was making sufficient money to make him comfortable in school and he hardly went home for pocket money anymore. When other students saw the way Aikponobhoa was making money from the book business, they also jumped into the business. However, most of these students soon had challenges as they did not understand the modus operandi of Aikponobhoa. Most of the new entrants into the market did not bother to put a mechanism in place to ensure that the used books they were selling were not stolen books. So it was not a rare occurrence for a student to be reading a fairly used book he had purchased for someone to suddenly come and accuse him of stealing his book. Then the source of the stolen book will be traced to the seller. But for Aikponobhoa, he had a system to discourage stealing. The person selling his book must show evidence of ownership of the book by presenting his identity card bearing the same name with the name on the book. And whenever there was mutilation of the names on the book, Aikponobhoa wouldn't accept such books. Before long, Aikponobhoa became distinguished as an honest business boy. It became known to most students that if they wanted to buy fairly used books without having challenges, they should buy from Aikponobhoa. Thus the entrants of the other students into the market rather than dampen the sales made by Aikponobhoa actually helped in projecting him the more. In the process Aikponobhoa became popular and was known all over campus.

Time management was another challenge Aikponobhoa needed to tackle so he could still continue with his good performance in his academic works. He soon realised that people could come anytime to ask for books. And those requiring photography services could ask him to cover occasions at anytime that was convenient for them. Thus Aikponobhoa knew that he couldn't cope with this method. As a fall out of this, he needed to get his priorities right and organize his plans. A typical day for Aikponobhoa starts at about 7am. He goes to have his breakfast at 7.30am and thereafter proceeds to class. Lectures will usually last till about 5pm. He gets to his hostel at about 5.30pm and then have some rest till 7pm. Aikponobhoa then created a window for business for only 30 minutes with regard to the book business. While advertising for sale or purchase of books, he would ask the prospective customers to come to his room between 7.30pm and 8pm. With this method, he was able to attend to a lot of persons within a very short time. He became glad that he had sufficient control over time management. Then by 8pm he will be off to read. Aikponobhoa had a pattern of reading up to 4am and till 5am depending on the activities for that night. If he needed to do photography coverage for birthdays, he will normally tell the customers to identify the specific time during the party when his services would be required. Aikponobhoa was not usually thrilled with the dancing and eating at the parties. He was business oriented. The aim was to take the photographs and leave soon after the photograph session. Thus if the customer told him that his services would be needed at about 10pm, Aikponobhoa will go to class at about 8pm and read till 10pm and then proceed to cover the occasion. He had a bag that was big enough to contain all his big medical books and his camera. Aikponobhoa soon discovered something that gave him great encouragement to continue with this work. While he is leaving the class at about 10pm to the venue of the party, some persons will be

outside the class having a break and having some drinks and engage in jokes. Aikponobhoa would go for the program and return at about 11pm. If he gets to the party and the celebrant wasn't ready for the photograph session, Aikponobhoa would always insist that they should take the photographs at the time already agreed and that he had other engagements. The engagements he actually was referring to was to go back to class and continue his reading. He usually will accept that one hour he was out of the class as a break period. And on such days he had a business to do outside, he will make up for that one hour by reading up to 5am. Aikponobhoa however noticed a trend among the students that were reading in the same class with him. He will often be amazed that some of the students he saw talking outside the class when he left at 10pm to cover a program will still be outside when he returns at past 11pm. Aikponobhoa often sympathized with them that they did not know how to manage their time. While they were busy talking, Aikponobhoa went to make some money.

Aikponobhoa also realized the need to be in a campus fellowship early enough. While in the first year, he joined the Christian Union Fellowship. He was active in the Fellowship and he later joined an activity group called "Hospital, Orphanage and Prisons (HOP) visitation group. The Fellowship taught him morals and the need to give maximum time for academic work. Then in the fellowship, the leaders would always emphasize that for you to tell other students who were not Christians that your God is not of a God of failure, you must make up your mind to have both academic and spiritual excellence. Aikponobhoa caught this idea pretty early. He knew he needed to please God. He equally recognized that he needed to work very hard and make good grades so that unbelievers will not mock him or mock his God. The concept worked perfectly well as he was focused on his studies and fellowship activities.

With these tactics and the grace of God upon Aikponobhoa, he began to do brilliantly well in his academic performances. He passed all his examinations in the medical school at first sitting. He did not repeat any examination from the first year to the sixth year in the medical school. He graduated as medical doctor and felt very fulfilled. He was happy that the dream he had years earlier have now become fulfilled. Now people can refer to his mother again as "mama doctor". Aikponobhoa's joy and that of his mother knew no end. And the mother reminded him of the events that transpired when his admission was withdrawn from the first University where he was initially admitted to read Medicine. The mother could now comfortably conclude that when events happen to you to make you sad when indeed you have not done anything that would warrant that, then look up to God always. He will always make a way and give you a reason to thank God that what happened to you actually happened.

It was now time indeed for Aikponobhoa to reminisce on what the mother told him about eight years ago when his admission was withdrawn from the State University. The mother had told him that he will have a reason to rejoice in future for not attending that State University. At that time it did not make any sense to him. The events that eventually happened in that State University perfectly justified Aikponobhoa mother's prediction. Few months after the training in the State University Medical School commenced, the program was scrapped due to lack of accreditation and the students had to be transferred to other departments. And because Medicine and Agriculture were in the same College, most of the students were transferred to Faculty of Agriculture. Unfortunately for the students, about a year later, Agriculture program was again scrapped from the University due to lack of

facilities. The implication was that most of the students had to read courses like Botany, Microbiology, Physics, Mathematics, etc; much against their wish.

Aikponobhoa graduated as a Medical Doctor. He gave thanks to God. He could not help but remembered the scripture that said “In all things, give thanks to God, for that is the will of God concerning you in Christ Jesus”. He saw the mother as a prophetess of some sort. She told Aikponobhoa that he would have a reason to rejoice for not attending the State University. Now indeed, the young Medical Doctor looked back and thanked God for permitting the School to withdraw his admission to read Medicine at the State owned Medical School. He eventually did his internship and national service program. He had become a full fledged medical doctor.

CHAPTERNINE: THE DOCTOR TAKES A WIFE.

“Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone - we find it with another.” — Thomas Merton

Aikponobhoa met a young pretty lady while he was in the medical school. The way they met was quite interesting and intriguing. Aikponobhoa had gone to his village to pick a mattress with which he was going to be sleeping on the floor in a room where he was going to be a squatter. Of course, in 200 level in the medical school at that time, Aikponobhoa was not entitled to accommodation in the hostel. At that time, accommodation was only for fresh students and clinical students. Since he hadn't money to rent a place outside the school campus, the option left for him was to arrange to squat with an old friend who was magnanimous enough to accept that albeit amidst a lot of inconveniences for his friend. On this particular Sunday afternoon, Aikponobhoa was returning from the village with the mattress. E was going to see his uncle in another town so as to collect his feeding allowance. He also had other bags with him. So while he was walking down the street to his uncle's place, a young pretty lady walked close to him and greeted him. Then the lady offered to help to carry some of the things Aikponobhoa was struggling with. She spoke impeccable English language. Of course, Aikponobhoa was to discover later that she was an English major student in the University hence her very good command of English language. Aikponobhoa was stunned that such a pretty lady who ought to be arrogant because of her beauty and intelligence could be that humble and down to earth. Of course because of the weight of the luggage that was weighing him down; the lady had barely finished talking when Aikponobhoa handed over the mattress to her to carry. As they walked along, they talked about themselves briefly and exchanged pleasantries. The lady went beyond her house and went with Aikponobhoa to his uncle's house and then bade him farewell and safe trip to school. Aikponobhoa got lost in thought why such a beautiful and sharp lady could be that humble and kind. At that time, there were no mobile phones and so there was no means of sustaining the relationship. At that time, frequent strike actions by University lecturers was a common event. Each time there was strike action by lecturers, Aikponobhoa was expected to be at his uncle's place to go and help with farm work. In any case, Aikponobhoa was always happy to be at the uncle's place at such times because at least he was sure of three solid square meals. Thus with such atmosphere, the effects of the farm work did pale into insignificance oftentimes. During one of such forced vacation as a result of strike action by lecturers, Aikponobhoa ran into this young lady again on the same street where they met the first time. They immediately recognized each other and exchanged pleasantries amidst smiles on both sides. The lady asked Aikponobhoa how he was finding the stay with his uncle. Aikponobhoa responded that it was nice staying with his uncle. She then went further to ask about Aikponobhoa's schedules on typical days. Aikponobhoa was a bit taken aback. He then summed up courage and talked about his activities in the farm. And that in the evenings after the farm work; he normally goes to the library. Aikponobhoa had thought that once this 'sophisticated' lady hears about the farm story she will just walk away. That was however not the case. The humility of this young lady was something else. She went further to encourage Aikponobhoa to have time for other things. For example, he encouraged Aikponobhoa to visit her place occasionally to

play some games. They became friends eventually. The first time Aikponobhoa visited, he was most uncomfortable. Both parents of this young lady were well read. Aikponobhoa was warmly welcomed. The young lady introduced Aikponobhoa to his parents as her new friend. Immediately, both parents of this lady accepted Aikponobhoa into the family. In no time, Aikponobhoa became part of the house. He became happy. He however never had the gut to ask the lady out. He simply considered that they were not in the same class. So for months they just remained friends and that was all. When Aikponobhoa was asked the kind of game he loves to play, he could only say “ludo”. Then the lady asked about whot game. Aikponobhoa has never heard of such. She asked again about scrabble game and the response was same-no idea. The lady knew she had work to do. She took her time to teach Aikponobhoa had to play whot and scrabble games. Very soon, Aikponobhoa was feeling uncomfortable that he was not a match for this pretty and very intelligent lady. So he tried to reduce the number of times he visited the lady. This young lady was however too smart. She saw in Aikponobhoa a humble and nice person that needed encouragement. Thus, on noticing that Aikponobhoa was not as frequent in her house any longer, she now started coming to see Aikponobhoa in his place. Of course while coming, she would come with the whot and scrabble games. On one particular afternoon, Aikponobhoa had just come from the farm in his dirty farm clothes. And this lady came around to see Aikponobhoa. She was not surprised. She greeted Aikponobhoa in the characteristic way – greetings with very broad and inviting smiles. Aikponobhoa was most uncomfortable and actually wished the ground should just open up and let him disappear. The lady understood the feelings and demeanour of Aikponobhoa. She then asked to take her leave and that she was going to come back after Aikponobhoa would freshen up and rested a bit. She kept her promise; She came back after about three hours. Of course she came with the scrabble game. Aikponobhoa was expecting the young lady to comment adversely on the fact that Aikponobhoa goes to farm. The lady never said a word. Like the saying “the sinner runs when no man pursues”, Aikponobhoa had an internal conflict to resolve. What were this young lady’s feelings when she saw him with farm clothes? Aikponobhoa waited in vain and the young lady never made reference to the farm issue. Then Aikponobhoa brought up the topic. He said “I hope you were not embarrassed seeing me in those farm clothes?” This young lady was in fact surprised. He said there was nothing like that on her mind. In fact she was already aware that Aikponobhoa regularly went to farm. And she even went further to tell Aikponobhoa that she was most impressed about his spirit of hard work and humility. That despite the fact that he was a medical student; Aikponobhoa still regularly went to farm whenever he was around in the uncle’s place. At this, Aikponobhoa got relieved and they settled down and played the game that day for a very long time. This young lady literally forgot to go home until the younger sister was sent by the mother to call her that it was getting late. After she left, Aikponobhoa then ruminated on these events. He was left with one conclusion that this lady is a good person with a very good heart. From that day onwards, Aikponobhoa developed deep feelings and love for this lady. Deeper friendship then commenced. Eventually, the strike action was suspended and Aikponobhoa went back to school. Before he left for school, he collected the lady’s post office address. He also collected her father’s telephone number. The father was quite comfortable and he was among the very few persons at that time that had a landline telephone. It was more convenient for Aikponobhoa to be writing letters to his new found love. Any time he needed to call her, it has to be in the afternoon and he needed to leave campus and go to NITEL office where he had a friend who was a

staff. At least he could call for free and stay on the line for a long time. With the telephone calls and exchange of letters, the relationship blossomed. And on one occasion, Aikponobhoa wrote a letter and requested formally that they should have a relationship that will lead to marriage. This letter did not receive a response. Aikponobhoa was worried whether he had offended this lady with his request. After, a long wait, Aikponobhoa wrote a letter of apology just in case he had offended the lady. The lady replied that she was not angry at all. She did not reply because Aikponobhoa had requested something that needed her to think very well before responding. At this time, she then told Aikponobhoa that she has heard his request and that she was going to think about it. Aikponobhoa felt glad and promised to give her time to reflect on his request. Thus, the letter writing and occasional telephone calls continued. On one occasion, Aikponobhoa, thinking that it was taking too long to get the response of this lady. Wrote what looked like a reminder. This letter did the magic. She replied and said, honestly, I liked you from the very first day we met and that within the few months of relating with him, she had found Aikponobhoa a very nice person. She concluded by saying that she has accepted Aikponobhoa's request. There was a proviso however that Aikponobhoa should promise not to hurt her. Aikponobhoa promised that he was going to be nice to her and that he will not hurt her. Then a real relationship commenced and from then onwards they related as persons that were going to settle down some day as husband and wife. Aikponobhoa became a happy young man. He looked for every reason to visit the uncle so he could just see his friend. Eventually, Aikponobhoa graduated from the medical school and started his internship. The young lady would visit from time to time and Aikponobhoa will similarly visit. At this time, the lady had also graduated and was working in an aviation company. Slowly, plans were unfolding about when the wedding was going to be. During the period, there was a need to do HB genotype. This lady came to visit Aikponobhoa and they both did the investigation. Then the big blow. They were both Haemoglobin AS. That started a very confused moment. Aikponobhoa could not convince himself or the lady that they could take the risk. They repeated the tests on three different occasions just in the hope that one of the test will turn out to be haemoglobin AA. Unfortunately, the result remained the same. What was the next thing? Aikponobhoa would ask the lady; what do we do? The lady will ask, you are the doctor and so advise what we should do'. With this, confusion and apathy set in. The visits reduced in frequency. Ultimately, the relationship came to an end. Aikponobhoa wept profusely the day they both decided to end the relationship. It was a sad moment indeed. Aikponobhoa then continued with his internship and eventually completed it. At this time, he was not keen about getting into another relationship. He was too devastated to think of a relationship during the remaining part of his internship. Aikponobhoa then concluded that everything with respect to seeking a life partner was going to be put on hold until his youth service period. He stuck to that self advice.

