



# Message for my Soul

WORDS FOR INSPIRATION

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by Enock I. Simbaya

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**Enock I. Simbaya, 2018**

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This book is dedicated to:

**You**

Shine your light

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# Speaking to Myself

“Every man who has risen above the common level has received two educations: the first from his teachers; the second, more important, from himself.”  
- Edward Gibbons

One evening, I am taking a walk, to get out of the house for a bit, to clear my mind. While I listen to a soothing piano piece by Ludovico Einaudi through my earbuds, I am wondering whether I have seriously blundered in the choices I have made in life. Especially some recent choices.

The walk is calming me down, as walks frequently do. I am having a subtle feeling of hope. Somehow, even though I cannot see what would happen next in my life, I know it's just a dark moment and everything will turn out okay.

Among the various thoughts of what possible choices I might make, I confront myself with "What do I want?" Because I feel I have wasted part of my life in indecision, in not being honest with myself.

I am often caught in between the big dreams of my heart and the 'realistic' choices others would say are sensible to make. Who am I to have out-of-the-ordinary dreams in such a time when the economy is bad? Who am I to be awesome? Very few end up being exceptional.

I want to be one of them, but I end up making choices that keep me in mediocrity.

“What is wrong with me?” I berate myself as I take that walk. I have turned back now, heading home. I am trying to negotiate between my desires and ‘reality’.

"What do I want?" I ask myself again.

Deep down, I know the answer. I want to be relevant, I want to make a difference, I want to be a creator of things. I have ideas, plans, things I want to bring into being, but I have held them back, because I feel: Not yet, not like this, not me.

But I am having a deep excitement. Like I always have when creating ideas, when brainstorming, when writing. In such moments, I feel nothing is impossible, life is in 'flow', and amazing things go through my mind.

In that moment, with the beautiful music in my ears and the beautiful stars in the sky, I feel the excitement, I am in touch with my soul. I tell myself there are so many possibilities and a little moment of darkness isn't the end.

It's always the beginning!

And I open up to myself: it's okay to have big dreams, yes even in this economy, even in this country, even in my current state, even if I have made a million mistakes. I only need to act, I only need to let myself try.

As I turn into my neighborhood, I start talking to myself, out loud. Not too loud that other passers-by can think I am crazy, but I can hear myself. I am talking to myself, talking to the deep part of me that understands. I am talking to my soul. I am letting my pain pour out, just letting the words come out.

After a series of self-tormenting words, I find I am encouraging myself: That I am better than who I have portrayed myself to be. I recall there have been times I let my true self, the inner me, out into the world. It is in those moments that something comes bubbling up through me, it is those moments I find myself creating things. Those moments I laugh and have so much courage. Those moments I feel nothing can stop me. Most times, though, I am a bundle of fear, timidity and mediocrity.

"Enough!" I say to myself. "Why can't I live my awesome self all the time? I want to be no coward. I want to live well, through my potential, in all the moments of my life. Even through the low moments, I want to regret nothing."

An idea strikes me then, and I open the recorder app on my phone and start recording my self-talk. I listen to it when I get home, and I think it's cool. I'll do this often.

So, on the next few evenings, I go for walks and talk to myself and record into my phone.

Now I share some of these messages to you, rearranged and expanded. This is for me. I am talking to myself, I am writing to myself. But this is for you, too. One of the best joys in my life is seeing others get a glimpse of who they truly are. As I'll be reminding myself of my potential with these words, I hope they will do the same for you.

I don't know what your story has been, but I know that you have an amazing gift in you and your life will shake this world. I know! And so I dare you to shut off all the voices that are telling you that you are worthless, that you can't do it, that it can't be done, that it is not you to do it.

Speak to yourself, shake yourself awake, dare to see deep within and see the purpose and glory you were created for.

# Is This Who I am?

“Your playing small does not serve the world.”

- Marianne Williamson

Is this who I am?

I have had dreams and inspirations, and because it is hard to keep on, I have found it okay to take the easy route. I have forgotten how to listen to my soul. I trust myself no more, and I am torn apart by the many paths others say I should take.

Is this who I am? Somebody tossed by the waves, to and fro, never stable? My heart says to keep calm, to keep hoping, to keep going after the higher things, to work from my potential, to believe in possibility.

