

Little
REMINDERS
For my
SOUL

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APPRECIATION

My gratitude goes to the Almighty God who has enabled me to take this little step in fulfilling His purpose through me. I am just a willing vessel and I pray that I will be useful in His Kingdom.

It takes a village to raise a child in the African set-up. Well, it took the effort of so many people to bring this little book to life. I am grateful to all my teachers of life, the lessons I have put in here, I have learnt from you. More specifically, I would like to thank my parents Mr. & Mrs. Kimencu, for instilling the love of books and learning in me at a young age. I love you!

My gratitude goes to all who took their time to read and provide valuable input to this book: My husband, Dr. Mwenda Mwilaria, Brother in Law; Mr. Mureithi Kaaria, My sisters: Emma Mureithi, Lena Kimencu, and Carolyn Kathambi. Your affirmations, counsel, and advice are truly appreciated.

Dedication:

Little REMINDERS *for my* SOUL

DEDICATION:

I dedicate this little book to my little A's: Alan and Amanda and all the children in the globe that they will know their true worth and aim at living a purpose-driven life.

INTRODUCTION

REMINDERS TO THE SOUL

Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all
your might, for in the world of the dead...
where we are all going, there is neither
working, nor planning, nor knowledge, nor
wisdom

(Ecclesiastes 9:10)

Begin with the end in mind: What could you do if you were told that you only had one day to live? We have all heard stories about cancer survivors who were informed that they had such a short time to live on earth. It is such an unravelling time when it comes to your own mortality. At that point, as you face death, as we shall all face at some point in our lives; we begin to have a clear focus on the things that are most important to us. Life suddenly gets decluttered, the distractions that sometimes keep you off your goals diminish, and the grudges that you have been carrying like a load on your back, just vanish! Well, because,

who has the time to carry on those grudges when there is so little time for you to leave a legacy?

A story is told about a dying man named Shujaa who had four wives. He loved all of them for different reasons and with varying intensity. Traditional African customs usually regarded the younger wives favourably and were adored by many. In embracing that culture, Shujaa loved and entertained his fourth wife so dearly; he would pamper her with the best clothes and adorn her with the most expensive jewelry. For her to remain young and vibrant, Shujaa ensured she got highly personalized beauty care in the best health spa situated in their town. Shujaa indeed loved her and in equal measure she loved him.

Shujaa was a successful man in the neighborhood. This social standing naturally dictated that he gets a trophy wife. To live up to this; he had his third dear wife, they loved each other so dearly. When hosting family events or gracing social functions his third wife would always accompany him. She was stunningly beautiful. Her elegance and decorum was easily noticed by all. Everyone admired and envied him because of this wife

who was so attractive and well endowed. Shujaa in return gave her anything she wanted. She had immense control over his life.

In life everybody has that special person who they are assured and confident that they can confide in to share with them their dreams, successes, fears, insecurities, struggles, and ambitions. For Shujaa, his second wife would perfectly fit that bill. Shujaa loved her so much and she loved him back. Her striking emotional intelligence and sound judgment endeared her to Shujaa. This was demonstrated when Shujaa consulted her on various key decisions regarding his family lifestyle, investment and retirement plans, and short term to long term plans affecting the overall wellbeing of his family.

Lastly, in Shujaa's life was his first wife who was always modest. She was always there for him. To Shujaa, she seemed aloof as he was not strongly attached to her. This made her at times strive to assert herself as she always felt taken for granted.

After several years' sickness befell Shujaa, frantic efforts were made to access the best medical care for

him. Nothing much could be done as his condition had deteriorated. A frail and now bedridden Shujaa called all his four wives to bid them goodbye; as the priest administered the last rites to him.

When they were all gathered around his death bed he said: “Now look my beautiful wives, we have come along all this far and I am about to die. I don't want to die alone; will any of you come with me?” He called his fourth wife and said: “You are the dearest to my heart, I have always loved you and I have given you the best of all I have had. Now my time has come to die, will you come with me? Without mincing her words she declined and walked away. This was devastating for the now heartbroken Shujaa. He regained composure and called his third wife saying, “You have been my trophy wife, I always loved to show you off to my friends, will you please accompany me?” Unapologetically she answered, “No way! The moment you die, I will be taken by someone else” just like the fourth wife she left.

Frustration was written all over Shujaa's face as he was struggling to come to terms with the act of betrayal he had just witnessed. He was visibly agitated after his two

favorite wives; whom he now considered apathetic and heartless, had refused to accompany him. Shujaa mustered the courage to converse with his second wife, “You have been my confidant, my friend, the one I told all my secrets; will you accompany me? She replied, “I am so sorry that you are dying, but I can only accompany you to your graveside; I cannot go past there.” She turned back and stood in her place. A dismayed Shujaa could not believe that his most trusted confidant was now reluctant and only sympathetic to his plight.