The experience during the national youth service year was quite interesting. Aikponobhoa was posted to a remote village in one of the northern states of Nigeria. There was neither water nor light in that village. That was a very backward state indeed. Aikponobhoa spent only a week in that village and he nearly died of enteric fever. By the time he recovered, he did not need any prophet to tell him that he did not need to go back to that village. He moved over to town in an attempt to secure redeployment on health grounds to town. Aikponobhoa met a doctor in the town. This doctor graduated about two years before Aikponobhoa. He did his best to assist

Aikponobhoa in securing redeployment but they were not successful. After series of trial, Aikponobhoa got frustrated and left the town to travel to his home town. This was a Christmas period. His conclusion was that the search for redeployment will resume again after the Christmas break. Before Aikponobhoa went for youth service, a matron in the hospital where he did his internship gave him a letter to help deliver to a lecturer in a University in the state he was posted to serve. However, because of the challenge of seeking redeployment, Aikponobhoa was unable to deliver that letter. So when he got back to base, he felt the need to go and search for the matron and apologise for not being able to deliver the letter as earlier promised. At first, a mind was telling him that there was no need going to search for the matron. On a second thought, Aikponobhoa felt that it was only right for him to go and search for the matron and explain why he was unable to deliver the letter. This latter decision was to change events for the better for Aikponobhoa with regard to the service year. Aikponobhoa searched and found the matron. At this time, communication was quite difficult as there were no mobile phones. Face to face with the Matron, Aikponobhoa told the matron that he was posted to one village and needed to seek redeployment to town. As Aikponobhoa mentioned the name of the village he was posted to, the Matron looked up and “attacked” Aikponobhoa for referring to her town as a village. It later turned out that Aikponobhoa did not pronounce the name of the village correctly and it sounded like the matron’s town. Once the controversy regarding the pronunciation was resolved, Aikponobhoa instantly remembered that there was a lady in the camp who was from the matron’s town. This lady was in charge of posting in the state. Then Aikponobhoa mentioned the name of this lady to the matron. The matron had a long laugh. The matron then said, “That is my younger sister”. Aikponobhoa smiled and asked if the Matron could give a note to the lady. The matron happily gave the note. That note was like magic. Aikponobhoa was only waiting for the Christmas break to be over so that he could rush back to meet the lady with the note. Aikponobhoa presented the note to the Matron’s sister and the next question from the lady was this: Where do you want to serve? At the initial period Aikponobhoa and his doctor friend attempted securing redeployment; they had come across a director in one of the government directorates who had promised him that if he got his posting to his office, he would gladly accept him. The director was not quite happy with the national youth service program because despite repeated applications for a corper, he has never received any posted to him. He had earlier told Aikponobhoa that he had decided never to ask for a corper again but that if they posted him to his ministry he would gladly accept him and pay all the allowances accruable to a level 8 officer including call duty claims. When Aikponobhoa was asked about where he wanted to serve, he instantly remembered this office and told the lady. By the next day Aikponobhoa was posted to the office in town. Thus, what he wasted two weeks searching for, was granted to him with a short note. Aikponobhoa could only see this as the finger of God and he gave thanks to God

Getting accommodation in the city was another challenge. His doctor friend who was single at the time was living in a three bedroom flat provided for him by the hospital where he was working. He willingly offered Aikponobhoa one of the rooms in the flat. While Aikponobhoa was searching for a place much earlier, he had also visited another office. Now that Aikponobhoa was in town, he went back to this office and was offered a locum job to be covering six hours a week. Along the line during Aikponobhoa’s travails in seeking a place for service, his doctor friend saw a vision

that Aikponobhoa was indeed serving in this second office and that Aikponobhoa was housed in the staff quarters.

Aikponobhoa eventually settled down and was relatively comfortable. Another youth corper was given the third room in the flat. The entire house was lively and they all behaved as one family. Other corporers would come there and spend weekends. It was like a fellowship centre of some sort. However, about four months to the end of the service year, there was a big blow. The doctor who was housing Aikponobhoa had been transferred by the hospital to a different state and so he needed to give up the accommodation and that also meant that Aikponobhoa needed to seek for another accommodation. There was confusion. About this period too, some persons from the southern parts of the country who were living in the northern parts were transferring their properties home because there was a rumour of possible attacks on the southerners in the North. Aikponobhoa was having sleepless nights how to get his properties to the south since he was going to end his service year in about four months. In the midst of that confusion he stumbled into a medical doctor, who had been given a truck to transfer his properties to the south. Aikponobhoa approached him to assist him and the doctor gladly accepted. The next challenge was getting accommodation. Then prayerfully and by faith, Aikponobhoa approached the director of the company where he was doing locum to assist him with accommodation in the staff quarters. The director said that Aikponobhoa was not entitled ordinarily being that he was just with the company on locum basis and not serving with them fully. However, the director obliged to give him a space in the staff quarters as a way of just assisting him even when he was not qualified. Aikponobhoa saw this as the finger of God and he blessed the name of the Lord. He only picked a few items to this new accommodation while he packed every other thing into the truck that was going to help him transfer his belongings to the south. Thus everything happened so swiftly and smoothly and there was no other way to consider it than to see it as orchestrated by God himself. The coincidences were just so many. Then his doctor friend who had left for another state came visiting. He went to the house where he had assisted Aikponobhoa with accommodation. He was told that Aikponobhoa had relocated to the staff quarters of the company where he was doing locum. The doctor rushed there to meet Aikponobhoa. On getting to Aikponobhoa's room, the doctor lifted up his hand and blessed the name of the Lord that the vision he saw some months earlier had been fulfilled. He had seen Aikponobhoa housed in that particular accommodation. He passed the night in Aikponobhoa's room and they both blessed the name of the Lord together.

Like every young man, the young medical Doctor thought that there was the need to settle down. He considered the period of the national youth service as an appropriate period to commence the search. He came across someone that knew him back in the University days. He did not quite recognize her. But the young pretty lady reminded him that he was her photographer back in the school days and that they were even in the same fellowship. Perhaps Aikponobhoa was too busy as an undergraduate to have had time to be admiring ladies. But now he was out of school and it was probably safe to start searching. Within a short period, Aikponobhoa and the young lady became very close. They were both in the same corporers' fellowship and were both members of choir. Consequently, they had one reason or the other to interact virtually on a daily basis. After several months of meeting this young lady, Aikponobhoa felt it was now time to declare an intention to marry her. He was quite positive that this lady liked him and he was sure that he would receive a positive answer from this lady.