But my mind! My mind brings me fear. It tells me “No one has gone that way” or “That way is impossible” or “Go for what is popular, what is familiar. Go for what is easy” or “Dreams don’t work in this country”.

Finally, I find myself lost and torn. I no longer know who I am. I no longer know where I am supposed to be. I no longer trust my dreams.

Somehow I have learned to give up, I have learned to accept mediocrity. People say: Life is hard, don't dream too much or you will be disappointed. Life is hard, don't take this route, people don't make money there. Life is hard, don't expect too much or you will get your heart broken. Life is hard, don't try things else you will be devastated.

And I have learned to accept that. Because this feels safer, this is much easier.

But is this who I am? Will I look myself in the mirror and be able to justify this? Will I tell myself “This is fine, this is good, this is the way of life”?

Will I forgive myself for being a coward, someone who has failed to stand up for himself, failed to speak my heart out because I am afraid that it might be irrelevant, that it will be shot down as too dreamy, to unrealistic?

Why does it feel better to accept the limitations the world has set on me? Is it “growing up” or “giving up”?

My potential calls me to achieve something, to make something, to leave a legacy, to be extraordinary.

Can I do that, can I be that, instead of this passionless being? Instead of this person who cowers in excuses and blame and “Hey, that's the way life is!”

I have become the kind of person who asks, “Who am I to be brilliant? Who am I to be awesome? Who am I to dream to achieve? Nothing has worked out. I try, I pray, I do this, I fail. Who am I to be the kind of person who goes to great heights? Who am I to be like *them*? After all, this is Zambia, this is Africa; I wasn't born with a million dollars in my silver pocket. So who am I to want to become that?”

And even more than that, I have begun to take glory in my limitations. I have begun to chase, not my dreams, by my nightmares. I am a person who is happy with low ambitions, a person who is satisfied with peanuts, a person who is okay with “the way it is”.

I justify things.

I make excuses.

I blame.

No, this is not okay.

But, deep down, the seed of hope never dies. I don't know why. And when I get honest with myself, when I take off the mask, when I look again in the mirror and shake my head, I know I am letting myself down.

# Finding My Light

“When I stopped making excuses, I started making progress.”

– Caroline Marsh

Am I my past? Just because I have been a certain way and that’s how people know me, does it have to mean I’ll forever be that? Should I continue locking myself in that shell?

Am I the color of my skin? Does having dark skin mean I have limited potential? Am I then sentenced by my birth, by the color of my skin, to be a lazy, no-time-keeping, unambitious, good-for-nothing, undependable, and unaccomplished person? Is this my destiny? Can I never be bigger, better, higher than all this?

Surely genius is genius, and potential is potential. It transcends outward appearance, it goes beyond background. I have seen it, seen many rise above the stereotypes. Laziness, violence, lack of achievement are not a skin thing, they are not an African thing, not a Zambian thing.

As long as change is possible, as long as my dreams never seem to give up on me, as long as I know what I should be doing, it is time to stop being afraid. It is time to let myself shine.

# What If?

*"I am never without hope." – E.J. Simbaya*

Maybe I have been filling my mind with wishes and 'if only'. If only I had this or that, life would be better. The list of 'this and that' has been versatile and endless. When I was younger, my If Onlys included Transformer toys, toy cars, Nintendo, a spiderman mask, treasure in the garden and powers of invisibility. Later, the list morphed into more muscles, greater confidence, cooler clothes, a color-screen phone.

In the years going towards the start of my career, I thought I would have been happy If Only: I got a wonderful job, just a little more money, travelled the world, had more people to think I am worthy and lovable. If Only someone were to give me an opportunity. If Only all my plans could work out. If Only people realized my potential. If Only that company calls me. If Only a miracle could happen. If Only I wasn't born in this country.

But, my soul, what if I change 'If Only' to 'What If'? See how my mind expands, and how my story changes! 'If Only' creates a wall, 'What If' breaks the wall. 'If Only' makes it seem life is dependent on one pivot; 'What If' opens a million doors. See how deeper I can go, and how much I can understand:

What if what I have right now is what I have for now? And what if that doesn't have to be a bad thing? What if it doesn't mean I am done for, what if it doesn't mean that I have no open doors?

