SECOND CHANCE WITH A DIFFERENCE

POWERFUL TOOLS TO MAKE IT COUNT

Power of: Family, Parenting, Affirmation, Essential Support systems, Self-awareness; Resolving Identity crisis, Mid-life Crisis and- Self Healing out of Depression.

"LEOPARDKING"

Anderson Ambindi Murunga

SECOND CHANCE WITH A DIFFERENCE

POWERFUL TOOLS TO MAKE IT COUNT

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DEDICATION

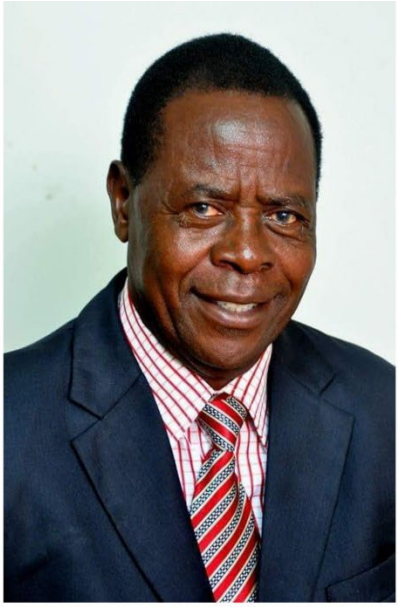
I dedicate this book to the all God almighty, my father Hon.Cllr Peter Boswell Murunga Munala, my mother Rev. Stella Majuma Atemba Munala, and the great pillar of my support system; my wife Susan Vutare Ambindi together with whom is a battalion of those that will take over our Barton: our children Andes Agumba Boswell Murunga, Aden Andanje Munala ambindi and Shirley Muhonja Zaina Ambindi.

I also dedicate this book to my father-in-law, the late Mr. Daniel Agumba of former Stage Coach, and my mother–in–Law PST, Mrs. Beatrice Muhonja Agumba.

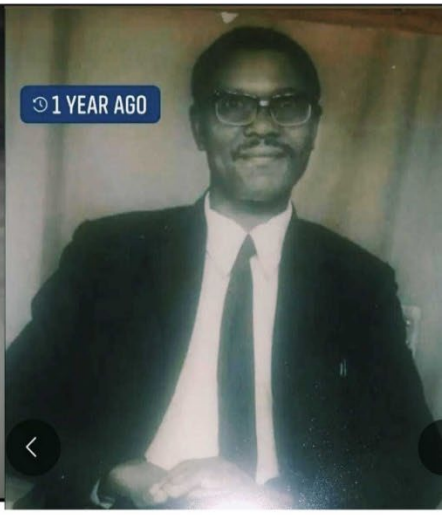
I also make a very special dedication to one "Richmond"; the late teacher, Richard Burton Arina Okaalo, and his wife, the late Rev. Sarah Anyangu who took in my orphaned young father and educated him through primary school. Without this love and Kindness, my father's Education and life would never have turned out the same.

MY PARENTS AND I

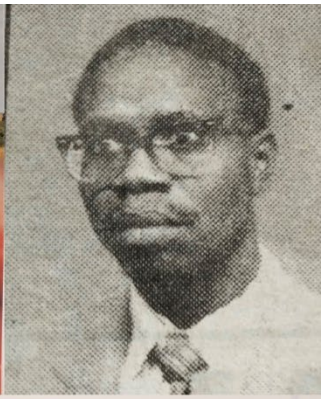
MY MUM



MY DAD



MR AND MRS OKAALO



MY PARENTS IN LAW

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Allow me to share a special acknowledgment for my dear strong-willed, loving, caring, and gracious wife Susan Vutare Ambindi. Franz Peter Schubert, an Austrian composer of the late Classical and early Romantic eras, who wrote more than 600 lyrics, said "Happy is the man who finds a true friend, and far happier is he who finds that true friend in his wife". Dear Susan, you fit seamlessly in this frame of description. Our God-given products; Andes Agumba Boswell Murunga- the tall dark, and handsome lawyer/musician, Aden Andanje Munala- the multiversatile Engineer/footballer and Shirley Muhonja Zaina Ambindi- the dancing, baking, skating scholar and queen of basketball, have borne moments of my absence away from them as I work on this literary piece.

A fitting couple rarely forgets their best couple. Mr. Bernard Muchiri and Sylvia Muchiri, you have never tired of supporting our every endeavor. The fountain pen can never, therefore, go dry.

Prof. Charles Kimani Njoroge and your wife Jane remain a great inspiration in our personal lives, right from our heydays when we entered matrimony. Mrs. Jane Theuri and Mrs. Grace Thuku, whose content, rich in the thread of motherhood has been included in this book!

The journey of sharing my quest for self-awareness would be mentally tiring without the support of my mentor couple Rev. Dr. Peterson Wang'ombe and Ann Wang'ombe. This special man of God contributed to the buildup of the content of this book. Brandon Sanderson, an American author whose 122-chapter book

Oathbringer, was published in 2017 says: "Yes, I began my journey alone, and indeed I ended it alone. But that does not mean that I walked alone."In the shoes of Brandon, I, cannot forget that I walked with Rev. Chris Khatela and Mrs. Juddie Mmosi who kept the prayer watch relentlessly. Bishop Jimmy Kimani offered much-needed insights.
Mr. Eric Muleri, my best friend and confidante, who since our high school and campus days was keen on my personality traits, was supported thereafter by his wife Maggie in profiling and documenting our past, as part of this premier book.

The writing shops about this book were hosted by Rev. Winnie and William Odero and the ICC-Kitengela Family. Your companionship, hospitality, and discipleship are beyond reproach. Thank you for encouraging me thru the assignment.

I acknowledge all my fans and followers who have encouraged me to write along the template of parenting and family life. Some have encouraged me to write on the thread of healing and restoration while others have encouraged me to write on the thread of empowerment and capacity building for the times we live in. Thank you.

Many are the times when guests get acknowledged and those under the heat of the kitchen are forgotten. In my case, I salute my editorial team led by veteran broadcaster, William Ogonda, supported by MK Cyprian, Joylyne Kasyamani, Clara Kimeu, and Sheelah Adisa. Thank you and welcome.

FOREWARD

My first encounter with Anderson was when he preached in 2007, at the deliverance church Kasarani, in Nairobi, during which I took reckon that, the young man's passion about God was an inspiration to our generation. Our friendship would later blossom and solidify beyond the disciplines of ministry in the word and music. His penning of this very informative and inspiring book came from several conversations we had and am elated today when I realize that the discourse resonates with my life in God's love and overall, it captures the spirit of our journey as believers in Christ, founded on the family, our key social institution.

The church is a major pillar of reinforcing family values and therefore has to be deliberate and principled on family values. There is every need therefore to call upon the church to invest in the media and art, thereby being intentional about creating alternative/counter content. We can't shy away from the internet and assume that prayer alone will drive away the bad content. We must become influencers for positive social values in the marketplace. This is one clear-running narrative in this unique book – an autobiography that comes with a strong inspirational muscle of content. It gives credit to the very positive role that the church is unrelentingly providing and provides nuggets on the direction and opportunities that if explored will place the church as the strongest pillar of starting, grooming, and sustaining the ideals of family, with the Almighty God remaining the fountain that the family has to consistently drink from.

The twists and turns in Anderson growing up both physically and spiritually have peak points that drive me into the whirl of human reality. His family, career, and ministry avenues make me appreciate the value of talent in providing the narrative of hope and resilience right as evidenced through his music ministry that he has blended pretty well with the supporting disciplines of theology and psychology. The glaring role of mentors reminds me of my recent past. Archbishop Arthur Kitonga, founder of the Redeemed Gospel Church Inc, believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. He mentored me guiding and supporting me since my days at the university to date.

As well threaded through this wonderful read, mentoring comes with affirmation with the latter making our social distances that vary from one person to the next. I share in the blooming, the power of affirmation from my mentors and role models, making me what I 'am today. When Bishop TD Jakes first visited Kenya in 2005, I was the secretary general of the Kenya Union of Journalists.

At the time, I was in bad books with the Kibaki government because of working with the then British high commissioner Edward Clay to expose the Anglo leasing scandal. Senior people in government hit back hard and hatched plots to malign me and destroy my reputation. Despite the negative publicity and fabricated court cases, Bishop Mark Kariuki invited me to the TD Jakes press briefing. I strongly felt that my destiny was tied to this great preacher who was impacting millions across the world and had a great desire to just shake his hand, badly like the woman with the issue of blood who desired to just touch the hem of his garment. The very government that was fighting me would later give me a job as Director of information and public communications. I would later have opportunities to serve in the UN Secretary General's committee of information and serve as Vice chairman of UNESCO's communications committee in Paris, among other high-end responsibilities in the public sphere. I echo the consultative findings by Anderson on the need for workplace support systems that hinge on the holistic human experience and make the workplace a safe space to thrive, amidst the high and low moments in that environment from where one aches bread.

"Leopardking" has captured me with his African identity thread. He has articulated the beauty of our African culture. The pure unrivaled aesthetics, imagery, and authentic family, parental, peer, and community support systems that sustain a thread of morality, identity, and a strong culture of values are consistent with the word of God. The African cultural experience where the child was raised by a community and schooled by a community with very edifying examples makes me reminiscent of when a decision was taken to invite me to the festival as Chief Guest to share my thoughts in the 2019 Hollywood Film Festival in Los Angeles California. It was my bold statements on the need to change this biased approach to telling African stories, using films to promote African culture, values, and aspirations that got me a trip to Hollywood. It ended up becoming a major debate on how Hollywood has misrepresented Africa in its films, for the longest ignoring the beauty of the continent and only highlighting the negative stories and stereotypes of Africa as a dark continent bedeviled by poverty, hunger, and civil strife. We couldn't have been more alike with Anderson in celebrating our culture and its beauty therein. I foreword this rare genre book confidently because its content resonates with my values and I highly believe it will be the case with yours after you read it.

Dr. Ezekiel Mutua, MBS
Chief Executive Officer – Music Copyright Society of Kenya (MCSK)
Strategic communications and public administration specialist

INTRODUCTION

As you open up this book, you will begin to appreciate that most of your mistakes and failures were a product of an untraceable journey of your life. You will appreciate how little you knew about your identity and personality. You will realize how most of your workplace, marketplace, and marital conflicts can be traced back to the collectible and memorable dramatic moments of your life. You will be shocked to discover which of your support systems held you together without your knowledge and how you deteriorated upon abandoning them. It is a moment of reflection, flashback, self-reflection, and self-reproach.

This book was born from a place of depression and midlife crisis towards the end of 2018, just before the covid-19 pandemic. I could not realize I was depressed until much later when a deep-seated question became so loud in my mind and spirit. I was in a vacuum as everything that validated me made no sense. I lost my taste and groove in family, business, ministry, and friendships.

I had a major misunderstanding with my father but the root cause was an even bigger misunderstanding between my parents with me as the child in between two tussling parental forces. I was the villain-bad but important, with the latter having a minor weight then. I also had a strained relationship with my wife, a strain which began showing during long-distance relationship dynamics but later revealed more deep-seated individual internal conflicts, unspoken expectations, unresolved issues, and a mid-life Crisis leading to a real marital crisis that threatened to end our marriage. The remedy largely came after both of us studied psychology. My church ministry was also struggling to remain afloat and eventually closed down due to a myriad of simultaneous circumstances that put a heavy strain on the ministry.

The dawning wave of the Covid-19 pandemic thereafter arrived and all it did with the baggage of its effects was to bring about the fulfillment of the English idiom: Scratching a healing wound. All these, happening in one year for one man, one heart, and one soul were but a puzzle. God loved me enough to preserve me so I can tell the story in this book. This book not only reflects my life story but also mentions the life story of a few other people concerning my scholarly arguments and proposals in psychology. The snippets of their life stories converge with my ideas and suggestions. I have also advanced the opinions of specific individuals who have valuable contributions to make on specific subjects such as parenting, career, Christian ideals, and mental wellness.

Professional and scholarly opinions have also been captured in the scripting of this book to advance the discourses about self-awareness, affirmation, support systems, identity, and emotional safety. Some of my peers, friends, mentors, and mentees have allowed me to share snippets of their stories and so the richness of this book cannot be gainsaid.

Behind all these patches that draw up my life and yours too are two words that we have either told someone or told to ourselves; the word, "Second Chance." Rarely used but highly desired by anyone sitting within the cloud of either guilt or regret, second chance has facets, that I have presented throughout the various chapters in this book. The one on the wrong starts by seeking it! An apology, much as it sounds like it makes one vulnerable, an apology is an attempt to see or feel the perspective of the person you hurt and how your actions or your words might have affected them. An apology creates an opportunity to begin the healing process.

A second chance in life means having another opportunity to achieve your goals and dreams. It may also mean righting the wrongs you may have committed in the past and thus showing the world what you are capable of. In the absence of your mistakes, a second chance can also mean the ability to turn a page when one factor of your life can no longer hold or when some opportunities seem completely lost. Moving on is a form of a second chance to thrive again without that old weight. There are moments we may need to gift others a second chance in situations where there is nothing they can do to change their situation unless we intentionally go out of our way to extend a hand of help, grace, and mercy to someone else so they can get something right, correct their past or achieve a goal that has eluded them.

Missed opportunities

Most of us missed out on good opportunities for good but others could have the same opportunities reappear in one form or another. Also, some people miss their opportunities due to financial challenges or lack of mentorship. We can dream again. I have witnessed people who go back to school many years later when they could now afford it- it means giving a second chance to missed opportunities.

Untapped potential

The prism of our potential may vary from one environment to another. One could also delve into maximizing untapped potential when they encounter an environment that brings their potential to light. My son Andes was a leader in his early primary school days. When I changed his school in class six, he was just a good boy in the crowd.

When he joined high school, he was also just a good student in the crowd but when he changed to another high school he found the chance to show his talent and skill more. He is currently the chairman of the school choir and is being groomed to be the next leader of the school Christian union. Maybe he found those opportunities he would shine best already occupied in his former school.

Unimagined opportunities

Many people are walking on this earth with a defeated mentality because they have internalized and accepted their defeat or limitations. Physical limitations, health limitations, and mental limitations can hinder your potential and close the doors to your opportunities. Think about the visually challenged, physically challenged, or those with autism. There was a day they had no chance to excel at anything but look around you and see a lot of exploits from some of them. Self-esteem is a big factor in the manifestation of people's potential. We can always find a way to beat that limitation and manifest our unimagined potential. The legend of Bob Nesta Marley, the King of Reggae sang and said, emancipate yourself from mental slavery; none but ourselves can free our minds.

Self-Granted Second Chance

I got very angry my findings of study insinuated that if I offended someone, my only salvation was in the hands of the person I had offended. If he or she didn't forgive or give me a second chance then, I would be a lost cause. I finally got to understand that you can get yourself out of that bondage and bottomless pit of self-pity, sorrow, misery, anger, frustration, pain, shame, and failure without reference to anyone else. All you need to do is to repent and change your ways.

I now, therefore, invite you to walk the journey through self-awareness, identity, understanding family, parenting, and soaring above storms among others on the menu of second chances that I have for you in this book. Reading this piece of literary work has a chance for your self-assessment and therefore self-awareness. With the support of the powerful tools provided herein, you will be able to reflect and introspect so that you can have a clear picture of yourself. Let us walk through the journey of second chance together. Welcome.

1

THE POWER OF FAMILY

Many people do not know or understand the power therein family. The power of family is summarized as meaning that a majority of the needs of a human person are established, sustained and propagated effectively within the family. You are conceived best in a family set up; raised best within a family set up and empowered the most if you are living within a functional family unit. You are meant to experience the best version of unconditional love, commitment and responsibility within a family set up and when you are grown; the cycle simply repeats itelf with a few reversed roles. The one who was once a baby, toddler, teenater and finally adult; becomes the father in exactly the same cycle while propagating the importance of the family unit. This is the whole essence of life to be experienced within a family set up. Your family becomes your support system and also the best place to exercise your potential and individualism as well as the family identity with loyalty whereby you can not be logically disowned as not belonging to that family. Family is everything.

The reason as to why God established responsibilities within the family set up was to preserve the basic human emotional needs of each person being a fundamental need. A wife is not commanded to respect her husband because it is for her own good but because the fulfillment of a man depends on it. The man is commanded to be a loving husband because the thriving of the woman depends on it. A family is a place of companionship, fellowship, lifting one another, sharing, giving, and receiving from one another. All the emotional needs are to be met within the family. There is no one person expected to give and keep giving withut receiving from other members of the family.

Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12, "Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. [10]. For if they fall, one will lift the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone?"

The first Eden family

Some of the biblical events have long been misunderstood. In Genesis 2 verse 20, there was found no companion from Adam. This companionship is the essence of life between a man and a woman. Modern-day pets are overrated; in some families, the pets are the It and the only thing. The dog and the cats are man's best friends and that is all beautiful. However, in the beginning, it was so, yet the man was not completely fulfilled. When God created Adam, in Genesis chapter 2, he gave him responsibility and pleasure in nature and its animals. Don't we love to go on a safari and see all the animals of the wild? Don't we love nature walks and basking in the sun? Don't we love going on holiday to the coastal cities or mountain hiking? Don't we love the water adventure to swim and play with water? This was the same pleasure that Adam was offered. We are not the first ones to love pets dearly and cherish animals and safari. All that experience wasnt a complete companionship leading to a superior version of companionship with one like him. God created a woman for this very purpose and charged them to multiply and have dominion on earth. For this ecosystem to function properly, there has always been a nede to understand how best to optimize the human experience.

Adam was also supposed to rest to restore the peace of his mind and balance his brain chemicals. The night was meant to offer that rest and reconditioning. Unfortunately, we pride ourselves in a 24-hour economy whose result is a decline in the family unit simply because that is not how God designed it. The charge to be fruitful and multiply was God’s idea for increase and dominion over the earth.

The traditional African family

In the traditional African family, it took a village to raise a child. Every child belonged to the community and there was continuity even when parents died. We had very few if any of the single parent-led families. Parents were heavily involved in the background checks of potential suitors taking away the many mistakes and regrets we bear today long after getting married only to realize that we are paying heavily for things we should have known earlier. Any man or woman could correct and rebuke your child and a stranger would assist your child. The sense of community was enhanced and we hardly had mental health issues because there was an elaborate community support system known as custom which kicked into play the moment one aspect of family broke down. The order of things was predictable and there was more human interaction and a shared sense of community. The loss of a parent or spouse triggered protocols to offer continuity. Some cases fell out of line but the motives were good.

The Old school family

For some of my contemporaries as children, waking up was a splash of cold water, slaps, and shouts from fathers for being late for school or late to go to the farm. Mothers would be pulling off the blanket from their children for waking up late. A few slaps for being late to fetch water, clean the house, or make breakfast. If you were lucky to have a meal, every sip of tea or bite of the food was accompanied by an insult on how your bad behavior resembles that of your father or mother depending on your mistake. Some of the mistakes were extra-time matches and penalties from the previous evening. You would then rush to school having forgotten an item or two because of the crescendo of threats to your life if you were found in that homestead at the count of three. You would forget your book, pen, or some of those funny things which were asked in school such as cow dung and firewood. That was a crime against humanity on the school front. Woe unto you if you exaggerated your crimes by getting to school late on day specific teachers were on duty; especially Math teachers.

The modern family

Just a week ago I visited my son Andes at school. He wondered why on a visiting day; most children were lost in watching tablets during a visiting day rather than enjoying talk time with their parents and siblings. That is a true reflection of our modern times where we call to take out our family and friends for a date and then spent the entire time smiling on social media talking to people who are not in the meeting. Our social skills for the family are weak. We go to bed as couples and spent the time we are awake chatting with people who are miles away rather than finding a common bond with the person right under the same blanket as us. That moment is precious even if you speak through silence.

What is the modern household experience between parents and their children? I challenge you to have an open discussion with your children even if they are grown now. You will be surprised how much of their stories and tales will shock you. Two days ago we had our open talk evening with all gadgets off and our children surprised us with their memories. When we asked our children how much we have improved in the way we handle them; Aden said that the mother had improved a lot. He said he would go to her room to ask for something then the mother would say that whatever he was looking for was on his head. You can be sure that many of us are guilty on this front; the inability to give our children the attention they need when they come to us. Mostly, it is because that is how we were parented while growing up for various reasons. Our instincts are a total reflection of how we were parented. I will leave this at that and challenge you to honestly audit your household situation. What type of parents are you towards your children?

Are you the parents who come home and the children warm up to you or do you make the children wish you got a call from your boss to return to the office for an emergency so they can breathe?

Sharing a meal and coffee with your partner is what triggers the mind to release the feel-happy hormones. Why don't you do it and feel good? Is it that hard to just sit at the same table and eat together? Serving your children or your spouse food, then eating from a different place denies you the precious happy hormones which should make both of you happy. Delicious meals also cause your brain to produce happy hormones. Why don't you double the experience by making and eating delicious meals together?

Dynamics of modern marriages

How do you wake up in the morning as a wife or husband? Is it with a kiss on your forehead or with vigorous shaking around your waist like deworming syrup? Does your wife wake you up with your pet name or by your two names? Does she ask you to come join her for breakfast or does she tell you to go and have breakfast anyway? Do you wake up and realize that your partner is long gone for duty or did you wake up together? How is your romance? Does someone behave like one of my primary school teachers when he was late for school using his bicycle? Does he handle it with care? Is she responsive and in charge or just like a dead cockroach?

The good morning greetings asking, "How was your night?" carries so much value to a person's emotional need of being desired and significant. The hug and embrace, and the kiss on the neck or forehead carry a whole barrel of life breathed into your partner and for yourself as you extract the same energy from your spouse. The admiration, appreciation, validation, and willingness to listen to each other's concerns carry another wholesome package that will add twenty years to your life of happiness. The nudity of your wife is the best gift that boosts the mind and activates the brain of your husband to stimulate happy hormones.

The only factor worth considering is that after your brain has been activated by nudity, good conversations, and good meals, appreciating each other, enjoying some vacations together, and nature drives or nature walks responsibility sets in. Responsibility sets in because your natural brain will want to experience the same pleasure again and again. Without responsibility, every man or woman is likely to fall into this trap of wanting a new attraction or experience to feel the same thrill as what they experienced at first. Not only will your brain register the memory of the pleasure but will require a little more attraction, provocation, or experience to feel the same degree of pleasure. There are only two ways to manage this wisely.

One is to always desire to do better when you can and bring on board a new experience while the other is to rely on the divine enablement of God through the Holy Spirit who gives us contentment and self-control. A new experience means simple things like a new meal, a new holiday destination, a new dress, a new hairstyle, a new way to show affection and passion, or a new attitude in the best interest of your connection. Let me shock you that a new experience also means an old experience. Old is also gold and history repeats itself. Fashion repeats itself. We must stop the frustration that comes with the desire for new explorations when we know that we can revisit our old times and enjoy the experience as well. Old school is new!

There is research available in this book to prove that the brain responds to nudity at the highest possible rate than most other images or information to produce dopamine into the bloodstream causing a feeling of happiness. Women also feel nice looking at their nudity. I have cited and constructively collaborated and found congruence in the topic of pleasure the fact that the self-confidence of both males and females man is boosted when they see nudity but more of males when they see female nudity. This was part of Adam's experience when he saw the woman whom he later named Eve. I am still introducing the family concepts, so kindly stay with me and stay sober. I have explained this subject on the topic better at a later stage because a lack of this understanding and responsibility leads to the prevalence of misunderstood forms of pleasure including, alcohol, pornography, and gambling. The family is crippling because we do not understand the reason we marry and the reason why we birth children. Most of us are playing catch up with situations we should have known, internalized, and prepared for. Marriage is a place where we offer unconditional love. Some of us come in to receive only. We should realize that we are meant to meet each other's needs and not just fronting our needs selfishly. Most of us get into dating and marriage simply because we want to extract value from the other partner without depositing any value willingly and unconditionally. Instead, we carry the attitude of conditional love where we only show affection after someone else makes the first move.

Family is the best place for meeting basic human emotional needs like peace, happiness, fulfillment, acceptance, admiration, and contribution. I grew up seeing our mothers coming home, greeting all the visitors and children except her husband. I have also seen fathers coming back home, greeting everyone else except their wives. You are missing out big time by not hugging your spouse or feeling the love that comes from her hand or cheek or even lips. It is within the family that all forms of affirmation should be experienced whether it is from husband to wife or vice versa.

Parents would complement their children and give them a sense of security and not be the cause of their anxiety and lack of self-confidence. The support systems necessary for life are right there within the family setup. The husband is the support system of the wife and the wife is the support system of the husband. They both are the support system of the children and at some point in life, these roles turn around when parents need more support from their children emotionally and materially. The sense of emotional safety is best practiced in the family unit before it can be exported to the larger community.

All the emotional needs of safety, peace, fulfillment, and happiness can be met within the family if we set the environment right. Our personality development can be just right if we set the environment in our family dynamics right.

Touch and touch starvation

Have you ever heard someone complain, "He never touches me/ she doesn't touch me"? Touch starvation is a big deal in the family unit, it Denys you all the gifts you could get from that simple hug, holding of hands, peck on the forehead, touch on your mustache, shoulders, or chest, or a soft slap or squeeze on the butt. Yes, I said it! When we hug someone, the physical contact releases a bonding hormone called Oxytocin. Oxytocin makes us feel good, warm, and nicely connected with others. Those soft tapping on the back or shoulder means a lot to someone. The problem with most people who were not socialized by love within the family do not have the software of showing affection and thus struggle to offer the touch or even receive from their loved ones.

Their partners are starved of affection; likely to respond to affection if it’s extended to them. Knowing the power of that touch should liberate your mind to start receiving it like medicine even though it tastes sour. Within no time, your brain will embrace and normalize it. According to Dr. Vivienne Lewis, a clinical psychologist at the University of Canberra, humans are "hard-wired to seek out human touch." If your partner is craving to touch you or to be touched, it is a sign that they are unhappy. They may get happy by touching you or by being touched by you. It is even more fulfilling if the touch is mutual as it releases more quantities of the bonding hormone Oxytocin which makes both individuals feel loved and connected. The hormone also induces anti-stress effects and reduces blood pressure. Oxytocin regulates the immune system. Just imagine how you can be healthy and happy because of a simple touch, kiss, or hug.

A person may become touch-starved when they do not receive enough physical or emotional interaction from others. They may crave hugs, handshakes, or even a simple smile from a stranger.

When there is a significant decrease in human interaction, someone might begin to feel isolated or experience symptoms of depression.
Some of the symptoms of being touch starved can include Overwhelming feelings of loneliness and isolation, and experiencing bouts of depression or anxiety. Feeling "stressed out" and under-appreciated. People who don't get their dose of affectionate touch seem less happy, and lonelier and have a higher likelihood of suffering from depression, mood, and anxiety disorders. Staying for long without physical touch or sexual intimacy can also cause adverse health impacts like increased anxiety, depression, and trouble sleeping. Lack of physical intimacy can lead to touch starvation, which can contribute to loneliness, isolation and even compromise your immunity.

Mothers need hugs but fathers come home, greet everyone except their wives, and vice versa. Mothers will mostly express their affection by hugging their children and feel loved by hugging their children. As mothers take in hugs from their children, fathers have very little connection with their children and spend less time with their wives. The unfortunate result will be to seek this excitement from other people far away from the most important people in the family. Children should normalize to hug their parents and grandchildren should normalize to hug their grandparents. It means the whole world to their happiness and well-being.
Grandparents who feel like life has lost meaning can revive their happiness by simply hugging, touching, and holding the hands of their grandchildren. Africa is the only place where people still find more happiness because we greet them by shaking hands. It was a great shock when I visited some of my white friends who opened the door, smiled, and showed me where to sit. It felt awkward that they do not greet by hand or hug it out, no wonder their addiction to pets is on another level. The touch of pets or touch from pets has the same impact on the human brain as the touch and hug from fellow humans.

I am not afraid to say that in Africa, we shake hands and shake firmly. It is a borrowed way of life to receive a friend into your house without shaking their hands and then show them where to sit using your eyes or the direction of your head. In Africa, we greet, hug, pat on the shoulder and hold hands while talking to people we love, respect, or miss. This enhances the touch and adds happiness to the persons sharing touch through greetings. Some cultures have reversed life roles by not greeting or hugging fellow human beings and by so doing, becoming touch starved. It causes them to highly crave touch, without realizing it, thus becoming so much passionate about the touch and hugs of cats and dogs as an alternative touch.

Sex and Marriage

The sexual experience between a man and his wife is the best gift ever in life. The process of flirting, holding hands, kissing, and foreplay signifies so many human blessings that it neutralizes all the stress hormones in the bloodstream by causing the release of happy hormones. This is what lights up your mood. The sexual pleasure does the same and ooh my, when there is an orgasm, the endorphins which are happy hormones are secreted in plenty and the bonding hormone Oxytocin which makes the two of you desire each other and feel connected are secreted in plenty. Madam! Are you about to remind me that you come home tired and stressed? Do you have a headache or do you have a bad mood after a long day? Guess what! The sexual experience if served right is the medicine you need to revive your mood, heal your headache and relieve the physical and emotional tension and stress. Sex! The only reason you may not see it this way is because your husband is yet to realize that your sex means your orgasm, not just the regardless penetration.

The moment the men will stop counting the number of shots based on their moments of ejaculation that is when we will cure this situation. If you count, count yours and count her number of orgasms because that is what will cause this wholesome healing. By the way, orgasms also improve immunity and renew the skin to look younger. Just imagine how much you may have been missing out on yourself. You may be looking much older than your age because you are not allowing yourself to regenerate your skin and allowing someone else to continue looking younger and more attractive to your man.

Self-awareness at the family level is the best gift that can be exported to the workplace, in church, and in the marketplace. The most effective church is one based on an effective family support system. Family is everything and is the backbone of society. An attack on the family is an attack on the whole society. The first institution which God put in place was the family. According to Murray Bowen, an American psychiatrist and professor at Georgetown University, the family systems theory of human behavior defines the family unit as a complex social system in which members interact to influence each other's behavior. Family members interconnect, making it appropriate to view the systems as a whole rather than as individual elements. Murray Bowen was among the pioneers of family therapy.

The power of family is summarized as meaning that a majority of the needs of a human person are established, sustained and propagated effectively within the family. You are conceived best in a family set up; raised best within a family set up and empowered the most if you are living within a functional family unit.

You are meant to experience the best version of unconditional love, commitment and responsibility within a family set up and when you are grown; the cycle simply repeats itelf with a few reversed roles. The one who was once a baby, toddler, teenater and finally adult; becomes the father in exactly the same cycle while propagating the importance of the family unit. This is the whole essence of life to be experienced within a family set up. Your family becomes your support system and also the best place to exercise your potential and individualism as well as the family identity with loyalty whereby you can not be logically disowned as not belonging to that family. Family is everything.

Sibling relationships

The family is the perfect place for children to develop relationships among themselves. Children who are many in a family relate easily with others in school and work setups and also in marriage. They find it easier to negotiate and navigate situations than those who grew up as lone children or two children separated by huge age gaps. Children have a way of learning how to take initiative among themselves and how to internalize the perspectives of their siblings without hating them for being different. Children born and raised in a community of siblings and cousins know how to disagree and mend their disagreements more easily than lone children. Lone children who are exposed to other children in the home front do not have major problems but those who are overly controlled or only relate with adults may tend to struggle to create healthy relationships when they become adults; especially with the opposite sex.

Some may be loud or withdrawn most of the time. Those who are withdrawn, do so as a way of avoiding exposing their low interpersonal skills or fear of rejection. However, some, who are loud, do so in because they are poorly prepared to negotiate for their space and therefore are helpless to the extent they can only state their perspective. An alternative perspective becomes a burden because they were not wired to see life thru multiple perspectives since they were children. The software for the inclusion of ideas was not broad enough.

Last-born children are used to being the center of gravity and attention. They easily become an emotional burden to their husbands or wives when they are suddenly expected to drop the toto and baby/ boyi mentality and learn how to feel complete by themselves. Last-born, men and women, also struggle a lot with the need to express their voices. In most cases, all family decisions are made by the older siblings and they become bystanders in the family equation. As a result, last-born men and women could easily become dormant in the marriage setup or could fight to be heard as a means of compensating for their denied chance to be heard. Every time a husband or wife speaks or questions their idea, they react in a manner to suggest they are being shut down even when that is not the case.

Every single suggestion by the husband or wife will be received as gagging their voice and demeaning their dignity and value in the relationship.

The firstborn women ride well when they marry firstborn men and do not struggle over in-laws because it's their natural instinct to keep the families organized and given direction. Sometimes it's not always the firstborn literally but the person who carries the responsibilities of a firstborn in their family. A firstborn marrying a lastborn is a disaster in the making as this is World War three previews. The held-back woman or man cannot understand why the spouse is always bullying them to rise to occasions they were ill-prepared for. They get tired of being criticized for not getting things right at the first instance and why they did nothing when situations presented themselves.

Children born in polygamy

Children born in polygamous families experience varied realities, some good and some bad. Let me begin with the bad and the ugly. Where there is favoritism, the children who are discriminated against develop jealousy and eventually become hateful toward the favored children. In this case, one of Nelson Mandela's quotes which says, "No child is born hating but is taught to hate "comes alive". A child who didn't know how jealousy and hate gets indoctrinated into the feeling of hate and jealousy too young such that in future dating life; their jealousy, hate, and insecurities as so close to the surface before they are even provoked.

Women who grew up in polygamous families are likely to be jealous and insecure especially if they bore the brunt of discrimination and if they felt their father discriminated against them and their mother. A lot of African polygamous families end up with witchcraft and manipulation to earn more favoritism wanting their children favored in a certain way. Sometimes, they would go to a great extent to achieve that; sometimes resulting in death or malicious traps such as the one recorded about the Wanga kingdom where the younger wife set up the elder son who was the rightful heir to be maliciously found at fault by the father. The father disinherited him of property and the throne and enthroned the younger famous Nabongo Mumia who was a younger child of the younger wife.

Men who grew up in polygamous families embrace it easily and think those who call extramarital affairs cheating just use the wrong word. It is those men who were affected negatively by polygamy who in their inner sense dislike the practice. Men embrace it more because a patriarchal society favors the man as the dominant species and dominion seems to be the natural place for the male species. In some instances, women who have seen polygamy around their families are not surprised when their men become polygamous or cheat.

It is the Christian folk who have a new identity in Christ that may not entirely struggle to keep monogamy as a lifestyle. Some still argue and say that monogamy was a prescription to the pastors, elders, and bishops but we can choose whether we want to pursue the original plan of God and use the arguments of Jesus which say, it was like that from the beginning.

The positive side of polygamy from a standpoint of identity development would be that most children did not have an identity crisis as they grew up under the care of a father who provided and rotected many children at one go. There was less abandonment and neglect by fathers. As much as there was less one-to-one bonding with fathers, monogamous families didn't offer that proximity either even in most present days; where fathers are still physically and emotionally unavailable.

Orphans and children growing up without fathers were less in these family setups since there existed traditions such as wife inheritance to continually offer provision and protection to the orphaned children. I must admit that I have not studied much of the matriarchal culture such as is prevalent in some places like India.
A lot of present-day trauma was not so common in our old days since the community participated in vetting, who was a good wife and who was a good husband. This increased the chances of marriage to more well-behaved and or well-groomed and cultured men and women. This factor alone contributed to the success of marriages and there was a low divorce rates. The community also invested in sustaining the marriages and solving of disputes when they arose.

There were fewer women raising children as single parents and there was more integration and a sense of community in families that were well-led like one of my great grandfathers from Mumias; Hajj. Shibwabo Lukhandia. He ate with all his children under a tree in one central place. Every wife would prepare their meals and had no control over who will eat their food because it was to be eaten by every child. Fairness was upheld and any wife who favored her children over the other wives would be punished. The farm work was equally distributed and all the duties were common responsibility.

2

EARLY LIFE

It is on the morning of 17th January 1980. It is the time a king had announced his arrival at Park Road nursing home, Nairobi. His arrival had been anticipated to be around midday or thereabout as of the previous day, but he didn't arrive on schedule. If this was an airport or train substation arrival, it would have changed signage from ON TIME to DELAYED. This wait continued as the specialists consulted amongst themselves; as to what could have happened to an otherwise normal protocol. At some point, the panic was so palpable that the Heads of the specialized medical services moved much closer to each other and there were more whispers than speeches and more body language than sign language. I saw them anxious while I battled for my life inside my mother's womb still downloading, I wasn't playing; I meant business and I don't like unnecessary delays.