There was silence in the room when he heard a faint voice from the back of the room, “I will come with you”, it was his first wife. An astonished but now remorseful Shujaa looked up and saw her emaciated body. He could barely notice that she looked unattractive; unlike her three other co-wives. Shujaa now sobbing inconsolably said “My dear, I have always neglected you, yet, in my death bed, you are the only one who wishes to join me in death. I wish I knew that you were the one who loved me more than anybody else when I was healthy and rich. I feel very sad that I neglected you

all the time.”

In the story the fourth wife symbolizes our body and its cravings. When we die, our bodies will waste away and lose all the beauty that our bodies represented. The third wife represents our prestige, earthly possessions, and the trappings of power. They are so attractive and we like to show them off to our friends but upon our death other people get to inherit them. The second wife symbolizes our families and close friends who are our confidants, however, they can only walk with us up to some point. No matter how much they love you and you love them, they will not accompany you past the grave. The first wife is symbolic of our soul, or our heart or mind. It is always there, but most often unnoticed.

Most of us invest on all the other things in life and forget to invest in the soul. In Mark 8:36, Jesus asked, “of what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and yet loose his own soul?” The soul is the most important aspect of our life, yet largely ignored, often people realize its importance belatedly usually in their deathbeds. Our soul is the oneness we have with God. It is much more profitable to safeguard your soul, your

mind, your heart for from it flows the things of life (Proverbs 4:23). The Bible continues to tell us: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all the other things shall be given to you” (Mathew 6:33).

Drawing lessons from the life of Shujaa, we can say he had his priorities wrong. It is okay to desire all the things that he had. It is of great benefit that you have good relationships; they will hold you up during your most difficult times and they will celebrate with you, your accomplishments. It is also important that you pursue wealth. There is a Kiswahili proverb that states: *Mkono mtupu haulambwi* (an empty palm is never licked), after all, Proverbs 13:22 tells us: “a good man leaves inheritance to his children's' children, but the sinners' wealth is laid up for the righteous.”

“So, by all means, work hard but always remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18). It is also equally important that we take care of our bodies. Making sure that you are healthy, having a balanced diet, exercising and maintaining personal hygiene. “After all, our bodies are the God's temples in which we carry our souls and

we carry the Holy Spirit.” 1st Corinthians 6: 19-20.

In summing up this introduction section, we all need to have our priorities right. The nuggets of wisdom captured as reminders in this publication underscore the need to take care of our soul and all the other things will take care of themselves.

The book is structured with stories, pictures, and Bible verses. The following are my reminders to the soul; I challenge you as you read this book you come up with your OWN reminders to the soul.

CHAPTER I



REMINDER # 1 : ORDER YOUR PRIORITIES

ACTIONS EXPRESS PRIORITIES.

There is a popular saying that goes “show me how you spend your money and time and I will tell you what is important to you.” Our actions express our priorities and what we treasure in life. A purpose-driven life requires that you get your priorities right. When our priorities are right, we are able to get time to do other things. A story is told of a philosophy professor from the school of public management in France who illustrated the importance of priorities using a jar.

The professor placed several two-inch rocks in the jar until no more would fit, he then asked his students, “is the jar full?” They unanimously answered that it was full. Then he added pebbles and shook the jar slightly until all the pebbles filled in the spaces between the rocks. He then asked again if the jar was full, in response they again indicated that it was full. Thereafter, he added a scoop of sand into the jar, shook the jar until the sand filled in the spaces between the pebbles. He then asked them if the jar was full, by now

the class response was split in the middle. Half of the students felt tricked and answered that it was not full, while others agreed that it was full. To conclude the exercise, he grabbed a jug of water and filled the jar to the full. He asked them, “If this jar were your life, what do you learn from the experiment?”

One bold student answered. “No matter how busy you are, you can always take more”. The professor then asked, “what could happen if we switched things around, for instance, if we put the sand and water first, then the pebbles and the rocks last, would they all fit within the jar?” The professor looked around the classroom, made eye contact with every student and proceeded with his lesson. “This jar reflects your life, every one of us has the same size of the jar, and that is 24 hours in a day.”