Aikponobhoa was however wrong. On this particular day, after church service, Aikponobhoa invited the lady to his place. They talked over a range of issues. Finally Aikponobhoa hit the nail on its head. He told the young lady that he was interesting in settling down with her. The lady answered back very frankly. She liked Aikponobhoa a great deal. But she was not ready for anything like relationship, having suffered a heart break in her final year in the University. Thus they remained very good friends all through the period of the national youth service but there was no more discussion about the issue of marriage between them. Aikponobhoa is someone who never puts others under pressure to take a decision. He always believed people must be allowed to make their free will decisions without being coerced. The service year eventually ended and Aikponobhoa went back to his State the same night of the day he completed his service. He was determined to go and commence residency training immediately hence there was no room to hang on in the state where he served since the service year had ended.

During the residency training program, Aikponobhoa was literally living in the call room whether he was on call or not. That was to enable him read and prepare for his examinations. One fateful evening, the lady friend who was very close to him while they were doing the national youth service visited the hospital where Aikponobhoa was doing his residency training. This lady searched the entire hospital looking for Aikponobhoa. She was in company of a beautiful young lady who Aikponobhoa later got to know was this lady's school daughter. At this point there were no mobile phones and was thus practically impossible to track anybody. They searched everywhere but were not lucky to find Aikponobhoa. After a very long search, the school daughter who was now feeling very tired and frustrated asked that they should go home and that her school mother could repeat the trip to locate Aikponobhoa. Reluctantly, the school mother (Aikponobhoa's friend) agreed that they should go home. And that she was going to repeat the trip on a different occasion. So they got set to leave the hospital. At the hospital main gate, the two ladies ran into an old friend who had just gone to have a drink outside the hospital. This doctor was actually reading in the room next to where Aikponobhoa was also reading in the central sleeping room. They greeted the doctor and told him of their frustration in trying to locate Aikponobhoa. The doctor smiled and said "Aikponobhoa is reading in the room next to mine at the central sleeping room". This was good news for Aikponobhoa's friend. She told her school daughter that she needed to go back with this doctor so that she can just see her old friend. Her school daughter grumbled a little and then reluctantly followed Aikponobhoa's friend. There was a bang on the door. Who is there? It was Aikponobhoa's friend and a very pretty young lady. They all exchanged pleasantries. The young lady was then introduced as a school daughter to Aikponobhoa's friend. Aikponobhoa was excited to see them, He got soft drinks and they all drank together and had a koinonia. They stayed for a short period and then left because they were going far into the town and it was already getting late into the night. There was no well defined means of sustaining contacts as there were no mobile phones at the time. One fateful morning, Aikponobhoa was going to work and a young lady greeted him so well. Aikponobhoa was so impressed with manners displayed by the young and pretty lady. And because she greeted him as someone she had met before, Aikponobhoa then asked the natural question whether they had met before. The young lady then reminded him that she was the one that followed the friend to visit him in the call room. They exchanged pleasantries and then parted. Some weeks later, the young lady had a medical condition and needed a prescription.

She needed the services of a medical doctor. So the only person that readily came to her mind was Aikponobhoa. She went to Aikponobhoa's department to look for him. Unfortunately, she was told that Aikponobhoa had just stepped out. So she waited patiently in the doctors' common room. Aikponobhoa eventually came back to the common room. Again, the young lady needed to introduce herself to Aikponobhoa. Perhaps Aikponobhoa was too engrossed in the residency training program that he had little or no time for making or visiting friends. After this third introduction, Aikponobhoa made a conscious effort to keep the picture of this lady in his brain. He did not want a forth introduction as that could be embarrassing now. He assisted the lady with a prescription and promised her that she will definitely be able to recognize her the next time they meet again. The lady was so appreciative of the fact that Aikponobhoa assisted her with a prescription for her medical condition. From that moment onwards, their paths kept crossing and Aikponobhoa kept his promise of being able to recognize her if they met again. Overtime, they became friends. Discussions eventually started. Aikponobhoa eventually became a senior registrar. And now he felt the need not to be alone anymore. He shared the idea with this young lady. The young lady took her time to pray about it and eventually came up with a positive response. Many attributes endeared this young lady to Aikponobhoa. She was very pretty and humble. She was a born again child of God. And she was also very intelligent. She was somebody that could make sacrifice and inconvenience herself to make others happy. She was a mother indeed. She was soft spoken and even when she was angry, she would never raise her voice. Her calmness even in the midst of a troubled situation demonstrated an excellent spirit. On a wide range of issues, she had brilliant ideas. She is very kind and willing to assist those in need. She was simply awesome. With all these attributes and a positive answer from her, the next step was to seal up the deal for marriage. Consequently, plans for wedding started. Salary of resident doctors at the time was very poor. Preparations for the wedding seemed a herculean task. However, the God that is able supply all needs according to His riches in glory made provisions for Aikponobhoa. Aikponobhoa promised himself that he was not going to borrow one penny to wed. By his characteristic humble nature, he was going to make his coat according to the size of the cloth. He understood the trick. With the aid of his best man, they started the preparation early. In fact, they started buying rice, tomato and other such non-perishable items about a year before the wedding. Some days to the wedding, a friend came to see the level of preparations. He met the ladies washing the take away plastic bowls to be used for serving. Usually, stickers are affixed to such bowls. Aikponobhoa however did not have the resources to print such stickers and so he resolved that he was going to use the bowls without stickers rather than going to borrow money. Aikponobhoa was that simple. The friend that saw the bowls without the stickers then offered to print the stickers for Aikponobhoa as his contribution towards the wedding. God again performed a miracle of provision for Aikponobhoa. Another miracle of God's provision happened. Aikponobhoa could not buy a nice pair of shoes. Instead he got a very cheap product from one of the companies where an uncle of his was working. Few days to the white wedding, Aikponobhoa went to visit the father in law to brief him about the level of preparation. As he was about leaving the father in law's place, the man handed over ten thousand naira to Aikponobhoa. This was a huge sum of money. So on his way home, he went to a supermarket and got a very nice pair of shoes. He was happy and felt complete. The wedding came and it was successful. The wedding was done during raining season and God performed yet another miracle that it did not rain. People were amazed how Aikponobhoa was able to make plans for the elaborate

and successful wedding. Aikponobhoa never took the glory. His response would always be that it was God that provided the resources that were used for the wedding. Thus, through the wedding ceremony, the name of the Lord was glorified.

CHAPTER TEN: BECOMING A SPECIALIST MEDICAL PRACTITIONER

“Success in life comes when you simply refuse to give up, with goals so strong that obstacles, failure, and loss only act as motivation” - Kushandwizdom

After the training in Medical School, it was now time for internship. Aikponobhoa got a place in the Teaching Hospital and had his internship for a year. Before he completed his internship, one of his consultants invited him for lunch. During lunch, the Consultant advised Aikponobhoa that he must seriously plan to commence his post graduate training as soon as he completed his youth service. Even though Aikponobhoa has always desired to be a Surgeon, he was not quite of the process. But this interaction with the Consultant ignited the fire for specialization in Aikponobhoa. Right from that moment he started making consultations on how to commence training in surgery. After the internship, Aikponobhoa went for his one year compulsory national service in the northern part of the Country. At that time there was no religious upheavals which has become the order of the day today. And indeed if his national service were to be in the Nigeria of today, Aikponobhoa would obviously have declined going to serve in the northern part of the Country.

