

OPINION

LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP



By Fusi Akinkugbe

How will you be remembered?

one leaves this earth. Many today are already living with their legacies from their time in leadership positions – legacies they regret but unfortunately cannot change. Everyone will leave a legacy one way or the other – what kind will yours be?

Those who care about their legacy take the long view – that whatever they do has an effect in future. Unlike others who are more interested in the now and couldn't care less about the future. Those who abuse the trust of the public when they are in a leadership position in government by being corrupt are not taking the long view of their lives. They leave a legacy but not a good one.

Legacy is ultimately not about what you have or accumulate for yourself but how much you do things that positively and sustainably impact the lives of others. I use the word 'sustainably' because it makes a difference when you can impact others and institutions in ways that can continue even when you are no longer there or no longer around. That is a legacy.

So, what should you be doing to build a good legacy?

First, if you are in a position of leadership, you cannot leave a good legacy if you leave an organisation

in chaos, lacking direction, or severely weakened. Are you leaving an organisation that cannot stand on its own? Or have you left a successor who you have groomed to fail? As unbe-

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lievable as it sounds, some executives set up their own successors for failure. Jim Collins in his book "Good to Great" tells how his team's research found that in more than three quarters of the companies used as comparison to the ones that qualified to be called 'Great', executives either set up their successors for failure or selected weak successors or both. The need of these executives to be remembered as being personally great was more important to them than their leaving the company with strong leadership. In one example, they found that the former CEO, under whose leadership the company had recorded consistent impressive financial results, "did not leave behind a company that would be great without him." Unsurprisingly, the company literally fell apart

after his exit.

Secondly, people who care about their legacy are protective of their reputation. They take the long view, mindful that what they do now will have im-

pact later. So, watch your values and choices because they determine your conduct and reputation which will frame your legacy. People who have had bad reputations all their lives do not suddenly end up with good legacies. When he was starting out his ministry, Dr. Billy Graham was aware of the challenges others like him faced. In 1948, he and his team identified four areas where these challenges could come from and put in place steps that would ensure they did not fall in any of them. These parameters set boundaries for Billy Graham's ministry and helped he and his team stay scandal free for over 50 years, ensuring he left a good legacy in his lifetime and after he passed on.

Thirdly be ready to pour yourself out into the lives of others. Leadership is about

sacrifice. We all want to be remembered well – but this depends on how much we did for people. Nelson Mandela's example is one of the most compelling ones of sacrifice. He sacrificed his liberty, a promising law career (important for a young black man in South Africa at the time), and above all his family, to pursue freedom for the oppressed black people of South Africa. When he and his compatriots were charged for sabotage, which had a supreme penalty of death, they told their lawyers that even if they received the death sentence they would not appeal. Mandela said:

"Our message was that no sacrifice was too great in the struggle for freedom." He received a life sentence for which he spent 27 years, to bring down the abhorrent policy of apartheid in South Africa and is acknowledged as one of the most influential leaders of the 20th Century. He poured himself into the lives of others and as a result even in his lifetime he already had an indelible legacy. We have very few leaders here in Nigeria who have or will have great legacies because they are not ready to pour themselves into the lives of others.

According to Ken Blanchard, renowned management consultant and author of international bestseller *The One Minute Manager*: "The important thing about being a leader is not what happens when you're there, but what happens when you're not there.... The key to your effectiveness is how well your followers carry on when you're not around."

I hope we will each begin to think of our legacies from today. Thinking of your legacy does not mean you are about to exit this world; it simply means you are ready to start investing in how you will be remembered.

Thank you and until next week, let me challenge you to Begin to Lead from where you are.

Akinkugbe qualified as a Chartered Accountant. He served as treasury controller at DHL and later as CEO of a technology services company founded by Accenture.