What do you fill your 24 hours with daily? The rocks represent the big things in life; what you will value at the end of your life. What are your big things in life? For most of us, the big things in life are our families, our health, our significant relationships, our hopes and

dreams and I guess this is where education lies, in our hopes and dreams. The pebbles are the other things in your life that give you meaning: Your job, your house, your hobbies, your friendships; the sand and water represents the small things that fill up your time such as watching TV, running errands, browsing the internet. They fill out our time, but they add very little value to our life. Can you imagine then, if we began the experiment with water and sand? Chances are that you would have no much time left to do the things that are most important to you.

So, how should our priorities look like? One would ask. There is no single formula to life; your life is defined by your choices and choices are very personal. My choices may be very different from your choices. But there is one rule that works the most: “Seek ye first, the Kingdom of God and all His righteousness, and all the other things shall be given to you” (Matthew 6:33). I take that to be a key principle to any prosperous living. When you begin with acknowledging your Creator, then you are able to know what purpose He sent with you when you were born. Knowing and giving God first

priority in your life brings order to all the other goals in your life. “Acknowledge the Lord in all you do and He will establish your plans” (Proverbs 3:6). By taking care of this important priority, you are taking care of the most important person who will never leave you even in your grave: Your Soul. In the jar of priorities, your soul is the rocks, the big stones that must serve as the foundation in your jar of life.

The second most important priority you can have is your family. These comprise of parents, guardians, spouse, siblings, and children. In reference to the Shujaa story, the family was symbolized by his second wife. Prioritize your family. The scriptures actually state: “Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than a non-believer” (1st Timothy 5:8). Your work place can have you replaced, but it is difficult to have a replacement of a father, mother, husband, wife, daughter, son, sister, brother, or other family relations that you have. There is a saying that goes: “To the world you are just a person, but there is the one person to whom you are their world.” Know who

those people are and keep them dear. Take them as your priority. In the jar of your priorities, your family and friends are the pebbles. They bring joy to your foundation. They make your foundation stable and anchored during all the seasons of your life.

The third most important priority you can have is work. You realize there is a difference between a job and work. Your job earns you a salary or an income, your work defines your purpose, ambitions, and your service. You were created for service. Rick Warren, the author of a purpose-driven life, explains that all human life was created to serve God. Most of the motivational speakers and get rich quick schemes excite our emotions by telling us how we can get more, accumulate more, have more, with less effort. However, that is not the reason we were created. God created you and me to make a contribution. You were created to add to life on earth, not just to take from it. “When God created Adam, he gave him work to do.” Genesis 2: 4-8. If you follow the creation story you observe that God put Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden to take care of it.

Before there was money to be paid and careers to be discovered or jobs to be sought; from the creation story, Adam and Eve had already some work cut out for him. Their work was to take care and look after the garden. God would have done that, after all, He created everything else with just a word, but He purposely created man for work. Man was supposed to derive pleasure from work. Long before man had sinned, there was some work cut out for him, meaning work is never a form of punishment, work is a source of pleasure and privilege and we should embrace it as such.

This poses a challenge to us all regarding what work needs to be done? Before you ask how much money will I earn or what are the terms of contract, our first questions and attitude should focus first on the work that needs to be done. You were created for service, how can you serve others today? What can you do to make the life of another person easier, a load lighter, and a problem solved? We were created for each other and to serve each other. In the jar of life, your work is the pebbles and sand. It fills up the other gaps in your life. Your work gives you the resources that you need to live

a fulfilled life. It gives you pleasure as you know you are being of service to others, it enriches your life and gives it meaning.

The fourth priority in your life should be “all the other things that will be added unto you” from the Bible excerpt we read from Matthew. The Bible embraces the role of leisure in our lives and it is also important that we get time out of our busy schedules to be refreshed in some sort of leisure activity. (Ecclesiastes 11: 8:) “Be cheerful and enjoy life while you are still young! Do what you want and find pleasure in what you see. But don't forget that God will judge you for everything you do”. So, yes, make time for the things that you enjoy doing, but always remember there is a limit: God will judge you for everything you do. Good choices will get applauded while bad choices are reprimanded. That's how life works.

CHAPTER II



REMINDER # 2:

TAKE CARE OF THE LITTLE THINGS...
THE BIG THINGS WILL TAKE CARE
OF THEMSELVES.

Just like my first reminder on ordering your priorities, this reminds me to know what is within my control and take care of that first, then the things that are out of my control, will be taken care of by the greater universe. According to Steve Covey, the author of the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, he introduces the two concepts of the circle of influence and secondly the circle of concern. The circle of influence are those things that you can control and you can change. The circle of concern are those things that you have no control, but by expanding your circle of influence you can ultimately have some control over them. For instance, during an election year, you may feel you are not in a position to control the economic tides, the drought cycles, who wins the elections, but you have control over and can decide on your choice of candidate to vote for.