While undergoing the national service, he was busy preparing for primaries to enable him gain admission for residency in surgery. Getting into the program was made relatively easy for him at the time. First, most young doctors were not interested in residency training. Instead, they elected to work in private hospitals which were paying better salaries than government hospitals. Thus, one could be admitted for residency training in surgery at that time even without primaries. Aikponobhoa was however not interested in making money. After the discussion with his consultant as an internee, the zeal for specialization had literally consumed him. Secondly, his uncle was the head of the department of surgery. During the national service, Aikponobhoa had written to the uncle that he was interested in coming to commence residency training in surgery soon after the national service. The uncle replied and the contents of the letter were quite encouraging. The conclusion was that the appointment was as good as Aikponobhoa's anytime he was ready to come into the program. At that time, there was no facility for electronic communication. He had waited for about two weeks and he received the Uncle's approval that he should come for the training in surgery at anytime he was set to come. With this in mind, Aikponobhoa submitted an application for residency training in surgery the following week after the national service. The letter received divine speed and in less than two weeks, Aikponobhoa had commenced his residency training in surgery albeit with a temporary appointment letter. His interview was conducted about three months later and he was then given a proper appointment letter.

The residency training was quite rigorous as the residents were quite few and that meant a lot of work for the few residents. At the time his group came into surgery, there was a lot of apathy amongst the residents they met in the department. Failure rates in the fellowship examinations were very high. The department was seen as a place where residents don't pass examinations. They had earned a name. But Aikponobhoa and two other young residents who came into the program some months

before him resolved in their minds that they were going to change that bad trend in the department. So they went into group discussions and very rigorous reading. These young men were practically living in the hospital. With this degree of commitment, they passed the primaries, part one and part two examinations in record times. As soon as Aikponobhoa passed his part two examinations, he attended an interview to be appointed as a lecturer. At this point, the young consultant surgeon had decided to be in academics and possibly become a professor. He however did not receive his appointment letter until two years after the interview. After the interview, he waited at home for the appointment letter for about four months. A private hospital in Lagos had offered him appointment with reasonable salary but Aikponobhoa's focus was now on how to become a lecturer. During the four month period, Aikponobhoa worked with a friend in his private hospital. Aikponobhoa's thinking was that the appointment letter was going to be ready in few weeks and hence there was no need of going to seek for job elsewhere particularly when he had fixed his mind on lecturing. After waiting for four months however, Aikponobhoa had to pick up a job as a consultant surgeon in a teaching hospital. He was not satisfied with the setting. He was not a core lecturer but an hospital consultant and an adjunct lecturer. He was not comfortable with this plan but had to accept it as an interim measure. About two years after the interview he attended to be a lecture, his uncle sent a message to him that he had been appointed a lecturer. Aikponobhoa went to the Registry of the University to pick up his appointment letter. Thus his dream of becoming a lecturer became fulfilled. Aikponobhoa became glad. Several persons encouraged him to remain in the Teaching Hospital and that he had a very bright chance of becoming the chief executive of the Teaching Hospital. But none of these things moved Aikponobhoa. He was focused on what he wanted and there was therefore no going back on the lecturing job.

Aikponobhoa commenced work in the University as Lecturer 1. Before his time, once you were appointed a lecturer in the University, it was almost automatic to be appointed an honorary consultant in the Teaching Hospital attached to the University. In Aikponobhoa's time however, the management of the Teaching Hospital refused to appoint Aikponobhoa as an honorary Consultant Surgeon. Two other young men with whom Aikponobhoa did residency were already lecturing. Infact, they had lectured for two years before Aikponobhoa was appointed a lecturer. They were however faced with the same challenge Aikponobhoa was encountering now -not being appointed as honorary consultant to the hospital. The two young lecturers were feeling very unhappy with the situation because they had lectured for two years without being appointed as honorary consultant surgeons. Aikponobhoa then told the two young lecturers to get encouraged that the situation cannot last forever. Thus, the two young men that had literarily abandoned their offices started coming to the offices. Hitherto, they would just give their lectures and go to their houses. Aikponobhoa helped in changing the trend. Aikponobhoa brought hope and zeal. He would always tell his colleagues that not being appointed consultants does not stop anyone from publishing papers. What the University requires to promote you as a lecturer is the number of publications. His friends eventually developed a positive mind set. They went into serious work. They formed a research group with other lecturers. And because they were not involved in serious clinical works, they had ample time to engage in paper publications using data they had collected when they were in residency training. Within a short period, they had enough publications to be promoted to the rank of senior lecturers. Indeed, Aikponobhoa had enough

publications within two years and he was eminently qualified for accelerated promotion to the rank of a senior lecturer. Certain forces in the department however prevented him from having accelerated promotion. The persons who literarily had hijacked the department were asking the question “where is the young man hurrying to?” However, there was a precedent in the department and in the University that some other persons had used accelerated promotion. The University rules were very clear about accelerated promotion. Aikponobhoa met the criteria for accelerated promotion, but the forces in the department scuttled the plan. Aikponobhoa could only wonder why the head of department chose to consult the “king makers” when the University rules were very clear. There was an agenda against Aikponobhoa. The ultimate aim was to reduce his speed. This was with a view to dampening the young lecturer’s zeal. The plan however produced a paradoxical result. Rather than dampening his zeal, the inhibitions only further energized him. Aikponobhoa continued to publish even more to the consternation of the self acclaimed “king makers”. Aikponobhoa had this firm belief even as a young lecturer that no one can stop a dream whose time has come. The failure of the Hospital management to appoint him an honorary did not discourage Aikponobhoa one bit. As a matter of fact, what the hospital management thought would work against Aikponobhoa by not appointing him honorary consultant actually became a blessing in disguise by igniting the fire to publish in him. This is akin to what Joseph told his brothers in the Book of Genesis Chapter 50 verse 20: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive". The period of waiting for appointed became a period of incubation of how to publish papers. Perhaps, if Aikponobhoa was appointed as honorary consultant immediately he was appointed a lecturer; he may not have been fully grounded in the act of publication. When God considered that Aikponobhoa had been fully groomed in the act of paper publication, He caused a shaking in the Teaching Hospital. With the shaking, the young lecturer was now appointed an honorary consultant. And because he had already imbibed the skill for publication during the period of “incubation”, Aikponobhoa did not have any challenge combining clinical work with publishing. Aikponobhoa was making good progress in all fronts of life. The more Aikponobhoa was getting established, the more several persons were becoming envious of him. But this did not deter the young lecturer. He got his promotions in record time.