The king's data had been downloaded in part but the bundles weren't sufficient to complete the download as the total bandwidth and bytes were massive. This matter escalated and the consultation now migrated from that of nurses, general physicians, and gynecologists to that of surgeons. Further investigations revealed that the file was so substantially downloaded that it was an unsuccessful download and the file was to be discarded and the disc formatted. Figuratively the doctors had declared that my birth was proving impossible and that the delivery process had progressed so much into the cervix that even a caesarian section could not save me. Plan B was to save the mother. It was that simple from a medical perspective.

The decision to save mother only was made and soon the preparations for the same began; if you know what it means in medical terms to save mother only. It means to do away with the fetus using precise medical procedures and that was to mark the end of my story; never to be told except to say one summary statement "The baby didn't make it". But who is God unto a king he has chosen?

I cheated death on day 1. I was meant to be, and I had a mission to major life accomplishments. It is perhaps a reminiscence of the fact carried in the popular gospel hymn titled, Blessed Assurance written in 1873 by the blind lady Fanny Crosby. These words in the song: Angels descending sent from Above…became a reality on the 17th of January, 1980. God decided to send His angels to nullify the doctor's report and decision. Blessed is a lady called Anna/Hannah. Anna was a cleaner at the hospital and when the doctors and nurses went to prepare for theatre, she made a risky decision to come in and make an unauthorized save for my life. You see when you are in God's plan; Angel's guarding and watching over you are not dressed in fine linen. Most of us have missed our help because we let the angels go past us on account of their image and composure. If my mother was the entitled type, she wouldn't let a cleaner get into the equation. Anna used some ordinary oil as a lubricant and the rest is history as they say. At 4 pm, I was in Hanna's arms but even she wasn't sure whether I was going to make it. I doubt anyone would have taken their wrath on her on my account if I didn't make it unless on account of my mother if we had lost her, but I was already a lost cause to the doctors. Wasn't I?

When the medics returned to the room, to their surprise, a baby was lying there beside the mother and that was me. I was lying in exhaustion and so I didn't cry and my heart rate was low, my temperature was low too. Fast aid was administered and oil was applied around my entire body among other interventions after some time, I cried with a big BASS Voice and they all confirmed the volume was okay. In my city, we say '*volume Ilikuwa sawa*". At 4 PM on the said date, I was declared alive and therefore my official birth time on record.

One of the daily newspapers told my story on day one. I was born to be a famous guy. I was published in the daily of 17th January 1980; and that's where the show stopper belongs, in the headlines, and so it was classified from heaven to belong to the headlines. God is great! A celebration broke out; everyone in the room danced and hugged my mother congratulating her together with Anna.I wonder what the medics felt after my miraculous birth given their judgment moments before my birth. I guess they were just as happy to have seen both mother and baby alive and well. To God be the glory. My life is nothing but a second chance; am grateful for the efforts of the doctors, not to disparage their conclusions and contributions. Keep saving lives and keep serving humanity like only you can. My story and reality might never have been told if Heaven didn't consider that I deserved a second chance. The ordinances of these second chance lives are written all over my life story as you will keep reading along. My mother posits that I was born struggling with sickness and so I was in the care of three selfless individuals: my mother, my sisters Ruth and Emma.

The floppy side of these sick moments is that I was given a lot of attention and affirmation as a sickling child. I felt loved and cared for despite the pain. This attention persisted later in life as these medical complications persisted whereby, I had a chance to test the love of my family. Suffering reveals true love if and when it exists. As much as my sickling nature was painful, I got the assurance of love and care from all my family members. By the time I was between the ages of 2 to 5 years, it was challenging for my mother to cope with her job as a primary school teacher while nursing her ailing little boy. My older siblings were then in boarding school and that compelled my mum to put me in the care of my grandmother, Zaina Nechesa Ramathan. Grandmothers or aged parents give their grandchildren a lot of space and freedom to do things and I guess this was my case too. If *Erik* Homburger *Erikson*'s epigenetic principle is anything to go by, these freedoms would explain why and how a child given such freedoms would become adventurous and confident with self. The principle is well explained in the upcoming paragraphs ahead on identity and personality development.

Research shows that grandmothers are a helping hand as long as their health enables them. In an article published in 2017 by the Palgrave Studies in Disaster Anthropology, the authors Sandor Shrijner and Jeron Smits register the role of grandmothers in the development of children as that of an enabling environment for children to explore their freedoms. My grandmother was big with riddles and stories. She always sang lullabies to me before bedtime. I do not have a lot of other memories around this time except once when we would go with my grandmother to fetch water and wash clothes by the river. She would do laundry while I played by myself and then later bathe me. I was a very curious boy. My mother narrates that my grandmother used to say I was too mature for my age. I used to dedicate to my grandmother a love song, by Issa Juma of the then, Les Wanyika, "*Nakupenda Jenifer*," and would tell her that its music I hear my dad play on our huge and loud radio gramophone.

My story around these ages is summarized by my nursery school teacher as well as my mother. My mother says I used to join the workers in their discussions and challenge all their arguments to an extent they either couldn't rebut my arguments or they were at a loss on how they would effectively respond to a kid of my age. I was too inquisitive. My nursery teacher, Mrs. Mary Namayi Shilenje says, after school, I used to stop by a popular shop owned by a man known as Olwichi. She says that if I found those people bare chest, I would also remove my shirt and join them in their gathering and contribute to their discussions but mostly challenging their conversations with curiosity.

My teacher says I used to go to people's homes and walk in like an adult and would not seek the attention of my fellow kids but the attention of the adult in the home and when I got the attention, you would think it is two adults talking in the home. This is perhaps supported by an article from a website that addresses Developmental psychology under Cliff Notes study guides. Preschoolers usually aged between 2-6 years are adept at functioning on their own and making self-discovery. This reminds me of when my two sons asked their grandfather, whether the cat was male or female. The grandfather advised them to just go and find out by themselves. Grandparents are all the same! That explains my exploratory nature of the then environment around me when I was about 5 years of age. My cognitive development was gaining stability. Given that my elder brothers and sisters were all in boarding school at around this time, I shouldered the responsibility of an elder brother to my two younger siblings during school days and the role changed during school holidays when my older siblings returned from boarding school.

In our rural setting, a kitchen is a whole house designated for cooking and eating, while the main house was for the living room and bedrooms. Whenever my mother served meals for us children to eat from the kitchen, it mattered whether dad was back or not. Whenever mum served us food while dad was already home, I would pick my plate having stew or vegetables and go to eat with my father in the main house. On normal days, when all family members were present, my father would come home when we have all had our dinner but bring me in to eat with him again. On one occasion, he pushed me to eat beyond capacity until I began having abdominal discomfort, which persisted and so we ended up at the local dispensary in the company of my mother. Since my book is a thread of psychology, kindly allow me settle this lesson. My father was doing a subconscious reminiscence between himself and his father who died when my father was only three years of age. My father narrates to me that his father would sit him between his legs and ate with him.

My grandfather loved his son very much because he was born to him after a very long time without a male child. At age 3, he had a tight and hands-on relationship such that his father always carried him around in his big hairy arms as he went along his business. Whenever he went to his butcheries, he always asked his best cook Yebei, to roast soft meat and give to his young son to his fill. He would thereafter make my father sit on his money, then coins. You should see my father's expression as he says how he used to feel nice playing with coins and tossing them around like his toys. "No wonder money loves me," my dad would say. Elders can heal their sense of loss of fatherhood by showing it to their children. Joseph, son of Jacob healed his loss of fatherly when his brothers sold him through the birth of his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh.

The evidence is in the name of his first son, Manasseh meaning, "The lord has made me forget my troubles." Our children can help us heal our past pains if we have the understanding. The second son is born from a place of hope and is named for God making him fruitful in a foreign land. While I was young, my dad would bring his friends home, especially those in his sponsored football club. Dad was president of a football club called Molasses. He was the sponsor and coach-player. I watched him play and score. After the game, all these teammates would come home for a sleepover characterized by roast meat and alcohol. Dad would brag about his son's musical abilities to his friends and call me in to lip sync along to some Luo song.

The guys gave me presents in the form of coins and that's when I knew and believed I could sing well. I cannot explain how I ended up grazing big herds of cattle all by myself at such a young age in the bush given that I was a son of a man with means and we had many people working in our home. One profound memory is my father coming into the thicket with some butchers of Somali origin. They took our fattest bull and when dad returned in the evening, he came with some beef ordering that I should eat the lion's share because I am the one who tends the cattle. That piece of beef was from the bull which had been taken from my herd earlier that day.

As part of the domestic routine, Dad went with us on the family farm and made sure that we had our portions to dig or weed. He made sure that I walked the dogs in the morning, collected dog shit, and that the dogs were well fed. I knew how to chop Napier grass with a chuff cutter, vaccinate our chicken and spray the herds of cattle. I knew how to feed the big number of chickens that he reared, both broilers and layers, and trained me on how to pick up the eggs, spray our kale using insecticides, and knew how to mix the rations properly. Ramathan Akhobwa Nangabo was a loving, and kind grandfather but very tough and firm in his ways. My relationship with him at a personal level to the best of my memory was close.

I recall taking a stroll down the road with this man in a pure white robe, just the two of us. He had his beads which I came to know later were a rosary. During this rare occasion, he held me by the hand for most of the journey. At intervals, he would ask me questions about my parents and about my siblings one at a time, depending on the pace of my response. Recalling the times, I realize that he had a way of connecting the dots and wanting to know what exactly was happening in his daughter's family. He would always eat with me in his expansive dining hall with the translucent roof which let in natural light from the roof. He had a dining area, living area, and several corridors in his expansive house that I may attribute

to the mason that he was. My paternal home and that of my mother are not too far from each other. They are two clans, only separated by a river.

My mother and her father, my grandfather, were very close. I remember being in their company around the Kakamega post office for long hours. They later opened bank accounts for me and my siblings at the Postbank. I witnessed my grandfather discuss and execute community projects such as building or repairing the bridge leading to his home and beyond. Two other outstanding memories are when my father did a bonus dowry payment and sent me to accompany the team of men who took the animal to him. Bonus dowry in my community is when a man has already paid their formal bride price, and you still go ahead to give your father-in-law another cow out of your own will and gratitude. I accompanied this team and that made me the most important guest in this arrangement. I have memories of how my grandfather received me, sat with me to eat at the same table sitting opposite him like we always did and when we were to depart, he gave me a huge red cock and spat on my head saying some nice things whose detail I recall with nostalgia.

I also have a special memory of shuttling secrets between my father, my mother, and my grandfather with once in a while curious interception from my grandmother who also wanted her curiosity to be concealed. On one occasion, my father sent me to deliver some money to Grandpa. He said I should just focus to take to *Kuka (*grandfather*)* and no one else should know my journey across the river Sasala. He instructed me that I should not stop at my grandmother's house but go straight to my grandfather's house. He was a polygamous man and that's how we separated the two homes.

The mission by my dad did not go entirely unnoticed as my grandmother stopped me in my tracks and inquired to know the nature of my visit and why I was passing by her home without salutations. I let the cat out of the bag and proceeded with my journey but not before grandma cautioned me not to let a second cat out of the bag to my grandfather as it would cause the third world war. Mum had previously sent me to also deliver some money to my grandpa and didn't want anyone else to know that I had peddled this high-value transaction. My grandfather would engage me in intelligent conversations and ask me questions such as which between my mother and father was important. I said, they were both important and he gifted me a “patco” sweet. He moved me closer to himself and kissed my head saying I must never forget that they are both important.

He then asked me, whom I would like to resemble when I grow up. I said to my dad and once again he said, you are a good boy who will grow to become a big man like your father.

He would then ask for food to be served, eat with me, and walked with me by the hand as we headed out. We would part at the junction that separates the path to my home and to the town where he was headed. He sent me to tell Dad that he has heard and that if my mother asks where I am coming from, I should say my grandfather sent me to my father saying he has heard. I would reply and say, that will be a wrong answer. He said, as an old man, he was allowed to give wrong answers. I said I am not an old man, and that it would be my answer and not his.

He told me to answer on his behalf so that the answer remains his as an old man, allowed to give wrong answers, then we parted ways I headed home as he headed to town. It is interesting how later my father would send me with a letter to my grandfather and he would immediately sermon his entire family with instructions to go and vote for my father the following morning. These are my memories of friendship with my grandfather. What I have come to establish is that the life one has during early childhood stays with them and forms part of those things they do naturally without much effort. The skills gathered during young age hardly depart from you and that is why the bible says, teach a child the ways of the lord and when he is grown, he shall not depart from them. I see a lot of the ways of my grandfather in my mother and yet I also see a lot of my grandfather and other guardians of my father manifesting in my father, especially the guardians who raised my father after the death of my grandfather. A lot of our early childhood experiences continue to manifest subconsciously in us today whether it was a good experience or a bad experience leading to trauma.

Children who receive love and affection, attention, care, protection, and empathy tend to espouse these values and virtues as they grow up. They find it easy to integrate with others and trust other people. They develop what is called secure attachment.

Childhood is a fundamental stage of a child's life because in this stage, a child begins to shape and structure their life experience. This life experience becomes a reference point on hiw they are likely to interpret future events of life.

My childhood was filled with great memories and experiences but had a major setback when it came to my health. Theprolonged labor delaying the separation of the baby through the cutting of the umblical cord may have a bearing on the persistent stomach problems that would haunt me for many years but this is subject to more definite findings as to whether that was the pivotal bearing of my poor health.
Here is my pictorial as a child.

1) *With our parents and siblings*

2) *With my sister Emma Murunga*

3) *As a young man in class 7 with Mix and match 1993*

4) *With the Family of Mzee Apollo Okumu Ongulu when they came visiting our home. Ongulu is the father of the late George Ongulu Makotsi, Husband to my eldest sister Ruth Murunga Makotsi Our Family: Our parents and siblings.*

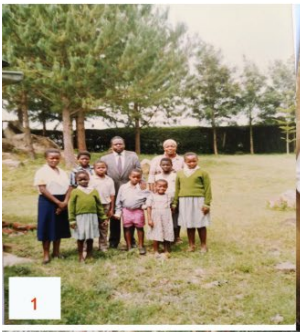
5) *With my Uncle Josphat Indimuli near at Uhuru Park near Serena Hotel in 1993.*

6) *On my father's motobike*

7) *With Makimbo son of former late Sub Chief. Omondi to my left and Shem Okhaso on my right. They both worked for my father. This was my parents wedding day.*

8) *This photo was taken for my post bank savings account*

EARLY LIFE PHOTOS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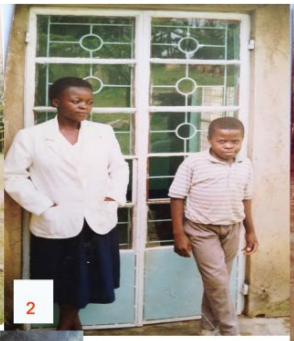
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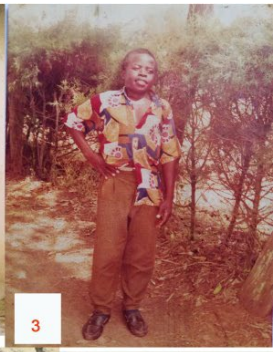
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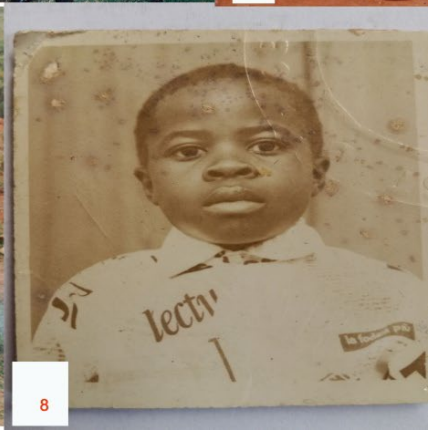
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GROWING UP AND EDUCATION

I grew up in Ingotse village, Kakamega County and I was privileged to have the best parents, my ever present, father Councilor Peter Munala, and my mother Rev. Stella Munala. My father is a farmer, an accountant, a community leader, a church elder, a musician and footballer and Politician whereas my mother is a teacher, a pastor, a farmer, a business woman, a community leader and a humanitarian. Ingotse village is an agricultural zone with a lot of farming activities and today I am also a farmer because of that background.

Primary School

I started school at Eshilakwe Primary at the age of 6 in a nursery. I then moved to class one where I was at the top of my class. When my mother transferred to Bushiri Primary, I also transferred with her while in class two. My father loved education and wanted the best for us all. He grew up as an orphan with the help of many people and when he finally succeeded in life, he made sure that his children had the life he never had. His idea of a good life was children in prestigious boarding schools and he knew how to tick that shopping list for every child. Fees were paid all year round, especially for my elder siblings. Dad was exactly like my grandfather; a party animal who gathered his friends to enjoy life. The highlife sherry alcoholic brand are the bottles which my elder brother and I would clear but not before tasting the content remaining in there.

I recall one occasion when one of my uncles, a younger brother to Dad, now late, brought him his motorbike in the morning. Dad had no idea where the bike was and what happened to it. Has someone stolen our motorbike? He asked me. He had a scar on his forehead and his cheek. The environment in which a child is raised goes a long way to affecting their upbringing because children are good at imitating their elders than they listen to what the elders say. Between the ages of 6 and 10, there was a drastic shift in my life and I almost lost myself in the process had my parents not intervened speedily. As a young boy, peer pressure was high.

My friends introduced me to smoking while I had already gotten introduced to drinking alcohol at home at the age of 8! Just imagine. That was me.

I would buy cigars and hide in the sugar cane plantation where I would smoke while alone just out of curiosity. Also, we had this one worker who could share with us his alcoholic drink to taste. While in school, we would take our lunch break to go have a drink and I had all the necessary money to buy cigars and mandazi. I was the financier of our team of four comrades. On one occasion, my friends took too much alcohol and exposed us. I was fairly sober but I had also tasted. This was at the age of 8 and I was in class three. We were thoroughly punished in school. To make matters worse, my mother was a teacher in that very school. She had to add bonuses to my punishment; I can almost hear this line in Vioja Mahakamani judge's voice! "So that it can be a lesson to you and others who have such behaviors!"

I went home in serious pain but no sooner had I arrived than my father took over the punishment! He let me sleep through the night but when it was morning, I was beaten like the famous West African drums. My legs were bloody everywhere. By bloody I mean bloody, they were bleeding. They made sure ***imekuwa onyo kwangu na kwa wale wote walio na tabia kama hizo*** (it was a lesson to me and all others with such behaviors). I was denied meals and asked to go weed Napier grass all day without food! That was the nature of my father's punishment. I hated myself and hated my parents. By the way, I was drinking out of curiosity. I didn't even enjoy it nor did I get addicted. Peer pressure is real.

A Second Chance to correct my mistakes

A lot of children miss their tangents and lose track of their lives completely after such intoxication and traumatic experiences. I was blessed that my parents did not give up on me but pursued alternatives that would offer me a second chance to reclaim my future. I was offered a second chance to correct my mistakes. I didn't realize that I was being offered a chance to prove myself but my parents extended a hand of grace and mercy to show me love and care despite the embarrassment I had caused them. Parents should love their children unconditionally as they can turn around their situations if granted a second chance.

My Dad decided to take me to boarding school which was a perfect isolation environment from my already polluted environment. My father believed in boarding school that my elder siblings went to boarding schools as early as class two. I, unfortunately, didn't pass my interview. My maternal uncle, Uncle Isaa Mulama, struck a deal with my parents that I change schools and go live with him.

That's how I ended up in Mwitoti primary in class 3 and later on, tried my interviews at St. Peter's Mumias Boys and made it to class 4 the following year. While living with my uncle, he was strict but loving. I straightened up and had absolutely no struggles with my life. I was just a good boy, reformed, and had absolutely no issues throughout the year. The second chance offered to me by my parents in conjunction with my uncle Isaa Mulama was the kind of **second chance where I would correct my past mistakes** and live a life that was devoid of those previously threatening mistakes and failures.

My childhood is full of memories with my dad as he traveled around with me some of the time. When I was at Mwitoti primary school, He would pick me up every weekend together with my cousin Iddi Mulama and return us to Mumias after the weekend bonding. The greatest memories of this season were a lot of love from both my parents as well as my uncle. I do not remember any prejudice from any of them.They did not let past mistakes cloud their utterances toward me. It was evident that all I needed was a second chance. A change of environment from the peer pressure I had experienced before. I also needed the distance from alcohol exposure right within the home front. Surprisingly, I didn't see the wine bottles anymore. The following year, I went back for an interview and this time I passed and joined St. Peters Mumias boy's primary school which was a very prestigious school at the national level. This was yet another **second chance where I corrected my past failure** when I failed my class three interview the previous year. I had now measured up to expectations and passed the class four interviews the following year. It was while in this school between classes 4 and 5 at ages 10 and 11 when I enrolled to participate in the school choir. During these two years, two teachers, Mwalimu Luva and Mwalimu Arnold Owandati introduced me to the world of music and drama respectively. Mr. Owandati introduced me to drama.

By the time I was in class 7, he made me a main actor called Bwana Zuberi. I have no clue how he identified me, and why he cast me in that role. All I know is that I was a main actor in a play that was to feature the following year. I was an outstanding actor but then my dad transferred me to a home school after class 7 and these acting skills would have to wait till a further date.

The kid Pastor

When I was in class 6, I got born again during a home fellowship. This was during the Pentecostal movement in my village and so I got to know Christ by fire. During this time, I set the school a blaze with the gospel. I used to hold fellowship after night preps and pray for the sick with real instant miracles on display. I had mentees whom other students called my disciples. We did exploits for God preaching the gospel, casting out demons, witnessed the sick healed instantly

and also prayed for situations that were back at the homes of students who believed in God for miracles on behalf of their families. I was shocked when three students called me to meet their parents to give thanks at different times because the parents bore the testimony of the answered prayers we held with their children. Some teachers were uncomfortable with my new found faith and my father had to be called in to help the catholic school administration to understand if I was mentally ill.

My dad came and after meeting teachers, explained to me calmly the need to balance my school work and my faith and to obey the school programs. I obliged and moderated myself all through class 7 and used most of my time singing, soccer, acting and competing in running marathon and walking races. One Mr. Fred Okong'o was a born again Christian and always spent time to mentor me. He gave me Christian books to read and sought for space for me to pray during the student assembly. This was a mystery to my predominantly Catholic community for someone to pray anything other than the Lord's Prayer. I would later resurface when I was called upon to pray for a student that was behaving like a mentally ill or demon possessed person in the sick bay. He had received medication without recovery.

The headmistress, Mrs. Ann Odongo, said, "there used to be a pastor in this school" I was called in. I went in to the sick bay and ordered him to calm down. Then I rebuked the evil spirit at once and the student calmed down. He became conscious and went about his class work immediately after that prayer. The headmistress began addressing me as Pastor even if we met along the corridors of the school. I was committed to the word of God and the work of preaching the gospel that I disrupted the school order. This story is captured alongside my ministry thread. The following year, Dad was supporting the entire family to be in school; including my mother who was at the time training in theology at the East African School of Theology. They had also done a wedding and so it was practically impossible to sustain all of us in boarding. Consequently, we all were asked to school to a nearby village school save for my elder brother and sister who were in high school at the time. When I was in class 8 at 14 years of age, I was transferred to Shikoti Mixed primary school together with my other 4 siblings. Looking back, I realize that this decision made for completely different reasons offered me a unique kind of **second chance where I would exploit my untapped potential.**

Except when I was in nursery school, my top-of-the-class academic potential was yet to be tested or exploited. This great, confident, and imaginative kid, smarter than his age, according to my grandparents, was yet to convert that genius to academic performance until I joined Shikoti Mixed Primary School.

I performed well and topped my class and my teachers took notice of me. This top-of-the-class performance also changed my perspective of life and self-image completely. I believed in myself more and thought very well of myself as an achiever. I realized that I could push my potential to great heights and put in the effort to better my grades in all subjects with success. My teachers gave me their best attention just as my father did at home. All my energy was directed to studies and it is around this time that I began to view myself as an academic powerhouse. This impression stuck with me to date that I am intelligent. It only began during this season when my untapped potential was exploited to the brim. We would go out for field days and agricultural trips and I would be right in my element asking questions like, "Isn't it true that if you keep these dairy cows continuously reproducing because of milk, the cow will shorten its life 'span?" I would then become the subject of discussion among the adults. Mr. John Speke Wabuyabo always reminded me that he hoped I would study business in high school. Mwalimu Gabriel Nawade taught Science and Agriculture with passion and Mwalimu Mike Makomere, who was an uncle, always reminded me that family relationship ended at the gate. He was a committed teacher of Mathematics.

My class teacher Mwalimu Otindo made me a group leader and put me in charge of the library. He taught us Geography, History and Civics (GHC) and he was a very strict disciplinarian. Mwalimu Meshack Najoli taught us Kiswahili and I ended up leading my school and the entire Lurambi division in the Kiswahili subject; I was also the top student in my school and the top male student in Lurambi division in 1994 KCPE. Of all the people who have been my mentors, Mwalimu Najoli understood me the most and made the perfect description of what would be my future.

After the results were announced, I never went to the school to pick my results. He brought them to our home complete with the leaving certificate which read, **"*With a lot of academic potentialities, exudes enough confidence, Very Industrious and of good conduct.*"** This single most impressive statement of my life continues to describe me. It just takes a combination of favorable factors to sprout out your full potential.

High School

My high school journey is captured some more in the context of my musical journey and so is my campus life. However, I wish to shed some more light on my leadership experiences, the support systems I benefitted from, the power of affirmation which created a completely new human being in me, and **the second chances I got to relieve missed opportunity** of thriving in drama which I was unable to actualize when my father transferred me form St. peters Mumias boys primary school to Shikoti Mixed primary school.

In Kakamega high school I had a strong support system that was genuinely concerned for my welfare ranging from schoolmates, teachers, support staff, pastors, and my parents. Their impact on my life cannot be gainsaid as you will understand in the topic, the power of support systems. The level of affirmation was at the highest possible level ever enabling me to grow in confidence and completely secure as someone who was loved, cherished, and needed. My gifting and talents were maximized by those who saw them and I was the best possible version of myself. I experienced various forms of second chances at the same time. I had an all-round environment that made it possible for me to exploit both my academic potential as well as my extracurricular activities; thus, unleashing my **untapped versatile potential.** When I finally joined the drama club and ascended to be the chairman of the joint play and traditional dance, drama groups, I fulfilled my **second chance at missed opportunities**. I excelled and won best soloist awards from zonal to national levels in the Kenya national drama festivals. A friend who was with me in Mumias Boys primary school looked over me. He was called Joseph Njoroge and was my dorm prefect in *the Misangos* dormitory. Njoroge was so concerned about my life that he became the elder brother from another mother.

Whereas I stayed late for choir practice, Njoroge wanted me to explain to him why I come late way after others have come back to the dormitories. I doubt that my explanations were good enough because he tried to investigate my claims. I believe I learned a little about my prefecture from Joseph Njoroge. After the main choir comprising 40 to 60 singers was done practicing, the bigger team would be dismissed to go to sleep and that is when the other students would go to the dormitory. It is at this point that Njoroge was asking, why I was not with them, and justifiably so. After the main choir was dismissed, there was what we called the small choir comprising 12 singers who would practice for the songs in that category. After this practice, about 8 or so students who participated in the small choir would be released as the quartet embarked on their practice. The quartet comprised 4 singers. I was in all these categories and also had my tenor solo pieces.

Sometimes we held lengthy leadership meetings after the practices were over. I can just imagine what Joseph was thinking as a house prefect who saw me come in more than two hours after other choir members came to sleep. As much as Joseph gave me the benefit of the doubt for being a class prefect, he kept checking on me and making sure that I wasn't getting influenced negatively. On the other hand, my fellow choir leaders who had become my closest influencers were gracious to escort me to my hostel way into the night between 11 pm and midnight. We were the most disciplined team you could ever imagine given our patron was the deputy principal who was also the patron of the Christian union.

The company you keep matters a lot in your conduct as it shapes your identity in part. On one occasion, Joseph saw me in the company of a guy who was a senior prefect. Joseph warned me to stay away from him. He was so stern that I didn't understand what the fuss was all about given he was a senior prefect. On this one, I thought he was being unnecessarily controlling until the guy once tried to kiss me while I was drawing water by the taps of my hostel. It was in this instance that I understood why Njoroge didn't want me near the fellow at all. I never mentioned the incident to him or anyone else for fear that the incident might have been misinterpreted. After all, it would be my word against his. I just let the matter slide and stayed away from the dude who obliged my departure without following up on me. This should tell you having a good peer support system is valuable for one to thrive amid the challenges of life. I grew up to be a reliable leader in school with most teachers having a soft spot for me depending on how we related in class and outside the classroom. My favorite teacher was Mr. Oliver Minishi who taught me physics as well as drama. He ensured that we woke up as early as 4 am to cover our lessons ahead of time. Whereas it was assumed that being in drama would make you chase your class work, we were ahead of our syllabus in physics all the time, our tag was "*crucial men*" thanks to Mwalimu Minishi.

Leadership

I had a very delicate life as a leader in high school with some notable incidences in which I look back and realize that there is nothing I would do differently under similar circumstances. My leadership skills were honed right here in the African government school Kakamega. I also experienced one of the lowest moments of my life in high school and became lonely and discouraged. I learned the art of politics in school as much as some of the antics backfired on me and left me with an egg on my face. I know what it meant to be a sacrificial lamb for the greater good of the entire society and what it meant to make hard political decisions to diffuse tension in the school environment Looking back I would say it was my first experience with depression. I even had suicidal thoughts. I had both good and bad moments throughout high school. The prefect's board was part of my support system.

Prefect on suspension

One day a set of prefects went around the classes enforcing different school rules. Indeed, corporal punishment was widely practiced by the prefects and teachers at the time. This is one area that my principal was very particular about. He did not believe in corporal punishment yet the deputy principal practiced it, so we were right in between depending on the situation at hand.

This was an inherited culture among the prefects and probably the only way we had observed since inception how to instill obedience to the rule of law. The principal was so committed to eradicating this bad culture in subsequent years.

A few years after we left, he suspended the entire prefect's board to inculcate this new paradigm of thinking among the prefects. On this particular day, as the prefects enforced school rules; one specific guy who would later inherit my office punished a student enthusiastically and the student bled after a slap landed awkwardly. There was uproar in school because of that. The result was that the principal took bold decisions to silence the noise and tensions. I was suspended for two weeks as one of the prefects who appeared high-handed even though I was not involved in this incident. The prefects involved were also suspended for two weeks.

A statement needed to be made to calm the student population and I was the face of law and order. I was the “John Michuki” or Dr. Fred Matiangi of my time and when I said a certain direction was overdue, we would all catch up and arrive on time. Hon. Michuki is a late powerful cabinet minister who streamlined the notorious matatu and security sectors respectively at different times in his tenure in those respective ministerial dockets in Kenya while Dr. Fred Matiang’I is a former powerful education and internal security cabinet secretary who streamlined the respective ministries with distinction.

When I was suspended, no explanation was given to me. I was not even given any letter or leave-out sheet to leave school. The chief principal, Mr. Stanley Ashitiva just sent me like a messenger to go call my father but stay at home until my father comes back home. I had no idea that this was suspended because I wasn't a part of the incident. It is my father who was given the explanations as to why I was home for two weeks to allow the situation in school calms down. My father was told that I was a great asset to the school and that the move was in my best interest to protect me from any possible harm now that the students were restless. My dad was told that I was not even involved in the incident but the optics needed to show the students that there is a shift in how business is conducted in school and those of us who were thought to be the face of that style of leadership had to be sacrificed so that the school could be saved. These were real political moments.

After two weeks, I returned to school and went about my life as usual. I lied low and within a month or so there was the selection for the next set of prefect's board. At first, I didn’t feel interested after the suspension but I pulled myself together and applied to be the head prefect. I was interviewed and recall the singular question that the principal asked me about my views on corporal punishment.

I explained that my view was not important but the culture which is acceptable in the school. He then went ahead and explained what the position of the Kenyan law was and the fact that it is him with the overall responsibility even when prefects or teachers misapply themselves on that front. I was appointed the deputy head prefect and life went on. I would say that the principal intended to teach me a great lesson on how to be a good leader who is inspirational and not using force. Sometimes we take longer to internalize some lessons but we eventually get to implement the values and lessons learned as we progress in life. **Second chances are an opportunity to correct our errors**, to apply ourselves correctly when offered a chance to grow and correct our mistakes. It was possible to dismiss me and the other prefects because we misjudged student-to-student disciplinary situations but not Mr. Ashitriva.Instead, the chief principal preferred to correct what was wrong in our actions but uphold his belief in our ability to lead. The prefect who was suspended together with me ended up succeeding me after I had fully served my term. That should tell you that second chances can help improve someone who needs to attain growth and improve thru learning good practices and unlearning bad habits.

Betrayal

While I was on suspension, my roommate and immediate follower in rank, who was the secretary to the prefect's board, or number 3 as we were called, moved from the room we shared with him to go stay with the head student in a his room. I was the deputy head prefect. We were called Numbers: 1, 2, and 3 respectively as our titles. This was what I call abandoning a wounded soldier. How does your roommate abandon you in your hour of tribulation? This opened a new chapter of mistrust that would endure for a long time causing more unpleasant moments later during our tenure. Upon my return, Number One and Number 3 suddenly called me to a meeting and had so much to address about my leadership.

I was astonished to hear my former roommate who had never mentioned anything along those lines had quite a mouthful to say about me. I am not saying this with regard to the two, but how I felt at the time. I felt a conspiracy had been hatched against me. I felt cornered and had no choice but to lie low in a vote in which I had already lost 1 against 2. I conceded to be bound by our collective approach to leading the school affairs where each detail had to be discussed before an action was made and we worked coherently after. The only disturbing part about this whole episode was the timing which made me feel manipulated and taken advantage of at a time I was a sacrificial lamb for the prefect's board.

As a fallen soldier, I felt shot by my teammates while wreathing in pain. This memory would remain recorded as the height of feeling betrayed at the time I was carrying our collective cross.

I developed a form of disdain for the two but moved on with school life and school duties as usual. Without specifically thinking through it, I felt I couldn't count on the two to cover my back if I was low and down.I will highlight a few of the tough leadership situations of my time when I was a prefect. I had great moments as a prefect; tough moments where I defused threatening situations but also had some moments which left me with an egg on my face.

Attempted mob justice

On one occasion, I found a crowd setting itself up for mob justice towards a gay student at night. This was so abominable because, if the other schools got wind of it, that tag would be painted on the entire school. Whenever we went to festivals and competitions such as soccer, hockey, basketball, drama, music, or science congress, we would be labeled, homosexuals, something which was unbearable for our context.

When I reached the scene, I quickly eased the tension by asking the students not to take the law into their hands. I decided to take the concerned student to the principal's house. The mob accompanied me till we got there. The principal, Mr. Ashitiva seemed to already know what the problem was and asked the students to go and rest while he handled the matter. I went back to the dorms with the students and since it was my responsibility as the deputy head prefect to ensure order, I asked the students to go to bed. I followed up to make sure that all students were in their hostels. The following morning, the principal came with the student to the assembly and that is when things started to go wrong. I don't know how wise his choice was, but it backfired on him. I wished he took matters into his own hands and spoke his mind on the issue; instead, of letting the student explain himself to the entire school population at a time he was the object of aggression. The principal said he wanted to explain something to us but before he did, he invited Steve, not his real name, to address the rest of the students When Steve was invited to explain himself, he revealed what would be the compassionate hand of a father in the principal.

He must have learned his psychology from a different source other than where all the others learned theirs. He revealed the fact that the principal believed this student could be helped and that his behavior could be corrected. We were looking at a second chance situation. Steve explained his dysfunctional family upbringing and how the same problem had happened in his former school, where the principal advised the father to take his son for counseling and that he would admit him to his new school where he can have a fresh start. On the flip side, all these narrations went south and so fast. The students just walked away; after all, they were walking away from a fellow student.