As a student, you may not be able to control what happens once you finish your fourth form. You may have little control over the job market, inflation,

unemployment etc. But you have control over your choices for today. You have some control as regards to the grade you will get in your math exam the same way you have total control on how you will utilize your evening study time.

Time is one non-renewable resource that we all have. A day has 24 hours, translated to 1440 minutes or 86,400 seconds. Assume someone gives you 86,400 Kenyan shillings daily, you are to use the entire money in a single day and cannot save any of it, what would you spend it on? Would you spend it on things you don't need? How would it feel if one day you lost the entire Ksh. 86,400? Or if you spent the entire amount on things you hate or you don't need? All of us have 24 hours, this is within our circle of control, however, what we do with our 24 hours is what distinguishes us. When you focus your attention on the things that you have control over, life becomes more simplified.

What are some of the things you have control over? One immediate thing we have control over is how we use our time. How we spend it, who we spend it with, what we spend doing with it. That is one choice we all have as

long as you are alive and not in hospital or in a prison cell. So, how unprofitable is it, when we spend our time on things that add very little value to our lives? Of what worth could it be, if you took the entire 86,400 seconds of your life on gossip, negative thinking, idling, engaging in drug abuse or doing other things that are detrimental to you or that do not add any value to your life?

What other things can you add to your list? You realize the things you are in control over are those that are within you: Your time, your attitudes, your energy, and your resources. Not your spouse, your children, or your friends. Your actions can influence them, but you cannot control them.

An American preacher, Dr. Mike Murdock said the secret of your future is hidden in your daily tasks and choices. How you choose to spend your 24 hours today and every day of your life is what will determine the kind of life you are to live. The serenity prayer by an American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr stated: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the

wisdom to know the difference.” That should be our everyday prayer that we gather enough courage to change the things within and around our lives that we have control over. Have patience and peace with the things that are out of our control and that we ask God to give us the wisdom to discern and act on the difference.

GOD GRANT ME THE
Serenity
TO ACCEPT THE THINGS
I CANNOT CHANGE:
Courage
TO CHANGE THE
THINGS I CAN:
AND *Wisdom*
TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.

CHAPTER III



REMINDER # 3:

THERE IS NO SMALL JOB...
IF DONE WELL

“Don't underestimate my hustle, yours doesn't feed me,” this is a popular saying written or imprinted on some motor bikes, hand cart private and public service vehicles or even in shops. I always laughed off at those tag lines, but after some time, I realized how true? There is no small job if it is done well. When we were growing up, there was this one question that we all dreaded to be asked during the school holidays. Especially if you have failed your end term exams and you seem to have failed all the “important” subjects such as Mathematics, Science etc. The question was, “what do you want to become when you grow up?” for that question, there were standard acceptable responses, and there were responses that were utterly unacceptable.

Most parents frowned on those choices regardless of how passionate, talented or sincere the child was. The acceptable responses included being a doctor, a teacher a pilot, an engineer, you know the big things.

The unacceptable choices included being a musician, a footballer, a mechanic, a hair dresser, a tailor, a plumber or what seemed unprofessional to the society of the time. What we all didn't realize is that for a society to thrive it needs all of us. The doctors need a tailor to make their coats, the engineers need the mechanics and we all need the plumbers. Imagine for a moment, a world with no plumbers, mechanics, musicians or other blue collar jobs that we know of. Within the same line of thought, imagine a world with no doctors, teachers, pilots etc. No group of people can survive or even thrive without the other. As a word of caution, never let anyone look down on your talent. Neither let anyone look down upon you because of your youthfulness: “Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity” (1st Timothy, 4:12).

Martin Luther King II, an American preacher and civil rights activist stated “If one is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep the streets

so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause and say, "Here lived a great sweeper who did his job well." Yes, and we all know when we have done a good job. The external applauds that we receive confirm that, however, the only person who can judge whether you have done a good job is you! It is only you who can tell for sure, if you have given your best shot at something. You are the only one who knows when you have given it your A-game or you have given substandard work. If you get a D in your studies and you obtained it after giving it your best, that's your A-game and it should be celebrated. Always remember better a worked for and a rightfully earned D than a stolen A. The stolen A, will never be yours, you will always know, it's not yours, and it won't be long before it starts to show. So be proud of your D; be proud of what you rightfully get and walk with your shoulders high, knowing in your heart that you gave it your ALL.