The last stage was becoming a Professor of Surgery. There were numerous challenges associated with this phase of the academic voyage. In all, God proved Himself strong by raising men and women that encouraged Aikponobhoa. He could only recall the Biblical quotation on the value of patience when his Professorship was announced. That scripture says in Habakkuk Chapter 2 verse 3 : "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay. Some persons had transformed themselves into principalities with the sole objective of truncating Aikponobhoa’s dream of becoming a professor. These men and women played varied roles to frustrate Aikponobhoa. They however did not have ability to recall and recognize that you cannot stop a dream or an idea whose time had come. Aikponobhoa was resolute and had faith in God that the same God who has lifted him through all the previous years was still the same God and was not going to abandon him in the midst of the challenges. Aikponobhoa continued to encourage himself with the scripture that says “many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him from them all”. Psalm 34: 19. And when the time was ripe, Aikponobhoa was appointed a

professor. The joy that greeted the announcement can only be better imagined. The appointment sparked off more envy and jealousy. Many persons were confused. They kept asking the question-how is he making it? They kept wondering how Aikponobhoa who was very busy with other aspects of life was still able to continue to well in academics. Some persons came to congratulate him out of a good intention while others came out of envy and just to confirm if the announcement was indeed true. But the actions did not bother Aikponobhoa just as Paul would say in Philippians 1: 16-18. (Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice....). Aikponobhoa was humble enough in all these that the achievements were achieved simply through the grace of God. Consequently, each time he was asked how he was making significant progress within a short time, he would always refer them to Philippians 4:13 where Paul said "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" and 1 Corinthians 15: 10 (But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me). With the appointment as a Professor of Surgery, Aikponobhoa became fulfilled. The appointment gave him an opportunity to share the goodness of God with friends and every person that came across him. He felt one good way to deepen this act of appreciation of God's goodness was to organize an elaborate thanksgiving service in the church. Consequently He invited several persons for the thanksgiving service. The sole aim was to have the opportunity to share the testimony of God's goodness with a large crowd. The aim was achieved.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE SURGEON BECOMES A LAWYER

*“You were born with potential.
You were born with goodness and trust. You were born with ideals and dreams.
You were born with greatness.
You were born with wings.
You are not meant for crawling, so don't.
You have wings.
Learn to use them and fly.”*
— *Rumi*

Aikponobhoa had always admired the legal profession. He did not quite understand the procedure for getting admission to read law. He went to faculty of law to make enquiries about the qualifications for a part time program in law. The outcome of the interaction was quite encouraging. He was qualified to do a part time program haven obtained a first degree in medicine. Thus the law program commenced. At that time, Aikponobhoa was working in a different city and it was not quite possible to attend all the lectures. He was however very fortunate to have a very brilliant young man who was the class captain. Aikponobhoa would always photocopy notes from the class captain. Whenever there was a continuous assessment, the class captain would have to notify him on time so he will prepare for the examination. God's grace was upon him and he was able to do well. He passed all his examinations and graduated with a second class upper division and was the best student in the part time class.

The next challenge was how to go to the law School. Aikponobhoa had a family and there was no way he could sustain the family while at the law school if he was not receiving salary. However, the University administration was quite magnanimous and considered applications for study with pay for members of staff that needed to go to Law School. This approval came with a great relief. Aikponobhoa had initially thought that it was not going to be possible to attend the law school. But with this approval, the next hurdle was how to obtain the law school form. At that time, the law school forms were not readily available because of the large number of candidates. For, Aikponobhoa, the officer in charge of clearing candidates for law school made things particularly difficult for him. This officer was later to confess that he took those measures against Aikponobhoa because he was jealous that a consultant surgeon and a senior lecturer will still be interested in become a legal practitioner. He almost succeeded in scuttling Aikponobhoa's dream but for the quick intervention of the Dean of the faculty of Law at that time. Aikponobhoa was eventually cleared and given the Law School form.

Selecting the campus for the law school was also a bit challenging. Aikponobhoa thought of Abuja Campus. However, by God's divine direction, he was posted to Enugu Campus. Aikponobhoa was later to enjoy the advantages of this. Enugu was closer to his base and so he could come home virtually every weekend. During such weekends, he was able to do some part time jobs and thus improve his financial base.

If he was in Abuja, he would not have been able to be coming home regularly. Thus he saw the hand of God in the posting to Enugu Campus rather than Abuja Campus which he actually desired.

The life at Enugu was most challenging. The accommodation was very poor with virtually non-existent facilities. They were six in a room that was sharing toilet and bathroom facilities with another six persons in another room. Before Aikponobhoa came to Enugu, he had made up his mind that he was going to stay in the hostel. He never anticipated this sort of poor facilities for Law graduates. Many persons put pressure on Aikponobhoa to get an apartment in town that will be befitting for his status as a medical doctor and a senior lecturer. But Aikponobhoa was not somebody that would easily be dissuaded from a course of action simply because of temporary gains. He considered the suggestions but declined to move out of the campus. Aikponobhoa's major consideration was that he was very likely to get easily distracted should he go and rent an apartment. He wanted to focus on his academics. He was willing to bear the pains of living in the hostel with very young boys albeit for a short period. He reflected on the scripture about Moses who declined palatial residence in order to fulfil a divine course – Hebrews 11v 25 : Choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. The story was told of a man who could not imagine staying in the hostel and therefore went to rent an apartment outside the school. Within two weeks of renting the apartment, a young lady moved in with him. About two weeks to the examination, a lecturer friend of his counselled him to move into the hostel so as to concentrate on the examinations. This man however refused the counsel. He claimed that he will be able to cope. That was however not the case. When the results were released, the man failed all the courses. But the young lady who moved into his apartment passed very well with a second class upper division. For Aikponobhoa, he did not want to have an encounter like this. Neither did he wait for anybody to advise him. He advised and encouraged himself even when friends were not happy with him for staying in the midst of "children". Aikponobhoa was focused and knew what he wanted. He could not just imagine the shame of a senior lecturer from a medical school failing examination at the law school. He also knew that he did not come to the law school for pleasure but to be called to the Bar. He had this adage that it is what you have come to do in the goldsmith's shop that you discuss with him. The goldsmith shop is usually very hot and should not ordinarily allow room for frivolities. This was the idea Aikponobhoa had while at the law school. He worked extremely hard. Even though he was not able to attend all the lectures, he made sure that he copied all the notes. The efforts paid off.

With a dint of hard work and the grace of God, he completed the law school program and passed with a second class lower division. Thus he was called to bar and thus becoming a barrister and solicitor of the supreme court of Nigeria. After call to bar, many persons started wondering about the relevance of law to medical practice. These sceptics were soon to realize that there was so much relationship between law and medicine. Before long, Aikponobhoa became a major speaker in most events. Other doctors started consulting him on a wide range of issues that have to do with law. He started giving a lot of counsel and this was done gratis in virtually all cases. Aikponobhoa became fulfilled. He then went on to start publishing some of his articles in the aspects of medicine that had legal connotations. His lectures and publications soon became unique and known all over the country and beyond. Aikponobhoa has continued to savour the joy and excitement associated with the

unique combination of the practice of law and medicine. Indeed, he saw this feat as a dream fulfilled. In all Aikponobhoa has continued to acknowledge God as the source of his victories.