This is touching, I am failing to sit. I stand up and pace around the room, my mind is exploding like a volcano. The possibilities are infinite. For I discover I have so much to give to this world. There are many people I can touch with my little gift. There are many things I can create with the few that I possess. With pen and paper, I

can write a thousand books. With my voice, I can speak into people's lives. With my hands, I can use my skill to make a difference. With my feet, I can go to where I can cause great impact. And with my mind, I can form and receive ideas, and ideas are the foundation of achievement.

I am awash with more What ifs:

What if it doesn't matter where I am from? What if the most important thing is not background but potential? And isn't potential endless? Who can say what potential is? Who can say the limits of the glory God has put in me?

What if my value is not in the things I wish I could have? What if, even though I get no Optimus Prime action figure or no awesome powers of invisibility, I am still valuable? What if, no matter how crumpled up, beaten down, wringed, crushed and tormented I have been, I am never useless?

What if I am more than this? What if I have never let myself see it? What if I am never without hope?

# But Then

"The best motivation is self-motivation."

- Jim Rohn

Chances I have had, but I blew them. Mistakes I have made aplenty. I could have done my best in some academic course, I could have done better in some business opportunities, I could have been bolder in some jobs. I could have spoken out more, loved better, said sweeter words, asked questions, said no to some things, not let fear hinder me... What is wrong with me? What is wrong with me?

But then, let me stop myself there for a moment and ask what good all this self-crucifixion is doing me. Surely there are many things I did wrong or didn't do well, but there are many I did well. What makes the former more important to think about than the latter? I can spend an equal amount of time and energy in thinking about all the things that went right, the work I did well, the good things I said, the opportunities I took.

Now, this turn in thinking is making me realize this is an insight about to come. This is a lesson. Hindsight.

This is where all the past mistakes begin to have value. Instead of beating myself up, I can realize that where before I had not done well, I can do better now. Where I did not bring as much energy, I can do so now. I can be confident in what I wasn't before. I can say better things where I hadn't before. I can negotiate better in situations I hadn't before. I can know a crook where I hadn't before. I can cook better the food I had put too much salt in before.

The writer George Bernard Shaw said, A life spent making mistakes is not only

more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing."

So I shouldn't hate myself for my mistakes, but be grateful for the lessons they have taught me.

But how can I turn it into foresight? I can point out to something in the past and say I shouldn't have done that. It would be nice to turn this hindsight into foresight. What about future decisions?

Lemme think about this for a minute and see what comes of it: maybe if I approach new decisions with a different level of thinking, I might make better decisions. I've made bad decisions before because: I was more concerned about what people would think about me; I felt I didn't deserve better; I let my fear have the upper hand; I made up hundreds of imaginary consequences; I just wanted to show off; I didn't budget before spending some money; I didn't ask enough questions; I was in a rush; I didn't care.

So a more calm, peaceful and in-touch-with-my-soul attitude with a large serving of lessons from past mistakes can help me make better decisions.

This also gives me the freedom to make mistakes without hating myself for it. For in some things, even after a good thinking and hindsight, you can never know whether it will be good or not, whether it will work out or not.

Life goes on.

# I'm Alive

*"Being entirely honest with oneself is good exercise."*

- Sigmund Freud

Even after all this self-recording and learning, I find myself falling into pits of overthinking: many things are going awry, plans and hopes have been broken apart. Life doesn't seem to work out. I'm screaming in my head: What then is the point of trying? Why should I do anything?

But then I don't want to be doing nothing. I have a great inspiration inside me, I've got ideas and I want to do something. Is this a dilemma or some form of laziness?

Maybe I am wishing things were easier, faster, predictable. Yes, that's the thing, isn't it? I want to do great things but I also want the going to be easy and predictable.

At one level, it feels like life with easier, faster and graspable results would cause no hesitation on my part to act. But on another level, I'm wondering what would be the point if it were all easy? What testimony will I tell, what book will I write, what lives will I touch if I say, "Ha! This was just so easy for me"?

Remember how I felt when I conquered challenges? The sense of accomplishment, the growth, the new wisdom. In the moment of the trial, it was painful. But afterwards... Afterwards, I looked back and said it was worth it. And I looked for more challenges because I saw the benefit in them. The sleepless nights working hard to make things happen, the heartbreaks at disappointing results, the moments of sickness when nothing was happening, the low pay for hard work, the terrible twists of life, the thousands of hours punching the keyboard, the critics... I wouldn't be who I am without them.