Nobody remembered that it was the principal's session and he had only taken a back seat to allow the student to explain himself before he gives directions. We all don't know what he would have said in the end or how it would have turned out had he spoken without asking Steve to speak. The students revolted; walking out on the principal and rather than go to their classes, the form fours in particular stood in small gatherings around the boarding section. This was a very uncomfortable situation for me as I watched teachers just walk back to the staffroom. The principal also walked away helplessly. The school was thrown into panic mode with no one knowing what to do and how to do it if anything.

Many emotions ran through my mind and heart. I imagined the possibility of students picketing and demonstrating against the issue of homosexuality. Since that was in total defiance to the principal, I thought about what else could have happened. The other risk was the possibility of the enraged students taking the matter into their hands like had been the previous night and doing harm to Steve. This could have led to school closure, threats to life, destruction of school property, and disruptions. The next center to hold was meant to be the head prefect. The head prefect or his deputy wielded so many powers as to determine the direction of the school under any circumstances. I chose to go talk to the students. I asked them to tell me their expectations and promised to address them.

I told them to go back to class and that I will address them at the prefects square during the tea break to confirm my assertions. The form four students agreed to go back to class. I walked to the principal's office. The principal already asked Steve to leave school immediately before any student could harm him. That made my work easier because I quickly went back to the form four classes, sought the permission of the teachers who were already teaching, and announced that the student had left the school compound and that we can go back to our regular school routines without hesitation whatsoever. I had fulfilled my promise and life would move on smoothly after this event.

I do not know what to say about the merits of this **second chance offered to Steve to correct his behavior** given the outcome that induced other students into the same gay behavior but you can see the handwriting of the principal as offering a second chance to a student who had a difficult upbringing which included the father sending him and the mother packing form their house. Steve had other great talents in which he excelled. This would contribute to his self-esteem and recover his academic performance. Steve would end up excelling in his talents and is today a successful international instructor in his trade with distinction. I did not support his choices but I am glad I saved his life from a mob justice at the time.

Wrong judgment

On one occasion, we got our intelligence right that some students had the habit of gathering in one of the isolated hostel bathrooms and were suspected to be propagating gay activities. We executed this strategy with the Head prefect and almost caught them but they ran faster than we could catch them. We got a hold of a T-shirt they had laid on the floor as they went about their forbidden business. My view was that we quietly seek further nexus which would lead us to link someone with the act and verify our facts. Instead, my Head student chose a different approach which I obliged to. We displayed the T-shirt in all classes that very evening and the following morning asked if anyone knew the owner of that T-shirt. Within no time, there was a name flying around the entire school as to who was the owner of the T-shirt. Most people believed this and that individual's character was assassinated as a homosexual.

Two months after we made this incident, I heard a narration that was suspect and contextual to the events of that day. I quickly asked some provocative questions and was able to connect dots linking this narration to the events of that night raid, two months earlier. I made friends with the student and gave him my ear some more and surprised myself when I got a confession from a member of the traditional dance group, which I was leading. He was indeed the owner of the T-shirt. He recounted what had happened on that day and who else was involved. This was very far from the perception we had created when we carried out the raid and soiled someone's name. He confessed and confirmed the event to be a true account of what happened between him and two other students. It was very painful for me, considering how the other student was branded after this event.

I once saw him in the streets of Nairobi after school and felt very guilty about that incident that I didn't even greet him. When he sent me a friend request on Facebook many years later, I was ashamed to accept it. I ended up forgiving myself though. We have since reconciled ourselves as former prefects to that fact as a lesson in life. With this knowledge of my leadership mistakes, I would do better given a second chance to handle similar situations or situations which require more fact-finding before committing one's tongue and possibly ruining another person's reputation.

An egg on the face

You are the deputy president of the Republic of Kenya and you see your leader, the president coming out of his office with the opposition leader in the famous handshake of March 9th, 2018. They suddenly have a shared agenda to which you are a stranger. This was exactly my case in a high school format.

One day I was seated in my class and a meeting was called by the Head student for all form four students to attend a consultative meeting in the lecture theatre. The meeting intended to strategize on how to raise various grievances within the school during the Parents' Day that was to take place the following morning. None of these grievances had ever been raised in any of our meetings as form fours or as prefects. The champion of this meeting was the Head boy and that beat my understanding on two fronts. We had a students' council whose exact mandate was to raise such issues, including checkmating the prefects with the welfare of the students in mind.

The student council was the official opposition in the school while prefects were seen as the executive. We never saw matters from the same perspective. This cooperation was unusual to me. Why was the president of the executive in bed with the opposition and championing the prerogatives of the opposition? Why didn't he raise these issues with the principal or the deputy principal who was the patron of the Christian union which was an arbiter? I was the Deputy Head prefect and it beat logic that my Head prefect and the secretary to the board who was third in the ranking were reading from the same script and so they were to be cheerleaders to confront and embarrass the principal the following day before parents. Why was I not aware? The level of emotions and arguments projected in the lecture theatre was such that this had been an ongoing strategy discussed at various levels begging the question of when was my turn for congruence. The emotions of my suspension and the events after whereby I was isolated by the duo came fresh to haunt me.

I did not utter a single word at this lecture theatre but I was at a loss with the turn of events. My conscience couldn't allow me to sleep in peace with an embarrassment of this magnitude looming. I thought I should do something about it. I went to bed to disguise my roommate who was also a prefect and at about 1 AM in the wee hour, I found my way to the principal's house to brief him. Before this incident, it is worth noting that the principal used to invite me for sit-downs to brief him on the state of the school. The state of the school included all aspects ranging from student welfare to teaching and academic issues to dining and boarding issues and to non-teaching issues which directly affected the welfare of the students. He would ask specific questions and seek practical solutions to existing challenges.

To my surprise, most times, the principal would implement my suggestions to the last detail. The relationship I had with the principal did not permit me to be silent on this matter. When the parents arrived at 7 AM, I feel that the principal overreacted; a reaction that would later punish me.

I expected him to prepare for a rebuttal to the students' claims or make peace with the students, something he was very good at, in good time before his parents arrive but not overreact as he did. I wish he asked me for suggestions like he mostly did. Instead, he came to the assembly and addressed his disappointment with the students' plan, then returned to his office and when the parents arrived, he instructed that they be guided to come and talk to us directly. Looking back, I regretted the risk I had taken the previous night. Anyways, difficult situations have no easy solutions. The parents organized themselves and called upon us to join them in the assembly hall and shed light on what was happening. The student council leader, Samwel Mutangili began making his presentation on the student grievances like he should have been the one propagating it anyway. My boss was very quiet; he never said a single word in this meeting. However, something happened midway through the presentation of Samwel.

He broke down and began crying. To this date, I do not know what hit him so hard that he became emotional. Was it fear of victimization; was the student's situation that bad that he empathized? I still can't fathom whether it hit him that he was carrying the weight of a matter beyond him or that it was something personal. When he could speak no more, I expected that the Head student who was the cheerleader of this campaign would take up the mantle, but nobody at all offered to step in. The students needed not look any further for one of the most eloquent and articulate fellows. When someone called me out, refusing to present, would betray me as the person who briefed the principal; so, I presented to remove my name from the potential list. I thought no one would suspect that I was the one who gave the classified principal intelligence. This camouflage wouldn't last a day though.

A night guard who woke up the principal when I went there the previous night would later inquire from the secretary to the prefects' board as to what exactly was the problem in the school which prompted number two, as I was referred to, to go meet the principal at night. As a guard, if something was wrong in the school, their necks would be on the line.

Remember the reviews of the head prefects would keep your job as support staff or make you lose it. The watchman must have panicked and decided to find out whether his job was safe and conducted his follow-up inquiries. Within a short time, the cat was cast out of the bag. I was branded the traitor. This result was not surprising but hypocritical because I made that speech after the students requested that I take up the task. It was impossible to reconcile these happenings. I was exposed and greatly shamed. The form four students decided to punish me for it, as no one would understand things from my perspective.

Nothing could explain what had just happened. What was there to explain anyway? I was punished by the students who must have had a genius for a strategist. They chose isolationist politics and it worked perfectly for my mental wellness. I would walk into a class and as soon as I sit down, all the students would walk out and say they can't sit with a traitor in the same room. One day, I was just performing my routine checks as deputy head prefect and when I got to a form four class, they all walked out and then returned after I left the class. The only class that couldn't execute this strategy was my stream because they would have nowhere else to go, now that I was a permanent member of the class. Being the Deputy Head student, I had my private room in the Sejero dormitory. Out of this scenario, my roommate, using the same reasons, moved out to occupy a different room in another hostel.

On a different day, I was watching football with one of my teachers, Mr. Isaac Mukavale. A classmate called Francis Oseso was called by him. While the two were talking, the isolationist students thought Oseso was keeping me company against the strategy to isolate me and started shouting his name until he left our company immediately. I was isolated as my punishment and this got to my head hard. I was lonely, sad, sorrowful, and ashamed of myself for the hypocrisy of that incident. It indeed was one of my lowest moments of high school because I gradually became lonely and discouraged. Looking back, I would say it was my first experience with depression. It led to me accommodating suicidal thoughts. Falling out with the Head student and my roommate was a major blow to me because the prefects' board was part of my support system; we had cordial working relations and mutual respect.

In my heart of hearts wasn't guilty of any wrongdoing except that I was in an awkward situation that needed to be redeemed. I needed to redeem myself from shame. I had lost valuable relationships and needed a second chance to redeem the friendships and make it possible to work together again. I was very clear that I had not made mistakes but I was hurting and boiling in anger and needed to accord myself a second chance for my own sake. I needed my life back; to thrive and be peaceful within myself again. Having mentors such as teachers you can rely on came in handy for me. I wrote to the guiding and counseling master who must have involved a few other teachers on the issue because two teachers spoke to me about it. They encouraged me and advised that I dismiss that and move on with life.

One night, I sought my Head student, our secretary to the prefects' board, and my former roommate to bring closure to the battle of the moment. I apologized for the misunderstandings and explained that all was not well with me; and asked the Head Student who was also the Christian union leader to pray for me.

I believe when I asked him to pray for me, he was wise and effective enough to use his mantle as a Christian union leader to help restore our relationship as friends and coworkers. We buried the hatchet and forgave each other and that was how I resolved that conflict. We would rebuild the relationships and complete our term of student leadership, having served effectively to the very end as friends who believed in each other.

Drama festivals

In 1997 we weren't lucky as the traditional dance fraternity at my Kakamega high school, after failing to win at the provincial schools and colleges drama festival, where our dance was silenced. I was depressed beyond consolation. The drama club patron Mr. George Litswa sent Madam Deborah Odenyi to come and console me on the school bus because he understood my sense of loss but that wasn't enough to heal my sense of loss. I know where we went wrong. As the best dance troupe of 1996, at the national drama festivals level in the country, we were sought after much of that year and traveled to many places including Moi University, the Nakuru Theatre, and the Kenya national theatre for performances. One day, we were hired as a traditional dance group for a private wedding of one Colonel Okanga.

For our troubles, it was a paid trip and there were bonuses including from the likes of the former Chairman of the teachers' union John Katumanga, and the politician Mr. Cyrus Jirongo, who put in some cash incentives. When this event was over the students felt they deserved better remuneration and when they remotely raised the issue, all our teachers were short-tempered and spoke without thinking about the implications of the words they used. The students decided to show them that we were collectively responsible for the glory and they decided to bury the glory intentionally as a means of punishing the teachers. They dispersed never to return to camp for rehearsals.

We always began our drama rehearsals as early as the third term of the previous year. We did not report to camp, all of 1996, the year of our glory and departure of our unity of purpose. I never shared this postmortem feedback because I was still mad at my teachers and just didn't know how to navigate that given my undivided loyalty and respect for authority. Furthermore, the teachers also joined in the public display of annoyance and left us to grow up. Much later, the teachers realized how serious this had become but it was too late to redeem the situation, so they watched helplessly. We later converged at the beginning of the New Year, working overdrive but we didn't have the magical touch we previously had.

When Mr. George Litswa, my dance teacher says, later in this text, that the dance of 1996 was largely successful because of me; I believe that this assertion should count more for the 1998 dance than it does in the 1996 performance. I will explain. When the students refused to train in 1997, I pleaded with them and they agreed to resume camp. We began training but it was not good enough to take us to the national festival. We lost at the provincial fete at Chavakali high school. Mr. Litwa put in his best effort by hiring some instructors to teach us new songs but we knew that our fate hung in the balance.

When we lost, I was not disappointed with the adjudication but with our last-minute pressure and events leading to our stagnation. I should warn you that "do not try this at school" because it was a bad example in a school environment but it did happen. It is worth noting that I couldn't make it to the national drama competitions to defend my best soloist award in 1997 because our dance failed at the provincial level. It was like Christiano Ronaldo losing his quest to be recognized as the greatest of all time football players the moment his Portuguese team couldn't advance to the semifinals. This loss in 1997 became personal. A second chance presented itself in 1998 and I took it to correct all the mistakes of 1997. I took the trajectory of the dance group into my hands. I worked up the team using my influence as the team leader and using my position as a prefect to instill discipline among our members.

It was a combination of inspiration and strict application of discipline which was mistaken as an extension of my strict character and demeanor as a prefect. There was a section of my team that was happy with the hopes and aspirations which I represented while there was also a section that felt the effort and discipline which was required of them was overstretched. These were the ones who feared that they could lose their spot in the dance group. We had instituted strict rules such that if you fail to attend our practices, then you had to leave the team so we can work with the willing. This was a group that was stuck with the past and wouldn't go past the disappointments of the past. We wanted to move forward and the option was that you either ship out or shape up. I was too given to getting it right at this second chance and I had to make it to the nationals and win back my position as the best soloist in the country. It was mine to lose and I had to prove to the country that I was the very best. I still believe I am the goat (greatest of all time) unless someone shows me who my competition would be in the very category for comparison.

It was too much pressure for some students that they complained to our teachers. When the teachers came, they didn't say what exactly was out of order. Nobody pointed out any mistake on the part of leadership. They just said, "we did not ask the prefects to lead the drama group". I was the leader and prefect being referred to here, but what exactly was my mistake? Being strict?

I just focused on the task ahead. I looked past the teachers and said nothing. I felt that they represented our past failure and loss of 1997. After all, I was the chairman of the dance group since form two. Being a deputy head prefect was a coincidence that found me along the way. I did not give a hoot about the teachers' complaints and pursued the goal without being unnecessarily distracted by criticism from my teachers. I wouldn't let the second chance go without reward. The nationals were the focus and winning was the only mission. By the end of 1997 during the third term, it was clear that we had it right and we were a winning team. We kept pushing our limits till our teachers stopped fighting me and joined us to support our initiatives and guided us accordingly.

The opening song was my own composition, a tune that I have heard other schools replicate many years later. By January, the first term of 1998, the dance crew had picked up with so much zeal that the playgroup called me and requested that I not only lead the dance troupe but also oversee the playgroup. They wanted a piece of that energy and dedication too. The chairman of the team for the play was the late Paul Oyatsi who stepped down from the role of chairman to make this a reality. Other officials of the play were: Dr. Frank Wafula, a lecturer at Strathmore University and Kester Muhanji Director at Aquila East Africa, who was the main actor in the play. He was also our dancer and so I guess he was the emissary here. I was made to chair the entire drama club and within a short time, we were smelling and looking excellent and perfecting our craft. The teachers loved our dedication very much.

The competitions began at the zonal and then district level where we won both competitions. We headed for the provincial-level fete at the Friends School Kamusinga. Given the previous history, I cautiously firewalled excessive controls by our teachers. We were preparing to go on stage, during the provincial event, about an hour away when one of our teachers made some last-minute changes to the flow of our choreography. I was conflicted about how to perceive that. I saw how anxious the team looked and could tell we are in for a bad surprise. This was a *déjà vu* -I had been here before in Chavakali high school the previous year and at the same provincial level. (I have already given a disclaimer that this behavior is not one to be emulated but I have to be truthful in my story.) My second chance at a provincial-level competition was under threat. I burnt with rage but didn't know how to express it. Nonetheless, I exuded enough confidence to overrule the teachers loudly and said with emphasis like only former US president George W Bush, or Kenyan Trade unionist, Francis Atwoli would say, *"We are not changing even a comma or a breather in this dance and so shall it be*!" With the students largely on my side, I could see the relief on their faces.

I instructed that we make one run through of the dance to undo the miscommunication from the teachers, who, as a result, got very disappointed in me. It was expected that they would be disappointed but there was not letting anything teacher-driven initiative to deny us another chance at the national festival again. The teachers deserted us and went into a discussion in some corner to vent among themselves while we were left alone and abandoned to mount the dance stage without any of our teachers nearby. The abandonment by our teachers hit me just before we began our performance. I was almost frozen and lost. Our lead percussionist, Michael Itebete, shouted my name from across the other side of the stage, “Anderson”! He called. One would imagine it was part of the script. Despite that near miss, we poured our hearts and spirits on that stage. We presented a perfect and flawless dance; an entertaining dance.

We won with distinction and that's all that counted. Everything else was inconsequential. The teachers forgot that such a miss had happened and celebrated with us. When we went to the national festival, this attitude of a firewall remained and the teachers got very frustrated with me, considering I was a senior prefect who should have been obedient. They reported the matter to our drama patron Mr. Oliver Minishi. He asked me a rhetorical question while walking away, "Ambindi, why are the teachers complaining about you?" He didn't wait for an answer like he was talking to someone else. I also know he thought it was unlike me but I couldn't explain what was happening to me at the time. Looking back, I realize that I was obsessed with success. I was too possessive of this dance, more than I knew how much I was being controlled by the fear to fail. I wanted to win and the only way I was winning was for my dance to win.

This was like my last world cup ever at the high school level and indeed it was for a fourth-form student doing his last dance. I mourned the loss of 1997 for far too long and this unexplained feeling ended only after we won the 1998 dance and I was awarded the best male soloist. We won! Hadn't we? I won too. When we went back to school, the Deputy principal Mr. Daniel Mbwanga, confronted me about the complaint by my teachers and I explained myself to his satisfaction.

He didn't punish me nor say anything bad to me. He just told me to remember that I was an example to other students. No matter the losses we incur in life, **there is always a second chance in one form or another.** It is worth noting that this was not the last time I would experience a stage in a traditional dance. I would later be the main soloist for the Kenyatta University traditional dance in the year 2001 during the Kenya music festivals; a dance which we won. I also performed a tenor solo piece and won the university category. Before this performance, my High school greatest Sukuti percussionist of all time, Mike Itebete was now in Maseno Univerity and told me to forget it.

He cautioned me of a guy called Obiero with a Vibrato that no one can compete against. For some reason, I brushed him off and invited him for the show of greats. In Liverpool where I was bread, was the title of the solo piece and guess what! Despite the theatrics by this super vibrato getting on stage and seeking attention by asking for the adjudicator to give him their bottle of water, I won! **Second chances always present themselves in life**. We can always improve on our life expectations and redeem our past failures or lost opportunities whenever they present themselves. As much as I didn't receive much support by my father in my music ventures, I still succeeded to perfect his missed opportunities. I am now perfecting the art by supporting my son's music ventures. I currently support Lukenya Boys Choir and Band for their music festivals. My son, the Tall Dark and Handsome Andes is the School Chairman of the Choir.

I navigated my student life and left Kakamega high school a proud and promising you ng man, having attained a B+ and joined Kenyatta University.

1. Enjoying the roses in front of our house
2. With My head prefect Rev. David Njuguna Gichuru
3. With the Board of prefects
4. My Baptism at a place and river called Evihande.
5. With the then Head prefect, Rev. Shadrack Onzago Mangera when I was in form two.
6. With my singing group during the inter class Music competitions
7. Performing in the award-winning dance Matemo during the Nationals Drama festivals at Lenana School.
8. In my Deputy Head Prefects badge
9. Around the electricity workshop
10. In the Deputy Head Prefects residence/My room in Sejero showing off my German dictionary and Electronics text book. I used to fix electrical issues in school once in a while in conjuction with Onzere the school electrician

HIGH SCHOOL PHOTO

Post-High School

After high school, I did farming activities, became a milk vendor, and challenged myself to train Ingotse High School's traditional dance. I used to wake up at 3 am, milked our cows, and then bought that milk from my mother. I also bought milk in bulk from my sister-in-law, Mrs. Dorice Yeswa Ambindi, my uncle Yusuf Nangabo and my grandmother Zaina Ramadhan and then supplied it in Kakamega town in hotels, homes, and shops. By 5 am I was busy supplying milk in Kakamega town in hotels, shops, and homes from Lurambi to Amalemba and return home by 8 am having made a day's profit of a minimum of 300 Kenyan shillings. This was the time around which workers began their farm work. I would take breakfast with the rest of the family and do my farming activities until midday. Later, in the evening I went to Ingotse High School to train them in Traditional dance.

My teacher and trainer in traditional dance, George Litswa had since been transferred to Mukumu Girls and carried his passion with him as the lead trainer in traditional dance. In Kakamega high school, the students were allowed to input their ideas in dance and play. In fact, Mr. Minishi allowed students to improvise on their lines and customize their lines as long as the intended message was not lost. Mr. Litswa missed that collaboration with students and desired to have some of our members involved in his Mukumu dance. When he mentioned his desires to his long-term friend Mr. Oliver Minishi, Minishi told him that he might run into trouble with the school administration being a girls' school if he engaged the names he was suggesting to involve in his programs. He told George that only one man could give him what he was seeking and that was Ambindi. Mwalimu, Litswa embarked on a journey to find me. I agreed to assist him to execute this assignment. I used to travel to his house where we would brainstorm and then go with him to Mukumu Girls for the training sessions. we lost at the district level. I would later move to Nairobi where I worked at the East Africa Industries as a casual laborer.

I worked night shifts and used the day to do other activities. I used the company vehicle to go to work and leave work thus saving on transport. I also ate my meals at work because the company fed us during our shifts. This is a habit I would carry along in my later days as I took split shifts while working at Safaricom to enable me to attend to my other passions like music and church. The only time I worked day shifts was during the 1999 August national population where I worked as an enumerator. We worked at night counting members of households. I would then do my regular job at East Africa Industries in the day. It is during this season in 1999 that I joined the K.A.G, Nairobi Christian Center where I joined the praise and worship team. The late General Superintendent, Bishop Peter Njiri, was the senior pastor.

I also used to lead a singing group that ministered in special services and during offerings. On one occasion, while we were ministering with our Singing team, Bishop Njiri stood up midway and began moving his hands, calling out to the rest of the congregation to rise and sing along with us. We all thought he was chasing us out of the pulpit because he was capable of doing that. The Bishop was dancing and singing aloud under the anointing. I also got involved in church crusades within Bahati and Maringo areas.

On one occasion, the 31st of December 1999 heading into the 1st of 2000, we had a night vigil called "mini kesha" which ended at midnight. While we walked home towards Eastleigh section 3, we were arrested together with my Tanzanian friend. We were held overnight and arraigned at the Makadara court, being charged with loitering, being drunk, and being disorderly the following morning. The church led by their Evangelism pastor, Makori came to bail us out and paid the fine. We then headed straight from police cells to a gospel crusade at Maringo grounds. Our spirits were not dampened. It is also during this time that I made my first attempt to record music in collaboration with a Tanzania friend. The project did not materialize for me after he took all the musical materials called, masters. He left the church never to be seen again. This was a very big setback considering how much I loved music but I did not let this deceit discourage me. I knew **I would one day redeem myself and grant myself a second chance**. It wasn't my mistake, so I had none to correct.

In October 1999, I applied for a sales agent job at the American Life Insurance Company, ALICO. The Agency manager, Mr. Joseph Ikirima said he had specified in the newspaper that he was recruiting ages 22 and above but he loved my confidence at age 19 and recruited me. On my first day in the field, I met one Mr. Daniel Mboi, he was the operations manager at Stanbic Bank and after talking to him he gave me his business card. When I followed up two days later, he gladly told me that he liked the aggressive young man in me. Workplace policies can be a stumbling block to growth. At Alico, one needed to meet a specific target of personal life insurance policies because life policies were their main niche. Before I was confirmed, I couldn't be allowed to sell medical covers and personal accident policies. To close this business deal, I was advised to give the business to a senior agent who would then move the portfolio back to me once I was confirmed. That is the last I was a part of the deal. I kept hope alive that another opportunity will come my way in the future despite my morale being hard hit. I kept working hard and finally met my targets. Despite my confirmation, I had to make the difficult choice of joining campus and letting it all go away in September 2000 when I joined Kenyatta University.

Campus Life

I built strong friendships some of which have endured to date many years after campus life. My friendships ranged from classmates to lecturers, mates in the Christian union, and mates in the Christian union choir who collectively became my friends. I also deepened my relationship with God and strengthened my faith and knowledge of my Christian faith. We shared most courses with my closest friends and took our friendships beyond the class, either into the Christian union or my singing activities. Some notable lecturers had a keen eye for building professional relationships with their students. Professor Romanus Okello for example just liked me and would hold personal talks with me after the class if we were not rushing to another class. He would ask me whether I intend to run for political office in the distant future. Dr. Francis Njogu taught us many subjects in Biochemistry. He was very personable, very friendly, and concerned about the welfare of his students.

We had a small unit of friends such as Bancy Ireri, Irene Mwende, Sammy Mutisya, and Josephine Munala. We studied most of our units in common and we were all born-again Christians taking our activities beyond class into the Christian union. Josephine and I would wake up as early as 5 am and meet in the science complex to hold academic discussions; we would do the same late into the night and discuss all our mutual subjects with dedication and commitment to our studies. We put in the extra hours all the time. We got committed to our teamwork with consistency and we saw the fruits in our grades. Immediately after the first year, I studied during the summer trimester. This was a semester between two respective academic years. If one studied for two trimesters, he or she would reduce their degree programs to three calendar years from four. By the time, my friends returned from the holidays, we were not having all our units in common and our units in common would decrease over time. By the end of the second year, I was to enroll for my second trimester, and by the time we resumed the calendar year, we were an academic year apart from this cohort.

As the party animal I was, I hosted parties in my hostel every so often. I was a good cook and so a number of my friends loved to come and get a piece of the pie, especially Linda Njoki and Dr. Shila Simiyu who were by then my girlfriend close friends. There was a common place where we bought food called KM, but I was never a fan of KM, I can count with the fingers on one of my hands, how many times I ate in that place, despite the cheap food. Being your typical eat-at-home guy, I mostly visited to buy groceries. My university life was also full of turmoil due to sickness which I have discussed in the chapter, soaring above storms. I also had a period of discouragement due to an identity conflict with the Christian union.

Music at the University

Soon after I joined Kenyatta University in the year 2000, the lead technician, Mr. Sam Maweu would announce that those who wished to learn to play musical instruments remain after service and I did. I guess out of us all, I was the only one selected to join the choir, way before the recruitment season, which would happen the following semester. I also assembled a powerful music team at the university called the new creations choir. We had a lot of performances for the Kenyatta University student community, during the Christian union meetings, and further during the union's ministry out of campus. In the initial days, I organized a worship experience on one Saturday evening. After that event, a student came to me and confessed that while we were singing, he got relief from stomach pains instantly while we sang. He had been suffering from stomach Ulcers. He later confirmed this the following semester that since then he has been healed completely.

I also joined the Kenyatta University student choir and the Kenyatta University traditional dance. This decision didn't sit well with the Christian union and I was punished for it by way of suspension from the Christian union. This move immensely affected me because I almost sunk into depression but I sacrificed my membership to accommodate the demands of the Christian union which was a significant part of my support system at the time.

In conflict with the Christian Union

In the first trimester leading to my second academic year, I joined the Kenyatta university choir which was viewed by the Christian union as not the best place to be as a Christian. The Christian union population had an attitude that insinuated that the music sung in any other format other than as sacred songs were sinful because it did not glorify God. I didn't share this belief. I came from a background of Drama festivals and Music festivals. This was familiar water and I did not need any babysitting. I performed my musical roles and then minded my business as an ongoing student. I wonder whether I missed any part of the show while attending my classes and personal studies because I knew of some individuals who were on campus specifically for the music festivals unlike me who was in a full-time study program.

I won the national inter-university category of tenor solo, and our traditional Dance also won. Mention the word traditional dance and the Christian Union would have none of it. Sing a song or play a traditional instrument to a Christian and you will realize how much psychological damage has happened to the African person to believe that being Christ-like means denying your African identity and pursuing a Western cultural identity.

In my defense, presented my certificates of excellence in traditional dance and choir as a soloist in traditional dance and a master performer in solo pieces of the choir all my high school life where I was a born-again Christian. This explains why I only participated once in the Kenya music festivals while in college where I won the best tenor solo and never participated again after this horrifying experience with the Christian union. I got into depression during this time when the Christian union isolated me for this non-Christian behavior of singing what they called immoral music. At this moment, I contemplated quitting the Christian union altogether when someone heard me praying in the chapel as very discouraged and brought it to the attention of a few individuals who encouraged me. One such person was Dr. Ann Muchemi who was the prayer secretary of the Christian union and Eunice Kiche who was the campus staff assigned by the Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS) to our campus.

A second chance would present itself with the emergence of a new leadership of the Christian union. The new leaders reached out to me and encouraged me to serve. The Chairman, Mr. Gaitano Simiyu came to my room and encouraged me to go back to service and that is how I returned to serve in the Christian union choir but never accepted to take up any leadership roles. **A gifted second chance is a situation where someone else goes the mile to offer you a chance to thrive again.** This could be due to mistakes or due to factors beyond your ability to dictate the outcome as it was in this case. I was content with leading my small new creation outfit and remaining within my self-determined pursuit without giving someone else the power to break my spirit when they deemed it fit to do so.

Our identity gets to shape our perspectives and understanding of things. The variance in our perspectives becomes a source of conflict among brethren and that is why Paul writes to the church among the Romans in chapter 8: 13, that your perspective about certain foods may be clean but if by so eating, you cause those who do not have your understanding to become unsettled, then you who has a broader understanding should be the bigger man and silence the debate about food so that the one with the narrower perspective can survive. It is the same rationale that Paul uses when he says in Romans 15: 1. He advices that those who are stronger should bear with the shortcomings of the weaker ones and help build them and not be conceited with our own standards of life. It has remained a big concern to me that the Western identity has forcefully been indoctrinated into most of our beings, that we no longer can celebrate who we are. A lot of our people find it difficult to become Christians because Christianity equals Europeanism and upholding an African identity means being backward, an outcast, and an enemy of godliness. That is the beginning of low self-esteem in many aspects of our personal lives.

It has been laughable or worth mocking to use the tools which our ancestors used with pride such as traditional musical instruments, symbols of authority, fashion and clothes, cooking pots and cutlery, and festivals that united and educated our people. Who we are in Christ is a completely different and crucial matter altogether.

However, in most instances Christianity has been offered to us with a lot of excesses like those foreign loans and grants from development partners and multinationals which come with conditions pronounced nicely like protecting the rights of minorities; when in actual sense it is promoting the activities of minorities more than it is protecting their rights. Western culture has been that forced constant in addition to Christianity and most people have been stuck enduring identity conflict all their lives because of extras and excesses of European culture being forced on the African folk packaged as Christianity. Our debates are not because of the teachings of Christ but to suit the expectations and the perspectives of a different cultural identity at the expense of our own identity. It is primarily for such reasons that we are stuck in such a manner some of us believe we cannot be African and still be Christians and vice versa. The conflicted identity is always fodder for doubt and a lack of confidence in all your life endeavors.

Failed 2003 Graduation

I had enrolled for the summer trimesters so as to finish my studies within three calendar years but due to my health challenges, I began reducing my work load. As such I couldn't graduate in the third year as anticipated. By the time the class of 2003 graduated, I still had three units to study and had to make peace with graduating with the class I joined together with and tame my ambition. I eventually graduated in my fourth calendar and academic year. During my fourth year, I only studied for three units during the first semester of the fourth year and completed my degree program. I had no time for a pity party for this predicament because I knew I could move forward with work or studies using my official letter of completion if I wanted to. I got hired as a teacher of Biology and Chemistry, at Penual high school, served at the deliverance church Kahawa Sukari as a pastoral intern, and also put my entrepreneurial skills to work immediately.

I was running a canteen in the school and a feeding program for the teachers.
I also lived in an own compound house, in Kahawa Sukari and planted kale and tomatoes which I supplied to the neighboring community. My graduation ceremony of December 2012 found me happily married, working, in business, and serving God. Dr. Wang'ombe hosted my graduation ceremony at his house in Kahawa Sukari.

Campus Dating

I met my current wife during my campus days, dated her through the campus season, and later got married soon after college. She also became a wife as soon as she had finished her degree coursework and graduated while happily married. I was walking along the streets with one of my friends, John Nyayemi when I took notice of a tall lady in specks walking alone majestically with her arms wrapped around her chest. She had a white cream overlay dress sitting on a white spaghetti top and a checked skirt. I was concerned that she was all alone by herself. I didn't speak to her but I was indeed attracted to her at first sight and took note of that encounter from a distance.

Susan had a calm demeanor, and soft-spoken but came out as a little shy. I later met Susan in the company of a mutual friend, Joy, after a Christian union meeting where I got introduced to her alongside a few other ladies in the company of Joy. I had already known Joy through my sister, Isabella, whom they fellowshipped in the same church in Kima before Joy joined campus. I would spontaneously spot Susan in the Christian union meetings alongside her friends. One day, I came across her in the company of her friends while heading towards the Nyayo hostels where she stayed. I said hi to the set briefly and left but only her image stuck with me; her face, height, lips, waistline, her hips, and her Coca-Cola figure. She was wearing blue jeans and a white T-shirt.

By coincidence, there was also a specific class that I used to attend within the art zone every Monday morning. In the hour after this class, Susan would also attend her class in a nearby room. As Susan waited to attend her next class, I would see her from my class. I used to strategically sit by the window so I could see her. On my way out, would greet her together with her roommate Linda Njoki who used to attend the very class Susan was attending. One day, I finished the above-said class and went to the chapel to pray; but as usual, I couldn't resist playing the piano. As soon as Susan and her friend Linda finished their class, they came to the chapel too. They didn't pray but instead came straight to me at the piano. We had some ice-breaking talks and got to know more about each other. Linda was the parrot and made it easier to have more conversations. I would ask a few more questions to know more about the two but I particularly wanted to know more about Susan.

Within the discussions, I got to know that Linda was a group leader of a singing group just like I was with my new creation choir. She wanted me to help train their singing group ETC (Eternally tied with Christ); whereas Susan wanted me to teach her how to play piano. We tried a few notes that very day but I guess it was the first and the last attempt; we are waiting for the next lesson until this day.

I got to know that they were both intercessors and that they reach out to some orphans within the neighborhood of the university in their small way in Kahaw West. When I played the keys to test their musical prowess, I was particularly impressed with Susan as much as I was with Linda's singing. Because they needed to win my approval for their, would be training, they belted their voices and hearts out, with all the emotions of an "America got talent standard". Right there, I confirmed my willingness to train them, and in my heart, I knew she was the one. I had found a complete package of a born-again girl, an intercessor, a humanitarian, and a good vocalist.

I began scheming how to get closer to her and recruited my friend Eric to accompany me on my adventures which he obliged. Every time I showed up at their room, Linda would ask that they get a dictionary to be able to handle my kind of English vocabulary during our conversations. Susan used to have a Tuesday class within the science complex. After attending her class, she would mostly pass by my hostel, which was along her path, to greet me. I always made good lunch on Tuesdays. Liver and rice were her favorites. Initially, she didn't like Liver but she couldn't resist mine. By the way, my room had pomp and color. I had some nice lighting of different colors, a full-color TV set, and was very organized with my kitchen and room. On one such Tuesday, Susan realized how restless I was and sought to find out what was wrong with me. I tried to claim all was well but she kept insisting that the writing was all over me; I looked bothered. Since she kept coming at me, I let the cat out of the bag that she was the reason I was restless. Did she bait me? We will never know!