CHAPTER 12: CHALLENGES IN MARRIAGE

A challenge only becomes an obstacle when you bow to it. -Ray Davis

Aikponobhoa got married to a woman that can best be described as a mother, a sister, a friend and a wife. Everything was bright and beautiful and they were both very happy savouring the joy of the wonderful union. They both agreed that they were going to wait for one year before having children. And they embarked on family planning that was planned to last for one year. After the one period, Aikponobhoa and the wife felt that they were now set to start raising kids. Then the challenges started. The wife did not take in as expected by the second year. There was calmness. Slowly, it moved from second year to third year and so on. At this point there were so many questions. Aikponobhoa and the wife were persons that did not live rough lives while growing up. Why were they having challenges with giving birth? It was a period that could easily lead to despair and frustration but certain things worked out to serve as encouragement for the couple. First their belief in God was resolute. Rather than blame themselves, they trusted God the more in the midst of the challenges and resolved to love each other more. In addition, both parents were very supportive. Aikponobhoa had lost his father while the wife also lost her mother. Thus Aikponobhoa was taking his father in law as his father while the wife on the other hand was taking the mother in law as her mother. The in laws were quite supportive. Aikponobhoa's mother would encourage him not to look back but rather keep looking unto God. She would also add that even if Aikponobhoa did not have a child that was not going to stop him from making heaven which in life ought to be anybody's preoccupation. It was not therefore uncommon to hear Aikponobhoa's mother say "in heaven, God will not ask you how many children you gave birth to while you were on earth". Aikponobhoa mother's position was quite encouraging. Rather than harass the son's wife and ask the son to marry another woman, she became the source of encouragement and strength to carry on at that bleak moment. Aikponobhoa's in law was also simply amazing. He kept encouraging the son in law and the daughter to keep holding in and looking unto God. With such level of support from both sides, Aikponobhoa and the wife resolved to love each other even more. Consequently, they continued to maintain the sort of calmness that was difficult to unravel considering the huge challenge that was staring them in the face. Their disposition could therefore only be deciphered with the scripture that says God gives peace that surpasses all understanding. Many persons were suggesting different things. Some statements from some persons were geared towards mocking Aikponobhoa and the wife even though such persons were pretending as if they were advising or encouraging them. But the couple remained focused on God and were not moved. There was a day in church when a lady was selling some clothes and Mrs. Aikponobhoa wanted to buy one but the lady subtly insulted her by saying that the clothes were for women with children, Mr. And Mrs. Aikponobhoa bore the pain and humiliation and encouraged themselves in the Lord. This pain and agony continued for thirteen good years. And then the Lord

remembered them and blessed them with a bouncing baby girl. The joy that greeted the arrival of the baby was ecstatic. Naturally, the child had many names. The father called her Ighelose meaning I have looked unto God. The mother called her Onome meaning my own. This was certainly her own and as it is said in some parlance, the drinking water that is meant for you will certainly not pass you by. The grandmother called her Joy because she certainly has brought joy to the entire family. And the baby had so many other names reflecting the thoughts and inclinations of the persons who were giving the names. Onome was pretty and loved by all. About two years after the birth of Onome, the Lord again blessed the Aikponobhoas with a son. Mr. Aikponobhoa named the boy Ebosetale meaning what God has said. On the other hand, the mother named him Akpevwweoghene, meaning we give thanks to God. The grandmother named him Oseyanitafo meaning that it is only God that has the final say. And indeed, in the life of Aikponobhoa and the wife, it was only God that had the final say. Whatever men had wanted or desired for the Aikponobhoas that were not in the plans of God for them did not come to pass. The family was now complete and they were all happy. Onome and the brother grew up and continued to be a source of joy to the entire family.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: PRIVATE HOSPITAL EXPERIENCE

Success comes from continually expanding your frontiers in every direction—creatively, financially, spiritually, and physically. Always ask yourself, what can I improve? Who else can I talk to? Where else can I look? – Anonymous

Aikponobhoa was a hardworking medical doctor; the background he had in his early days in the farm became very handy for him. Because he needed to meet so many financial obligations, Aikponobhoa felt the need to own a private hospital so he could be augmented the very poor salary from the government work he was doing. He started in a three bed room rented apartment. From there Aikponobhoa moved to yet another rented apartment. He was doing well in private practice and the Lord was indeed blessing the labours of Aikponobhoa's hand. His fame as a surgeon soon became known both far and near. In all, Aikponobhoa saw this as the hand of God in his life.

On a certain night, the Lord in a dream showed Aikponobhoa the picture of what his hospital should be. When he woke up from sleep, he realised that it was a dream but resolved that with God on his side, that dream was going to be transformed into reality. That same morning, he developed a sketch of the hospital building he saw in a dream. He shared the dream with the wife who then asked him where the land was located. Aikponobhoa answered the wife that he had not got any land but that the God who gave the dream will also provide the land. Done with the sketching, Aikponobhoa went on the same day to meet an architect to help change the sketch to a proper architectural drawing. It was as if there was a strong force that was propelling Aikponobhoa that very morning and that force was so much that Aikponobhoa was not going to stop at anything until he saw the fulfilment of that dream. When the architect saw the sketch, he sought to know where the land was located. Aikponobhoa then said that he was yet to arrange for the plot of land but the architect should just design the structure based on a dimension of 100 x 100 feet. The discussion was thus concluded. As Aikponobhoa got up to leave the architect's office, the architect suddenly remembered that there was a plot of land he had earlier been approached to purchase but he declined as he could not raise the amount he was asked to pay. The architect then phoned the man that was selling the plot of land to know if the plot was still available. It was later confirmed that the plot was still available. And because Aikponobhoa was not a man that would postpones things that can be done today to tomorrow, himself and the architect fixed a time to meet with the owner of the plot on that same day. Negotiations were finalized and Aikponobhoa got the plot. The money to be paid was huge. But the God who is Jehovah Jireh indeed provided the resources for Aikponobhoa and he bought the plot of land for the purpose of having a permanent site for his hospital. Once the transaction of the sale of land was concluded, Aikponobhoa fenced the land in order to secure it. Aikponobhoa felt relaxed and fulfilled. Then about two weeks after

purchasing the plot of land, the land lady of the building where Aikponobhoa was running his clinic gave a quit notice to Aikponobhoa to leave the building. Suddenly, it dawned on Aikponobhoa that it was because of this quit notice that was going to come that God gave him that dream and the drive to also pursue the dream. Aikponobhoa was grateful to God that he did not trivialize that dream. With his knowledge of law, Aikponobhoa realised that the one month notice that was given to him was in error since he was a yearly tenant. With this he challenged the land lady and he eventually got one full year for him to quit the premises. With the grace of God on his side, Aikponobhoa was able to develop the plot of land he had acquired and built that clinic that the Lord showed him in a dream. With this accomplished, Aikponobhoa became fulfilled that he now had his practice in an apartment owned by him and he was now free from paying tax. He became indeed cheerful and he had remained eternally grateful to God for the great things that He did for him.