So I pause to put this in proper perspective. Who says what I am going through this moment is 'the worst'? Only I do! It is within my choice to say what my

circumstances mean. Only I can call it a trial or an opportunity. Only I can say it is happening to destroy me or to build me. Only I can say it is bad for me or good for me.

I can consider a moment boring or a chance to pause and reflect. It changes everything, and I see that I can later share the wisdom I got in that moment.

I can think of myself unemployed or I can call myself self-employed. It changes everything, and I realize I have stuff to do.

I can call it a mistake, or I can call it a lesson. It changes everything, for I become a student of life and open my notebook to the lessons of life.

I can lay down and mourn for the absence of my miracle, or I can find something to do as I wait. It changes everything, and I begin to see that being alive is a miracle. I myself am a miracle.

I can keep tormenting and calling myself names: lazy, stupid, timid, sad, unworthy; or I can stroke my chin and say, "You know what, boy? Hitting rock bottom is not the end, but only if I say it is." I may be broke, but I'm not broken. I may be down, but I'm not done. In the words of Paul the Apostle, "hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

Wow!! I am screaming in my head right now. I am on fire.

# A New Prayer

"The wound is where the light shines through."

- Switchfoot

I fail to sleep one night.

My mind is full of worry or fear. A person I trusted betrayed me. Something stupid I did has come back to bite me. I am facing something that wasn't my fault. I have to pay for something that was lost. Also, the most valuable person in my life is also not talking to me because we argued.

A bad day it has been.

I close my eyes, plead with myself, "Sleep, please sleep". But the feeling is real, a pain in my belly, a heaviness in my chest. The coverings become too hot, too uncomfortable. I toss them off. I turn to one side, to the other. "Please sleep, Enock. The night is long."

And when sleep comes, the dream is nothing but the thing I am dreading. I wake in the middle of the night, want to cry or to scream. I force new thoughts into my mind. "Think of the good things in my life. Think of how many challenges I have been through and came out victorious."

But the dread comes out strong.

So I face it.

"Come on, boy," I tell myself. "You know how to encourage others. You just know the words to use to lift up their spirits, make them hopeful again. Why can't you do the same for yourself?" But as I search my mind for quotes or verses or fitting parables, I am blank! I have nothing, I am finished... it really feels like I am finished.

But I am not finished, am I? There's something else coming after this. I don't know what. Maybe not yet. This is not the first time. Maybe, just maybe, my mind is just being weird again. Maybe it's not so bad.

And then I know: I don't want this pain to be meaningless.

I want to come out of it a better person. If I am going to feel this, I might as well be a changed person afterwards. I refuse to let this pain, this heaviness, this sleepless moment go without me harvesting the gold from it.

Scratch me, Life, but leave me better.

In that moment, my prayer for God to take away this challenge changes. "Let me be a better person on the other side. I'll face this, Lord. Help me."

# Looking Up

“We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.”

- Oscar Wilde

I fell, again

Things didn't work out

I hated life

But so what?

I'll keep working

I'll keep walking

I'll keep giving my best

# Time Travel

“If you cannot be a poet, be the poem.”

- David Carradine

Maybe it's only me, but I like imagining myself a few years from now, and let that future me turn and talk to me.

Sometimes, I get so engrossed with something. I invest my emotions and happiness on it. I want that car! Nothing else but that car. That's when life will make sense. If I don't get that car, my relationships will suffer, I will have no friends, I will find life so difficult.

Those pair of jeans, that phone, that big-screen TV. Or: I want my life to work this way. If not, I'm a bad person, I'm not enough, the world is so unfair, there's something wrong with my job.

It leads me to the ultimate self-effacing: I feel there's something wrong with me. I need fixing. Or I feel like giving up.

But days later, I look back and laugh at myself: Why was I so taken by that desire? It's such a small thing! I brought myself so low in wanting that? I locked myself up in misery and self-hatred. I thought life wouldn't work out, but it was just me being trapped in my thinking.