Her response was very simple. "I hope you are not expecting an answer straight away". She said. "It's okay, take your time". I replied. We then ate our liver and rice and called it a day. Time went by as we continued visiting each other but on one specific day, as soon as I got in, Linda left the room. Susan would soon tell me her version of yes that "I have agreed". On this day, that is when I realized how unromantic I was, at least according to Susan. No flower, no ring, no serenade band nor chocolates? "Hey Susan, don't take it too hard on me" I dint come to propose that day, I had just come to visit, so I had nothing planned. I am the one who was surprised here, not the other way around. The day I proposed, that is when I would have serenaded you, but even then, you pulled the cat out of my bag with your loving care and concern that I should not be bothered with anything. When I proposed, you said, I should not expect an answer straight away. So, what romantic move would I have pulled? I gave you the little teddy bear, right?" Susan still begrudges me that she expected me to celebrate her agreeing to date me and be romantic, but instead, I was telling her how I was in it for the long haul and marriage. Asking her to be sure and committed to what she was saying.

I guess I would have failed the test but since she was done - in by saying "I agree!" It was no longer her call to make. The other word or words could only come from me under the circumstances and that is how I won a romanceless proposal. Next time I propose; say “yes lord" on the spot, and experience the magic! Linda came back after Susan walked out of the room and back moments later. They must have had some Pythagoras theory applied to me. Linda was great fun and made sure that we were laughing. Susan was able to understand my vision and calling and adjusted very first to tag along making it easier to love her. I believe I complimented her life in some tiny ways but it's only fair that she be the one to say it. She told me about her family and upbringing in small doses but I was eventually able to hear the whole story and got the whole picture of her life and aspirations. She later introduced me to her immediate family starting with her elder sister Grace and her cousin Milcah both of whom were within Nairobi and we quickly became great friends and confidants. I also introduced Susan to my elder sister Emma and my brother Tony and the friendship flourished both ways.

During the holidays, she would go to work in Uganda at a family friend's business to earn some money. I liked her hard-working spirit and the fact that she was self-driven. While on campus I established two spiritual formations, one of which was, my music outfit called the new creation choir and a missions team that did hospital ministry and school missions. Susan was part of a different all-girls outfit called ETC (Eternally Tied with Christ) and also a part of my missions team. I used to attend and train them during their practices on Linda's invitation. Whenever I set out to hold musical events with my new creation outfit, ETC performed in these events. They also became bold and visible using our shared platforms. I also began the process to record our music album with this New Creations choir, ETC members were an integral part of this endeavor; they came to our event and helped us raise the money.

The hospital ministry was born after battles with sickness. Susan was a part of my hospital ministry with her other friends. We would go for hospital ministry together. We used to encourage and pray for the sick as well as high school missions at the Mary Leakey girls' high school at the invitation of Reverend Chriss Khatela. Rev. Chriss also engaged us at missions at their church in South C Kenya Assemblies of God. I knew that Susan respected authority when we went on a mission in Kisii town with some of my new creation and mission team members to minister at a youth conference organized by Bishop Elisha Odero. I had asked to introduce Susan to my parents. Susan asked me to call her mother and say, I am a team leader to a mission team then inform her that we have closed college but we are going on a mission until a certain date. The dates given included one day to visit my parents.

I was told that my, would be mother- in law, said she didn't hear a word I said, except that Susan will come on a specific date because of my accent on a pay phone booth. Immediately after the mission and some goat roasting with Bishop Elisha Odero, we headed to my parent's home where Susan met both my parents and a few of my siblings. She had regular fights with our turkey because she was wearing a red dress. I also visited her home after a few days but did not disclose to her mother that I was the mission leader who made the mission call a few days earlier. Our love story is best told by Susan's roommate Linda Njoki and her campus best friend DR. Shila Simiyu.

Linda Njoki

"My first time to meet Anderson was during Kenyatta University Christian Union Church service. He was in the praise team. I must say anytime he led in praise and worship it was amazing. Later on, in 2002 he started dating my then-roommate now his wife Susan and we became friends. We had a singing group and he would help us. Anderson is very talented musically. I must say he is very eloquent; from when I met him, I knew him to speak very good English and he never mixed Swahili and English. It was only good English lol. Every time he came to visit my roommate I'd whisper to her to bring the dictionary. He had a great sense of style and humor too. You can say neatness was his weakness. One would wonder if you could live up to his standards and way of doing things. I know Anderson recorded songs before, during, and after campus and I thought he should have pursued a music course." Said Linda Njoki.

Dr. Shila Simiyu

"I knew Anderson through his current wife, Susan, who was a close friend during my time on Campus during our time in Nyayo hostels. "Sue lived in room number 91. Anderson, Susan, and I were also members of the Christian Union at the time, hence I cannot remember whether I met Anderson first through CU or Susan. One thing is certain though, that I knew Anderson better through Susan! Anderson is one person who will work towards his goals. For example, as a campus student, he was focused and never wavered in his pursuit of his campus girlfriend, who is now his wife. He is a fighter-consistent with the first attribute of being focused-he works through challenges and will not be deterred. Anderson is also a 'people-person' and works well with people. I remember him working through his singing during campus with several people on campus. He does not shy away from speaking about what he believes in (take it or leave it) and is a leader with choleric tendencies of leadership. His strengths are that he gets tasks and goals accomplished, due to his focus and determination. He pushes on, even during challenges. I have known of Anderson even after Campus.

I have known him to be a firm believer in the word of God, and this has been consistent. I was happy to see their friendship and relationship culminating in marriage; a testament that he does pursue what he believes in, In this case, the campus relationship was for the long haul, unlike most campus relationships at the time. It's been many years, and we still use the nickname, 'Rival'. Memory fails me because I have been trying to figure out just how that nickname came to be! Memory fails me! But that's Anderson for you." Said Dr. Shila Simiyu. Dr. Simiyu was one of our bridesmaids during our wedding.

Sexual temptations

When I attended my second trimester, Linda and Shila studied during the trimesters but Susan did not. Shila was Susan's confidant and I guess she was charged with the duty to watch over me or was it to support me; either or both. During this trimester, I was not your average student. I had one leg out of campus already. I was renting a servant's quarters in the lecturer's quarter, Tanzania 3. During this time, I had also been integrated as a youth leader at the Jubilee Christian church and this is captured in my ministry journey. Twice I hosted my friends from within the Jubilee youth fraternity but one of the visits became a little complicated for me to handle. So Aggey, not her real name, paid me a courtesy visit on campus with my knowledge and welcome. After hosting her in my room, she did not show signs of leaving and my indirect questioning didn't help matters either. I asked whether she needed help with the bus fare to go back home. A lot of questions ran through my mind. Was she thrown out of her house? If this was the case, then why can't she come straight and say it and let me be the one to decide what to do with the information? I asked myself.

My grandmother taught me well that when dealing with ladies, it's never black and white but you must apply wisdom at any given time, otherwise, a man will never win a case between him and a woman no matter how the case is presented. I chose to go for our praise and worship practice which was ending late in the night about 10 pm. Meanwhile, I left her the padlock to the door and asked her to lock it behind her. I also put a 200 note on my table for her use just in case she was short of bus fare. To my surprise, I came back and found the nice lady comfortably tucked in my bed, her dress hung together with my clothes. She only had a panty on her and it was fairly visible, provocatively so! I want you to understand that this was not in the hostels where there was the presence of other people. I was in the expansive lecturer's quarters in absolute serenity and privacy. The next two houses had no occupants and even the main house whose quarter I lived in had no occupants. If I wanted to go against my values, then this was perfect timing.

I thought to myself that if I failed to negotiate for her exit from my house, then I would have no one to witness in my favor should she create an unfavorable story. My grandmother's wisdom counted the most here. I took my shirt, trouser and blazer and bible then left and spent the night at my friend's room in the Kilimambogo hostel. It was the reverend John Miano Weche, the director of missions at the Navigators now the newly installed chaplain at daystar university. Behind me, I gave a stern instruction that I wanted her to close the door behind her and go away and that I will not entertain any other thing except what I had already said. Initially, I thought it was a bus fare issue, but the setup was very clear that I was in for a sexual trap that night. After I spent the night in Weche's room, we both woke up to our regular assignments at the Sunday Christian Union worship service. Immediately church was over, I saw Aggey walking towards me. I was so astonished at her courage. How dare she be so desperate and persistent? I never understood that situation properly.

She said that she had locked the door as I said, but unfortunately, she locked her purse inside and it contained her vital documents. When I knew how daring this was about to get, I sought Shila's help. I explained to her what was happening, and then I went together with her to my room, disguised as my woman. Shila helped me to end that drama.

I gave the lady a piece of my mind and didn't even allow her to get into the house; I just took her stuff and gave them to her. It is this incident; where Shila disguised as my girlfriend to help me dispose of Aggie that birthed the name "Rival" to mean, my other girlfriend.

Courtship heartbreak

The testing of our love happened after I finished college as Susan was in her final year of studies. One evening I paid her a visit on campus which culminated in an evening walk. As we sat down to talk behind the biochemistry laboratory, I told her my intention to marry her at a specific time. When she agreed, it was clear to me that she was agreeing to marry. When I asked Susan to marry me by the following year immediately after she finishes her studies, she did not say that she wanted to pursue her master's degree first. She didn't say that she would need to settle her mother, or that she needed time to achieve a specific career goal. She said that she wasn't ready to become someone's slave. Slave? Where did that come from? This was new, unexpected, and completely out of character. Right there, every nice thing I had concluded of her, as humble, positively minded, and submissive sublimed in an instant. She was no longer beautiful to my heart. I was calm but firmly clear in my mind that I was in unfamiliar territory and needed to exit. I kept quiet for a while flabbergasted and when I was through with organizing my mental set of facts, I said I wanted to end the relationship.

I promised to keep the friendship though. Susan was very hurt by my decision. I wonder what she expected of me after this declaration she made. It would take many years later when I was a student of psychology to understand what was happening back then. I will explain that shortly. Since Susan had the keys to my house, she came in and returned my teddy bear which I gave her when I proposed and the keys to my house in Kahawa Wendni. She wrote a small note confessing her love but also saying goodbyes after the heartbreak. After a few days of agonizing about the loss of something beautiful that we had built, I resolved that my decision was sound under the circumstance and that I wasn't malicious. I also resolved that I should visit her since I gave that disclaimer, to keep the friendship.

When I visited her, I found her in the company of her two friends Shila and Linda. We had a cordial chat and when I requested to leave, Susan offered to see me off. There was no complaining about anything. The chats felt like nothing wrong had happened between us. This makes me believe that, if aggrieved partners could have an open-door policy whereby their aggrieved partners can be allowed to express themselves when the time is right, we might have fewer heartaches and fewer irreparable relationships. As we walked thru the campus streets, we came to the very same place where we had ended our relationship and sat in the very positions as though a football team playing the extra time after 90 minutes. As we continued with our chit-chat, Susan explained her reasons for her turning down my suggestion. Her reasons this time were different and had nothing to do with what she had said earlier. She said that she needed some time after graduation to achieve certain goals before she gets married. She needed a job to earn money to achieve those goals.

I asked what would become of the situation if she didn't get that job soon after graduation. Does it mean we shall be held hostage by employment? We finally reached a compromise and arrived at an alternative timeline from the original suggestion and solved our misunderstanding. We got back on track and stuck to the plan. I made sure that we have a specific date for it so that we do not have to repeat this kind of discussion ever again. It is noteworthy that God came thru for Susan, and the goal she had anticipated was fulfilled by God's grace and we got married within the timeframe we had agreed. I imagine that **Susan granted herself a second chance** by seeking a chance to explain herself better and see whether the broken relationship could be redeemed. She wanted to correct the wrong thing which she had said and attach meaning to what she actually intended to say. In this instance, I gifted Susan a second chance at our relationship after she sought to be understood. I had the choice to decline but **I offered her a second chance** because I was in love too despite what separated us in the instance.

It was possible to judge Susan wholesale like I did when I ended the relationship but I said to myself that if she finally agreed to marry me, then she will have agreed to defeat the silent voice which made her believe that marriage is a form of slavery. That silent voice is also a worldview of the subconscious mind. Conventional Psychology would describe subconsciousness as existing in the mind but not available to consciousness. It affects thoughts, feelings, and behavior without entering awareness that it is manifesting. I would call that moment with Susan as subconsciousness.

I would argue that the subconscious mind has a worldview of its own formed from the experiences of life since childhood including childhood trauma. Sometimes, this subconscious worldview is constantly in conflict with your awareness (conscious behavior and desires). A child who did not experience their first experience of a family and marriage as a beautiful and fulfilling experience will generate in their subconscious mind a worldview that suggests marriage is not a good thing. If this worldview is supported by other experiences such as witnessing a world where the family doesn't hold together or teachings by teachers, peers, and role models then it becomes a complete worldview in the subconscious mind. This worldview will always project itself and embarrass you by speaking its mind which may sometimes conflict with your conscious worldview.

What I call a conscious worldview is one arrived at based on your conscious understanding of your identity, your life goals and aspirations, cultural or religious beliefs, and your logical perception of yourself and the people around you. A logically reasoned worldview is likely to conflict with the subconscious or unconscious worldview; unconscious being those events and experiences you are not aware that they happened yet shaped your perception of the experience of life. These worldviews will always continue to be in conflict and each will manifest when triggered to express itself.

It is what the apostle Paul explains to us in Romans 7: 23. “But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. From a psychological point of view, Paul is exposing himself to us on how desires to do the things that favor his conscious world view; being his Christian identity and worldview, but he ends up doing the things which are deep-seated in his subconscious worldview; being his sinful and subconscious world view. Verse 24, begs the question, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Paul’s conflict is not in one body over another body but in the two worldviews; each premised on the conscious and subconscious minds.

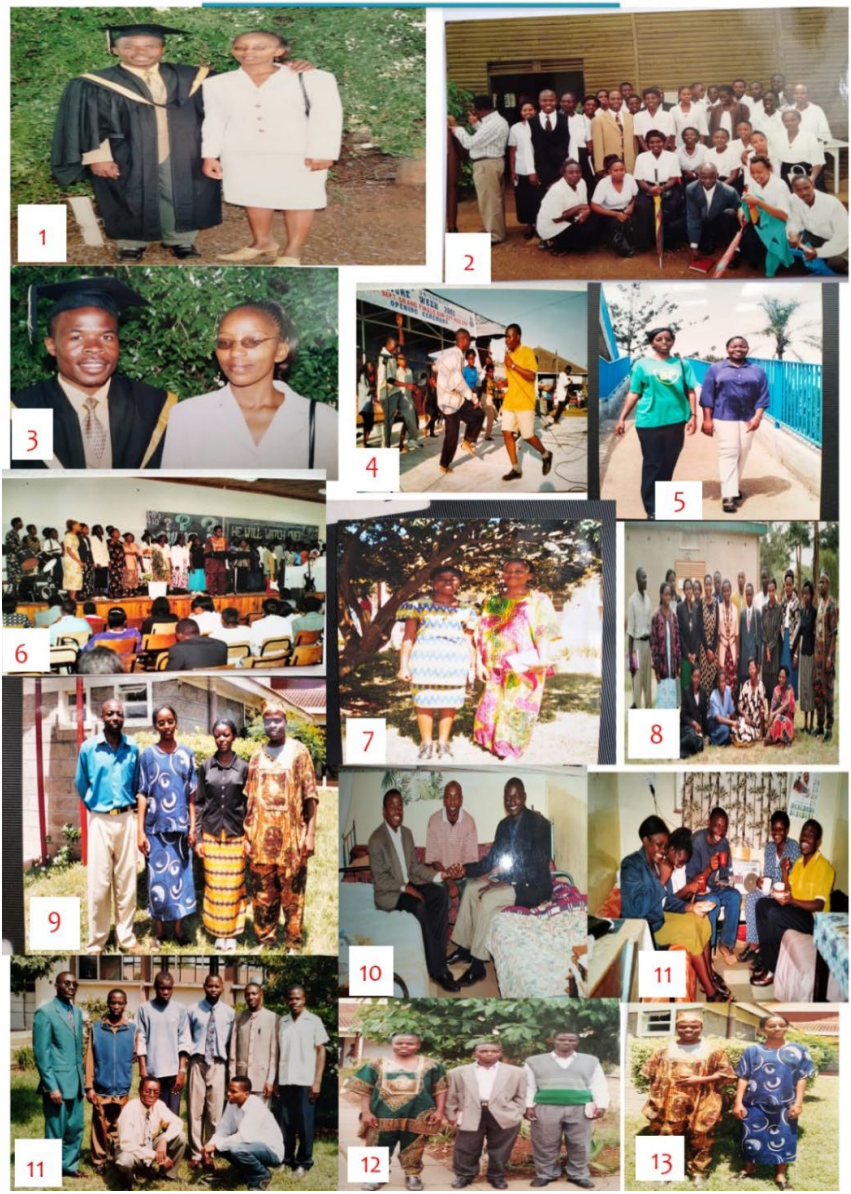
Verse 24, resolves all that for us as Paul says he is a slave to the law of God thanks to our savior Jesus Christ. This means that the finality of our choices will be driven by the overriding identity and therefore overriding worldview. The human will always choose what worldview they wish to override the other. Not choosing in favor of one is making an alternative choice in favor of the other. In the case of Susan, when she chose to get married that conscious worldview superseded the subconscious worldview of what marriage was and what it was meant to be. There are instances when the conflicting world views have been tested again but her choices in the final call are the evidence of which world view won and overrode the other. I have also had my worldviews tested, both my priority Christian worldview and my African world view both being conscious world views. My choices, in the end, point to what my superior worldview is. The Christian African world view.

After Campus, I can summarize and say that immediately after campus; I was called upon to join the Jubilee Cristian Church under Bishop Allan and Kathy Kiuna where I served in the youth Cabinet and founded the youth Choir of the Church. I took up a part-time teaching job at Penuel High School. Later Dr. Wang'ombe approached, the Christian Union at KU seeking an intern. His specifications pointed to my name. After lengthy discussions, I requested to be released at the JCC church and began an internship program at Deliverance Church Kahawa Sukari where I developed my music career as I served in the church through the greater part of 2004, the very year I graduated and got married in a church wedding the following year on August 13th, 2005. During the wedding preparations, I had the full support of my family and friends and my church, Deliverance Church Kahawa Sukari. My in–laws also gave me a great deal of cooperation.

1. With my girlfriend Susan during my graduation
2. With Christian union choir during a missiona at the ridgeways Baptist church
3. Performing a luhya traditional dance at the KU culture week
4. Susan and her campus frined Shila
5. Ministering with the Christian Union; playing keyboard
6. Susan and Linda, her room mate
7. With Christian union choir members during one of the trimesters
8. With Susan, Eric Muleri and Linda Njoki
9. With Eric Muleri and his Room mate Daniel aloka from Lambwe valley
10. With my campus friends Josphine Munala, Emily Massava, Eric Muleri and the late Petronila Osore.

11. With my New Creation Choir members; at the back from right to left is Daniel Mbajo, Isaac Rogito, Ben Wamalwa, estus Ndisya Musyoka, Ben Mwenda, Myself. In front is Dominic Muriuki, and Macarius Mung'angu
12. With my campus friends Peter Okoti then with Susan

CAMPUS LIFE



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FAMILY LIFE, CAREER AND MINISTRY

Early marriage dynamics

The first marriage challenge occurred when Susan was shortlisted and approved for an internship with a non-governmental organization to which she had applied while still a single person. The organization wanted single persons who could be sent to remote places and be productive without being distracted by their family needs such as the need for attention from their husbands, wives, or children. She painfully forewent that chance and was discouraged for a very long time until one lady from the church; deliverance church Kahawa Sukari encouraged her. Mrs. Mwikali Wambua, "I owe you." Mrs. Wambua told her that even raising children is a career and part of the package of a married person and that she should start raising children with pride as she waits for job opportunities. She explained that it had benefits such as growing with your children and we can now feel the benefits thanks to the wisdom of this nice lady, Mrs. Mwikali Wambua. By this time, I was working with a leading Christian Microfinance company. God remembered Susan to get a job where she still works to date at a leading mobile telephone operator in East and Central Africa.

We are now just beginning our 40s and two of our children are now in high school. In this respect, I see a situation where one is gifting self **a second chance while exploiting the unimagined potential.** Susan had not imagined a fulfilling married life in the absence of a job. She was more focused on her employment opportunities and lacked peace and happiness because of the lack of employment. Mrs. Mwikali Wambua assisted her to see the other side of life; Motherhood which she was missing out on. Our first son would be born under these curcumstances and we both enjoyed the gift of parenthood. As they say, Life begins at 40 and we are right at the peak of this life as she has enriched her knowledge with post graduate studies, growing nd studtying alongside our children. Life has many open doors! Sometimes we do not see the open doors because we are so focused on this particular door we think needs to be opened. I have learnt the power of diversity.

When one door doesn't seem ready for use, making the most of any other open door has become my life policy. My mentor Dr. Wang'ombe taught me the power of Open doors.

He said that God speaks through Open doors. Most of the time, open doors are an indication that God has opened that door for your good. When I lost myfrst job, my wife was now working. At some point we had an uncoperating househelp. I asked my wife to focus on work as I took up the role of parenting to take care of our first son. My wife got the peace that she needed to concertrate on her work and this became fulfilling to both of us until when I finally got a new job; a time by which we had a new nanny who had jelled with our son well. We went throu the various cycles of handling finances at different times with varying curcumstances, each presenting its sets of challenges until we finally settled on a model that worked for us. We also went through the cycles of intimacy and its expectations until we finally found our working rhythm.

We went through the cycles of interacting with in-laws; bonding, storming and norming until we found a balance serve us best. We found our spiritual and work life balance and lived happily ever after.

THE STORY OF MY FAMILY

Church Ministry

My church ministry thread can be traced first from my primary school, high school, KAG, Nairobi Christian Center - Bahati, University Christian Union, Jubilee Christian Church in Ngara, and finally my pastoral internship at the deliverance church Kahawa Sukari where the pastoral calling got rooted. Rev. Dr. Peterson Wang'ombe and Deliverance Church Kahawa Sukari defined my worldview of church ministry during my internship at the church in the year 2004. It was a great institutional support system. The program was introduced to me and shepherded by my pastor and mentor, Rev. Dr. Peterson Wang'ombe.

DR. Peterson Wang'ombe

"When I met Anderson, I found him charming, bold, outgoing, and self-confident; probably over-confident and a little adventurous. He came through as a young man who felt capable of fitting the task that I wanted him to do in the church and that was mainly developing music and working with youth for starters." Says Dr. Wang'ombe. "While Anderson was very confident especially in the area of music and at home singing at the pulpit, I knew that he had not gone through any other internship program like what FOCUS, Navigators, Life Ministry, or Trinity Fellowship had. As is usual with internship programs, I was not expecting a polished person. The program was designed for young people who have a passion for some form of ministry or are considering future ministry and were therefore exploring possibilities and seeking to learn how ministry was done.

I wanted to expose Anderson to leadership development in the setting of a local church. I also wanted to see him develop preaching skills as we worked together. While his exposure at Kenyatta University was mainly confined to fellow students, I wanted him to learn social skills that would enable him to work with all ages in a local church but of course, his primary responsibilities were music and developing worship in a local church. This would instill the values of godliness, commitment, respect, empathy and honor for people, integrity in ministry, and determination in life. This would also include leading, taking responsibility, working in teams, and mentoring younger people. The other area that needed development was preaching skills. Singing was excellent but it needed the company of good exegesis and delivery. That combination of music and good preaching was going to make a great youth pastor at Sukari because very few have both." Says Dr. Wang'ombe.

This institution and community prepared me for the ministry I would become a part of many years later. Dr. Wang'ombe particularly encouraged my music dream and kept referring to an author who published a very small book that eventually became a best seller and opened doors for his other books.

His encouragement would pay off after ten years of investing in Music when I was a breakout music star in 2009 with my Hit song "Ugali Sosa." My first recording happened in 1999, a story I have shared in the next volume of this series of second chances with a difference. One thing that I greatly appreciate Dr. Wang'ombe was that he knew my strengths and did everything possible to sustain the strength I carried as my identity rather than seek my conformity or try to get me to do what was not in my purview of strength.

In one of our monthly review meetings with him, He told me, he was getting concerned at my progressive change of personality; trying to fit in. he told me that one thing he loved about me was the ability to do daring things; something he graciously said he cannot do. He still wanted me to light the fires, especially for the youth ministry which needed a vibrancy he didn't think he could offer. "If the fires become wild, then we are here as the elders to quench it but you light it and let it burn. Do not try to be like me as a way of pleasing me because there won't be space for the two of us here. Do not try to fit in." Said Dr. Wang'ombe." Dr. Wang'ombe entrusted me with assisting him in some of his national and international mission assignments such as the Kenya Church survey of 2004 and the African Evangelistic Enterprise international Youth mission. We also hosted the annual mission for the African Evangelistic Enterprise in our church. He brought me along as he conducted student ministry in Universities and Colleges with a lot of valuable lessons along the way.

I have come to realize that we are a product of our experiences. A person who was handled badly by their mentors is likely to repeat the same experiences over to others. On the flip side of it, those who have pleasant experiences are likely to share such experiences with those they mentor. Dr. Wang'ombe told me that when he was feeling restless in ministry and seeking to transition from one of his previous work stations where he served as the communications director, his boss cared so much for him. He was willing to let go of him into his next frontier but didn't want to see him jobless or not properly stationed. He made a few suggestions where there were part-time opportunities. Dr. Wang'ombe took these opportunities while supported by his former employer. It is his former employer who also recommended him to the church organization I served during my internship. The support from his employer, particularly housing was only withdrawn after he moved fully to his new assignment.

It is the same treatment that Dr. Wang'ombe extended to me when I sought to transition from the church. Together with the church council, they made sure that I was comfortable in my transition. My transition was very smooth as I continued to volunteer in some of my ministry roles and continued to assist the church whenever they needed my involvement in certain roles.

In January 2006, I successfully applied for a job at Faulu Kenya and was posted to the Kitengela satellite office under Machakos Branch. I looked for deliverance church and that is how I met the tall dark, and handsome, Bishop Mohammed Kamwaro; a man with a big heart, a man of big faith, a man of exploits, signs, and wonders. He was a strong personality full of energy and vision; a mentor who would throw you into the deep end of the pool so you learn how to swim. Bishop was a spontaneous guy who acts when his instincts arise. We were woven from the same piece of cloth and carved from the same piece of rock making him a great influence to dream big, never give up, and keep moving no matter the obstacles. Bishop Kamwaro was very prophetic as he was apostolic. That very Sunday, I introduced myself to him; Bishop said he had been praying to God to bring him a prophet for the youth ministry. "Who knows if you are the prophet I have been waiting for," he said.

Bishop said, the worship team needed a lot of support and that he will introduce me to the leadership so that we find a working rhythm. When Bishop Kamwaro said so, he meant you get down to business; there were no more pending instructions. Every time I consulted, he told me, "Just do what God will direct you to do. If I need to get involved, I will tell you. Just put your skills to work, put your knees on the ground and keep your heart in the right place." That is how he entrusted me with the youth ministry and worship ministry with a blank cheque. It wasn't as easy to navigate the challenges which existed in both ministries but I had very dedicated support from the patrons of both ministries making it easier to deliver transformation in the ministries. My mantra was simple, get more mature people involved as mentors. I managed to mobilize several elders and couples to own and participate in youth vision and activities. They offered a perfect platform for the mentorship of the younger ones.

This went very well and made work easier for the entire church leadership as the youth became actively engaged in the work of the ministry. With the support of Reverend Paul Arithi of the "Grace Hill Mission church Kitengela." who was the youth patron at the time. Within no time, we had a vibrant youth program. We called ourselves the Eagles ministry. We had morning devotions at 5 am every Wednesday before people went to work and regular workshops over the weekends. We had goat roasting forums involving the elders of the church and the youth for mentorship, retreats, and musical concerts as well as talent shows. We also held evening Dinners and enjoyed every moment we got. We also got integrated with other churches within Kitengela and supported them during their activities. The boss was happy and kept encouraging us to forge forward. The main need in the youth ministry was just motivation and role models.

The worship team had more challenges but not so unique. I had trained worship teams for over a decade and now over twenty years and I have found a pattern that was no exception here. One of the patterns I have come to establish across many worship teams is that the main resource persons such as the music directors who are most gifted as instrumentalists, or lead vocalists, and sometimes both like me, are too preoccupied with self-elevation and self-preservation. They hardly develop new talent or build capacity for the church or even for the next generation. They hardly mentor other leaders who may contribute to church worship. They seem less interested in having a legacy or the legacy of the church. If you asked any of them, whom they were grooming, to become a better worship leader or even a managerial leader of the team, there may be one in a million to show you who their mentees are.

To be a good leader is to nature and develop others. In worse scenarios, you might hear cases where the main musicians of the team go to any length to frustrate anyone else that appears to be gifted like them just to maintain their place of relevance. One evidence of a leadership that is not concerned with building capacity in the church but instead preoccupied with self-serving and self-preservation is a leadership that surrounds itself with only people who have been their very close friends.

Sometimes they may surround themselves with people of their ethnicity to a large extent. I am not singling out the church of the time but I admit that these traits are observable in countless worship teams especially those who do it as a job. We had a sit down with Engineer Bramwel Juma who was the music patron, and pastor John Kamau of Deliverance church Milimani, who was the chairman; and agreed on a way forward. They asked me to lead them into the future and gave me a blank check. We had a lot of issues that I may be hesitant to detail. We dissolved the entire team and asked those who were willing to put in their heart and discipline to apply. A few people fizzled out and a new set applied. We then negotiated our modus operandi and began a journey. We had to keep some of our instruments in the store and reverted to using the keyboard alone.

Whereas we were skeptical about how effective our decisions could affect the future of worship in church, Bishop Kamwaro stood by us and encouraged us to not give up on our labor of service to God. Within no time, we had a new set of musicians, instrumentalists, and a new set of worship leaders growing in competence and character by the day. By God's grace, I managed to convince specific couples who were older and mature Christians to join the worship team transforming the image and reputation of the worship team. This naturally cured a lot of the struggles that existed in the team because there were more mentors to help the younger ones navigate the dynamics of life with fewer casualties of fate. Musicians and worship leaders are just as human only more visible.

They need more support with mentorship to put their lives together and to be at peace with themselves. We got to a point whereby we now had as many leaders as could lead worship across the month with no single person leading more than one service in a month. We had two services and one set could lead the first service and a completely different set would lead the second service singing the very songs. There was more encouragement for new members to join the team and there was space for talented people to join the team and grow their gifting. We trained more instrumentalists and within no time, the children who were born and grown in the church were able to take up the challenge and completed the meaning of a community church where fathers and sons, mothers and daughters served on the same altar playing different roles. I always aspire for that result in every church I have been to. If there is anything I gained was to see the capacity of the worship team in the church grow.

When I finally began my transition out of the church, nobody missed me. I mean not because there was a gap in the pulpit and worship ministry. Anyone within the team could lead worship effectively with as much variety of talents and strengths as possible. I stayed in the church for six months overseeing the transition of leadership and supporting the team to be strong, united, and motivated beyond my leadership. I wanted to be replaceable and loved it that way. When I remember my failures that led to the closure of my church ministry in 2019, I always remember this moment of transition at deliverance church Kitengela ten years earlier in 2009 and take a lot of pride in it.

Around early 2009, I began having the conviction to do ministry differently and spoke to Bishop about it. He encouraged me to keep it in my prayers. Meanwhile, Dr. Wang'ombe then requested I go back to Kahawai Sukari to assist him with the worship ministry. Soon after I was sure that I wanted to leave, I mentioned to bishop Kamwaro my exit plan which would run for 6 months. I began raising leaders and empowering them more for the next leap without me. I put them in charge and retreated to just being a backup vocalist for three months. Within those three months, I only lead worship once. I then retreated to the congregation after 4 months and by the sixth month, left the church with the blessings of Bishop Mohammed Kamwaro. Sometimes, we get to doubt our calling, our direction, and our timing.

All in all, never give up but put your trust in God all the time. As my conversations with Dr. Wang'ombe were ongoing, my emotions were stuck with Kitengela. My spirit belonged here and I wasn't embracing that geographical change with ease. I chose to stay in prayer without affiliation so that I could determine objectively what I wanted to do. I spent nine months crafting a church vision and praying about it.

When I explained to Dr. Wang'ombe what my persuasions were, he told me to forge ahead and offered to support me. This presented one problem. Dr. Wang'ombe could not open for me a deliverance church within Kitengela which was under a different jurisdiction within the structures of the deliverance church. I also understood very clearly that every sound leader has a strategic plan for the church and the leader will not, out of nowhere, start the program of planting another church just because Anderson feels called, and right now. It is something that most young ministers do not understand. They feel they are being held back by their overseers. The truth is that every overseer works with planning and understands that the burden of sustaining a church goes beyond the passion and gift to preach and pray for people. A good pastor may only commit to planting a church when there is an overwhelming need, sufficient capacity to plant a church, or both.

Dr. Wang'ombe advised that we should both seek someone who could offer me legal cover or affiliation. I didn't need to look far. Apostle Danson Indimuli is the overseer of the Back to God church whose headquarters are in Mwiki. He was and still works at the Kenyatta University accounts department. The man of God was my friend since my days at the university as I had severally ministered to his church and spent valuable time in his home. We have always been friends with his family We had traveled with him to the other branches of the Back to God church across the country for missions. Apostle Dan is the one who led my delegation when I went to ask for Susan's hand in marriage. He was a quick choice when I needed legal covering and affiliation. He offered me that cover without conditions. How lovely! He commissioned me as pastor in their church in Mwiki together with my wife Susan. They stood with us and came to offer us material and physical support when the progressive Christian church was born.

Soon after we launched the church, Dr. Wango'mbe sent me a fully funded mission team, which was enlarged by my Kenyatta University Christian Union fraternity. Dr. Wang'ombe also offered us some of their used sound equipment. Just to set the records straight, I had to once again go back to my spiritual mentor, Bishop Kamwaro to let him know that I had changed my mind and that I was no longer going to Kahawa Sukari, nor coming back to his church but that I desired to start my church ministry within Kitengela. He prayed for me again and blest me a second time. That is how the Progressive Christian Church was born. Bishop Kamwaro was a great father. After I had settled in our new church, I paid him a courtesy call, in 2010 and requested him to come and dedicate our second son. He came, loved on us, and dedicated our son. He also prayed over our church and anointed the ground with oil. It is Bishop Kamwaro who also dedicated our first son while we were still fellowshipping at the deliverance church Kitengela in 2006.

I was ordained as a reverend on the 15th of July 2012 in the presence of both my mentors Dr. Wang'ombe and Rev. Chriss Khatela. I was also designated for consecration into the office of the Bishop on the 5th of July 2015, by Arch Bishop of the Kingdom Dynasty Fellowship of Churches, USA, Bishop Jonathan Tate Snr in the presence of my mentor Dr. Peterson Wango'mbe and the entire leadership, and membership of the Kajiado East Pastors Association where I was the constitutional affairs committee chairman and also serving in the missions committee. I organized for Bishop Tate to visit and meet my other mentors, Dr. Wang'ombe and Bishop Jimmy Kimani. He was invited to preach in Bishop Jimmy Kimani's church at deliverance church Kasarani.He also held a conference at our church in Kitengela with the Kitengela pastors during his visit to Kenya. We also organized conference meetings in Nairobi at the Nairobi Cinema and in Kasaranii at the Word of Truth sanctuary.

False lease

When I began church ministry, we had rented a small hall on a property where there had been another church before. While on a mission outside of Kitengela, in Mwiki, I met a friend who told me that he had a plot in Kitengela that he was willing to lease out to me. We agreed on the terms and before long, I had convinced my leadership to work towards moving to that plot. We bought the necessary building materials for a temporary building and constructed a worship facility within one week. After three worship services, we became victims of family squabbles. The actual owner of the property was living in the United States and the siblings were fighting over who should take control or benefit from the proceeds of the plot more. Before I knew it, we were summoned by the area chief with a notice to vacate the premise.

I was capable of putting up a spirited fight but my leaders advised me, it wasn't worth it to begin our church-planting journey with fights within the community. This was a big blow for a young church but we encouraged ourselves in the lord. I was blessed to have a very supportive leadership and so we prayed to **God to give us a second chance** and help us find land we could lease and stay much longer, possibly buy. God heard our prayers and before the end of the week, we got another property. **We took a second chance to correct our mistakes and performed due diligence and signed binding contracts witnessed by our respective advocates**. We served God on this premise for many years without any disturbances. The owner offered us a chance to buy it but the price was too expensive for us.