While working in the private practice, God has on several occasions demonstrated his goodness to Aikponobhoa. There was a particular incident when Aikponobhoa was doing a right nephrectomy. He injured a blood vessel and the bleeding was torrential. Aikponobhoa and his assistant did all the manoeuvres they knew how to do in order to stop the bleeding but the bleeding wouldn't just stop. Then God directed Aikponobhoa to put his artery forceps blindly through the pool of blood in the abdomen. This was not the routine of catching a blood vessel. As Aikponobhoa made to obey that inner voice, the assistant surgeon almost held Aikponobhoa's hand because by the teaching of science, you can only apply your forceps to pick the artery when you have seen the bleeding vessel. Aikponobhoa however chose to listen to the voice of God from within rather than listen to the voice of the assistant. With the forceps that was passed blindly, God directed Aikponobhoa's fingers and the forceps and he was able to pick up the blood vessel that was bleeding. The assistant surgeon was astonished and saw Aikponobhoa as a magician. But Aikponobhoa was quick to say that this was certainly the work of God and he therefore had no glory to take. Aikponobhoa could only remember the words of Apostle Paul when he said "His strength is made perfect in our weakness". Thus, the patient that was almost going to bleed to death became stabilized and the operation was successfully completed. This became a humbling experience for Aikponobhoa and that experience remains a great lesson for him that God can do anything at any time and in His own way. Aikponobhoa also took his mind back to the miracle of the great catch of fish by Peter and his colleagues when Christ told them to launch into the deep. Peter was going to resist because they had toiled and fished all night without catching anything but the simple obedience to the command of Christ brought a miracle. Aikponobhoa has continued to excel in his practice as a surgeon and guided by the understanding that God is always nearby to give help during difficult moments.

CHAPTER 14: WHO IS AIKPONOBHOA?

The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's and he hath set the world upon them.

1 Samuel 2:7-8 (KJV)

Aikponobhoa is the same person as Professor Clement Odigie Aikponobhoa Osime. Professor Clement Odigie Aikponobhoa was born at Zuma Memorial Hospital, Irrua on the 13th of March, 1964 to the family of Chief Blessed Oboh Osime (of blessed memory) and Mrs. Agnes Aitebebekefo Osime (nee Anegebe).

He attended Ikienwanlen Primary School, Opoji from 1970 to 1977. For his secondary education, he spent the first year 1977 to 1978 at Ujoelen Grammar School, Ekpoma and thereafter proceeded to the prestigious Annunciation Catholic College Irrua where he completed his secondary education in 1982. He then taught as an auxiliary teacher at Usugbenu Grammar School from 1982 to 1983 before he proceeded to Auchi polytechnic and obtained a Diploma in Quantity Surveying in 1985 graduating as the best student.

In his quest for greater academic heights, young Osime proceeded to the great UNIBEN where he obtained the MBBS degree between 1985 and 1991. His internship was at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital from 1991 to 1992 and his National Youth Service in Sokoto State from 1992 to 1993.

Prof. Osime commenced his residency training at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital in October, 1993 and became a fellow of the Nigerian Post graduate Medical College in Surgery in 1999. Thereafter, he worked as a Consultant General Surgeon/Associate Lecturer 1 at Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital and Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma from 2000 to 2001 and was Head of Department of Surgery in 2001.

Professor Osime joined the services of the University of Benin as lecturer 1 in January 2002 and rose through academic and administrative ranks to become a full Professor of Surgery with special interest in surgical oncology and medical law, in the Department of Surgery, University of Benin in October, 2011.

Professor Osime undoubtedly has a flare for scholarly activities so; he went on to obtain a Masters degree in Immunology and Immunohistochemistry from the University of Benin in 1999. Not resting on his oars, he delved into an entirely different profession and bagged an LLB degree (2nd Class, Upper Division) in 2006 from the University of Benin and was called to Bar in 2007 thus becoming a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

Professor Osime has received professional trainings both within and outside the country. Some of which are; Advanced Trauma Life Support in South Africa (2003), Diploma and

Fellowship in Minimal Access Surgery from the famous Laparoscopy Hospital, New Delhi, India (2007). In addition, he has attended and presented papers at several local and international conferences. He is a reviewer for several reputable local and international journals and has over 60 well researched publications in very reputable learned journals.

He has won several awards. Some of the awards include National merit award presented by National Association of Dental Students (2009), award of excellence presented by the graduating Medical and Dental class(2012), award of excellence presented by the

Association of Resident Doctors, UBTH in recognition of outstanding impact in residency training (2013), best lecturer in Surgery; an award presented by University of Benin Medical Students Association (2014), award of excellence for brilliant performance as guest lecturer in medico-legal issues in surgical practice presented by National association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (2014), award of excellence presented by the graduating class Medical and Dental Students (2014), and an award of honour in recognition of outstanding contributions to the service of God and humanity presented by Christ Ambassadors Students Outreach, AAU Chapter (2015).

Prof Osime is an external examiner to several Universities including university of Port Harcourt, Delta State University, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma and Igbinedion University, Okada. He is also an examiner for the fellowship examination in surgery at the National Post graduate Medical College and West African College of Surgeons. He has successfully supervised the dissertations of three candidates who are all consultant surgeons now and he is presently supervising 8 other candidates.

Professor Osime has served the University of Benin/University of Benin Teaching Hospital in several capacities.

- Chairman, University of Benin Teaching Hospital Committee on Security matters, (2010 – 2014).
- Member, School of Medicine, UNIBEN, Research Committee (2012 – Date) Member, University of Benin Teaching Hospital Research and Ethics Committee, (2012 – Date).
- Member, UBTH merit award committee; (2010- Date).
- Member, Senior Staff Disciplinary Committee, UBTH (2011- 2014).
- Chairman, UBTH public lecture series (June 2013- Date).
- Chairman, UBTH Cancer Registry (2013 to 2014),
- Deputy Chairman, Medical Advisory Committee, University of Benin Teaching Hospital (2014- Date),
- Member, infection control committee (2006 – 2010)
- Member, Patients' rights committee (2007 – 2010)
- Coordinator, 600 level medical students' training in Surgery (2005-2013).

It is worthy of mention that Professor Osime is also member of several professional bodies.

- Member, Nigeria Medical Association,
- Member, Nigeria Surgical Society
- Fellow, International College of Surgeons,
- Member, World Association of Laparoscopic Surgeons,
- Member, Nigeria Bar Association,
- Member, Society of America Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic surgeons (SAGES),
- Member, American Association for Cancer Research,
- Member, Canadian Society of General Surgeons,
- Member, American Society of Clinical Oncologists,
- Member, European Society of Medical Oncology,
- Fellow American College of Surgeons.

Professor Osime is a devout Christian of the Pentecostal extraction. Raised and nurtured spiritually in the Assemblies of God Church; he is an ardent member of the Ugbowo branch and also a member of the Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship, Ugbowo Chapter. A humanitarian of repute he has made an indelible mark in the sand of time as the Executive Director of Total Healthcare Breast Cancer Advocacy Centre, a non-governmental organization that seeks to encourage early presentation and prompt management of Breast cancer.

Professor Osime is happily married to Dr. (Mrs.) Evarista Osime, a senior Lecturer in the School of Basic Medical Sciences, UNIBEN and they are blessed with two lovely children (Ighelose and Ebosetale).

God has indeed been faithful and so I can boldly and conveniently say

“Great is Thy faithfulness,” O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
“Great is Thy faithfulness,” Lord, unto me!