The most useful asset of a person
is not a head full of knowledge, but
a heart full of love, with ears open
to listen, and hands willing to help.

CHAPTER IV

**Think Outside
The Box**



REMINDER #4:

LIVE OUTSIDE THE BOX...

An American actor and producer Mr. Tyler Perry once said: “Live outside the box, because when you die, they will put you in one any way.” Solomon the wise man in the Bible stated this in Ecclesiastes 11: 7- 8 “It is good to be alive. It is nice to see the light from the sun. You should enjoy every day of your life, no matter how long you live.” But remember that you will die, and you will be dead much longer than you are alive. After you are dead, you cannot do anything. In Ecclesiastes' 9:10 it continues to state “Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might. For in the realm of the dead, where we are all going, there is neither working, nor planning, nor knowledge, nor wisdom.” From the scripture, Solomon is talking about getting rid of the box mentality. *Think outside the box and then throw it away!*

What kind of boxes do we live in every day that limit our potential? When you think of a box what comes to you mind? Some would say: Exclusion, confinement,

containment, limitation, or boundaries. The society always aims at fitting us into boxes or roles that they feel fit for us. Boxes define what you can do and what you cannot do. What you may wish to do but you are not allowed to do because of the societal expectations around you. However, God never places any limits on anyone. The way upwards is always open. *Any limitations you place on yourself are your own.*

Warren Bennis, an American scholar who has authored the book on “Becoming a Leader” stated: “To be successful in life, you first and foremost need to find out what it is you are and be that. Be who you are and don't lose it, it is very hard to be who we are, because it doesn't seem to be what everyone wants us to be... No one, not your parents, not your teachers, not your peers can teach you how to be yourself. Indeed, however well intentioned, they all work to teach you how not to be yourself.” People will always place limitations on you, they will always try to define and confine you to be the person that they imagine or want you to be. You must work to set yourself free from those confinements by defining who you are and being that.

Bennis states that to become a leader, you must become yourself, become the maker of your own life, knowing yourself means separating who you are and who you want to be from what the world thinks you are and wants you to be. The first step towards change, towards attaining your greatest potential is to refuse to be deployed by others and to choose to deploy yourself. Bennis asserts that “until you make your life your own, you are walking in borrowed clothes.”

So get rid of all the limiting mindsets that we possess. Embrace the attitude of “I can” “I will” “am able” and discard the “I can't”, “I may”, “I am not able” mentality. Live a life of freedom, know that you are who you think you are. So think positive thoughts about yourself. Philippians 4:13, we are encouraged that we can be ALL things, through Christ who strengthens us. Give yourself freedom to be YOU today!

BE BRAVE
BE BOLD
BE YOU

CHAPTER V



REMINDER #5:

DREAM WITH YOUR EYES OPEN

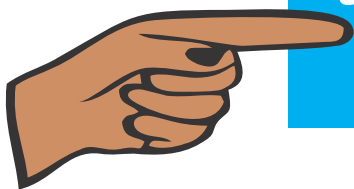
A British Archaeologist T.A. Lawrence stated in one of his quotes: “All men dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds, wake in the day to find it was all vanity. But the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act on their dreams with open eyes to make them possible”.

Until you dream with your eyes open you will never achieve the impossible. It is only in the land of your imaginations' that you can be anything you wish to be. A persons' mind is so powerful that you can invent, create, experience, and destroy things with thoughts alone. An average person has around 50,000-70,000 thoughts in a day. Every one of us, is the sum total of his own thoughts. He is where he is because that's exactly where he really wants to be whether he will admit it or not. Our thoughts define our realities; our realities, define our destinies. The Bible is very clear on this: As a man thinks, so is he (Proverbs 23:7). The

Bible also states, “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Mathew 12:34). So, if you inhibit positive thoughts, you will attract and live a positive life, if you inhibit negative thoughts, your life will be limited. We can only reach where we allow our minds, our attitudes, our imaginations and creativity to reach. Henry Ford, an American industrialist who revolutionized the automobile industry by founding the Ford Motor company stated in one of his quotes: “Whether you think you can, or you think you can't—you are right; anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or at eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young”

Finally, as I conclude my thoughts on the 5 *reminders for my soul*, I will remind you that there is no end to knowledge. The little nuggets of wisdom and knowledge you gather daily, determines the direction your life will take. Proverbs 4:13 states: “Always remember what you have learned. Your education is your life- guard it well”. I hope that this book helps you to unlock the potential that you so richly possess in your heart.

I still challenge you as you read this small booklet that you look within yourself and come up with more reminders to your soul.



*Enrich your Soul. Enrich
Your Life*