International Missions

I was also blest to minister beyond our borders; seasons that enabled me to make new friends and experience cross cultural missions. The biggest open doors were in the United States traversing over many states; from Texas to Boston, St. Lois Missouri to Florida, Kansas to Ohio, Arizona to Philadelphia, and Maryland to Atlanta. The ministry was exciting and the connections and metworking opportunities great.

KEPA (Kajiado East Pastors Association)

I joined the family of pastors through a personal friend who was a pastor. I had a great time within the fellowship serving in various capacities. I served on the missions committee, the music and worship committee, the Investments committee, and also the legal affairs committee at different times. Sometimes I was seconded on temporary assignments in departments where I was not a committee member but was requested to contribute based on what was at hand. My time within the pastors' fellowship can be described as exciting and summarized in three perspectives. On a light note, Every Tuesday was fellowship time and whenever pastor's fellowships were hosted at our church, it was time to roast some goat meat on top of the list. On a serious note, the perspective of the community of pastors referred to my services as an earth Mover. I was known for making things happen. Ask any pastor within the town and they will tell you that if Anderson is on board, it's gonna happen. I oversaw several local and international missions at the request of the executive leadership. I was entrusted with major assignments on behalf of the organization or asked to work with committees.

I was tasked to chair the MBCI Eastern gate mission committee – Kitengela chapter, which brought together pastors from Kitengela, Mlolongo, Athi River, and Kajiado on behalf of the organization. The mission presided over by Apostle John Kimani under the umbrella of the "MBCI", Mission to the body of Christ. I was tasked to oversee the great harvest crusade on behalf of the Kitengela pastors; a mission which was presided over by evangelist Carel Buttler from Australia. This mission was embraced by both organizations of pastors of kItengela, each seconding a sub-committee of missions. I was seconded as the team leader for Kajiado East Pastors Association (KEPA).

We teamed up with another sub-committee of the Kitengela Pastors Association (KIPAFE). I was appointed the Overall leader of the two joint committees. I was tasked with overseeing the "Megga Fest" which was an interdenominational musical praise and worship extravaganza bringing on board musicians from 23 churches gelled into one mass choir.

We didn't just train for the media-backed event but also trained to equip our ministers for the benefit of their churches. I was also requested to oversee intrinsic interdenominational missions, which were presided over by the Kitengela select pastors for one mission and another select team for another mission. We would have speakers from amongst ourselves for one mission and a different set for another mission. The second frontier was accountability. Every event and assignment we did was captured in black and white from concept development, preparations, budget lines, delegation, and final execution.

After execution, a postmortem report was developed and discussed in official meetings and the reports were adopted in our minutes for future improvement of our processes and systems. Every time a new project came up, we would need to go back to the past events and dig into our template to inform the concept development of the new assignment. We grew progressively in efficiency and capacity.

The last frontier which is the straw that broke the camel's back and caused me to later encounter a heartbreak that haunted me for two years was reforming the organization. When I joined the organization, the mega fest was the first assignment I was given. After the modus operandi of that event, the executive called me into their meeting and requested me to assist the organization to achieve certain key organizational reforms. The chairman whom I would proudly say, I was a favorite son, gave me a blank check and asked me to challenge them and support them to attain organizational excellence and efficiency of their processes. The secretary of the organization appreciated that our team had set a good precedence of standards, accountability, and planning complete with functions to assist with continuous monitoring and evaluation. I was mostly seconded to committees to support during specific seasons. Firstly, I was seconded to serve in the missions committee, and Investments committee and later entrusted to lead the legal and constitutional affairs docket to help fast-track institutional reforms. I played this role across five annual general meetings three of them having elections.

Towards the last annual general meeting I participated in, we were confronted with what Major General Daudi Tonje was confounded about when he instituted far-reaching reforms in the military. Those reforms caught up with him In the year 2000 when he had to decline an offer by the then president Daniel Moi to extend his term as Kenya's defense forces head choosing to retire as per his own reform laws. There was a philosophical premise that we had developed over six years such that members negotiated shared aspirations and shaped a vision whereby the elected leaders would seek to fulfill that vision.

I believed that whenever an organization came up with a strategic plan over a set of years, they did so intending to consistently bring that strategic plan to fruition. My committee developed the modus operandi and sought leadership guidance to continually engage in chapter-by-chapter discussion and negotiation every Tuesday during fellowship for a period of two months. In the final two weeks, the concept anticipated that we shall have one last, kamkunji (informal meeting) where we discuss all the issues on the agenda list before the AGM so we have as much consensus as possible. In this case, only the contentious issues would be subjected to a vote while those unanimous issues will just receive ascend and acclamation.

We had that informal meeting and everything seemed just fine; at least according to me. When we got to the floor of the AGM, something was not right. There seemed to have been underhand lobbying beyond what was already revealed to our committee. Some of the issues for which we had already built consensus surprisingly came up as hotly contested from a select group of people with so much emotions and aggression that the AGM ended in acrimony and total confusion. The meeting was eventually postponed to a later date. The events of this AGM haunted me for a very long time with many unanswered questions.

Music Career

Before joining the university, I used to lead a small singing group at the Nairobi Christian Center - Bahati KAG church. One of the members of this singing group was a friend of Tanzanian origin. We used to compose songs and one day tought we shoukd record these songs. We struck a deal to co-produce an album by sharing the costs. At the time some dreams call for unrivaled resilience. I used to walk from my house in Eastleigh section 3 (Suncity house number 14) to Komarock for practice and rehearsals at the Covenant Studios. This was a direct recording where you play every instrument and record your vocals live and direct. The exercise was very involving for it was not as advanced electronically as is the case today. If you made a mistake, then you repeated the entire session. Because I had used all my little money to pay for my part towards our backup vocalists, instrumentalists, and the studio session, I was very broke during the season. I would only eat roasted maize along the way and drink water when I reach the house. I would then wait to eat my main meal at work during the night shift. I was working as a casual worker at East Africa Industries, now Unilever.

Once the recording was over, we had the duty of raising the remainder of the cost for the recording. I didn't have the money. I traveled home and disposed of a few assets at my disposal, returning ten days later. When I returned, I couldn't find my Tanzanian friend. My friend took all the music recording materials, otherwise called the masters, and left church never to be seen again.

That was the last time I heard of him. This heartbreak was too much considering the lengths I had gone to compose the songs, practice regularly, and do rehearsals at the studio. The payments for the vocalists and instrumentalists and the deposit at the studio were all my savings.

The harsh experience and difficult circumstances under which this dream was hatched and executed made it very painful to go through this experience. After the failed attempt to record, this dream was rebirthed while in campus. We formed an outfit called New Creations Choir. When we decided to record an album, I convinced Bishop Charles Mugo, of Oasis of Love church to come and support us raise funds for our album. We also lobbied among our friends for financial support. Bishop Mugo showed up and presided over this great event on campus. What a heart of gold. Our sister team called ETC - Eternally Tied with Christ also supported us in this fundraiser. Eternally tied with Christ was another singing group to which my girlfriend, Susan, belonged.

We went ahead and recorded the premier album at the Kassanga's music studios in Westlands, Nairobi. I thank Bishop Mugo for supporting young students who had nothing to offer him in return. "You made our dreams come true". The dream to be a recording artiste lived long enough to materialize three years later after the first failure. Never ever give up! We had an experience of a lifetime thru this recording period. The album may not have been a hit album, but it did wonders in our student community at Kenyatta University.

From campus to church

The Jubilee Christian Church team had been to our Kenyatta University campus for an annual mission when they watched me lead praise and worship sessions. Some of their leaders, Pastors Andrew Ngara and Isaac Odero; a great keyboardist, invited me to their church where I later was incorporated into the youth cabinet in charge of music at the Jubilee Christian church under Bishop. Allan and Rev. Kathy Kiuna. It was a blessing to perform in the main service as well as in organized youth events in the church. We had a vibrant youth ministry under the stewardship of what we called the Youth Cabinet.I later joined Deliverance church - Kahawa Sukari branch, under the leadership of Dr. Peterson Wang'ombe. My skills were in music but I also served as a pastoral assistant and worked with the youth committee.

We organized and prepared for many events with the worship ministry and youth ministry including events with the churches within the Kahawa Sukari, Githurai,

Kasarani, and Kahawa Wendani communities. While in Kahawa Sukari, I embarked on a journey to record my first solo album. While doing this project I met two people who would help revolutionize my recording music career. My producer, Robert Kamanzi took me through an identity drill.

He asked me what the messages in the lyrics were and who my target audience was. We debated for quite a while on this matter. The majority of songs were in the English language. Robert advised if my audience was Kenyan or better, Kenyan youth, I needed to speak in their language and not necessarily in mine. He also told me that my music was way complicated and that the simpler my songs were; the easier it was to have my fans embrace them. Very convincing! He won and we embarked on the project with some adjustments to my original ideas and deliverables. The great work of art was scheduled to be ready before I began my wedding plans and by God's grace, I managed to achieve this target in May of 2005. In August of 2005, we did our wedding. This album was a blessing and expanded my outreach within Nairobi. Two songs, Jina Langu, and Nisamehe got reasonable airplay on local Christian stations.

When I got a job with a Christian microfinance organization and was posted in Kitengela, I met this guy called Richard Njoroge Ngaruiya, the director of the biggest imaging studio in Kitengela, Happiness Imaging. Richard was then recording his rap music project (I used to call him MC Hammer). He introduced me to Tim who later produced my album Nimechizi na Yesu. This album got traction encouraging me to do an album launch which went well.

The popular gospel music personality, Mercy Masika and Mass G, the founder of Kingdom TV were my guest artists during this launch. Hellen Mtawali also sent a fully-fledged, Afrizo band, to my launch which took place at the then-technology development center. In 2008, I met Smith Mwatia also known as Rufftone, my former schoolmate who had hit the Kenyan billboards in a big way. I asked Rufftone what it would take for me to have a break in the Kenyan music industry. He encouraged me to collaborate with him, an opportunity I pounced on. Our track title, *Yesu ni Beste* hit the airwaves with success. I would also record *Ugali Sosa* at "Lampstand" a record that was owned by my newfound mentor, Rufftone.

I later met Paul Mukoma of princecam media who produced the video. Ugali Sosa became a hit masterpiece ruling the airwaves for two years straight. This is the song that defined and continues to cement cemented my legacy more than a decade later. My long wait of ten years since 1999 when I did my first failed project was rewarded thru persistence. I never gave up on my dreams and never stopped working to improve my craft. Paul would later produce my next album "Wrong Number" which was a great success with hits such as "Boda Boda" and

"Mulika Mwizi." My brand as a big player in the entertainment sector was solidified at Prince Cam Media through their dedicated and concerted efforts to manage my brand. I also had a loyal dance crew called "D-TOURE" which complemented my live stage performances in all my major live and televised shows. Even though I did not win, I was a nominee, for "male artiste of the year" for three straight years in the biggest awards in East Africa, the annual Groove Awards.

A music producer

In 2007 I set up the first-ever recording studio in Kitengela. The studio was managed by one Jessi Njeru. I would later close down this studio when I got a job at Safaricom for fear of the unknown. I however didn't give up my dream to be a recording artist and later producer. I have built a home studio in both my Kakamega and Kitengela homes. During my international tours, I particularly focused on buying studio gear and when I had bought enough modern studio gear, I revived my studio – "Stopper Records" in 2015. I would later set up a second studio in Kakamega.

Unfortunately, the studio in Kakamega was later broken into and most equipment was stolen. The police investigations did not yield findings and the best I could do was to look forward into the future. The dream of a music studio might be different but I have not given up on its realization at God's opportune time.

Hewa Safi tour

In 2019, I firmed up my record label "Stopper Records" and identified artists whom I wanted to work with. We signed working contracts and embarked on a music production journey. I had a total of 8 artists and produced songs for each of the artists. During the Easter festivities, we embarked on one of my biggest ventures together with my artists. My all-time favorite Royal Media services agreed to support me by sponsoring my media publicity complete with live feeds for the 8 days of my music tour dubbed, "Hewa Safi tour".

In our tour across five counties of Eldoret, Trans Nzoia, Bungoma, Kakamega, and Vihiga, we were powered by four radio stations. This was the first of its kind by any artiste in Kenya. We were promoting ringback tunes and also went all out with my cooperate social responsibility visiting children's homes and offering mentorship with a few supplies. The impact of this venture would be felt many years later and the market positioning and image of my brand has largely been anchored on this phenomenal venture.

Kuwa Mpole peace initiative

I genuinely have no clue how I began the process that saw got me involved in politics. Following the 2007/8 post-election violence which bruised our national character, I was irked so much that I always asked myself what I could do to help the situation. I was more driven by empathy and sympathy towards the victims of the post-election violence of 2007/8. As a national artiste with immense influence and traction, I thought I could do something about it. I had no structured plan, or resources but just a heart full of love and compassion with a passion to do something anyway. I don't think I have it to detail how the concept of the Kuwa Mpole peace initiative was conceived, initiated, or birthed. I did not even have a clear execution plan except the desire to do something about peace and cohesion for a country I was so much attached to at heart. There was no board meeting to structure the vision, no budget to facilitate the idea and there was no connection between what I wanted to do and how I will do it except for the reputable brand I had built and a desire to heal the hearts of victims and lift the spirits of the nation to believe in a greater and better nation.

I did not have the fine print of how I will finally get my conversation to become a national or organized conversion. I just chose to try. When I set out to start the Kuwa Mpole peace initiative, I was motivated by the need to have a peaceful 2013 election. Kuwa Mpole means"be nice", "Be kind" or Be polite. I composed a song "Ngeli ya Mluhya" which would help me to pass that message of peace then launched it. I then began holding musical concerts with a message of peace. As an artist who was ranked among the very best in Kenya (Three times Groove Awards "Male Artiste of the Year" nominee), it was easier to get the support of fellow artists without having many demands from me. I also used to show up for them in their various endeavors too. I also reached out to mainstream media which gave me immense support and coverage of my peace message and activities in print media, radio, and Tv. With the support of my trusted friend Crispin Njau and my nephew Kelvin Okumu we had a reliable technical team that handled all logistics. I was extremely grateful for the support of great artists such as Jimmy Gait, Eunice Njeri, Rufftone, Gloria Muliro, Mbuvi, Omundu Mulosi, Sam Andanje, Ole Toninio, Consumeta, Willy Paul, Ringtone, Abbedy Ngoso and Njugush of the Lubamba crew among many others.

My parents and my siblings also supported my events and attended some of the events. We held concerts in some of the hotspot estates in Nairobi and also in the countryside cities and towns. We used music to speak to the youth to embrace peace and avoid conflicts. We also listened to the tales of victims who saw the post-election violence in real-time. Some had lost friends, family members, and property with some having raw images of how people known to them died while they helplessly watched.

I used the information to encourage them to trust in God. I also had the support of religious leaders who helped encourage and preach peace. Through mainstream media, my idea got the recognition of key political actors. In my launch, it was the Governor of Machakos Wavinya Ndeti who was my chief guest assisted by Dr. Peter Githae, a younger brother to former Finance Minister Robbinson Githae. I would later scale my engagements with politicians during their political events and got the attention of then-justice minister Hon. Eugene Wamalwa and even former president Uhuru Kenyatta.

I was pleased with the strides and the contributions which I made to my nation in my small ways. If I knew what I know now, I could have done better and done more but all lessons and experience are valuable for a future application. The passion which I had for national healing back in the day seems to be raw and a precursor to the ideals I am currently propagating for the national maximization of our potential. I seem to be awakening the old passion that says, "We can achieve peace as a people."

The only difference now is that the attainment of peace is sought from more than one dimension; as holistic mental well-being is at the center of it all. Individual mental health, family and community support systems and self-awareness are all part of the national conversation necessary to position us to exploit our human potential to its greatest possible extent. Without mental wellness and self-awareness, we shall have too much-unrealized potential, missed opportunities, and missed potentials. I am offering the nation a second chance with a difference.

Corporate career

After I graduated from the university, I taught in a high school as a part-time teacher and served in a pastoral internship program. I later landed a long-term job as a development finance officer. It was a good learning experience as this was my first cooperate job which encompassed being trained continually and training our customers continually. Our internal trainings were aimed at equipping us to empower our customers with business skills to boost and thrive their businesses. Since our core business was lending money to businesses, I ended up understanding how business. We learnt customer service and customer management skills. We learnt market surveys and analysis. We also learnt portfolio management and strategy. It was a good experience. When I left this employment, I didn't know what I know now.

Looking back, I would say that we should elevate the plight of an ordinary employee who might do better with intentional support systems at the workplace. After being jobless for a few months, I got a new job. I passed all my interviews at all levels and scored very highly in the final interview.

My efforts to open new markets in my previous job spoke well of me despite the challenges that came with it. My handling of difficult customers counted in difficult environments counted to make me stand out for the new assignment. God rewarded my days of tears a million times with peace and joy and compensated lost time and lost opportunities with privilege. There were huge contrasts between my former employment and my new employment. I saw God with my naked eyes. First, I was employed at the entry level as a trainee with pay that was double that of my previous rank; a rank that was above entry level. I worked in this rank for three months after which I was elevated to a full customer care representative.

My salary was increased to more than that of my immediate former boss and equal to that of my former branch manager. I never used any of this money for job-related travels because there was transport provided by the employer from home to work and from work to home each shift throughout the whole day. This was a shift job, which allowed me to have more time for rest and anything else I wished to do away from my job.

The most beautiful experience in my new job was that once I left the workstation, I never had to deal with office work away from the office, except on a few occasions when I volunteered to learn more about other departments. When I began volunteering, my name would be submitted for consideration to be trained with more skills, and within a short time, I had lateral movement with expanded skillsets and was later promoted and confirmed in the position after four months with a monetary increase. God had wiped my tears and this made me forget my pain very fast. As someone who was dedicated to his work and passionate about going the extra mile, within no time I received recognition with cash rewards from the head of the department in what was typically called Pongezi; a program that recognized outstanding contributions to the success of our customer Experience department. I was also featured in the staff magazine as an outstanding employee.

The employer had great facilities for the employees such as a gym, Sauna, and Jacuzzi, a fully-fledged daycare, a clinic with doctors on-site, and a resting room if one had burnout or needed a break from fatigue. We had a prayer room, mothers' nursing room, free transport, and free online courses in a myriad of courses. We were given free airtime and also an account that allowed us to call from the office to any part of the world on the company’s bills. You needed to pay nothing for any of these facilities. My workstation was flowing with milk and honey because there was tea and other beverages full-time, 24/7. We had a firm but friendly management. I had a culture shock, a good one that enabled me to function well and perform meeting my work targets. We had an internal Sacco and credit facilities for unsecured loans with other commercial bank.

Within my first year, I took a loan and bought a piece of land which remains a treasured possession. My membership in the credit department, savings, and credit cooperative is still valid to this day. Whereas my former employer was offering a medical scheme of up to two children with a co-pay, my new employer's medical cover covered myself, and my children, and had an offer to extend it to parents and parents-in-law. My new employer had maximum maternity leaves and paternity leaves days. When the gifting in the music business came calling in a big way, I resigned with dignity and was accordingly released with my full benefits and a good recommendation from my employer. I said this is what I always wanted: To quit on my own time and my terms. Yes, you can rise again by not allowing the setbacks of life to hold you back forever. You can believe in the God of second chances and pursue your second chance by faith. I transitioned into a musical career involving Music Ministry, Music Business as well as Show Bizness with peace, joy, and pride. By this time, I was already thriving in Church Ministry while still working as an employee.

The Disciplined path to growth

My spouse couldn't understand why we lived small despite the affluence and her ability to call the shots if she wanted to. I insisted that we have to make the relevant sacrifices for a better tomorrow. My eyes were set on land as my life depended on it and we put our sweat into it. We stayed in a two-bedroom house for the longest time even at the height of my stardom with a good appearance fee. When our daughter was born, I chose to make some changes as a gift to my wife for giving birth to 3 stars for me. I went and looked for my own compound house with 5 bedrooms and paid rent and its advanced deposit fee in full. I put a mattress and a blanket in my maroon 4 by 4 Hilux Surf trunk/boot depending on whether your English is American or British.

I took my wife on a road trip to get her out of the house two weeks after delivery. By the way, I took my wife to the maternity ward and while in the labor ward, personally cut off the umbilical cord of my daughter. Respect for motherhood! I stopped by the house I had just leased, checked in, and took her around the house. I asked her whether she liked it. She said yes with a broad smile. I went back to the car, took the mattress upstairs, and left her there with our two weeks old baby girl resting. That was a surprise road trip. She had longed for that kind of house. She confessed to me that, the simple choice reminded her of her childhood because her father was wealthy even though their parents didn't live together for long to have her enjoy the wealth. She was happy to host her graduation party after her Master's degree in business administration from Kenyatta University.

Much later we decided we should build our house on one of our plots. We agreed but a new fight ensued. She wanted a good home like the one we had, but I insisted that the unit must be both residential for us but also commercial to enable us to gain some rent and survive eventualities. I was right because just recently our debt was too much as occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic constraints on my income and our rent was our only source of domestic upkeep. When we couldn't agree, I abandoned the project but after 6 months, she agreed with me and we began the journey. With just Kenya shillings 300,000, we began building the foundation of the house and God met us along the way. She played a great role and supported the vision with all of her heart and resources. Much later, I was to make a trip to America. I said to myself, what would happen if my trip didn't meet my expectations? I made up my mind on what to do and because women love arguing with everything a man proposes, I chose to just shut up and act. I rushed the construction of that house like we were on fire. The shutter/upper floor was done and electrical fittings done and one afternoon I called my wife to tell her that when she comes from work, she should call me first. She obliged and called me.

I picked her up at the EPZ junction in Kitengela and without saying a word, drove towards our construction site. No choice. That was the home and none other. The house had electricity, water, and plaster and I had improvised a fence. We had security issues but God protected us. We stayed there for 2 months, after which I left for the United States, confident that rent was not on the list of priorities to worry about. While I was away, we continued partnering on the project and she gave her best effort.

The perimeter wall was done. The gates were done and the upper floor walls began going up. When I returned, we had made great progress. I stayed for three months with my family in Kenya and I was to go back to the United States. I put my foot forward and pushed myself as I had never done before. The house was almost completed. I roofed the house on a Thursday, finishing the work at 5 PM, and flew out to the US at 11 PM, the same night. That was it. We were all set and the rest were just final touches on our new house with a few sacrifices here and there. The secret to success is focus and sacrifice. You must sacrifice comfort to gain comfort. This unit continues to house us and has also been a blessing concerning income.

While working at the leading mobile telecom operator Safaricom, an offer was extended to us at the Safaricom Sacco and I took it, right away. I bid for a Toyota Hilux double cab, got it, and sold it three days later for a profit. Then the savings and credit society offered us a land loan. I took it up. You would think I was a senior manager because while everyone went for the 100 by 50 in the new light estate, I went for a quarter acre in the prestigious Acacia plains.

My partners were senior managers and engineers only. That loan took a huge chunk of my salary, but the sacrifice was worth it in the fullness of time. I would later make up my mind to set up a good house for my spouse and children and despite her wanting it in the capital city of Nairobi, I insisted it will have to be at our rural home first. That is a work in progress and I believe I will get it done later I will still give her the dream house in the city as I promised her, if she trusted my vision. It wasn't as easy but it is what it is. I will keep my part of the bargain some day and I will get there for sure.

It was important that I have a Karen- leafy suburb worthy of a home in my village city as a future Governor of my county Kakamega and it's not negotiable. I will get there. When I retreated to the village following my depression, these are the dreams which got me hopeful. I kept the dreams alive. Am here to tell you that you can make sacrifices today which will eventually pay off 10 years later and that's my case, that's my story of 10 years of vision and sacrifice for the very vision. Make the necessary sacrifices and see a secure future when the time is right especially if your opportunities allow you to touch some little change.

Political Career

Every time one mentions politics as a Christian, one will be told that politics is dirty. I may agree that politics may be a space infiltrated with all manner of interests. So, what is wrong with trying to occupy the space for whatever interest a Christian or honorable person may wish to advance? I will state my understanding of politics from three angles. It is the exercise of governance of a people's affairs by way of seeking power to govern through various instruments established. Politics is also leadership where people are influenced or guided towards a course and an end.

Politics is also spiritual as the exercising of both governance and leadership shapes the soul of the nation and depicts the character of a nation. The values which are systematically espoused by a nation form the spirituality of the nation. As a Christian, I draw my inspiration from Abraham as a father of the new nation and new faith after the previous generations since Adam.

Abraham was a prophet, Genesis 20:7. "Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live." Abraham was also a leader and military strategist as we see him in Genesis 14:14 when he organized an army of 318 men and fought against three kings delivering Lot his nephew and all his possessions. It is after this victory that we are introduced to a prophet who was king of Salem, Melchizedek. He blessed Abraham establishing and ceding the earthly covenant of King and Priest to Abraham.

Abraham received this mantle and tithed to King/prophet Melchizedek as an honor to the complete order of priesthood and kingship. From Abraham and Isaac, Jacob would be a custodian of this mantle which was passed down to three people, two being one. We had the mantle of government upon Judah and the mantle of the priesthood upon Levi and Manasseh from the house of Joseph. Joseph himself had been a custodian of government in Egypt in God's ordinances.

Moses would be the next in line to uphold all the mantles of leadership through governance and priesthood. Joshua would be his military man. After Moses, many actors played various roles according to the needs and threats of the nation of Israel but most of the time had the mantle of leadership through priesthood or governance. Some had the mantle of leadership through governance and military action such as Samson. Deborah was the only woman who had the mantle of leadership through governance, Priesthood, and military action. Most of the prophets and Kings collaborated to offer leadership with each bringing their contribution to lead the Israel nation. Prophet Eli and Prophet Samuel carried the mantles of priesthood and governance as judges. There is no clear mention of the men who conducted the military operations but it is clear that they had soldiers fighting for Israel. They were the very soldiers who were out in war when the sons of Eli died while in battle.

It is after Samuel's reign as judge and priest that the people revolted against his sons who had no integrity, that God appointed the fairest among them; Saul! Saul became King leading the governance of the people and military action with Samuel ceding the role of governance to Saul but still performing his priestly duties. Samuel would later oversee the transfer of leadership of governance and Military action of Israel from Saul to David. Samuel established the school of prophets such as Nathan who came to rebuke King David but he did not necessarily participate in the routine affairs of the land like Samuel did.

David was a unique leader whom God called his beloved and friend. There is something about David that makes him earn all these accolades. David was astute in military action, was great in his governance, and had the priestly mantle upon him. It is the reason Jesus would be called the son of David in that order and identity.

Melchizedek to whom Abraham tithed in Genesis 14:17-20 was both a king and priest whom Paul explains that Jesus is in the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:13-17 says Jesus is considered a priest even though was not from the bloodline of Aaron. I have already explained in the genealogy of Jesus that the order of the priesthood of Jesus is found in the genealogy of Mary and Elizabeth mother of John the Baptist. John the Baptist accomplishes the priesthood rights of Jesus when he baptizes him and according to his confession, he was making the way

for the arrival of Jesus. David was the first to be called the anointed one which means messiah in Hebrew. Through David, we encounter the first fulfillment of God's promised anointed ruler. When David became king, he moved the capital of Israel to Jerusalem where Melchizedek once ruled as Priest and King. David had the mantle of King (Governance), priesthood, and an astute Military general without comparison ever.

Despite his human failings, David served the lord faithfully till he breathed his last. Solomon took over the mantle of his father as a priest, King but his military strength was not a direct personal mantle but organizational strength, unlike David who was great in battle. Jesus is after the order of David and is the anointed one who rose from the dead and will return to accomplish his mission for 1000 years restoring the world order as it should be. Until then, it is my philosophy that the world will become a better place when its leadership is established on genuine spirituality, good governance, and a strong military premised on the conscience of the first two. An example is the queen or king of England is the head of state, commander in chief of the British armed forces, and also the supreme governor of the established church of England. My philosophy is not completely about the structure of government but the character of the person who occupies the seats of leadership. It is for this reason that I do not think Christians should shy away from political leadership but seek such opportunities which will become a good place to offer their values to shape the destiny of the people they lead.

If anyone doubted the place of God in politics, let's not consider our present day which is defined by our misgivings and misfortunes. Let us focus on how life will be after Jesus has returned to rule the world, judge the world and finally presented us to God holy and eternal with him. The mantle of the kings of the earth shall be revealed to us all.

The calling of God is not just in preaching in church but in leadership too. It is a holy calling fro which God's glory is to be revealed today and in the end of time.

Revelations 21: 22-24

"I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. [23]The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. [24]The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

If it were up to me, I would happily endorse a monarchy and save the country from these protracted wars that come with every election cycle. I would then prescribe the parliamentary system of government where parties propose ideas and the people choose their representatives such that the ruling party offers the prime minister to govern the nation exactly like the British system of governance which has a combination of democracy that changes wheels every five years and a stable monarchy. If I were to make any adjustments to that model, then I would propose that a monarchy endears itself to the people every once in fifty years where in a golden jubilee, the monarchy continues to serve or cedes power to a new one which would lead the nation. The modalities of how to actualize that may not entirely be well conceived in my mind. Before this philosophy, I used to imagine that the purely democratic all-American model was the best until I witnessed the transition from Donald Trump to Joe Biden with an attack on the US capital. I can assure you that one day, someone else will test that democracy one more time. The African continent has been ruled by Monarchs in all of its history.

There are both bad and good stories to tell just like democracy hasn't given us all smiles to the bank either. The British system of government seems to be a perfect blend of what the Kenyan nation has been confused about and clamoring to have a blend of parliamentary and presidential systems. I know that Americans won't allow that to happen because they would want to have total control and say every so often in every election cycle according to their changing interests but it is also possible if that is what the Kenyan people would want.

My political umbilical cord

I was born in leadership and politics chose me, not the other way around. I have an authentic connection with my people which was not driven by a need for a political pursuit but by pure genuine influence which came from a place of talent, adventure, and passion. I believe that I am gifted and talented in so much a way that, there is no way God would make this true for no reason. My father Hon. Peter Munala was a nominated councilor in Kakamega municipality. It is the powerful cabinet minister Moses Mudavadi who nominated him following his role in KANU (Kenya African National Union) politics within Kakamega as a whole.

At the time, my father was the campaign manager for Reuben Otutu, who won the Lurambi parliamentary seat at the time and the nomination was befitting for a winning organizer that my father. He was the chairman of Kakamega town planning for 5 years uninterrupted. Before, during, and after this time as a councilor; he was always at the center of Kakamega politics. My father was either the organizing secretary of KANU under the chairmanship of the late former Cabinet minister Joshua Angatia or the Chairman of ODM (Orange Democratic

Movement) in the Lurambi constituency when it was still part of the wider Navakholo. He delivered on all the seats in his patronage to ODM in 2007.I was physically present as my father navigated all these political activities and he was proud to introduce me to all his friends. I enjoyed the introduction he gave me to 'His worship' the mayor, S. Khalisia. I would later hold conversations with my father and ask to understand what it meant to address the mayor as his worship. Dad had no problem answering my various questions as I was always curious.

I enjoyed the presence of the veteran politicians of Kakamega such as Basil Misango Khalumi, Mark Udoto, Rev. Javan Ommani, and Joshua Angatia among others who had close relations with Dad. I always cut out my own space with them to discuss anything and everything. They somehow liked how I answered their questions but more specifically the numerous questions I asked out of curiosity. If I told you that I had sit-downs with Rev. Javan Ommani, you would deny it. If I told you that we had Lunche with Basil Misango, just the two of us, you would deny it. If I told you that Chairman Joshua Angatia sent my dad who was the organizing secretary for an errand and the two of us remained in the KANU office for almost an hour in a busy conversation about politics, you may deny it. I have had up close conversations during the many functions of KANU and ODM, you would think I was a delegate too because I was the one handling the logistics and helping my father navigate transport and accommodation logistics along Luthuli Avenue.

In 2000, some of our convergence was purely coincidental because I was a student at Kenyatta University. Whenever my dad would come to Nairobi for his political activities, the only way to spend more time with him was to tag along with him in his political activities. I saw how the likes of the veteran politician Hon. Henry Koskey did a walking race at KICC, and I would ask my dad why he was walaking too fast.

Dad would then explain that He is running away from the pressure of the people but he can't run literally; so he has to walk fast; so I already know how to walk away from pressure when that time will come. Walking race!

If we were not at Afya house seeing Dr. Amukoa Anangwe, we were at Transcom house at community, to see Hon. Mudavadi. Dad had friends in senior places too at the foreign affairs as well as the Ministry of Education and local authorities. We went in with him to either their offices or houses and he was always introducing his son. Surprisingly all these fellows loved this son and wished their sons were as lively as I was. We struck our conversations independent of my dad. It's interesting how I twice booked my appointments to see Dad's friend at Jogoo house, He was the deputy principal secretary (PS) and he granted me the appointments.

I had my uncle's camera at the time, and this friend had no trouble giving me a chance to try my skills in photography with him, a trade I did as I waited to join campus. As a little boy in 1992, I was hands-on during the voter registration and facilitating our people to register in numbers in the ward where my dad was a candidate. I was on the pick-up truck as we did several trips and assisted our people to register as voters. You know how old I was? 12 years! I experienced these political skills hands-on, feeding people over lunch or giving them tokens after a busy day, or just buying them a cigar. I did these things yet Dad never gave me money for any of them. I used my money to keep my close friends closer and they had a tale that goes like "Inula, inula vutoro…meaning a good person is known while still young. I remember their names and faces. Some of them worked for my father. I later learned that election bargains are conducted on account of how many people have registered as voters. Major political formations also win elections on account of registered voters.

I knew what it meant to receive delegations as early as 6 AM. I saw firsthand how Dad handled these people with ease. I knew all of my father's political functionaries and spent time discussing politics. I always brought Dad feedback on what I heard especially when one woman spoke about my dad's life being in danger. When I told Dad, he dismissed me but explained it to me like a 12-year-old. He said, these people would sometimes want handouts and to achieve that, they have to come up with a valuable story to tell so that they qualify their claim for the money. I understood it very well. I sat in the car with my father as he dropped off his special guests. After the drop-off, I would ask questions concerning the conversations they had with his friends. We would get back home and stay in the car for much longer after arrival, discussing the same. When I was living with my uncle at Mumias and when I was in Mumias Boys, he would visit or come to pick me up over the weekends while in the company of some of his high-ranking friends. All these were the likes of Chief Noah Ambunya, Chief Imbiakha, and other dignitaries.

Sometimes I used to spend the whole day at the Kakamega KANU office directly opposite the current governor's office. I was sent on errands and sometimes just idled as I waited for my father to conclude a meeting with the KANU big boys. My dad was once taken for a state house trip as a campaign person for KANU and the former president. When he returned I asked him to explain the trip to me, which he did so to the last detail. The trip had been organized by my late cousin Advocate Seth Osundwa Andanje. I have memories of the yellow Toyota Corolla KQD 616, owned by my father. I don’t know why my father disputes the registration number. He could come back home with a very dirty car after campaigning for Hon. Reuben Otutu. I used to wash it and then would ask Dad to explain to me why that was the case and he did as we both washed the car.

He would soon take off again for the campaign trail. During the 1997 elections, I remember how he campaigned for Mr. Nyangweso. In one event, Mr. Nyangweso complained publicly that he did not get good votes from my village and he used a derogative term; he said, “he said I have come to see these enemies of mine who did not vote for me". I was very irritated at this statement and asked my father to abandon his campaign trail.

My father explained to me that the very people had registered as voters in the ward where my dad had an interest as a councilor, Bondeni ward which was in Kakamega town. As such they voted for Mr. Nyangweso but voted from Bondeni in Kakamega town and not from Ingotse. Some of you might be familiar with how voter registration is conducted in most of our catchments. This was very true because I traveled as part of this registration exercise on a pick-up truck owned by one Hon. Musera who was also running for a councilor seat. Our people registered in Bondeni to vote for my father but some also registered in a different ward to vote for Mr. Musera. That was the barter trade between my father and Hon. Musera. His pick-up was his political contribution while my father translated that into votes for both of them. This was the exploitation of social capital to the highest possible extent. I was not told, I was on all those trips during the holidays ahead of the general elections.

