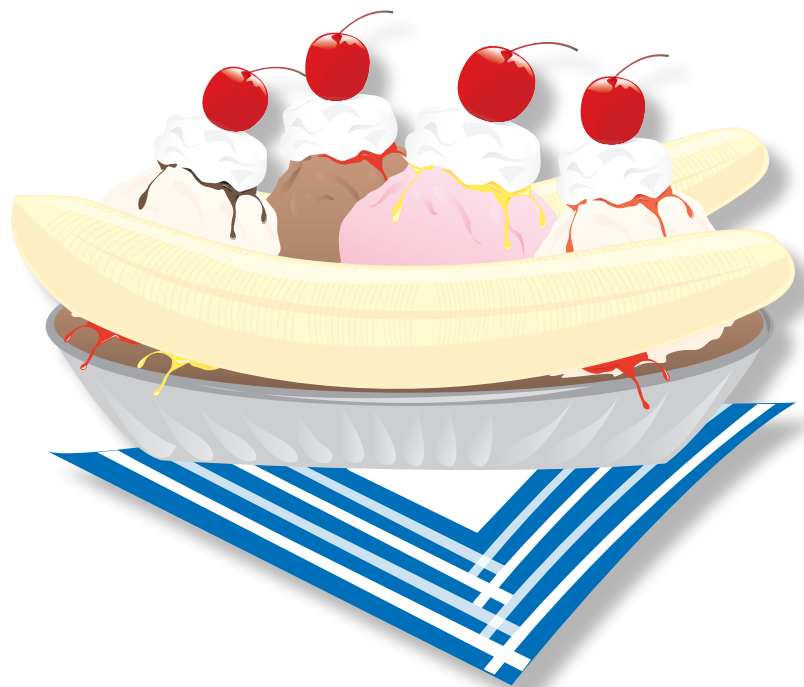


THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS



By Ola Joseph

I had only driven a couple of minutes when my eyes caught a glimpse of an ice cream parlor. My mouth watered and I swallowed hard as I maneuvered my car into a parking space. I have never gone into an ice cream parlor alone before, which made this an adventure of sorts. Usually, I just ordered what my friends ordered, saving myself the headache of learning the names of the flavors. Remember, I'm a village boy from Nigeria, and we don't eat ice cream in my village, so the word is not part of my dictionary.

I looked up at the signs to see if I could recognize any of the names. The longer I stood, the more my mouth watered, and the more I wanted something to assuage my cravings. Finally, I looked toward the register just as a young lady was being handed a bowl of ice cream with some banana pieces. Just what I wanted – so I thought. I looked up at the signs again and saw “Banana Split.” I salivated a little more. When it was my turn to order, I said, “Banana Split” with the air of someone who knew what he was doing.

I watched in horror as the young lady grabbed a bowl about six inches long and three inches deep. She took a banana, split it into two-halves and placed them in the bowl. She then scooped one, two, three different flavors of ice cream into the bowl and topped it with several different nuts – then red, white, blue, and brown sauces.

“Is that for me?” I asked incredulously.

“Yes,” she said. “Isn't that what you asked for?”

My mouth went dry. All the desire and the salivation went away as I looked at the mountain of ice cream in front of me. The lady beside me saw the look on my face and said “You didn't know what you were getting into, did you?”

The sight of the banana split ice cream was enough to fill me up even before I tasted it. Needless to say, I ended up throwing more than three-quarters of it away. I couldn't make a dent in the heap. I watched helplessly as all the different flavors of ice cream, nuts and sauces melted down into the bowl. I sat there for a long time thinking of how many people were out there like me who have failed to finish what they started.

Most of us have several books that we start to read but never complete.

Some people start school but never finish. Some start projects and leave them halfway through.

That also reminded me of an interesting lesson I learned in the Navy cafeteria. I noticed that 70% of the sailors did not finish what they had on their plates.

I have discovered that the main reason people fail to finish what they start is because they ask for the wrong thing in the first place. Just as I asked for “split banana ice cream,” most people don't know what to ask for, therefore, they get what they don't want, and because they get what they don't want or need, they end up abandoning it.

The more I thought of these unfinished businesses, the more I realized that these uncompleted businesses sometimes point to our lack of will power. As someone once said, “Lack of will power has caused more failure than lack of intelligence.”

I have known people who went to school to get a degree in a particular discipline, but somewhere along the line they realized that was not what they wanted. Some even completed the degree program only to realize they really didn't want to be in that profession.

The Bible says, *you ask and do not receive because you asked amiss*. I wish we all knew exactly what we wanted; then we could go for it.

Now that I've learned my lesson, next time I want something, I will make sure I ask for the right thing. Not only that, I will make sure I have what it takes to finish it.

How about you? Know what you want and ask for what you want. If you don't know what to ask for, you may ask for what you don't want, and end up getting what you don't need, which means you won't finish what you are starting.

Would you like to share your tale of unfinished business? Drop me a line.

“You didn't know what you were getting into, did you?”



Ola Joseph is a prominent speaker, author and consultant. His published works, audio and video programs can be ordered from his website: www.olayinka.com.