

# CHARGE FORWARD, REGARDLESS

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For Your Eyes Only!



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## Chapter 1, Yesterday

*Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose.*

-Lyndon B. Johnson

Where are you coming from? What was yesterday like for you? Rosa Luxemburg once said that history is the only true teacher, the revolution, the best school for the proletariat.

“Charge forward regardless” has three solid and independent words. One must first acknowledge a destination and the last location of reference (geography of origin) to charge forward. In addition, a global positioning system (GPS—bet you did not know what it stood for) can only take you to your destination if it knows your current location. Your current location and where you’ve been are equally crucial for your ability to break/bust through the

barriers preventing you from reaching your destination.

### **Carter G Woodson, PhD**

A historian of African and African-American heritage, a Ph.D. holder, an author, and a journalist, Carter G. Woodson was born in 1875 and died in 1950. In the seventy-five years of his existence, he devoted his life to studying the history of Africans and Africans in the diaspora, deciphering the intricacies of the various cultures that span the aforementioned descriptors. Educated at Harvard and the University of Chicago, Woodson was a learned man by all accounts. Woodson authored many notable books, including *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, *The Negro in Our History*, *The History of the Negro Church*, and *African Heroes and Heroines*. An avid contributor to the collection of African-American history, Carter created the *Journal of Negro History*, now known as the *Journal of African American History*, in 1916. Carter was second, only to W.E.B. Du Bois, as an African-American *Ph.D.* earner at Harvard University he earned his doctorate in 1912. Many well-known quotes are attributed to this scholar. Here is one of importance: “Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history.” To lose inspiration is to be demotivated, in essence stagnant, or to regress. Dr. Woodson cautioned against this. Often referenced when speaking of the African Americans and their lack of

knowledge of African royalty, the quote mentioned above speaks to the importance of knowing one's history.

When you know that you come from royalty, there is a greater chance that you'll walk boldly onto a bus and sit majestically in the most comfortable available seat. When you know that those before you built pyramids with precision in geometry without scientific calculators, you'll exercise confidence in sitting for and acing the MCAT. When you know that your motherland is prosperous with milk and honey and with plenty of gold and sapphires, your affinity for materialism will be much less, knowing you have access to like matters in excess. Knowledge of a favorable history is a benefit to one's confidence; it improves character affirmation and fosters strong poise. For those who have been robbed of their history, a deep search within the gene mapping industry is not uncommon and could bring some level of comfort and peace.

Oh, and you can thank Dr. Woodson for the celebration of African-American History Month. The celebration started as African-American Week, the week of February 12 and 14 for Abraham Lincoln and Fredrick Douglass's birthdays. Woodson recognized the efforts of those two men in the emancipation of the African-American slave.

Learn and know your past in order to fight your fears, overcome your obstacles, and bust through the barriers before you.

## **The Value of Studying the Past**

According to research from Fortune Business Insights, the global gene mapping industry was estimated to be worth \$19 billion in 2019 and is projected to be over \$82 billion by 2027. Gene mapping is what ancestry.com or 23andMe do when people want to know their personal and historical lineage. Nineteen billion dollars is a lot of money, if I may say, and it's approximately the gross domestic product (GDP) of Zambia or Iceland. A global spend of that amount can only tell you one thing: People are interested in their past. And they should be, for the right reasons. Here are two good reasons why studying your past could be of benefit to you:

### *1. To understand yourself*

Gene mapping is done by people who want to know their past and, in most cases, to connect their current characteristics (whether physical or otherwise) to something else. When you map your genes and identify with the Igbos in eastern Nigeria (like Bishop T.D. Jakes did), you can better understand your ability to make a living where most people can't (a natural-born entrepreneur). Your past creates a path to understanding your present state. Going one generation back, a child born to an asthmatic parent and placed for adoption could still develop asthma regardless of the geographic environment; the gene within goes from person to

person. Likewise with other attributes, knowing the past helps you to understand the observed attributes.

## *2. To understand the times*

A study of the past could help you develop an understanding of the times. The history of humankind begins with Adam and Eve tending the garden of Eden. (This is my faith belief speaking here.) God created man for many reasons, and one was to tend the garden and care for the other creations of God. A clear instruction was given on what was permitted and what was not, yet Adam and Eve disobeyed. With that came the pre-stated repercussion, and what was once the joyous activity of tending the garden became the painful hardship of scuffling for resources. Thus the human race went from activity to labor and from joy to pain. Understanding the past helps us understand the times we are in. We remain in the post-error times, and until we return to our rightful place with God as His creation after Christ returns, we will remain in these hard times.

### **Virology 101**

In 1918 the Spanish flu surfaced from what is known biologically as the H1N1 influenza virus. Affecting over 500 million people globally, the death toll ranged from 30 to 50 million people. The virus first appeared in the United States in February but was later found in Europe by April of the same year. The reign of this virus lasted two full years and some change. It presented in four waves: early 1918, late

1918, 1919, and finally 1920, with the deadliest wave in late 1918. The Spanish flu was no respecter of age, afflicting the young, the middle-aged, and older adults worldwide.