In the whole political journey of my dad, I only got disappointed with him once in 1992 and this disappointment hit me in a personal way. After Dad campaigned for then Member of Parliament for Lurambi Hon. Reuben Otutu, he had mastered the terrain and the kingmaker wanted to be king. He ran for MP Lurambi in the year 1992 but later was asked to step down for Hon. Reuben Otutu. The argument was that Otutu and my father; both being from the Batsotsoi community would reduce their chances of winning against Hon. Wasike Ndombi who was from the Banyala community. Dad agreed to this but later changed his mind.

I have never known what informed his change of mind to run after already stepping down but he was not as lucky as Uhuru Kenyatta who stepped down in 2013 for Musalia Mudavadi only to change his mind and made it to be elected into the presidency. Anyway, Uhuru Kenyatta never stepped down. He said that Hon Ruto will remain the running mate and that a delegate’s forum will determine one between himself and Musalia. On this occasion, I said I will never do as my father and if I set my eyes on a prize, I shall go all the way no matter what anyone else thinks. This anger would play itself out in 2013 when I ran for political office and my father was not in agreement for two reasons. He knew me better and being a father, he thought I didn't have enough resources to marshal the seat I wanted.

Most importantly, when the facts available to me demanded that I quit ODM, it worked against him. He was running to be elected chairman of that very party. Dad expected me to cede ground for him but I had vowed never to quit a race I had begun and that's exactly what I did as my father nursed his disappointment which would take a long before healing. He never brought this to light but I know that it was a difficult period for him. When I launched into politics, I was very confident that I was not pursuing a vague path but an already established history with strong roots in my heritage. That is still the case today as I believe I will finish what my forbears desired for their people. It's just a matter of time. It is when and not if.

A candidate

I just had the urge and the drive to belong to a political formation or to work with an individual who would introduce me to the political stage. I thought through who could be the most seasoned and salted player; and settled on the hon. Cyrus Jirongo. I sought his number and an appointment, which I got. The day hon. Jirongo gave me an appointment, I got there at the very time President William Ruto, and then MP for Eldoret North had just walked in. I waited for a long but finally got to meet him. I told him my thoughts and ambition and he seemed interested to know me some more. Hon. Jirongo brought me up to speed with the happenings of the following week. They were launching the United Democratic Party, URP. He asked me to stay in touch.

I shared my ideas with him on the phone, ideas which he fell in love with. He gave me an appointment to discuss these thoughts some more with his communications guy, then Mr. John Nyongesa. John did not buy my ideas as being in line with his already-formed strategy. I saw how Jirongo felt removed from an exciting ride but I didn't push further. I just chose to align with John.

I understood how working with an established system demands that you align first before you can contribute your ideas for improvement. Just a week later I was to perform at the Bomas of Kenya as we launched URP. For some reason, we were not called up to perform, and Hon. Jirongo was not happy that the Luhya representation was not felt in this event where he was a stakeholder. He thought it was a deliberate blunder. A little later that union between himself and Hon. William Ruto would collapse as the Hon. Jirongo formed his Federal party of Kenya. Hon. Jirongo later launched his presidential bid and referred me to solidify my performance contract with John at his upper hill office. When John told me how much he was paying me I refused the deal. I told him that I was worth more than that and asked him to watch my videos on YouTube. He did watch my video, Ngeli ya Mluhya, and one minute into the video, he agreed to pay me 40k up from 20k.

One problem stood in the way of this relationship; I was just a musician and an entertainer which was never my intention from the beginning. My new relationship with Hon. Jirongo as regulated by Jogn became transactional when he needed my services as a musician. I wanted to be at the center of politics and remained restlessly ambitious. One afternoon, I met Hon. Eugene Wamalwa in another bromance at the first encounter. It was a case of being at the right place at the right time. Hon. Wamalwa, then a cabinet minister for constitutional affairs had just come from the late vice president, prof. Saitoti's burial and stopped by a joint for lunch in Kitengela. I was at the very joint with my family. The honorable Minister came to my tent and said hello to my family before he proceeded to his tent. After he was settled, I went by his tent where we talked and later struck an instant deal. He was launching and rebranding the new Ford Kenya; the "Ingwe party." "How can we launch the Ingwe party without the Ingwe himself?" he asked.

Right there I gifted him 5 of my music CDs for himself and his protocol crew. He decided to gift me 5 K which I declined. I insisted the CDs were not a sale but a gift, but he also insisted that the 5k was to buy my boys more goat ribs since they were on site and not for the CDs. The reason I earlier declined this offer was because I didn't want hon. Wamalwa to view me as a transactional musician but to finally realize my totality as a person. I have also had other awkward moments with other dignitaries who only saw my music. On one such occasion, I had gone to the home of the former cabinet minister for finance, Hon. Robinson Githae to comfort them following the demise of their son. I made this request thru my close friend, Dr. Peter Githae, his younger brother. I performed my music to cheer them up and when I went up to the minister and his wife, to offer my condolences, Dr. James Mwangi, MD, and Chief Executive Officer at the giant Equity bank group noticed that I was the one who had been singing.

He asked me to bring him my music so he could buy some. This was echoed by the minister's affirmation that I had unique and inspirational music. He even got out his wallet asking how much I sell the music. I had a few CDs in my car but I insisted that I didn't come to make sales and that it was a matter of principle. They both gave me their business cards and asked me to bring the music to their respective office. This relationship would culminate in an opportunity to script a song for Hon. Githae's gubernatorial race in Kirinyaga County in 2013. I wrote the lyrics and used a Kikuyu musician to do the vocals for me. The song impressed the candidate Hon. Githae. It became his theme campaign song. Clearly, my choices paid up in later days. Two weeks after meeting Hon. Eugene Wamalwa, we executed the New Ford Kenya launch. Not only did I perform a good musical piece but gave a speech that impressed the then-presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta.

Senator Sakaja who was the TNA chairman said, I articulated the catchphrase "I believe" in a manner that made the former president wish I was in his corner. “I believe” was his catchphrase for The National Alliance.Hon. Wamalwa, then a presidential candidate quickly requested me to join his think tank and enjoined me in a movement called Vijana na Wamalwa. We hit the ground running with successful events. Hon. Wamalwa would invite me to his home for an after-work bonding time with the rest of his strategy team. Whenever he traveled out of town, he always reached out and asked me to accompany him. We traveled to Central Kenya and met several Mount Kenya delegations as well as visited historical sites such as where Dedan Kimathi was shot at. We traveled to Turkana and the Coast and Gusii land. We would also travel to events together in western Kenya and other places. Whenever he hosted delegations in his home in Nairobi or Kitale home, he would invite me; not to sing but to strategize on ideas and to engage with the masses. He believed in my intellectual and oratory prowess. I felt I had finally found the rhythm I had always sought for.

That is how I became a part of his entourage for major events alongside the likes of former speaker of the senate Hon. Ken Lusaka, who was then running to be governor for Bungoma, Hon. Musikari Kombo, former Cabinet minister who was running for Bungoma Seat, Former Cabinet minister for Agriculture and member of parliament Kipruto Arap Kirwa and former Member of Parliament for Lugari Hon. Cyrus Jirongo who would later be a presidential candidate.

We used to fly with Hon. Wamalwa across the country to places such as Lodwar where I had done major successful concerts before. He was pleasantly shocked to realize how much following and love I had in that far part of the country. On this very occasion, we had some light moments with Hon. Musikari Kombo, Cabinet Minister and a former member of parliament for Webuye, when the first senate speaker of the republic of Kenya Hon. Ekwe Ethuro found us onboarded to the airplane. He asked from outside who had accompanied the Justice Minister, Hon. Wamalwa, on that trip. He was told in a chorus, that he was accompanied by “Ugali Sosa”, as many people popularly call me. Upon clarifying they said, the minister was in the company of Man Ingwe, my stage name before I rebranded to "Leopardking"; which means the same thing in the Luhya language. Ingwe means Leopard.

As we flew back to Nairobi, Hon. Ekuro joked that he expected answers like the Hon. Musikari Kombo because he was there, but it seemed I masked everyone else with my celebrity presence, a gain which Hon. Wamalwa knew how to exploit. Hon. Musikari Kombo said I owed him a goat for making him look insignificant because of what Hon. Ekwe had just said. We all laughed at it as we flew back to Nairobi.

My tutelage in national politics was incubated when I worked with Hon. Wamalwa. I also felt more mainstreamed on the negotiating table; exactly what I had hoped for when I began my journey. I was not just a musician but a politician. He believed in me and wanted me to be in his corner at all times. In one meeting at the Golf Hotel in Kakamega, He made a formal plea that he needed my assistance to bring kakamega county to his fold. He needed foot soldiers with boots on the ground as a presidential candidate. He suggested that I could run for a political seat in the county and that would make the rallying call more believable. It is during this sit-down at Kakamega Golf Hotel that the idea of political candidature would be born.

I can authoritatively say that Hon. Eugene Wamalwa mentored and inspired me into active politics national politics no matter how one may look at it. I was there when Hon. Wamalwa positioned himself to be Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta's running mate at the biggest party launch ever in Kenyan history, the launch of The National Alliance, TNA. Uhuru Kenyatta and Eugene Wamalwa shared events in which I played major roles. The only trouble which separated the two was the unwillingness of the new Ford Kenya die-hard supporters to fold up and join TNA; something he would effect later in the lead to the 2017 elections. One would argue that URP didn't fold up either at the time. Be it as it may, Hon. Wamalwa found himself out of sync with Uhuru Kenyatta's grand political scheme of things.

This new found situation presented what the late honorable John Michuki used to call Liver juggling which means a slippery territory where you have to keep changing hands lest the liver falls off your hands. It was as complicated for Hon. Wamalwa when he was no longer a presidential candidate as it was for me since I was now a senatorial candidate for Kakamega County. I joined the Jubilee alliance through TNA where the current governor of Nairobi Johson Sakaja was the national chairman.

I mobilized candidates in every single ward in Kakamega county and marshaled parliamentary candidates in every sub-county and convened delegates meeting in Kakamega town at the Jamindas Hotel. I then convened another meeting in Nairobi where I invited top brass officials of TNA to discuss our nominations and other related logistics. We set up a campaign team for the county and a program where we shared synergy. We had good candidates; the likes of Professor Samwel Okubasu Kwashe who was running in the Ikolomani constituency, and Major Mapesa who was running in Matungu and Ambassador. Ambeyi Likabo was running in the Shinyalu constituency among others. During the Jubilee presidential campaign launch at Uhuru Park, I was given a prime-time slot to officially join the Jubilee Alliance. During the manifesto launch at the Moi sports center Kasarani, a time slot was also created for me to join the likes of the former

majority leader of Jubilee, Cabinet Secretary for Roads and Transport, and current cabinet minister for Roads and infrastructure, Hon. Onesmus Kipchumba Murkomen; to discuss the Youth agenda of the jubilee coalition hosted by Big Tedd.

During this launch, I argued the case for every ward to have a resource center as an empowerment hub. Resource centers would be a model for the people to learn and train skills which are demonstrated at the resource center but implemented in individual homes or community projects. These community development projects would also be monitored from the resource center. It was my concept to have a resource center in every ward as an empowerment hub using creative talents and sports as the springboard of economic development and an avenue for shared resources of knowledge and technology. This concept is still raw in my spirit today. As I will articulate my idea of a resource center at the end of this chapter, I have no problem with someone else duplicating my concepts. I intend to use the resource center concept beyond my domain.

During these campaigns, I had the privilege to have a sit down with the likes of Mzee George Muhoho who interviewed the viability of my candidature and gave me his nuggets of wisdom which I still treasure today. I learned the art of organizing for politics in TNA and it is what it is, articulately precise. The politics of candidates at gubernatorial and sub-county levels was very isolated from the presidential campaigns. The secretariat was strictly focused on logistics and facilitating the recruitment and serving of agents. This is completely removed from the activities of individual political candidates. My agents were recruited for me and facilitated without my single input; financial or ideological. This was from the national level down to every polling station. That's how organized the team was. The training of election officials and tallying officials was a serious matter. They all came in for residential training for days before being released for the actual work. Politicians had absolutely nothing to do with this.

Their job was to campaign for themselves, the presidential candidate, and the party. All logistics were run at the secretariat level with total isolation from political interference, you take it or leave it! This was my kind of orientation into politics and I am sure that it will count for something in my political acumen.

I had the president's number and knew how to talk to him to convince him that I was worth his time. How I did it, remains my secret. The president above everything congratulated me for a nice presentation at Kasarani during the manifesto launch. When the campaigns were tough and my finances were exhausted his team backed me up a little. Towards the end of the campaigns, my car couldn't stand the heat, it broke down in Nakuru. With it were campaign materials that I was carrying.

I ended up losing the car but I had to do what I had to do to finish the race. My last run was with hurdles and extremely tough circumstances but God saw me through. I was proud of myself and the fact that I ran a good race to the tail end and garnered significant votes with dignity and my head high for the lessons I had taken and the votes I got. I build great alliances within the county and the entire country. I was noticed and my people acknowledged that I am one of their bulls for the fight. One day, I will get to the field and wrestle for the trophy.

After the 2013 elections, I followed up with my deep-state relationships. I got my way and was nominated to be a member of the Intergovernmental relations committee which was to replace the transition authority. My joy didn't last long because the first summit of the President and the council of governors resolved that the governors want all county functions at once and immediately. My nomination became a stillbirth as my organization; The Inter-governmental Relations Committee was never fully operationalized. My contact person was then the political advisor of the devolution cabinet secretary. When the two fell out, he quit the government and life moved on quite a bit. I accepted my fate and went back into rebuilding my music and other related activities awaiting the perfect timing for my political comeback. When that time will be right, you will see the star in the sky or the white smoke.

The 2022 elections were supposed to be a good time for a political comeback but I had some major setbacks going into the race. Part of my efforts towards a resource center was thwarted when my music studio was broken into. I had set up a recording studio in Kakamega. This studio was part of my entry plan to support young talent and church choirs. When the studio was broken into and my valuable pieces of equipment were stolen; I got discouraged. Some of the equipment stolen included the sound system I had acquired for purposes of my roadshow campaigns and musical instruments which would help with my creative and talent development programs.

I was also still suffering the aftermaths of my struggles which I have already explained in this book. I felt that I needed more time to heal and recover emotionally and financially. Political campaigns can be draining both emotionally and financially. I am convinced that some of the conduct of our political class has everything to do with the stress that comes with political activities. This stress goes without being moderated or properly processed so as not to affect our routine life. When it was clear that my chances to run were compromised I decided to be involved in the 2022 election cycle more as a political strategist and adviser to specific candidates. I also occupied my political mind with political commentary on media and my social media platforms as a strategy to remain politically relevant.

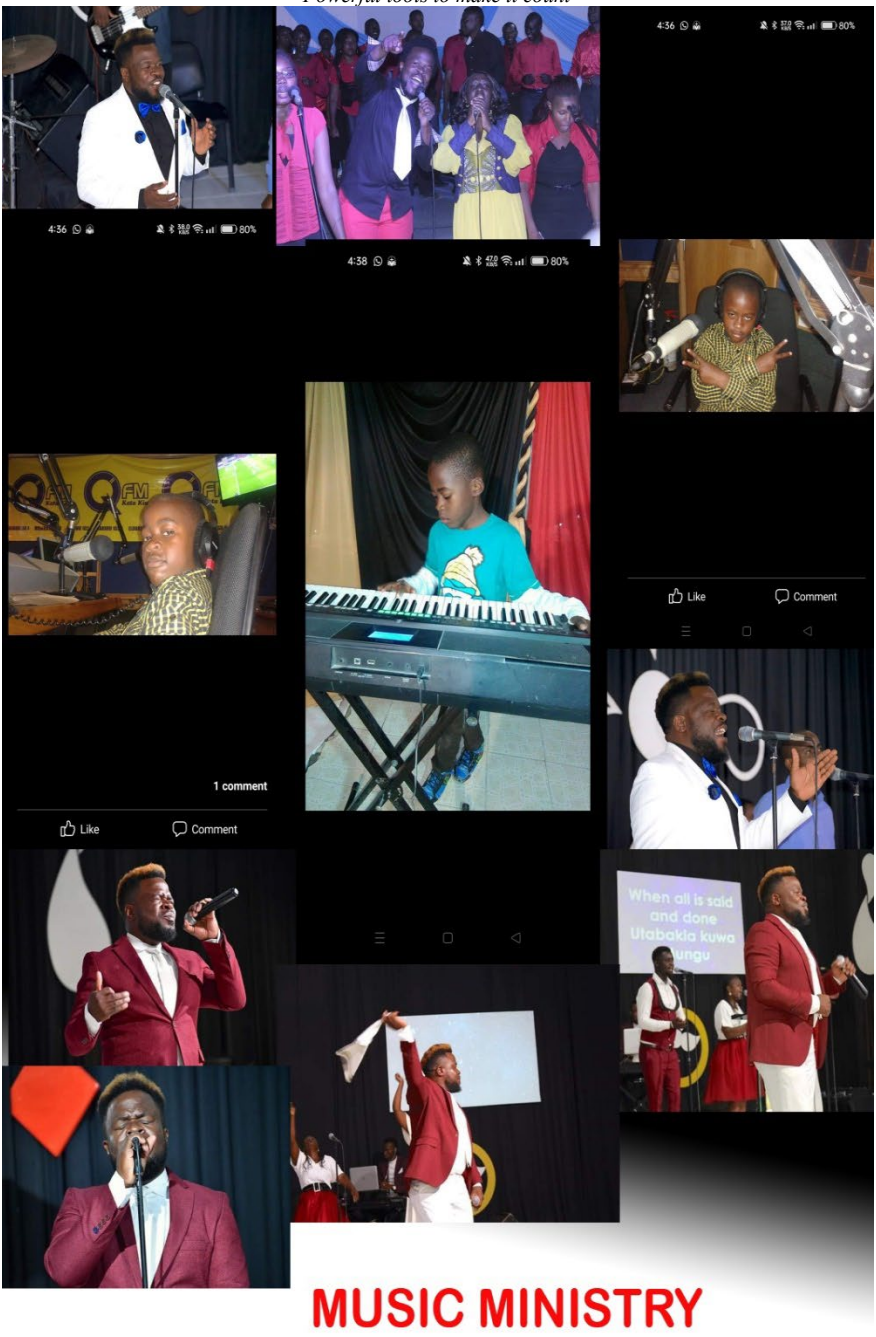
I also enjoyed offering psychosocial support to my friends who were running for office because I understand how much a politician needs psychosocial support during the campaign period. To others who subscribe to my faith, I also offered spiritual support with encouragement and prayers. Of all the people I dealt with in my various political-related capacities, I remain grateful to these specific individuals who valued my contribution and dared to show gratitude after the fact. Most politicians never look back to show gratitude in any form but these three earned my great respect. After supporting his communications strategy and playing other campaign roles in different capacities, my mentor and friend, Hon. Sam Omukoko who was running for the Kakamega Gubernatorial seat came to my town in Kitengela and called me over lunch. He conveyed himself to me with a very simple message. “I know that you wanted the best for me and you did your very best, thank you for your valuable input and for sharing your platform with me; the results of the elections notwithstanding.” These were kind words considering I have watched how my father worked for many politicians who never reciprocated with a simple word such as “thank you.”

Hon. Beatrice Elachi, Member of Parliament for Dagoretti North has been my close friend since when she was first running for the Dagoreti North seat in 2013. I supported her campaigns from then and through her different political seasons as a nominated senator and majority whip; the first woman to serve in that capacity in the history of Kenyan parliament. In 2017, she was elected speaker of the county assembly of Nairobi. Hon. Elachi is a great woman of prayer and a woman of great faith. She is also a very humble person who resigned as speaker of the Nairobi County government only for God to reward her with an appointment as the cabinet assistant secretary in the Uhuru government. Our friendship and psychosocial support for each other have endured through the varied seasons. After she won the 2022 Dagoreti North parliamentary seat, she called me for lunch and told me, “Man of God thank you for your labor of service.”

Isn’t that beautiful when such humility and gratitude are displayed by a woman who is in power and already got what she wanted; just coming back to say Thank you? These are the faces of humanity that make leadership and politics beautiful. When I grow up, I want to be remembered this way. The King himself, Central Organization of Trade Unions boss, Papa Francis Atwoli has been a friend of mine mentor; something I formally requested of him. We engaged with him more during the 2022 elections. When the elections were over, he called me for a dinner date and said "Thank you, pastor". He had a few nice choice words for me. He told me that he listens to my political analysis and thinks that I am an intelligent young man with a good future in our country.

He also taught me a lot about Luhya's history and heritage. He then asked, "What can I do for you?" I told him that I would like him to mentor me.

PASTORIAL AND PUBLIC LIFE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5

THE POWER OF AFFIRMATION

How, do you feel whenever one tells you the word thank you after you say a few words or complete a task? Each one of us feels nice whenever we are appreciated, encouraged, feted, cheered up or just placed in a position of achievement. The *Adrenal glands* also called suprarenal glands are activated and we go: Wow! That is a result of an act of affirmation. It is a word familiar to us. The word affirmation comes from the Latin word *affirmare,* which means to make steady. We can therefore interpret it as instilling confidence in one. Interestingly, it starts during our baby days when a mother or father just holds their baby in both hands and says words of affirmation to the baby: "Do not cry, I love you, you are good, I'm here, baby!", just words of comfort, without the baby responding but it goes quiet, giggles and makes a sound of happiness. Holding a baby in both hands is a sign of total focus and attention.

Affirmation is emotional support or encouragement. It is usually a sentence, of powerful words put together, like a positive statement, aimed to tap into your conscious and unconscious mind to motivate you, to challenge you, to push you to reach your full potential in life. It is my son's 16th birthday and I am figuring out how to make it memorable. I have put together a team of three fathers and their teenage sons. A camp looks like a great idea for a birthday gift. Doesn't it? We have played, swam, slaughtered, roasted, and eaten and everyone is happy. I challenge the boys with a cash reward if anyone of them can do 50 push-ups. One young man attempts and only does 20 push-ups. He makes a second attempt and makes it 36 but oops! He has muscle pull.

The second young man attempts and does only 20 push-ups. On his second attempt, he goes past 20 and we are all cheering for him. He gets to 30 and starts to show signs of being worn out. I start affirming him as he pushes his limits. I tell him that for as long as he hits 40 push-ups, I will give him the money. He regained his drive and smashed the 40 mark. He had the strength to take it to 50 but he came short at 46 pushups. Not bad for believing in yourself to such a point as doubling your previous record! The shock of my life was still being sharpened. My son wasn't even going to try.

He gave up and knew that he won't get anywhere close to the target so it was all pointless. I affirmed his athletic abilities and how he is the envy of anyone athletic in terms of height, physic, and stamina. My son got the magic desire form out of nowhere. He was ready to give it a shot. This one didn't want to even start, so I had to start motivation from the beginning. The young man hit 52 straight push up's on his very first attempt and smashed the targets. He got his cash reward for it. That's the power of affirmation. Oprah Winfrey, who today has about 2.5 million followers online, says that without affirmation, she would not be what she is. A great believer in a positive mindset- the essence of self-affirmation, she has popped up greatly from a background of poverty to global fame. The Nigerian lady Bukola Lukan, who since 2020 has distributed over 5,000 affirmations cards to Nigerians and targets 13 million Africans by 2030, has been reckoned as the affirmation queen. She confirmed, during one of her interviews that, affirmations are a simple solution to mental health and hardship.

Affirmation deficiency

The lack of affirmation by one or both parents leaves some children emotionally crippled. An emotionally crippled person is unable to feel or show true emotions and so cannot form stable relationships with others. An emotionally crippled person has been rendered indecisive, alienated, uncaring, confused, or helpless in conjunction with experiencing debilitating emotions such as worry, fear, panic, or despair. This state of being emotionally crippled is largely associated with a lack of affirmation by one or both parents. A lot of us missed out on the affirmation which should have come from our parents and teachers leading to limited self-confidence, poor self-concept, and being emotionally crippled. We do not know how powerful affirmation is because we were born to parents who were struggling and broken by poverty, slavery, apartheid, and colonialism and their poor self-image is all we got while growing up. Affirmations have the power to motivate you to act on certain tasks, help you to concentrate on achieving your goals in life, and give you the power to change your negative thinking patterns and replace them with positive thinking patterns or assist you in accessing a new belief system.

Colonialists and apartheid regimes conquer their slaves by first of all making them believe that everything about them was bad and everything which was of their masters was great. This manipulation continues to put a majority of populations under mental slavery up to date. Affirmation has also been discovered to be a proven tool that makes it possible for people to conquer difficulties or phases of life which would otherwise be miserably painful without affirmation. Dr. Carmen Harra is a clinical psychologist, metaphysical intuitive, and best-selling author. He posits that affirmations have been used to successfully treat people with low esteem, depression, and other mental health conditions.

Affirmations are the tools you need to conquer difficulties

One painful experience that is characterized by affirmation is circumcision. It brings me memories of how the Tiriki or Bukusu people in my Luhya community in Kenya conduct their circumcision ceremonies and build up to the actual cut. The boys are lined to sing and dance while playing the jingles otherwise called *Tsinyimba* along the road before they are taken by the river to face the cut. Listening to the lyrics of the songs when translated, the lyrics say," If you are afraid of the cut, you are not a man; you are not a human being". If you face the cut then you are a bull, a leopard, and a warrior, qualified to be called a man and a man of nobility.

Affirmation builds confidence

A father owes their child affirmation. God the Creator showed us an example. Affirmations of a father build confidence in a child while also causing believability among those who see or experience this moment of affirmation. The book of Mathew 3: 13-17, presents us with Jesus being baptized. As soon as Jesus was baptized, heaven was opened, and the people saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ***"This is my Son, whom I love; with Him, I am well pleased."*** This is the height of affirmation from God himself, not through an agent like an angel or even a link person like John the Baptist. The confidence of Jesus was affirmed while the people present believed at this moment. In Mathew chapter 17, verses 1- 8, we see Jesus go up the mountains with Peter, John, and James. Jesus is transfigured as they watch. His face shines like the sun, his clothes become white as light, and there before they appeared Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus.

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, ***"This is my Son, whom I love; with Him, I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"*** How many times have you affirmed your son or daughter in private and how many times have you affirmed your children before their contemporaries or before your contemporaries?

Affirmation in marriage

Marriage is the place where the most fundamental human emotional needs are to be met. If you cannot say that little thing such as good morning, then you have denied your wife, husband, parents, or child the blessing of meeting their emotional human need called Significance. If you cannot take that moment to ask how was your day, how are you doing or how are you feeling, then you are denying your partner an essential emotional need called attention, if you cannot allow your partner to speak to you as they fell and see things, then you are denying them validation and if you are overly controlling them demanding for everything they should do, then you are denying them an emotional need called

volition. If you do not appreciate the good things or the looks and effort to cook or provide or pay for fees and rent, then you are denying them an emotional need called appreciation. If you make them chase shadows then you are denying them an emotional need called security and finally, if you do not find a reason to make it habitable to connect with them interestingly or allowing him or her to mingle with others then you are denying them an emotional need called connection. All these are not complete until the place of affirmation. There is something we have christened "Chemistry" or "love and attraction". Without complicating my argument, that chemistry or attraction is an answer to a question. Can you affirm that person? You will know that this woman is the one for you if you can affirm the person and you will be attracted to this man if you can affirm the man. How do you feel whenever you are with this person and what do you miss when you are away from the person? Are you able to say things that will make the person feel appreciated, needed, wanted, valued, and significant? Is whatever you are saying coming from a genuine place?

Can your actions, attitudes, and behavior back up the claims you make as thoughts and emotions toward this person? The key word is **affirmation.** It is the primary responsibility of those who enter into marriage. It is rewarding to affirm and to be affirmed both ways. I mean, if I say good night, I will get the response-'good night'. If I say you are beautiful, I will be told, 'Thank you'. If I say thank you, I will be told, 'You are welcome'. God aroused the first instincts of affirmation into the psyche of Adam into his subconscious and conscious said, "Woman!" He affirmed. God made sure that Adam could affirm Eve by doing it just right like only he could do. When the word of God says that wives should submit to their husbands, all that women were asked to do was to affirm their husbands with the perspective of authority. If you ask every man, they will tell you that they prefer to feel respected than to even feel loved. That is what I am talking about. Women are making a lot of effort to show love to their men because that is what women need the most and therefore their mind is programmed to interpret their conduct around feeling and showing love. In reciprocation, they also show their men love, hoping that they are doing a noble thing. Unfortunately, this doesn't seem enough because it is like a lion showing its strength in water. It will be crying out for help rather than showing power and ability.

Women need to learn how to affirm their men within the perspective of authority. Make him feel in charge, make him feel his voice counts, and was the voice that mattered in the instance. Make him feel that you see a strong and intelligent man and not a loser. Stop the prayers and affirm your man, then go back to pray for an affirmed man. Queen Esther submitted and was offered even half the kingdom. Affirm your man, and he will conquer all the mountains and follow your soul like a shadow.

Some men can affirm themselves but if all you see are errors in their lives; they will never rise to the occasion. Show them trust and affirm that they can make the right decisions for the family and they can restrain themselves when it matters. Affirm that they have in them the ability to get it right and correct past mistakes. Do not keep reminding them every morning that you knew it would end that miserably. When he affirms you because he is seeking favor from you, it is not wise to rub it on his face that you knew he was seeking favor. Do not always say mean things about his pot belly or even the strong man in the strong room.

One day, your two soldiers will be fallen and you wouldn't want him to comment on them at all, not even in a good way. However, when the word of God says men should love their wives, He simply means that men should affirm their wives from the perspective of care and empathy. Let the men show that they care about her feelings, her worries and fears, her priorities, and her gifts. Be empathetic with what is on her itinerary and see whether there is anything you could do to make her feel better. Adam affirmed Eve as the very first words he said concerning Eve. Young men should take priority to spend time with the wives of their youth. This phrase is not in vain because certain aspects of pleasure fade away with time and so if you do not explore them while you are young, you will have missed the element of adoration for your wife's beauty. When you experience her beauty, in her prime which is in her youth, every time you look at her in her older years, you do not see the fallen breasts, the stretch marks, or even the wrinkles because your brain already has an image of the sharply pointed breasts or all gathered breasts, nice looking body shape, whatever your type is.

Learn to give your wife good sex in your youth so that when she is going through menopause, she doesn't fill her mind with a sense of loss. Those who deny themselves the pleasure of their youth, tend to struggle more in their later years due to their missed opportunities. Do it and do it again, then start doing it. ***Having the most beautiful moments, memories, and encounters during your youthful years shall become your old-age affirmations when much of that won't be on display.*** The men who enjoyed their youthful sex and let all their adrenaline on the floor are less curious as they head to their older years but the couples who are still guilty of having sex after two years of marriage and are holding back for whatever reason; end up staying with these curiosities even in older years. Am not suggesting anything outside the bounds of decency but am saying that let us all do our best during our best times and try to make all our moments lean towards our best. Marriage Missions International conducted surveys and established the following findings; Affirmation is everything. When a man is affirmed, he can conquer the world but when he is not, he is sapped of his confidence and manhood.

When a man is not affirmed, he will unconsciously seek out places where he receives affirmation. If a man realizes that his wife believes in him and is always looking forward to the best of him despite his limitations and mistakes, he will be more determined to excel in life. A man can slay dragons, climb mountains and win great victories if he believes his wife believes he can. 44 percent of the men in their prime years with responsibility for home, children, and work felt unappreciated in their families. Instead of affirming what they were doing right, their wives were overly focused and reinforcing their inadequacies. When you focus your attention on what he is doing wrong in the relationship, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Arguments and fights in marriage

Quarrels and arguments are healthy in a marriage as long as they are done fairly and without being abusive to any of the parties involved. Whenever one is angry, disappointed, or ashamed, it is important to say and vent it out. It is important to let the other person know how you feel. Not expressing your emotions and repressing them could cause you to degenerate into depression or deep hatred for the other person. Have you ever wondered how and why people who fight and argue in one moment can make up and be happy again? It is because letting out your anger releases that pressure and sets you free such that after the argument, you are no longer keeping the emotions of anger and disappointment. Arguments and conflicts enable you to specify, vent it out, challenge and interrogate and justify or nullify logic then possibly alter the things that keep your relationship from being connected. Let it out and then at the earliest opportunity affirm each other one more time. Let the affirmation outweigh the criticism. Listen to each other and attempt to understand what the other person is saying. You should keep your sight on affirming each other even when you disagree. Arguments can lead to a better understanding of your desires and priorities. They can help to outline and crystallize your needs; Arguments are a great enabler for better trust and connection after gaining understanding.

Dr. Jess O'Reilly, resident sexologist for Astroglide, says it's less about the subjects of your fights and more about *how* you fight. "A healthy fight involves active listening. It is also an attempt to understand your partner's perspective and still have positive interactions even when you disagree," she says. "For instance, you can let your partner know that you love them and want to resolve the issue." Acts of physical affection, pauses or contemplation before responding, and an attempt to make up after can all go a long way toward making a fight a more positive, productive experience for both of you. Some people fight unfairly whereby arguments involve conversation-killing statements like, "I guess I should just leave," "You'd be happier without me," or, "Well at least I don't do X." Says O'Reilly.

"These types of statements not only sound selfish and unreasonable, but they don't move the conversation along and are certainly not underpinned by love. Healthy fights allow you to relieve tension to improve your relationship and deepen the loving connection."

Genuine affirmation is just as powerful even in silence or in absentia

There is a reason why the scripture says to honor your father and mother and your days shall be long. Exodus 20:12. Ephesians 6: 1-4 says Honor thy father and mother so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth. This goes a long way to validate that your parents can affirm you in their hearts and thoughts without having to say or do anything much as they must verbalize their affirmation. Their secret places of prayer, the thought of pride and gratitude, or thoughts of shame and regrets and bitterness can easily affect you without your parents having to commit their words to you. 1 Peter 3: 7 says that

Husbands should dwell with their wives according to knowledge (What do you know about women or your wife?), giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; So that your prayers may not be hindered. Wives might want to stage arguments as to whether they are weaker vessels or in fact what a man can do a woman can do better. This is likened, to a weaker vessel. To mean, whether they are strong or weak, let the husband first embrace the attitude which handles with care." Fragile goods on board!" Women would want to quickly imagine that they have the keys to hinder the prayers of their husbands. Instead, it's the revelation by Apostle Paul that; anyone vulnerable such as orphans, widows, the poor, and wives, who in this context have been subdued by way of divine instruction, have the defense of God.

This defense is to the extent that their position is compromised on account of divine instruction. Wives who are not submissive to their husbands do not have this privilege because they are not vulnerable under the authority of their husbands. The context under which these words were spoken was a situation where wives were to listen to their husbands as a duty, please their husbands, not even speak in the place of worship according to 1 Corinthians 14: 35, but speak through their husbands and above all obey their husbands as the head of the wife. In this case, the wife was vulnerable in the same breath as the orphans, widows, and the poor because they had no inheritance and their vulnerability automatically invoked the attention of God that they are treated well. The answer is in Psalms 10: 18 "You will hear the cry of the oppressed and favor the orphans. You will judge in their favor so that mortal men may cause terror no more."

The upshot of this conversation is that your wife can be at peace in her spirit and it shall be beautiful between the two of you. However, when you oppress her, then in her helpless state and oppressed state, God will judge in her favor, which is what Paul means when he says, that oppression will hinder your prayers because her tears speak contrary to your prayers in the wake of oppression. It is therefore wrong for the wives to imagine that the word of God offered them such an undue advantage to have their wishes and desires prioritized before God on account of that scripture.

Disclaimer! This revelation doesn't apply to the powerful women who have all the affirmative action working in their favor. Such are not oppressed and are not vulnerable. The women who are freely throwing their husbands out of their houses because the federal and state laws favor children women and pets cannot be beneficiaries of this revelation as they are not the oppressed and helplessly vulnerable. This revelation doesn't apply to wives who are oppressing their husbands by way of being abusive, bruising their husbands' egos, shaming their husbands, sexually depriving their husbands, and doing everything to make sure they are the ones in control of their husbands' will, oxygen and heart rate. Such women are not in any way vulnerable, oppressed, or needing the merciful protection of God. The principle of their husbands' prayers being hindered cannot apply to wives who are oppressing these husbands. The scripture did not envisage the oppressor being the one to benefit from her acts of oppression and injustice towards her husband. If this scripture be a principle, and it indeed is a principle, then in such a case, it is the husband's misgivings which should hinder the prayers of such a wife before God.