But again I find myself being taken deeply by something else right now. It's like the obsession just keeps moving to something else. What if I project this to my wise future self, as though I am looking back on this moment? My future Self says to me, laughing, “You're so worked up by this? Come on, you are better than this. You have skills, opportunities, wisdom that is galaxies beyond this one thing you think you want.”

There's nothing wrong with wanting and getting. Things are useful after all. But when I look at the person I want to become, the wise future me, who is calm and collected, who laughs in the face of challenges, who knows no limits, who is unstoppable, who knows what to say and what to do, I understand the better things to focus on.

I say to myself, "There's life! There's that something that is deep, that goes beyond our constant loops of wanting this and then that. Enock, why are you so worked up about this?"

Many worries simply melt away.

I can laugh without trying.

I can sing without hesitation.

I can do things without thinking too much.

That feeling is the deep wisdom with which I can create so much.

# In Silence

*“Circumstance is nothing... passion is everything.”*

*– Steve Chandler*

I am overwhelmed again. So much weighs me down, I feel like I'll burst. Will I manage to live through this? Will I?

I have a headache. The walls around me are oppressing me. I feel trapped. Surely this is it, I tell myself. This is the thing that's finally going to kill me. I can't see the solution. I feel done for.

So I take a walk or go and sit somewhere; drown myself in good music or in silence.

And in the silence, I wait.

Then it comes to me:

Even at rock bottom, I will survive!

# Life is Short

“With every broken bone, I swear I lived.”

– One Republic

If I am going to fail, let it be not because I didn't try.

If I lose, let it not because I didn't give my best.

Oh, there's so much fun to be had!

There's so much to do, and I better be about my work.

There's nothing I'm waiting for, even when I feel like there is.

Nothing is holding me back except when I decide that there is.

# Let Me Be

“One can never consent to creep when one feels the impulse to soar.”

- Helen Keller

So let me bigger and better than I was yesterday.

Let me be okay with the fact that things will be okay sometimes and they won't be okay in other times. They will not be a reflection of my soul: just because I am having a bad time doesn't necessarily mean I am a bad person.

Bad times, too, can be good opportunities: to learn, to rise up, to pause and reflect, to re strategize, to celebrate, to be grateful - as the moment calls for. I shouldn't waste these moments, let them help me grow in my resilience, in my character, in my greatness.

Not everyone will understand. Not everyone will get it. It is nature. I myself don't understand and get others, and who knows, they may be onto something great. As long as those who matter have my back, let me not sell myself short with concern of what others will think.

Let me open my eyes to see more possibilities. Let me see that even I can make a difference. Is there any reason to exclude myself from those who are making impact?

So, let me make no excuses, they will not serve me but keep me back from unleashing my great potential. Yes, I may not have the opportunities others may enjoy, but it doesn't mean I am without infinite options. It may prove difficult, hard-going, and may cause me hours of lonely work. But I'll do it.

Before, when I thought of what I'm up against, I took to crying, sulking, calling life all sorts of names. This time I find myself fascinated. Why? Because I have seen

what inspiration and some not giving up can do! People make it and people make it big, and I'm a person too!

That's a simple truth that puts all excuses to shame. Now, instead of thinking, "I have all these problems and I so I can't be great", I find myself thinking, "I have all these problems and so I have no option but to be great"

And that, my soul, is fascinating.

So let me be extraordinary. Let me love my loved ones with all my heart. Let me be more patient, more forgiving. Let me say little and listen more, and even in the midst of a bitter argument, let me not threaten to withdraw my love. Let me be not quick to defend myself, and let me be there even when I feel like going away. For they are no better nor worse than I. Like me, they are all doing what they feel is best to feel good and avoid feeling bad; they are holding on to their hope; they are trying to be relevant, they are aiming for something big. In our differences, we are the same. So let me love them for who they are.

Let me be extraordinary. Let personal gain not be a means to an end or an end in itself. But let it be a product of my relevance to others. Let me not chase money for the simple want of more. But let it chase me because I have created amazing ideas, I have made a positive change, I have contributed, I have touched lives and have been a force of greatness.

Let me be extraordinary. Let me be more than I have let myself be.

# How I Want to Live

*"It is never too late to be what you might have been."*

- George Eliot

So now, my soul, these are what I want in life:

To do more of what I love

To be with the people I love

To be extraordinary.

To say "Thank you, God."

Every day.