In 1977 the Russian flu presented from the H1N1 influenza virus, which killed about 700,000 people globally, was unfavorable to young adults, killing those in their twenties in droves. Although called the Russian flu, the virus presented first as an outbreak in China in May 1977. Its reign lasted through 1979, after a global sweep through Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia. A conspiracy theory exists that the Russian flu was a biological weapon of mass destruction created by the Soviets.

In 2009 the swine flu, a derivative of the H1N1 virus, was found in Mexico and later parts of the United States. Affecting over 700 million people, the death toll was much smaller than the prior two outbreaks in 1918 and 1977; it was reported to have killed approximately 250,000 people.

Since the first quarter of 2020 and through the time of this writing, we have witnessed the coronavirus, a different virus from the H1N1 virus. You would think that a recurrent outbreak of transmittable diseases would be curbed by now after the excessive, though regressive, mortality of global citizens. You would think that all public health practitioners, doctors, and virologists would be focused on preventing the next big viral outbreak. Much credit goes to those who are doing just that, but

as the human race, we've failed to learn from the lessons of the past to address the inevitable in the future. We've failed to understand the nuances of the season, notice the spring occurrence, and set boundaries to be much more alert at those times. We've failed to learn from history.

Parlayed to our individuality, we sometimes fail to learn from our own past. You hear of a woman leaving an abusive husband only to fall in love with a similarly abusive man. Likewise, you read of supposed servants of God who fall for similar temptations as others before them, sexual immorality being the most pervasive. Why are we unable to learn from our past? We may be aware of the past, but until there is a transformation from the actions of the past to the change of the present/future, we cannot say we've learned.

### **Flip the Script**

Now let's flip the script and ask another question: Should your past really determine your future? Well, you could say yes if learning from Rosa Luxemburg. But you could say no if a student of Jesus Christ. If you've accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, then your past is simply that—past. Here are three reasons why your past does not have to define your future:

1. **Old things:** 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old

things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” The precursor to that: We must first be in Christ. Christ’s death on the cross of Calvary renews our person. We died along with Him on that cross; the negative, old things die the day you give your life to Christ. Believing that is key to restoring the ideal you God has plans for. If you haven’t accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, please do so now. Find a Bible-believing church, and feed your soul with the Word of God for sustainability.

2. **Renewed focus:** When you were in your old self, your focus was on you. Now that you’re in Christ, your attention is renewed and on God. Your old person tends to tell you what you did wrong. You are imperfect; you’ll always be. But we are all imperfect human beings. If you focus on God, who is the author and finisher of your faith, the Holy One who knows no sin, there will be no blemish in your vision or sight. What you keep your eyes on is what you see. If you look in the rearview mirror, you will see what’s behind you, but if you stay focused on what’s ahead—in this case, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—you will see nothing but purity. He is the Lamb that was slain. He is pure. James 1:25 reminds us that blessings are ours when we stay focused on the perfect law of liberty. Jesus is the key to that perfect law.
3. **No condemnation:** A convicted felon who has done time shouldn’t have to relive the crime

(that's a write-up for another day). Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Your past cannot affect your future negatively because you're now in Christ, and there is no condemnation of you. Don't let the devil lead you into depression by telling you that you are condemned or of no good to the kingdom of God.

From time to time, I have a great pastor who will tell of how God changed his life from that of an avid sinner to one in pursuit of Christlike perfection. When he shares, it's from a place of gratitude, an acknowledgment of how unworthy he is that God called him. That is my encouragement to you as you consider where you're from. Your future is in Christ, and He alone can wash away your past and create a bright future. There's no going forward without that. So when you think of what you've done in times past and those ugly stories rare up, think the following thoughts as well:

1. Think of them as what they are—the past.
2. Be grateful for your salvation, and get your mind off the negative thoughts of condemnation as you focus on Christ, your future.
3. Remind yourself of Romans 8:1, and thank God for a renewed focus on Him.

## **The Blind Side**

*The Blind Side* is an inspirational movie that hit theaters in 2009. It is the story of Michael Oher, a young African-American boy from Tennessee. Michael was born to a mother who was addicted to drugs and a father who was in and out of the prison system. He was one of twelve children born to his mother, so limited resources, considering his mother's minimal work and lifestyle. Michael was placed in the foster system and moved from home to home until his senior year in high school when he was adopted by a family whose children attended the same high school as he did. Michael was gifted in sports, playing basketball and football and running track. He mainly focused on his love for football despite helping his high school win the district championships in other sports. Although gifted in sports, Michael's unstable upbringing had not prepared him adequately for an NCAA college admissions process. His GPA was at one point only 0.76, whereas a 2.3 minimum is required. His past had reared its ugly head again.

Nonetheless, he charged forward regardless with the help of his adoptive parents. While he was enrolled in online learning programs, evening tutors helped him complete additional courses to bring his grade up to the required average before beginning at the University of Mississippi. Michael worked hard on his grades, kept up his commitment to football, and got to the finish line in that period of his life.

The story here is of a young man who refused to let his past hold him back from his future. Despite the odds, Michael charged forward regardless. As we journey through the rest of this book, I want you to keep reminding yourself to charge forward regardless, just as Michael did. The premise is simple: Do not let your fears, obstacles, or barriers keep you from achieving your God-given potential. Know that your past is simply something to be aware of, not a determining factor of your future.