Parental affirmation: Mohammad Ali affirms his daughter

My all-time favorite role model, Mohamed Ali, the greatest of all time (GOAT) is the best example of the power of affirmation and I will quote him in three varying incidences. His daughter who is now a retired world boxing champion, just like her father, narrated the fiber of her father, Mohamed Ali. One of Ali's daughters was being bullied in school and Ali handled it most epically from point of understanding and revelation, which is exactly what I am pushing or pulling you to explain; "She called my father in tears when she was 7 years old. Kids were teasing her saying, "you do not look like your dad, and we've never seen him." She was fair-skinned, didn't look like him and he wasn't living with her mother." Leila continued. We do not believe your father is Mohammed Ali."My father got on the plane the next day, flew to school, and called an assembly. When Mohammed Ali landed, the whole world stopped moving because he was the most famous man in the whole world. He asked my sister to pick out the students who were teasing her. They walked to the stage, he shook their hands to their disbelief and he said to them, "This is my daughter!"

"My father then took her home at the end of the day and walked with her up and down the streets holding her hand as the world came to a standstill crowding every possible space to see the greatest man, Mohammed Ali, and his daughter." As Mohammed Ali signed autographs both in school and in the streets, he solved the single most need of his daughter which was affirmation. The whole world was able to see that Ali was proud of her daughter and the daughter's self-image, self-esteem, self-concept, and self-worth were resolved for the rest of her life. Affirmation is the difference between your self-confidence and the lack of it. What do you do with your children? Do you affirm or destroy them? What do you do with your spouse? Do you affirm or destroy them? If the people around you cannot affirm you, make sure you meet that need. If your father cannot affirm you, find a father figure in a mentor or pastor. If your mother cannot affirm you, find a mother figure to offer that much-needed oxygen.

The Birth and Affirmation of Baby Jesus

The human spirit responds to affirmation as an innocent child at birth, as a growing person, and as an adult. When Jesus was born, Luke 2: verses 8 to 20; shepherds were taking care of their flock by the night when an angel of God appears to the shepherds and delivers the great news: "This very day in the town of David, a savior is born, Christ the Lord. They will find the baby wrapped in cloth, lying in a manger." Consequently, in Mathew chapter 2, wise men from the east came to Herod saying,*" Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."* They must have assumed that in King Herod's house, an heir had been born and so the king's palace was the most obvious place to direct their search. As they departed from Herod, the star which they had seen in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where baby Jesus was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother fell and worshipped him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. In both cases, the angel of God affirmed the divinity and royalty of Jesus unto the shepherds and affirmed Jesus unto the shepherds. He also affirmed the royalty of Jesus unto the wise men through the star of Jesus acknowledging the creation of the sun, the moon, and the stars for the festivals of men as written in Genesis chapter 1: 14. Both the shepherds and the wise men worshipped Jesus and this too is an affirmation of Jesus by these special people. Nature affirmed Jesus in the skies with stars while the angels affirmed Jesus to the shepherds and wise men who all came and worshipped him.

The Life of Joseph

In Genesis chapter 7:3-5 we establish that Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other sons because he had been born to him when he was old. He made a richly ornamented long robe of many colors with full sleeves to him. God also directly affirmed Joseph through dreams which depicted that his brothers would bow before him and later, another dream would depict that his father and mother and all of his brothers would bow before him. These dreams affirmed to Joseph what he would become in the future. His father, Jacob discussed this with him and questioned as saying, do you mean even your mother and I will bow before you? The Bible says, But Joseph kept these words in his heart.

Revelations of God beforehand through dreams and visions, the promises of God in his word, and the prophecies of God by fellow men and women of God are godly affirmations that serve to strengthen our confidence in God. The primary objective of affirmations is to build confidence which manifests as faith. It is this combined affirmation of Joseph and God through dreams that Joseph had in him the confidence to fight off all of his tribulations in his later life as a slave in Egypt and as a prisoner. It is still this confidence that made him rule well in Potiphar's house and as prime minister. This is the primary wisdom in Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 14:5 when he says, rather than speak in tongues; we should instead prophesy in the church so that the church may be edified. To edify means to instruct or inform in a way that improves the mind or character. This outcome seems consistent with the outcome of affirmation.

A blessing needs affirmation and congruence

In Genesis 48, Jacob was sick and counting his last days when his son Joseph came to see him together with his two sons. Jacob was pleased to see his favorite son Joseph and his offspring Ephraim and Manasseh. He blest Joseph, gave him an inheritance of land passed down from Abraham and Isaac and then gave him more land inheritance, which he had conquered by his bow and arrow. Genesis 48:*22* ***Moreover I have given to you one [d]portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.*** In our present days, we would say land bought with your money in addition to the ancestral land held in trust. Jacob then blest his grandsons with three blessings. He elevated them to the status of sons and made them his sons and not grandsons. He gave them the right to be given an inheritance alongside Joseph's brothers separate from that given to Joseph inheritance; ***5 And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. 6 Your [b]offspring [c]whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance.***

Jacob also pronounced an increase and favor upon them. **16** "***The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, and the name of my father's Abraham and Isaac, And let them grow into a multitude amid the earth".***in verse 20, Jacob says **20** ***"By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!' "*** And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh. However, Joseph under this glorious moment did what he should not have done. He failed to affirm this blessing and failed to accept or agree with the blessings of Jacob. Picture this, that your father or pastor is praying for you then someone by merit or otherwise comes and removes that hand by force with arguments and verbal exchanges. How does that end? ***17 Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know.***

Joseph never enforced the blessing of Jacob to his children and never asked his brothers to uphold that position of things except that they should carry his bones to his ancestor's land. The failure to affirm and agree with the blessing of Jacob turned it around that the sons of Joseph, so blest in utterance became a total disgrace. Didn't Jacob say, the people of Israel will bless each other by the name of Manasseh and Ephraim? This blessing by the name of Manasseh and Ephraim is largely practiced by the Jewish community to date. It is customary in many communities for parents to administer this blessing to their children on Friday nights before the Kiddush. Others, including Chabad Chassidim, reserve this special children's blessing for the moments before the onset of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year. Many also preface this blessing with the Priestly blessing: However, the actual sons of Joseph and their generation have some of the weakest links imaginable in their lineage and that of the house of Israel.

Firstly, Moses gave an inheritance to Manasseh only and nothing to Ephraim. The tribe of Manasseh was wiped off its male species in the wilderness and after making the women protest to be given his inheritance. Moses settled them. As seen in the book of **numbers 27 1-11,** (*The daughters of Zelophehad son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, belonged to the clans of Manasseh son of Joseph. The names of the daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirzah. They came forward [2] and stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and the whole assembly at the entrance to the tent of meeting and said,[3] "Our father died in the wilderness. He was not among Korah's followers, who banded together against the LORD, but he died for his sin and left no sons*.)

The tribe of Ephraim complained to Joshua and demanded a share also in the book of Joshua 17: 14. [15] Joshua answered them, *"If you have so many people that the hill country of Ephraim is too small for you, go to the forest and clear for yourself an area in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim*."

Secondly, while God gifted the tribe as warriors and valiant fighters, in 1 Chronicles 12:30, Ephraim failed to follow God's order to remove the Canaanites as we see in Judges 1:29. Instead in laziness, they made the Canaanites their slaves but later on, these Canaanites would mingle until idolatry was heightened and Ephraim was punished heavily for his sin. **Hosea 7:8-10:** *"[8]Ephraim, you are like a half-baked loaf of bread. [9]Foreigners are using up your strength, but you don't realize it. You have become a gray-haired, old man, but you don't realize it. [10] Israel, your arrogance testifies against you, but even after all this; you don't turn to the LORD your God or look to him for help."*In the end, Ephraim was greatly punished and his glory flew away. That doesn't sound like the name of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob being printed on them. Why? Because Joseph did not affirm the blessing of his father to his sons and removed his father's hand while in the act of blessing. When Isaac blest Jacob, Jacob accepted his mother's advice and affirmed that decision. He went before Isaac in deceit but very confidently having accepted and affirmed himself in his heart that the doubts of Isaac could not sway him. He remained confident. When Isaac knew that he had been deceived by his son, he did not curse him. He stayed calm and told Esau the truth.

When Mary received the news about the birth of Jesus through the angel Gabriel, she did not dispute or doubt. She said, may it happen to me as you have spoken. When the same angel Gabriel spoke to Elizabeth and Zachariah about the birth of John the Baptist, Zachariah doubted and was made dumb so that he may not say anything contrary until the child was born. He remained so until he gave the correct name of the boy as directed by the angel. It is the doubts of Abraham when he was promised a son by God which caused him to go through a second test to verify his complete trust in God. The first time he was promised a son, he said, let Eleazar my servant be my heir.

Then he sired Ishmael as another show of doubt. It is these tendencies of doubt which made Abraham subjected to the most delicate test to sacrifice Isaac to prove that he could believe and obey God fully. Only then was he confirmed as the chosen one for the Godly promise to restore the order of God. The blessings and promises of God require affirmation. There are many practical ways of affirmation of blessings but I will restrain myself so I do not birth a doctrine. Abraham and Jacob had the habit of making sacrifices whenever they encountered God or his instructions and promises.

Affirmation deficiency/spirit of rejection

Those children who were rejected at birth by their fathers, mothers, or kin continue to struggle with that rejection. Our ignorance as prophetic ministers makes us pray against the spirit of rejection but my understanding is different. This hyper-awareness of the spirit of rejection makes you more and more aware of your rejection until you believe the intensity of rejection and ruin your life despite receiving prayers. Rejection and abandonment are the opposite of affirmation and they create what I will christen, as an **Affirmation Deficiency**. My understanding is such that our revelation which we get through the word of knowledge is meant to help us identify the deficiency in the spiritual substance of the individual. Gaining knowledge through the spirit and mentioning it in public to the amazement of the gathering only reveals the need of the gathering but casting out the spirit of rejection doesn't cure the condition.

The man or woman of God is supposed to pray and to set your spirit and mind free then speak affirmation to you in accordance to God's word customized with your context When we will have perceived right, and grasped that the impression of the spirit of rejection is practically a spirit man, deficient in substance as a result of a lack of affirmation. We ought to affirm the individual with the word of God. Once we can tell the source and context of their affirmation deficiency, otherwise christened, rejection, we then would use the word of God to speak life and offer support and encouragement. We ought to prescribe a support system that can cover that gap. By saying a support system, I mean that some cases will need to be escalated for therapy; some will need to be included in support groups of people facing similar challenges while others might need to be assigned to mentors who will offer the much-needed affirmation of a father figure or mother figure.

That is the cure for an affirmation deficiency and that process which starts with the word of knowledge/prophetic moment up until the mind, soul, and spirit are free and the deficiency healed will constitute what I will call deliverance. Deliverance is a state of mind and spirit where the man has been rescued and completely set free from the situation which once bound limited or negatively influenced and affected them. Most of the time, Deliverance is a process and not an event. Those who treat deliverance as an event are the reason we see the same people receive deliverance prayers under the anointing over and over again.

Abandonment of Ishmael

A child who grows up without affirmation suffers the consequences of abandonment and rejection even if no single word was spoken against them. When the angel of the lord told Hagar that her son Ishmael would be a wild

donkey of a man and his hand would be against everyone while everyone would be against him and that he would live in hostility towards his brothers, the angel was not passing judgment like I have heard a lot of bible preachers say. What is happening here is that the angel had the psychology which I am trying to have you get. Since Ishmael has been born in an environment of rejection and now facing more abandonment, he will be raised without the most coveted element which is affirmation. It meant Ishmael would be raised with an affirmation deficiency, the outcome of which would that be Ishmael would grow up to be what I have already explained to be "emotionally crippled". The manifestation of which will be, *a wild donkey of a man and his hand will be against everyone while everyone will be against him, and he will live in hostility towards his brothers*.

Charge of duty

When someone entrusts you with responsibility and charges you with duty, it is a sign of confidence in you and thus a form of affirmation. At one time, Jesus asked Simon Peter among other disciples, “Who do the people say I am? “They said, "Some say you are John the Baptist and others say you are Elijah". Jesus asked, "But who do you say I am?" Peter said, "You are the Christ, son of the living God". Jesus calls Peter blessed because flesh and blood had not revealed this but God in heaven. Jesus then proceeds to charge Peter and commission him to strengthen his brothers.

Jesus promises to build the church upon Peter and affirms him saying that he will give him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever He binds on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever he loses will be loosed in heaven. The words of affirmation, when one is charged, are what builds confidence in the person. When Jesus commissioned the disciples over the great commission in Mark 16:17, he said, ***"The following signs will accompany those who will believe.in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they shall take up serpents and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall do them no harm. They shall lay hands on the sick and the sick shall be healed***. All these are affirmations of charging one to duty.

Self-affirmation

The other critical layer of affirmation is self-affirmation. It is not always that we will have a spouse, a parent, a teacher, a boss, or a contemporary who affirms you. Sometimes, we might need to affirm ourselves through our situations without looking out for external aid; especially if the external aid is not as available. This is what we call self-affirmation, self-charge and it is as practical as you see it. You can change yourself; your self-affirmation can achieve miracles in your life. I dare say that self-affirmation is the measure of your faith.

The degree and extent to which you affirm yourself under your circumstances is the functionality and measure of your faith thereof.

Meshack, Shadrack, and Abednego
The power of self-affirmation prevails in Daniel 3:15- 18 when Meshack, Shadrack, and Abednego are accused of disobeying the worship of King Nebuchadnezzar. A determination is made and they are asked to worship an idol the moment the music is played. Meshack, Shadrack, and Abednego affirm themselves as they tell of the king. They say, "Far from it, that we should worship your idol. Our God will deliver us, but just in case He doesn't, so be it. We shall face your judgment with courage." That is self-affirmation in the circumstance.

Paul and Silas
In Acts 16, Paul and Silas are thrown in prison for a charge of disturbing the peace of the Romans. They are brought before a magistrate who issues, according to me, the worst form of judgment. Paul and Silas were brought before the public square, beaten up, then thrust into the inner cells, meaning the deepest possible, and chained on locks. Paul and Silas affirmed their faith in God. They affirmed themselves in faith, sang praises, and prayed to God. They did not complain but prayed in hope and suddenly, there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bands were loosed.

Prodigal son
One other great story of self-affirmation in the Bible is found in the prodigal son narrative. When he had suffered in a distant land, he charged and affirmed himself, he said, “My father’s servants eat and leave food on the table yet am here suffering. I will go back to my father and ask for forgiveness. I will ask him that I have sinned against him and God. I will ask him to hire me as one of his servants”.

Muhammad Ali self-affirmation

The greatest boxer of all time, Mohammed Ali is the greatest example of self-affirmation to ever live outside of the example of Jesus. He became the most famous man in the world and I do not think there is any man after him that has acquired his kind of fame enduring for a lifetime. Mohammed Ali did not win his fights because he was the strongest or even most powerful, no, he just affirmed himself and won all his matches and battles outside the ring by the power of affirmation.

I want to write a bit about this, so I need you to adjust your sitting position, as I tell you the unlikely story of a man who won the battles of his life when everything was against him and when the environment and every known parameter had a closed case of defeat for him. Surely you can make it. Mohamed Ali is my hero and when I grow up, I want to be Mohamed Ali. I have introduced my football-playing son to the person of Mohamed Ali as a role model so let us talk self-affirmation.

Mohammed Ali, a black young man at the age of 22 in a racial white American country in 1964 makes this assertion, and as I listen, I hear the tone of Martin Luther King Junior. Ali says, “Am the greatest!” There is a video on YouTube called, ***The Greatest*** – Mohamed Ali inspirational video. I would like you to watch the video and tell yourself that you can motivate yourself and affirm yourself into victory any day any time, no matter your circumstances. Mohammed Ali had no car, and for that reason, he used to run miles to the gym. Not having a car was not an excuse not to try. He said to the journalist Jerry in an interview, “I am the greatest fighter to ever step foot in the ring and that; this will be the biggest upstage in the history of boxing because money will be lost. Jerry demeaned Ali and said,” I think you are a big bag of wind.” Liston is the champion, a much bigger puncher.

Ali responded and said, you say I talk too much; I want you all there so I shut all of your mouths. In that match, he beat the champion in the 6th round and all the mouths got shut. Notably, Mohammed Ali was initially named Cassius Clay. He rejected that name and gave himself the name Mohammed Ali. He refused any journalist to call him Cassius Clay, a white man's name. He said he is not white and didn't want to be forced to wear a white man's name. He encouraged blacks to believe in themselves and be happy with themselves without looking out for anyone else to validate them. His opponents in the ring knew how much he hated the white man's name and called him by that name to annoy him. Mohamed Ali punished them in the ring, with a bad beating. All this time, he would be asking his opponents such as Terrell, in the middle of the match, “What's my name?” He beat him so badly that he uttered those magical words. "Your name is Mohammed Ali.”

He refused to be inducted into the United States armed forces because he was opposed to the war in Vietnam. The United States government would punish him harshly and strip him of his championship and that came with being stopped from fighting or working anywhere in the United States. As a result, he did not fight from March 1967 to October 1970, thus from ages 25 to almost 29, as his case worked its way through the appeal process before his conviction was overturned in 1971.

Mohammed in his own words during these low moments said, “Am gonna fight, not for me, but to uplift my little brothers and sisters who are sleeping on concrete floors today in America”. He wanted to become famous to help people and that is my trajectory. He affirmed himself while at the same time affirming his people and affirmed himself for his people as an identity. After 4 years, he won his appeals and was back on track having lost time, but not the passion and vision of being the greatest.

Mohammed had a mantra: “I float like a butterfly and sting like a bee”, which was his self-affirmation into any fight and the making of his brand. Heading into his October 30th, 1970 fight with George Foreman in Zaire, dubbed “the rumble in the jungle”, Mohammed Ali won that fight with affirmation. He won with his mind and mouth more than he did with his fists. As a build-up, he kept saying through media that he can't fight what he can't see, "I'm too fast that he won't see me coming. “I know you have picked his side but you will all bow after I whoop him. The man is in trouble and I am going to show all of you how great I am." There is a video on YouTube of Mohamed Ali accompanied by his technical team and as he looks around, he sees his entire team sad and defeated.

Mohammed Ali looks back at them and asks, **"How do you expect me to win with all of you looking like you have been beaten?** You are not going to fight; I am the one going to fight. If you know you are going out there, then smile or act like you are smiling, else stay back." Ali understood the power of affirmation and how a less-synched technical team would demoralize him. George Foreman in a documentary said these words: "I had him beat in about 5 or 6th round. I had done everything and knew. I got him. Oh, how wrong I was.” Ali looked right into my eyes and asked me,” Is that all you got George? Come on show me something, is that all you got? They told me you are a hard puncher; show me something George or you are in trouble”. He then embarked to call Foreman all the ugly names that came into his mind and within no time, George Foreman was knocked out on the mat. Self-affirmation and a verbal or mental journey into your possibilities is the key to any victory and positive outcome in your life.

Courage and a Parental affirmation

Most biblical characters who showed resilence and courage were affirmed by their parents, not just to be confident and content with self but also, to face danger and various threats with a positive mindset. David for example, was Jesse's last born child. In 1 Samwel 17: 24-51 various aspects of affirmation by his father comes forth. First and foremost, David suffered prejudice from his brothers the same way Joseph son of Jacob did. In verse 28, Eliab, David's eldest brother, heard David talking to the men. He was angry with David and said, “What are you doing here? Who is taking care of those sheep of yours out there in the

wilderness? You cheeky brat, you! You just came to watch the fighting!" "Now what have I done?" David asked. "Can't I even ask a question?" He turned to another man and asked him the same question, and every time he asked, he got the same answer. Some men heard what David had said, and they told Saul, who sent for him. The father must have known that the brothers perceived him this way but still sent him to the fields to check on his brothers and take food supplys to them. He never withheld David challenging him with fear not to risk moving near battle lines.

17 Now Jesse said to his son David, "Take this ephah[d] of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. **18** Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance[e] from them. **19** They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines."In verse 34, David narrates to Saul how he has delivered his flock from lions and bears. Let us agree that the father knew that his son deals with such threats yet still sent him out to shepherd after the flock.

In the same manner, Genesis 37: 1-3 tells us that Joseph gave a bad reported his brothers to the father and the brothers hated him for that. Joseph was more loved and had been given a robe of many colors by the father. In verse 4, His borthers spoke no kind word to Joseph and to make matters worse, Joseph shared his dreams with his brothers as well as with his father making them hate him even some more. Despite all this awareness, Jacob said to Joseph, "Go to Shechem. Your brothers are there with my sheep." His father said, "Go and see if your brothers are safe. Come back and tell me if my sheep are all fine.

Fathers and mothers can help build their children's courage if they affirmed them even in what we may perceive as danger. I attribute my courage to mygenes but also the fact that my father sent me to herd large herds of cattle all alone in the thickets as a young man; among many other factors.

Church affirmation

Have you ever heard something like Sunday best? Have you realized that most people dress to kill on Sunday more than any other day? Congregational fellowships have the perfect place for affirmation than you might imagine. Affirmation and the power therein is the reason most people find a reason to go to church. You won't miss the greetings and smiles of an usher by the door elevating an emotional human need known as significance/recognition. You weren't lost in a crowd but someone singled you out and greeted you, found it worthwhile to smile at you and welcomes you; possibly showed you where to sit.

While at it, there was a worship team whose leader spoke to your spirit by elevating more welcome and probably doing what people find funny such as turning to your neighbor and speaking some affirmation words such as; "You are welcome to the house of God, this is the day that the Lord has made that we may rejoice and be glad in it, it is nice to see you, you are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God". While at it, maybe a scripture of exhortation, encouragement, or admonition is read too.

This too, is an affirmation of your spirit through God's word. Maybe also some clap offering or a shout to the Lord, which is a form of affirmation but this time around affirming God through praises. I will comment a little more intensely on this area as a practicing worship leader. Praise and worship for example help an individual in two dimensions. The worship leader might sing a song of thanksgiving or praise. What people do not know is that when you praise and thank God, you are offering something to God something; meeting an emotional human need called a contribution. It is a feeling of contributing and therefore being valuable and having a meaning within the communion context that you can contribute to the congregational worth for the church to be complete. The perspective of gratitude through thanksgiving is a big healer of self-esteem. It is the reason for Psalms 100:4, to enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise. As for praise and worship, it is a moment to offer praise that is in an actual sense affirming God. An individual is therefore contributing by offering something to God making you feel valuable.

Worship and adoration is also a form of contribution but most importantly aligns your mind and spirit with your maker which comes with the great benefits of spiritual nourishment. Spiritual nourishment which comes from the word of God, praise, worship, and prayer overrides the mind and the brain and installs in a person more virtue than what any knowledge can offer. I have discussed this in the second season on the topic, of the brain, the mind, and the spirit.

On the flip side of it, moments of worship expand the intensity of God's presence. God is always present according to his word but the intensity of his visitation is a function of the connection of your spirit to the spirit of God. That is why it is an injustice to worshippers/congregants when worship teams take their congregants through sets of brand-new songs the entire service reciting the words projected in a mental pronunciation of lyrical vocabulary in a musical fashion of notes without offering interlude moments to meditate on the depth and meaning of those words in a personalized way. We need to allow people to know and internalize the songs such that at some point, the message of that song is customized to come from their hearts like they are the ones who wrote the songs. Better still, worship teams should invest in about 60 to 70 percent of a constant playlist which makes worship easier for me as an individual.

I should connect and offer my heart, soul, spirit, mind, and words without the need to constantly refer to a mental process on a screen projection which is just as important. The other 30 to 40 percent space is space to introduce new songs with new meanings without making a worship service a laborious exercise of cramming new words and new tunes a stressful exercise for the mind of non-musical professionals. As a member of a worship team, I get the song list a week in advance, then practice in my private space and finally rehearse together with the team before I can sing along with other professional musicians in a Sunday service. Why do we imagine that a person who is not professional in music will be able to learn that song in an instant without having related to the song before the worship service, sing it with intent but most importantly connect in the depth and core of their souls with the song and its message; only to repeat the same experience with a brand-new set of songs the following Sunday. That is where most worship teams have denied people a heavenly experience by chasing what's latest in the musical circles and being up to date with modernity and post-modernity hit songs.

In a church service, you will never miss your moment during the service whether it is through preaching; teachings, singing, encouragement, or acknowledgments to feel valued, wanted, and affirmed. In some places, the visitors have a special moment for someone to genuinely show concern to know who you are, where you come from, what you are going through, and ask how the church family could be of support. The church is a house of affirmation. People say the church has brainwashed its people but there is no such thing as brainwashing but hope and confidence at its best within the church. I do not refute that there are errors of false teachings and exaggerated false hopes but we cannot define truth using falsehoods. We must say that the affirmation which comes from the church makes anyone find a reason to be affirmed some more.

The miracles of Jesus and the prophets are affirmations to the rest of God's people to have confidence in what God can do. Most people have been broken and brutalized by poverty, sickness, oppression, and many life-limiting mental and physical situations that their self-confidence and confidence in God are lost or diminished. I would arguably say that self-confidence and confidence in God would cumulatively mean hope and faith. Miracles awaken faith and the knowledge of miracles sustains faith. John 14: 11, *Believe me, that I am in the Father and the Father in me or believe me for the sake of the works that I do*. John 10:38*, Even though you do not believe me, believe the works that you may understand that the Father is in me and me in the Father*. The word of God is very insistent on the miracles and deliverance performed by Moses toward the Egyptians. The Lord Insists that they should tell their children and their grandchildren how he dealt with the Egyptians, that they may know that he is Lord. Miracles and the record of miracles are affirming and sustain affirmation.

Never underestimate the power of testimony in church. It affirms and strengthens the weak and hopeless.1 Thessalonians 5:11 *Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing.* The testimony of what the Lord has done, for another person will most likely be used in a congregation to stir hope and faith/confidence in you. The church is not a perfect place, neither is it for the perfect people but it is a place for the process of transforming to be Christ-like and towards perfection. Nobody should blame themselves for not being perfect because we shall have a whole 1000 years of being perfect. Just uphold the minimum threshold of having the mark of Christ in your life. He comes into your life through a very simple process of focusing your mind on him, believing, and backing it up with words of affirmation otherwise called confession. Romans 10:9 says*, if you declare with your mouth," Jesus is lord" and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* It's that simple. All you need to do is to raise your awareness through your mind and your spirit will immediately align with the will of God. I will explain the will of God at the end of this chapter because it is the most misunderstood and abused word in our Christian circles.

One of the benefits I got when I joined the International Christian Center in Kitengela was that I got the affirmation that I badly needed given that I was getting none from all my circles; none from my wife, none from my parents, none from my work environment or friends and I felt that God was giving me none in the instance. Besides this affirmation, there was a great emotional human need; to belong to a community and thrive in it. The senior Pastors here were and are still very big on the affirmation that they can easily cause you to fly 10,000 feet without wings or a plane. I saw the church leadership intentionally put into action the effort to encourage people who are wounded by various circumstances of life, embraced them without discriminating, and offer programs that help heal their self-esteem and reconstruct the trajectory of their lives as God will guide and help them. I was introduced to the church formalities which was to encourage you to go through a connect program that best embodies the motto of the church, connecting people to God and each other.

This program seamlessly ushers you into two dimensions. You would be encouraged to serve in a department if you find one you are attracted to. The underlying principle is that you are encouraged to serve and contribute to the life of the church. Contributions are an emotional human need and by so doing you build your esteem and self-worth. Secondly, the program ushers you to a family of people with whom you can connect through connect groups for further bible study programs and support. Belonging to a community and thriving in that community is an emotional human need. In my case, the reception and integration into the community of believers were great.

The connect programs assisted me very much and I was able to find places of service where I was happy to thrive in various dimensions.

Child dedication and baptism

In the same way, Jesus Christ was affirmed at birth as well as during his baptism by God and nature, our modern child dedication is a form of affirmation. It is a chance to dedicate our children to God and a commitment to raise our children in the ways of God. Upon dedication, the spiritual dimensions of the child take form. Even in silence, the newborn child is believed to have fulfilled righteousness and gone through the elementary steps necessary for an upright and complete child. Baptism bestows to you not only spiritual acumen but also the acceptability within the community of believers. One who has been baptized is accepted into the family of brethren and approved of by the community of Christians. It is a very strong affirmative force. It builds the self-esteem and confidence of the individual as some form of bragging right.

Anthems, national commendations, Celebrities, musicians, sportsmen

School anthems and mottos are not just a collection of selective words but a set of affirmation statements. Some of our teachers have always had mantras that they carry to each school they go to. In my high school, Kakamega High, the school motto was, "In unity is strength", but our principal had a personal mantra. He always said, "Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent, Press on!" We lived by this mantra of affirmation. My elder brother Anthony Munala is the director at the Legacy Mixed Secondary School in Tassia and I am particularly impressed with their school motto, "I know I can". This is the height of self-affirmation. Affirmation is the driver behind the musical national anthems. Affirmation is what we do when we chant for our favorite sports. It goes a long way to explain the role of fans and cheering squads. Show business is founded on affirmation.

National commendations such as the Moran of the Burning Spear, the Elder of the Burning Spear, Elder of the Golden Heart honored by the president of Kenya, presidential medals of freedom bestowed by the president of the United States or orders of merit, order of St. George and St. Michael awarded by the queen or King of Great Britain, all weigh down to an affirmation. It is the same principle of affirmation that the basketball hall of Fame, the Madison square garden hall of Fame, the Oscar Awards, the Groove Awards, the Mama Awards, the Leopard Grand Awards, the Kora Awards, the Nobel peace prize, MTV awards, Nollywood awards, Kalasha awards just to name but a few. It is a form of affirmation to those who are putting in the effort.

These recognitions motivate further the concerned parties to strive at excelling even further. When our sportsmen and musicians are affirmed, they are motivated to keep winning and performing well.

Kings and affirmation

Affirmation makes the pulse of kings. They take in the order of God. Kings are to be affirmed to keep a sound mind and have positive self-esteem. God says we pray for all leaders without exception. The whole nation relies on the king to make sound decisions that will make their lives better every single day. It is for this reason that the kings have choirs to entertain them. It is the reason military parades are done in honor of Presidents. It affirms the power and authority not just to the presidents but also to the population which needs confidence and assurance that they are in capable hands and that they are well protected. It is loyalty to the President that keeps his mind at peace and when that peace is compromised, psychology is the best explanation for why the statecraft actors will do everything possible to create political handshakes to give the president peace and stability of mind to govern. Kings and Presidents have been affirmed in various ways. The first President of Kenya Jomo Kenyatta used to go bird watching in Naivasha but was entertained by choirs every so often in public events and at Statehouse. I do not know what President Moi did for recreation but he was big with choirs and dances too.

In the Bible, when Esther was elevated as queen in the place of Queen Vashti, it was because Queen Vashti had failed to affirm the king by refusing to offer him a dance at call. This refusal to give the king a dance shuttered the image and esteem of the king that his handlers had to decisively deal with it so that other women do not follow the example of dishonoring their husbands. There must be a reason as to why Daniel right in the den of lions was visited by the king and when the king asked whether his God whom he serves had saved him, Daniel answered. “May the king live forever! Kings have been affirmed from the beginning of age and it was for a reason; the very reason the King of kings is upheld in high regard and affirmation. How about you say something like,” If you kept saying nice reviews like this, I could as well be your slave forever and be happy about it.” This is not about slavery but about the authority of the one who owns a slave. Just learn something about a master, a boss, a king, or a President, and use a line once every year to affirm your husband like my once-in-a-year Christmas chapattis.

Joshua and the Battle of Jericho

Affirmation is the hallmark of the ability to conquer difficulties.” Onward, Christian Soldiers!" is called by commentators "a rousing hymn of Christian warfare."

The words were written by Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, a Roman Catholic writer, and priest. He was born in England in 1834. The 3rd Stanza of the song: Like a mighty army, moves the Church of God; Brothers, we are treading where the Saints have trod. We are not divided; all one body we- One in hope and doctrine, one in charity. This is a depiction of a soldier's reality. In the book of Joshua 6: 1-27, Joshua led an army around the walls of Jericho for six days of praise and worship, cheering and blowing horns and trumpets and finally letting the whole army shout.

All these actions are acts of affirmation that have been practiced by armies over centuries. The case of Joshua was that invoking the name of God and focusing their faith on the divine enablement brought down the walls of Jericho without any military action but just affirmation to God and self. Soldiers going to war have to affirm themselves to be in the correct state of mind as they go to war. Their affirmed state of mind is a product of the chants they would make before they lead out on tough assignments. Ray Davies, the founder of Affirmation Spot, began studying affirmations and positive thinking after a life-threatening illness at age 25. Out of several affirmations he has written for soldiers, one has these words that are memorable soldier self-affirmations:" A challenge only becomes an obstacle when I bow to it! I struggle, but I grow. I fall, but I get up. Even amid adversity, I succeed and I prosper. Every setback has within it the seeds of a massive triumph."

The power of school affirmation and recognition of special talents and gifts

Many schools do not believe in extra-curricular activities and would do anything to push everyone to get good academic grades. Some head teachers go to great extents to ban participation in activities such as drama, music, sports, etc.; claiming that it wastes time for studying. My second son was admitted to my former school but because the management at the time was articulately taming and toning down the sportsmanship, it became difficult to convince my son to join the school. The management was at bare-knuckles war with the principal because the school was known for its prowess in soccer, Green Commandoes, Drama, and Music but all these activities were aggressively being given a back seat in the school so that the school can perform well academically. What most teachers do not understand is that some students have bruised self-esteem emanating from many factors among them dysfunctional families, divorce, and poverty. Some children may not be very great with their academic abilities but may have talent in a sport or an art. When they perform well in their sport such as basketball, soccer, or hockey, they heal their self-esteem because they suddenly realize that they are good at something.

Some children have been abused by their parents or some teachers as useless and trouble makers not amounting to anything but when they excel in a sport; it automatically heals the anger and frustration of their low self-esteem. When a child heals their self-esteem, the effects are seen in all their activities including class work and cooperation with fellow students. Poor children with good academic ability have a chance to get scholarships but poor children with talents such as music, arts, and sports have fewer chances of scholarships in our African context. Excelling in sports or art makes your mates respect you, admire you, and cheer for you. This is an emotional need for every child to feel valued, loved, and needed. Through excelling in sports and arts, children heal a lot of their self-esteem issues emanating from a lack of approval and validation from parents, teachers, and peers. The new self-confidence feeds into their ability to achieve more with their lives and to have a positive outlook in life. My Chief Principal knew how to affirm his students and motivate them to do better once they made an effort to become better. During the assembly, he once singled out a gentleman called Boaz Moseti. Mr. Ashitiva congratulated him for achieving improved behavior and being very neat and clean unlike before.

He asked the entire school to clap for the "young man" as was his quote. Boaz was my classmate, and since I was his class prefect since form one, I believe that my opinion may not be too far from the truth. The transformation of Boaz began when he joined the school choir. Not only did he sing as was his love for music, but was required to keep certain standards to do the music that he so much loved. Our patron was the deputy principal and Boaz was good in music.

Mr. Minishi saw the talent in students such as Vincent Andambi. In one of the school awards, Vincent Andambi was awarded and affirmed as the most improved and well-behaved student while he was in form three. That should tell you that he reformed and improved from something. This revolution began with his involvement in the school drama and Mr. Minishi giving them lead roles as an actor. Vincent later became the leader of the drama team. It was impossible to compare the two versions of him given his previous streak of finding Vincent with disciplinary issues with the famous late Mr. Paul Aura, alias Achepe. Some of the students who had struggled with school life in one form or another began thriving when they discovered or put to use a talent that they had in them. These talents were further developed and the student affirmed taking away the feeling of being unloved or unwanted at home or in school. Their lives changed forever and for the better. That should bring congruence to two things. Under the topic of parenting, I have posited that a lot of what we call indiscipline is not necessarily because a child intentionally chose to do or fails to follow instructions.