### **Four Fs to Consider**

I want to share the four Fs here: faith, fear, the future, and following instructions. I had to have been six or seven years old and my younger brother a couple of years behind me when my young mother (in her early thirties) was driving us to school one morning in her old 1960s Volkswagen Beetle. It was December of that year because I remember we were all singing “The 12 Days of Christmas” while driving down Ring Road in Ibadan, Nigeria, when we suddenly saw smoke coming out of the car.

Now, if you know the old-school Beetle, you know that the engine is not in front but in the back of the car, where most cars typically have their trunk. My brother and I were sitting in the back, so we smelled the smoke before our mom did. Once we notified her, she pulled over frantically, and chaos ensued. I recall at least five men coming to her aid quickly with fire extinguishers, bottled water, and an open hand

wanting something in return when they were done putting out the fire. Even though this incident occurred almost thirty years earlier, I still remember it like it was yesterday. Why? Because this was a moment of fear!

I've had several instances of faith, but one of the most memorable was when I fasted and prayed at seventeen years old before going to the United States embassy in Lagos for my student visa. I had just returned from Texas for the summer as I was told that my visiting visa would not suffice as a reason to stay for college. Boy, was I scared. The thought crossed my mind to ask my parents to permit me to do what most people do: stay in America on my visiting visa and apply for a change of status, hoping for mercy. I recall deliberating in my head if the decision to return was a good idea, but I also remember praying to God and exercising faith that if it was meant to be, it would be. I exercised faith in this situation. This was about nineteen years ago, but I remember it like it was yesterday. This was a moment of faith!

Both faith and fear have a lasting impact on us, not only on the physical but also on our minds. In both situations, however, there was an opportunity for faith as well as fear. For the Volkswagen incident, I shared from the vantage of fear, but I could have shared from the perspective of faith, seeing that my mother had faith in the men who came to help as she willingly accepted their help, not knowing if they were bandits or if the extinguishers they had were going to help or further harm the vehicle. Likewise, for my visit to the

U.S. embassy in Nigeria to convince a consulate to approve my application for a student visa, I could have dwelled more on the fear of not returning to Texas. Still, I leaned more on faith in this instance. Faith and fear compete for our attention, and we have a choice to make daily. Which will you choose? What will you focus on—fear or faith?

*Abraham: Following Instructions for Your Future*

I want to introduce the story of Abram here, and I will reference this story through the book from time to time. In Genesis 12:1–9, we read of God telling Abram to “go” from the land of Haran to a land God would show him, where Abram would be made into a great nation. That land ended up being the land of Canaan, and when Abram got there, God appeared to him and told him that “To your offspring, I will give this land.” In essence, Abram received confirmation of the land. But then Abram journeyed on.

If you read the chapter closely, you will see that God never told him to go anywhere else. The Promised Land was already identified, there was a clear confirmation, but my dear Abram went forward when God never told him to. We read in verse eight that Abram went to the hill country and built an altar there where he called on God; we do not read of God answering him at that altar. Then, in verse nine, Abram went to Negev. We read in verse ten that there was a severe famine in the land, so Abram thought it best to go to Egypt. Again, we are not told that God

directed him there. At this point, Abram had made two moves from God's Promised Land.

Continuing to read in 12:11–20, we find that Abram's wife, Sarai, was beautiful, and Abram was fearful that the Egyptians would kill him for her; so he told her to introduce herself as his sister (which was a half-truth) so that they would spare his life. She did, and everyone thought she was so beautiful that they talked her up to Pharaoh, who then took her as one of his wives.

Now, let's just pause here. Abram presented as a man without balls—yes, I said it. Why would you be so scared that you would let another man take your wife willingly without a fight? Anyway, we will deal more with fear later.

In verse 17, we read of God showing mercy (undeserved favor) upon Abram and intervening with a plague upon Pharaoh's household because of Sarai. Another detour could be that God's intervention was to avoid his big plan being interrupted and diluted. Could you imagine if Sarai birthed a child for Pharaoh rather than for Abram? Once Pharaoh realized what was going on, he sent Sarai back to Abram and sent them out with all the riches Abram had amassed while his wife was in Pharaoh's house. Reading on in chapter 13, we see that Abram returned to the Negev and eventually heard from God in verses 14 to 15 after Lot moved on and out of his life (another subtopic to discuss at some point).

The moral of the story here is simple: If God, your Maker, did not send you somewhere, charging forward is more detrimental than staying put. Abram heard from God in Canaan but journeyed on when he wasn't told to. He put his future in jeopardy and almost lost the precious gift God gave him—his wife when he made a move without direction from God. Abram is celebrated as the father of faith in the book of Hebrews, but he acted out of fear in this story we just discussed, almost derailing his future by not following God's instructions.

If at any point in your quest forward without God's clear direction you realize you are wrong, you should return to the last place you heard God direct you to. It is not going backward; it is recalibrating to the center point so that the GPS can re-navigate you to your future. Stay close to God; He alone can direct you to the best life you can have. He wishes this for you.