Most often than not, it is the subconscious mind projecting inconsistent mental patterns which are borrowed from varied experiences and other people around you which could be friends or even parents. Error, mistakes, and indiscipline are indicators of what is wrong with us. It is a shout for help, a scream for attention. Mistakes are not entirely bad because they help us correct what is wrong with us. Suppressing the conflicts thru punishment without an audience doesn't always help construct the holistic person. It could be an internal battle with self-esteem, anger, and resentment coming from our homes and parental effects and how we adapted to our attachment to the universe as young children. Was it a secure attachment or an insecure attachment? I have discussed this subject of attachment at the tail end of the topic of parenting. Sometimes, affirmation of what the students can do or is capable of doing could heal a multiplicity of struggles within a student's mind especially if he is talented in some skill.

Having shared with you my constructs of affirmation, allow me to highlight my journey of Affirmation, mostly during my early teens and high school days which to this date continue to contribute to my confidence. When I got born again in class six and later through my life journey of music and ministry, all my mentors: the pastors, prophets, and evangelists coupled with my father, my mother, and my sister Emma affirmed my path. We used to do a lot of music with my sister Emma in my early life and also attended a lot of Christian meetings with her and my mother. The spiritual authorities I met while with these people constantly had a lot of prophetic declarations about my life.

One such person was apostle Michael Omega who listened to me sing a special presentation before handing over the microphone to my sister. He just stood up and began prophesying over me. Apostle Shaphat Kombo prophesied over my life in a big way. On one occasion while I was in form two, we were at the national music festivals in 1996 when I went to visit my mother at the East Africa School of Theology where she was a student. She introduced me to her friends in college and all of them collectively said a prayer for me. They prophesied how I will serve the lord. What many people do not realize is that prophecies offer affirmation from God. Romans 14: 31, holds: "*For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged*". It is God affirming what he sees in you and what he has positioned you for.

You are young, but God is affirming you by His word or through His servants concerning the person you will become or the missions you will accomplish. You are weak and downtrodden but God lets you see into the plan which should affirm and strengthen you to keep the focus on the bigger picture. Exodus 6:6, therefore, says to the Israelites: *'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.*

I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. The purpose of the prophecy/affirmation is to make sure you do not lose sight of the bigger picture because of temporary setbacks. The word of God admonishes us to encourage one another.

1 Thessalonians 5:11- *"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing".* This verse commands Christians to continue to encourage and lift fellow brethren. The church of Thessalonians was already doing this and Paul reminds them to not stop, but to keep on encouraging each other. My high school journey is also captured in the context of my musical journey but I wish to shed some light concerning a support group that was big on affirmation towards me. This support group influenced and sharpened or enabled my musical and drama journey, my leadership skills, and my academic performance. They boil down to one word: **affirmation**. I was affirmed by a strong support group of individuals who were genuinely concerned about my welfare. They range from schoolmates, teachers, support staff, pastors, and my parents. The level of affirmation was at the highest possible level whereby I grew in confidence and completely secure as someone who was loved, cherished, and needed. I felt confident to exploit my assorted gifting and talents and maximized my potential to become the best possible version of myself.

Most of my teachers had a soft spot for me and the most outstanding of them was Mr. Oliver Minishi who taught me physics and was also my school drama club patron. He ensured that we woke up as early as 4 a.m to cover our lessons ahead of time. It was assumed that being in drama club would make a student not be regular at class work. Interestingly, we were ahead of our syllabus in physics all the time. Our tag as physics students of Minishi were "crucial men "who could swallow barbed wire and stay alive after. If this was not affirmation, then I don't know what else is. He would come to class early or late in the night and say "Crucial men, let's meet at the lecture theatre" then go away. He meant the students who had chosen physics should proceed to the lecture theatre for learning.

My subject teachers considered me a top performer. It is a culture for teachers to give a little more push to the top performing students so that the teachers can be rewarded when their students score that wonderful grade in national examinations. I was affirmed among the few in that special group, targeted to score the top mark, A. I was graded as third in my stream and on average 15 to 20 position in the whole fourth form of 250 students. This became a true assessment because after the Kenya Certificate of Secondary exams; I was graded, among my stream and 15 in the overall of five streams with a B+, as my overall grade with an A in Biology and Physics.

My Chemistry teacher, now Dr. Geoffrey Anyembe, the Director of a Collaborative college with Maasai Mara University, wanted me to be a teacher because I explained concepts well to others. I think he saw this day coming when I will explain concepts better to my readers through this book.

Mr. Daniel Mbwanga who now lectures at Nazarene University believed in me and affirmed me every time he had a chance. He chose me for every single assignment in Music. He selected me and Daniel Weloba, now an editor with the Standard Media Group to sing for former President Moi in 1996 when he visited our school. He chose me to lead a street fork song to entertain Moi when he was on a campaign trail in the region. Mr. Mbwanga chose me to perform tenor solo pieces all my school life. He chose me to sing tenor one within the context of the Quartet. I was the tenor one, without a substitute, tenor two had Daniel Weloba who was sometimes substituted with Sammy Luseno, Burton Musumba was the bass one and Sammy Ateru was the sure bass two. Mr. Mbwanga chose me for the small choir which comprised only 12 members and the bigger main choir. Sammy Ateru who sang bass two in our school choir was also the soloist in the traditional dance. He had just won the best provincial male soloist in a Luhya traditional dance entitled "*Stella*."

Sammy Ateru was not your ordinary guy. He was a natural vocalist and armed with a charming smile to this very day. He is an extremely courteous guy; you will think he can't hurt a mosquito. No wonder the lady's choice. Ateru was the best vocalist of our time. He was the best Bass vocalist and I was the best tenor singer. However, Ateru was a soloist in traditional dance and an award-winning soloist. Ateru was through with school and the traditional dance was desperate for a soloist who could keep the standards of Ateru or even come close. Michael Itebete, who was a member of the choir and played *Isukuti* drum percussions for the traditional dance proposed to the team that I was the one they were seeking. The entire leadership of the traditional dance led by Itebs (Itebete), as we called him came looking for me while I was in form two. The rest they say is history. I won the best national soloist that year and so did our dance titled, *Matemo* meaning, Trials won the national competitions held in Lenana School in 1996. We also won with the play titled, *Metamorphosis.*

We lost the competition in 1997 at the provincials which were held in Chavakali high school. This loss was more brutal than Christiano Ronaldo losing the chase for either the golden boot or balon dor, maybe even the GOAT tag once Portugal was eliminated in the world cup of 2022. Kakamega high school lost the dance at the provincials yet they were the defending national champions. I had my best soloist tag to compete for and all that was gone when we lost the 1997 dance. It was so devastating that I just retired to the school bus and cried my heart out.

I was inconsolable until Mwalimu George Litswa requested Deborah Odenyi to come and console me. Deborah Odenyi was a great friend of mine and a friend of the Kakamega high school dance troupe being the trainer for the Matende primary school dance. We worked as partners. Their dance had won the 1996 primary school dance category, just like our items did.

In 1997, Matende primary school made it to the nationals and so was our play but not my dance. The dance was my heartbeat, and I could say it was my dance. We had put in so much time and effort. George Litswa, the choreographer used his resources to get us someone to teach us new song lyrics and we put in the time. The nationals were scheduled to be held at Kakamega high school, my school. It meant I would miss the action. This was like South Africa missing the 2010 world cup. It was painful. Painful beyond any threshold of pain I had ever faced for a loss in a competition. Deborah came and sat with me for more than an hour encouraging me and whispering those words of affirmation like only a mother or big sister would do. She was a great dance instructor for Matende primary and she got my heartbeat because she put in her advice in our dances and put in the time to make us better. Her consolation was valuable in the instance.

We lost the competition in 1997 but we would bounce back in 1998 winning the national dance category with our dance *Bukhonyi*, meaning Help, in which I was instrumental in creating the storyline and had the opening song as my composition. That tune has been sung in subsequent years by schools and colleges. I look back with pride. This particular year, we won the best male soloist award. We also won the play category. When we got back to school the following term, the Principal was super excited with our immaculate performance that he made it the story on the morning assembly. He called me forward and made me the highlight of the story of the entire drama victories. He called me to step forward and had the entire school cheer for me and us. I was the face of victory. Affirmation doesn't get better than that anywhere on Earth.

I later went to work in the capital city, Nairobi. After a few casual stints at East Africa Industries, now Unilever, I was recruited in the life division of American Life Company, ALICO. I was so attached to the former school Principal that I called the school to just salute him. After high school, Mr, Ashitiva was still a father who continued to affirm me as one day, I was in the office, and he came unannounced. The nostalgia cannot be explained. He loved on me, told me nice things about myself, and affirmed me to strive for higher ideals. When I heard that my loving former Principal, Ashty, his pet name given by students, was admitted to Mukumu Hospital, I went to visit him and he was glad to see me.

Our last personal encounter was in the run-up to the 2007 general elections in Kenya, where he was a presiding officer and I was a polling clerk in Kakamega. He gladly narrated to his friends how he and I ran the school Affairs with flair and style. He wished the district election officers gave the two of us the mandate to run the show and that we would have offered better management of that electioneering process at our district in Kakamega.

Mr. Ashitiva was my affirmation in chief and for as long as I had his confidence, everything was possible. Maybe a statement won't suffice about how exactly affirmation works until I offer you a synopsis of how Mr. Ashitiva's affirmation in unison with other mentors was wrapped all around me to produce the kind of confidence I exhibited as a young man. As I look back, I realize that Mr. Ashitiva affirmed me so much that he admired what I had become and he wanted the same traits for his son Nelson Ashitiva who is today a leading lawyer, with Ashitiva Advocates LLP in Nairobi. He didn't hesitate to send his son Nelson to meet me and share the experience of being a student leader. From my perspective, I just met a friend who was interested in making friends with me but from Nelson's perspective, the mission was not to just make friends but rather what the advocate perceives to have been the mission as he narrates below.

Advocate Nelson Ashitiva

“I got introduced to Anderson around the year 1998 by my late dad, Mr. Stanley Ingosi Ashitiva, who was at the time the Principal of Kakamega High School. He recommended that I meet Anderson in his capacity as the school captain to learn leadership from him. It was his way of saying that some things are taught while others are caught by apprenticeship. My role was to shut up as I spent a few hours observing the transfer of skill and knowledge that happens by watching the master at his craft, in this case, Anderson attending to his leadership role at the school. The first thing that struck me when I met the young Anderson, was his brilliant white shirt, his spick-and-span coat or blazer, and his delightful comportment, he was your quintessential head student, he was large in style as he was in substance. There was an aura of innate authority around the mid-height leader that made me understand why my dad had insisted that I meet him.

When we began to talk, he did not only display external excellence but there was a solid internal strength and distinction of character in him. I observed as he spoke to a group of his fellow school prefects, how he moved about the school and how he presided over disputes. I noted he addressed the school assembly, how he mobilized his troops to different mundane and complex tasks, how he led his followers to compete in sports and supplementary endeavors against other schools, and how he managed his time. This was the master at his craft.

I would ask questions and take notes, mental notes, heart notes, and written notes. It was an intriguing experience. It was not only intriguing but critical, as I had only recently also been nominated for the same role in a school many miles away from this one, a role for which I felt ill-prepared until I went through this 'induction crush course' to understand the gravity of having the governance of the school on your shoulders.

In this context, like Anderson, at the age of 16, I was meant to be the judiciary, parliament, and executive all rolled up in one and some instances even the ombudsman, the press, and the civil society. In this ecosystem, the Head of the School's title would have been the Emperor, the Priest, the Supreme Justice, and the Speaker of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. As I got to understand in Anderson's case just as was going to be in my case, the Head student yielded a lot more power than most teachers and was only third to the Deputy Principal and the Principal of the school. He could determine whether the school was going to be heaven or hell for you, He could determine the rules, how the rules are applied, and when you disobey the rules what punishment would be meted out.

He could determine if the teacher or staff member got the promotion or not. If this is not supreme authority, then I don't know what is". Says advocate Ashitiva.The reminiscence of Advocate Nelson Ashitiva 24 years later is not just a testament to how my principal Mr. Stanley Ashitiva affirmed me, but that he also had a way of affirming his son who felt otherwise ill-equipped for his task in his school. Mr. Ashitiva decided to clear his son's doubts by simply throwing him into the deep end of the ocean to swim with the sharks and realize that it was doable and that his mate was doing a good job within arm's length. He was telling his son Nelson, "You can do it too because Anderson is doing it. He is no different, he is just like you. Go for it, son!"

To close this long-life legacy of affirmation, my affirmer in chief, Chief Principal, Stanley Ingosi Ashitiva 'showed up from his grave' just a few months ago as I wrote this book. A few months ago, my father was taken ill and had a minor operation; I stayed in the hospital to watch over him across the night. During the night, we had intimate discussions. He revealed to me that Mr. Ashitiva made him promise that he will take good care of me for him. He had told my father that I will become a very special person in our country beyond what the existing systems and structures can offer. With emphasis, my father said, "Ashitiva saw you before me, or let me rephrase to say Ashitiva saw in you what I had not yet seen in you yet". My dad said. A father conceding that someone else saw better in his son than himself, is humbling when the memory of the person is brought into context.

These words came alive just a few months ago while I was still drafting this book and I was able to relate that teachers and lecturers can make a lasting impression in the lives of their students. Every environment is a platform to make a difference. Affirm someone wherever you serve. May the memory of Mr. Stanley Ingosi Ashitiva live long! Despite what Advocate Nelson Ashitiva, believed that I was the school captain, I wasn't! I was the deputy head prefect (Number two). I had a head prefect (Number One) with whom we worked very well. He was kind enough to bring to life those treasured memories. Reverend David Njuguna, the senior pastor at the KAG Transformation assembly - Rungiri, lecturer and member of the board of management at Kage bible school was my head prefect when I was in high school.

Rev. David Njuguna Gichuru

"Anderson looked so self-confident unlike most of the students in form one. He spoke authoritatively too as we worked closely as student leaders.

As a prefect, Anderson was a **strict** disciplinarian. He did not allow students to get away with wrongdoings. He was also **confident** as he gave his speeches or instructions. He spoke **firmly** and **assertively** about the rules that were to be followed and the consequences that would befall those who broke the rules.

In terms of interpersonal relationships, Anderson was **outgoing**. He easily interacted with all people – teachers, the non-teaching staff, fellow prefects, and the students. His role as a prefect did not hinder his interaction with other people. Anderson easily made friends. I can say that in our friendship, he did more to reach out to me than I did to him. Also, he was **cheerful** in his demeanor. Rarely, would I find Anderson in low a mood? In his personality, Anderson was **action-oriented**. He easily rallied those under his leadership to achieve tasks, e.g., searching the student dormitories to fish out the wares that were not permitted in school or laying traps to catch students who were smoking or sneaking out/back to school.

Anderson was **a gifted speaker**. He would normally explain his points so clearly, coherently, and in grammar that most of us admired and couldn't measure up to. He had a good command of English and great communication skills that are rare to find among High School students. Also, I noticed that Anderson had a unique ability to **multitask** and balance all the things that he was involved in. He performed well enough to go to university despite serving in a student leadership position that was so demanding – being a deputy head prefect, while at the same time participating in extracurricular activities such as the school choir and traditional dance (which were very demanding activities for an award-winning school). In leadership, Anderson came out as a great team player. I had great confidence in his work. He easily mobilized prefects for different actions.

He inspired confidence and showed the prefects that whatever task we had was achievable. He also gave very insightful views especially when we were discussing how to handle difficult issues of indiscipline or planning how to present the agenda of the board of prefects to the school leadership.

As my deputy team leader, he covered my weak areas. For instance, he was able to confront the students that I would hesitate to confront. He would also articulate the agenda of the prefects to the School Principal better than I did.
Notably, he did not shy off from speaking his mind as deputy, even when his thoughts were different from mine. Most of the time he convinced me and the rest of the prefects to follow a particular course of action. Anderson was a very brave man. Whereas I feared meeting and talking to the principal, he easily approached and talked to the principal. Serving with him both inspired confidence on one hand and fear on the other one, Confidence because he brought great strengths which were indispensable for the success of our term of office, Fear (or jealousy) because he appeared to be the favorite of the School Principal Mr. Stanley Ingosi Ashitiva and they had a more cordial working relationship," says my head prefect; Number one, as we used to call him.

Our confidence as students grew in leaps and bounds because our teachers believed in us and trusted us with high-level responsibilities. The confidence in our abilities was a form of affirmation. Something noteworthy for the success of Mr. Oliver Minishi as a playwright and Mr. George Litswa as a scriptwriter and director of African traditional dance is, that they gave the students space to contribute to their ideas once they have created the main framework of the play or dance. Mr. Minishi even allowed students to adjust a line or two and speak as they feel the flow. We originated the dance movements all by ourselves. In support, Mr. Litswa always brought us videos of past dances and those of a popular Eastern African contemporary musician Koffi Olomide to enable us to pick some dance styles that we could modify and inject into our choreography.

Mr. Minishi sometimes revised his plays after zonal, the district level festivals, and at the next stage, you would watch a completely new play but with the same title, in which case he would release lines as the students continue acting. He gave the students the space to add value. That is how we got to believe in ourselves and trust that we are loaded with capabilities. Affirmation comes in many shapes and forms. In my post-high school experience when Mr. George Litswa was now in Mukumu Girls and felt that something was missing. He needed a piece of the Kakamega High School pie where the students took charge and contributed ideas in crafting dance both in choreography and dance formations.

He and Mr. Minishi endorsed me to take up the challenge of helping with the Mukumu girls' dance of 1999 and that is still affirmation. When you demonstrate confidence to children and students and trust them with responsibilities, they feel affirmed and equal to the task. Mr. Litswa had his perspective always gave his students the space to express their capabilities and was always friendly to support his students.

Sir George Litwa

“As a student, Anderson was a very likable young boy with a disarming smile. Mr. Litswa said. "What was striking was perhaps his confidence that often belied the fact that he was a form one. Anderson was very comfortable with the more senior students in the school as much as he was with his classmates and age mates. This earned him recognition that resulted in respect from the teaching fraternity as well as the students. He had very explicit self-initiative, leadership, management, communication, and teamwork skills. My relationship with him was multifaceted and he knew where and when one began and ended. He would never cross those boundaries. He was in summary what you would call an all-around student. He always put his skills to good use.

While in form two, he was the lead soloist in Kakamega High School’s first National winning dance “Matemo.” This dance was what it is because of him. He owned it. I am aware that he was central to the School choir participating in so many classes. Given all the qualities he had, it was not surprising that he was eventually appointed the School Head a duty I must say he performed meticulously. However, his gentle nature and sociability could have been the cause of his biggest downfall had it happened. Because of his free interaction with the rest of the students, it was not easy to differentiate between the student leader and the rest of the students. He was also prayerful from a very young age.

It is not so easy to create a rapport with as many teachers, each at a personal level. Each of the teachers he mentioned had a unique personality because of the various orientations and roles they were playing. We all interacted with Anderson from different perspectives that were majorly informed by the roles each of us was playing in school. Interestingly, he was comfortable at whatever level he was engaging. He was comfortable with Mr. Ashitiva at the administrative level, Mr. Mbwanga at the music teacher level, and Mr. Minishi at the drama and physics teacher levels. He interacted with me at the dance teacher level but this went beyond the student-teacher relation. He was and remains my friend and confidant. We had an understanding level of respect for each other that was true and beneficial to both of us. Of cause, I punished him like any other student when he made mistakes and he took it positively.

It is these entrenched friendships that enable us to remain connected to the level of visiting each other even after he finished school. Though Anderson was young, his friendship was that which encouraged and strengthened. You never took into account his age because of the meaningful friendship he offered. He was and still is empathetic. I would describe our friendship as low-maintenance. We have been able to reconnect after some time apart; understanding that we both have lots of personal commitments.

He just actively listens to you. He is selfless. He does not always think about himself. He seems to understand his own life experience and is not overly consumed by his problems; instead, he endeavors to help solve the problems of others. He is trustworthy and loyal. My longtime friendship with him reminds me of his unwavering support. He still refers to me as "Sir" very likely because our friendship has been defined by mutual respect. Often than not, he makes you see things from different perspectives while opening your mind up to new ideas, experiences, and advice that makes you learn more about yourself and the potential around you. Above all, he has a sense of humor that makes you feel accepted in his presence." Said Sir George Litwa. These positive reflections by Mr. Litwa are not things that I was fully aware of but he made it possible for a student to relate with him in a safe space thus bringing out his full potential. It is this level of affirmation by one previous confidant, which breeds confidence with the next confidant. I assert that affirmation is largely responsible for my confidence and industry which I have carried with me through my life journey at various levels.

Both my father and mother affirmed me in their unique ways. My mother has been present and affirming the servant of God in me and continues to do so. My father affirms all my potential that sometimes, I used to imagine he was trying to live his life in me or meeting his unfulfilled dreams through me if the detail was anything to go by. Later in life, I realized that he was charging me to make full use of my potential because some of the calls have been consistent way into my early forties. This was not because my father was ignorant or illiterate; he is a trained accountant. He has always been looking at facets: the capabilities of his son to achieve all these and much more and the possibilities of the future with such capabilities as had been confirmed by my upbringing and self-initiatives over time coupled with the ability to multitask. He was affirming my abilities. My father has mostly put me under pressure, partly because of the faith he has in me and he always pushes me not to underperform my potential and this is an existing reality for which I am grateful. My mother has always been present for me and encouraging during the low moments and holding me up to never give up and so we shall be discussing her a lot in the chapter under support systems and the second season of this book on the power of resilience.

I would say that I am what I have become because of the affirmation of people around me. If the people you have become vulnerable to such as your spouse, siblings or parents, close friends, and mentors were to unintentionally destroy your potential, it will be destroyed. However, if you are blest to be vulnerable to people who mean well to you, you will prosper. My sister Emma Murunga used to be my affirmer in chief as a child and continues to be a great cheerleader now as an adult. I have been her cheerleader throughout our adult life too.

She says I was the midwife for her dream, helping her birth the "Nomi Ruth Ministries " which she founded as a mentorship program for women. We continue to cheer for each other's success and support each other. Emma's reflections sound exaggerated but since it is her own words, authenticity is a good gain. She says "I taught my younger siblings a lot of songs and Anderson was the only sibling that would repeat all the voices. He was so sharp in his musical ear that you did not need to instruct twice. He also had his innovations which I also learned a lot from, especially on musical minor notes. I borrowed a guitar from a village choir leader, to try playing it. I never taught him how to play any instrument. One day I just realized he played the guitar. I borrowed an accordion from a friend, once in a while and at one time, I just saw my brother playing on the accordion's keyboard perfectly. He had this love for music that was exceptionally phenomenon.

My brother will tell you to repeat a certain way of singing a given melody and when he says it you don't see what he is up to till the task is done. You listen to it, and you will marvel. He was too creative in music for his age when he was young, I should say. My brother is great. He is gifted and it's not a lie. I admire him a lot. I was humbled when he invited me to help lead worship at the inception of his first church service at Progressive Christian Church. I saw a vision. I saw greatness. I saw talent and I saw a man in charge. Greatness and purpose await him. I have seen him handle life from childhood to date and this is spot on for me, He is 50 percent choleric, 20 percent sanguine, and 30 percent melancholic. The choleric in him is seen more often than any other temperament…" she says.

"…As he is naturally, a leader, this occupies a bigger portion of his personality just like our dad. He can survive in very harsh conditions and find his way out. Something many cannot manage and have found themselves in the grave for failing to find a way out. The Sanguine in him manifests a lot when leading public discussions or dialogues even in private. His humor will make one understand the most difficult construct to explain and he does it easily. There is a silent part of him that is so creative in thought and when left all by himself, because he is a deep thinker and an Innovator.

Analytical creativity is part of his brain as he will creatively do his music, a thing not many singers have. The scientific man in him is exceptional. Though the percentages are not measured by a machine or kgs, it's a personal way of observation and the fruits thereof.

He doesn't always smile as he is a result-oriented person; whereby you perform or get out of the way but the sanguine cools it down and makes people love him. So, very few people have three temperaments wrapped in one person and so he is unique. He indeed uses all of them to serve God. He can navigate anywhere, and make it in life. That is choleric and it is his dominant trait. I look at how he works on machines in his studio, listen to his compositions with life illustrations, and look at how he sits with men of God over 60 years of age and they listen to his wisdom. Only a melancholy would do that. His ability to get good grades makes him capable of pursuing several disciplines like he does today" That is my big sister for you. The affirmation which I have received over time has helped me to ascertain my strengths and know how well to put them to good use.

I would conclude this topic by saying, "Learn to learn to affirm your children, your husband, your wife, your workmate, your parents, your teammates, and your leaders." It makes a whole difference and God will find a way of bringing the affirmation back to you. I am always affirming the people around me. Some would mistake my intentions because of where they have been and the experiences they have had, but I learn to make my people comfortable and secure around my affirmation with time. I will always affirm my friends and my children because I understand how much mileage it gives them to last another day in strength and hope.

1. My mother supporting and sustaining my farming ctivities.
2. My mother supporting and sustaining my farming ctivities.
3. My mother hosting my media guests and encouraging us to keep dreaming higher. She hopped to be a journalist but missed the chance so she celebrates my success around media.
4. My father attending my post-graduation ceremony at kahawa Sukari
5. My father attending to support my national "KUWA MPOLE" peace initiative campaign.
6. My father supporting my charity activities; introducing me during a church dunraising at Ingotse Mission Church of God where I was the chief guest. My father is the development chairman of the church.
7. My mother attending and encouraging my "KUWA MPOLE" Peace Initiative.
8. Enjoying photo moments with my mother inside our house
9. Enjoying photo moments with my mother outside our house

10. My mom giving a speech at my KUWA MPOLE initiative launch
11. Enjoying a hearty laughter with my father after a dinner on his 79th birthday in Nairobi
12. A photo moment between father and son
13. My father attending my wedding day.

PARENTAL AFFIRMATION

6

THE POWER OF IDENTITY

Erick Ericson 8 stages of identity development

1. Trust vs. Mistrust

The first stage of identity development begins right from childbirth and is dependent on the primary caregivers offering reliable, predictable, and consistent care. Within the period of birth up to 18 months, a child develops trust or mistrust depending on their environment. The infant is uncertain about the world in which they live and so they look up to their primary caregivers, the nannies, and the parents for stability consistent care, and trust. If the child receives consistent predictable and reliable care, they develop a sense of trust that they will carry throughout their relationships even in the future because they shall believe the world is a safe and secure place where they can live in trust. However, if the children feel uncomfortable and are not given predictable, reliable, and consistent care in infancy, they are always anxious suspicious mistrust other people even in the later stages of life because they do not feel the world is safe reliable, consistent, or predictable. I have written more insights about this in my book, "The wounded child in every adult."

Success at this stage of Infant's life leads to a life of an infant who is always optimistic about life. They believe the world has accepted them, and there is a place for them in the broader equation of life. Life has setbacks, but children who developed this stage under hospitable care will always believe they can surmount the setbacks and bounce back. They easily trust other people because they believe the world is full of good people since their infancy. However, if this stage is not properly developed, such infants live up to view the world from a perspective of Fear and mistrust; they always feel that the world is unsafe and that there is no one to be trusted. They mistrust the world and even if they are confronted with failure, they easily give up because their perspective of life is already founded on hopelessness and pessimism.

I took time to profile numerous people along these psychological prims and all the people who participated had feedback that reflects their growing up to be consistent with the issues they are either benefiting from in their adult lives or struggling with. My childhood is already discussed intensely in chapter one to demonstrate that I received a lot of love. I needed to understand how and why my father shows a lot of love to a lot of people including strangers as if they were his children and without boundaries and I was able to find this overflow of love emanating from his childhood. When my dad was born, His father, Maxwell Munala had longed for a male child for many years and so my father was a golden gift to him. He always carried his little child in his arms wherever he went, including in his business at the butcheries, where he gave him roast meat all the time. Whenever his father was to eat, he made his little son, my father, sit in his lap and fed him most of the time. My father recalls a man by the name Yebei, who used to work in my grandfathers butchery always serving them roast meat of the soft liver and lungs.

Its interesting how my grandfather intentionally trained my father to get used to handling money. He made my father sit on his money and play with the coins as his toys. You should see my father's face saying how he used to feel very nice playing with the coins.

I would say the same about my mother. When my mother was born, her mother and father loved her very much but how much more, her grandmother (my great-grandmother)? My mother's grandmother declared that she was not her father's child but her own and therefore her last-born daughter. This love of a grandmother is told all along her life till when she was in high school.

To authenticate this, I have heard both my uncles, Yusuf Ramathan and Isaa Ramathan make jokes that whenever my mother would visit their father, especially when he was sick, their father would ask, is it Majuma, my daughter, or Majuma, my sister? My grandfather's second wife also had a daughter named Majuma, just like my mother but now my mother was the kid sister to her father, while the other Majuma was his daughter. That explains the question as to whether it is Majuma, my sister or Majuma my daughter!

In an article published in 2017 by the Palgrave Studies in Disaster Anthropology, the authors Sandor Shrijner and Jeron Smits register the role of grandmothers in the development of children as that of an enabling environment for children to explore their freedoms.

The narrations of my mother's family and that of my grandmother Zaina, report a child who was given a lot of love and attention. She was the center of that family and the center around which father, mother, and grandmother revolved. In the fullness of time, she was daddy's girl as much as she was mummy's confidant.

This optimism goes a long way to explain why both my parents are optimists and never give up even when situations happen to be tough and all odds against them. They always believe in the possibility of a better day. If you want your children to be optimists and to show love to the world, then love them from day one of their birth and make sure that their nannies are doing nothing but showing love and care for the children. Nannies who mistreat children or starve children of food or any form of punishment are denying the children a huge part of their self-identity and it is likely to haunt their lives in adulthood; a topic I have deeply discussed in my book, "the wounded child in every adult." The book examines the imact of childhood trauma and explains the various scopes of childhood trauma.

THE FIRST IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT STAGE WHERE A NEW BORN BELIEVES

THE WORLD IS SAFE ABD TRUSTWORTHY PLACE

2. Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt

The next stage in psychological development is the concept of autonomy or the alternative of shame and doubt. The stage occurs between **18 months to 3 years** and Kids develop a sense of personal control over physical skills and gain independence. When you see your son and daughter begin to exercise autonomy and start to walk away from their mother; choosing and picking the toys they want to play, with the color that they want to get as a toy or work clothes; when they begin to choose what to wear and they begin to say I don't wanna eat these, I want to eat the other one, the parents should be careful to just exercised what we call safe control and not to be overly controlling.

The children should be allowed to exercise free will and learn to be self-supporting and self-reliant with the support of their caregivers or parents. Parents should allow an environment of tolerance because in so doing you are allowing these children to develop independence and autonomy and an ability to make decisions on their own. While being patient with the children and allowing them to succeed at the tasks that they have independently chosen. While allowing these safe controls, the parents should however watch out for possible accidents not to occur but also watch out if the children seem to be failing at the tasks they are attempting.

The children should not be allowed to continually fail but instead could be assisted to accomplish the said tasks. If they try something they fail then, you have to help them to make sure that they succeed because if they do it again and again and fail again and again, another failure to put on the shoes, they put the left foot on the right food and the right on the left foot and they tried continuously, Help them before they will start to internalize failure and therefore they begin being ashamed of their failures at the attempted tasks. They might stop believing in themselves and start doubting their selves. You should be careful not to criticize this failure, just assist them to accomplish the task and cheer them on.

Success at this stage will make children more confident because of the support that they received to become independent. They are therefore secure and can survive in any environment by themselves. They will always have confidence in themselves and trust their ability to navigate thru life issues. They will be able to hold opinions and believe in their opinions. They can trust their creativity, their resolve, and their innovation and will not always wait to be influenced because they have an opinion of their own. However, if kids are overly criticized, overly controlled, and not allowed to assert themselves, then they begin to feel inadequate and they are therefore unable to survive going forward. They become overly dependent on others, they lack self-esteem and they feel a sense of shame and doubt in their abilities to do things and will stay in the safe zone of not

attempting anything new, even when their circumstances demand that they take action. If *Erik* Homburger *Erikson*'s epigenetic principle is anything to go by, these freedoms would explain why and how a child given such freedoms would become adventurous and confident with self. The principle is well explained in the upcoming paragraphs ahead. In an article published in 2017 by the Palgrave Studies in Disaster Anthropology, the authors Sandor Shrijner and Jeron Smits register that grandmothers in the African context, are a helping hand as long as their health enables them. Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that intelligence changes as children grow.

A child's cognitive development is not just about acquiring knowledge, the child has to develop or construct a mental model of the world. Some scholars have however argued that Piaget's model advances sudden changes in cognitive capacities. Cognitive theorists like Robert Siegler have argued that cognitive development in children is a slow, progressive change that enables children to explore their environments hence being aware of the developments therein. Robert Sternberg on the other hand argues through his **triarchic theory** of intelligence that intelligence consists of three factors: information-processing skills, context, and experience. These three factors determine whether cognition or behavior is intelligent.

3. Initiative vs. Guilt

The next stage takes place between ages 3 and 6 and this is when the children develop their sense of initiative. This is the time when a child interacts with other children at home; makes the initiative to play with others, and asks for help from other children. Children assert control over all the other children and that is when their social interaction tells them to level up their initiative responsibility and ambitions at this stage. if the parents allow them to have initiative such as teasing playing with a disk, constructing houses, where that is doing assignments going out to run stories, and initiating competitions should allow the children to explore within the limits and support them, giving them a chance to be able to gain responsibility and ambition and develop their self-confidence and a sense of initiative at this stage.

It is the ability to make friendships at the toddler stage which makes it easy for children to make sound relationships as adults and goes a long way to affect their self-confidence around others or how comfortable they may feel being around others, even though they be strangers to each other. If this is not well managed at this stage, the self-confidence of these children would be hampered. Parents should not stop their children from relating with other children. It ought to be a deliberate effort to support children to engage with others and learn life from the perspectives of other children so that in the future they can learn to be more accommodative of varying opinions and world views. Eric participated in my profiling and said that one of the burdens of his childhood was the pressure from his father to perform well in class and that playing of any kind was meant to be an enemy of that success.

Being a teacher's son, he was expected to just study, and after finishing his studies, study some more. When his father returned home, he was not to see any sign or trace that there was playtime or that young Eric engaged with any other external party other than books, and with that, he would meet the approval of the father as a good and obedient child. Life was fully figured out for him, and his role was to fit into that predetermined role and identity.

The aftermath of this reality is that Eric thinks, he struggled a lot with making new friends outside of school. He was only comfortable at school, where he was able to express himself in the formal setting of the school environment but then he would struggle or even feel it was strange to make friends at home or any other setting. While in High school, Eric ended up becoming a prefect and house captain, he still doesn't understand how he ended up in senior roles at his workplace; maybe because success was the only option or that it is the setting he was prepared for anyways; prepared to succeed in school so that he can succeed to get a good job.

Eric says he struggled a lot with making independent decisions in social contexts and still prefers that someone else makes the decisions and he can then verify them or He'd rather implement them but not be the champion. It is an irony that he had to handle the tough choices and situations at work because his roles dictate so. Sometimes, it sucked a lot of energy from him but he would later get used to it. Thru awareness, he began figuring out how to survive his social contexts and over time it became less burdensome. Eric acknowledged this imbalance and consciously worked to improve in this aspect of his personal life because it was getting in the way of his personal life.

He noticed that the imbalance manifested more during informal settings and his personal life outside of official work environments. His wife Magie agrees that Eric doesn't express himself as much at home and you might need some sophisticated equipment to extract his thoughts. He speaks with his silence more than his words, yet at the office, he is the go-to person when complex situations arise. Before he consciously worked on these aspects of his personality, Eric would smartly avoid being part of those difficult situations where he would bear the greater responsibility of risk in family settings. As a friend, I also agree that I am the one who reaches out to him most of the time. When he realized all these, he took the initiative to improve how he relates with his children, family, and friends at large and he is much happier with his results. Eric agrees so much about how much childhood trauma can completely alter the quality and trajectory of one's life that he is researching more and writing a book on the effects of childhood trauma. I would be happy to read from his exerts.

CONTINUATION OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT STAGE WHEN CHILDREN LEARNT CREATIVITY AND PROBLEM SOLVING BY MAKING NEW CREATIVE INITIATIVES WITH OTHER CHILDREN.

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4. Industry vs. Inferiority

At about ages 9 to 12, children begin to compete with their peers to see how they measure up. They flex their strength to know how strong, how smart, how fast, and how superior they are compared to others. They develop a sense of pride and self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment of work whenever they perform well. They compete in sports or social activities in family life; they compare what their parents have against what the parents of the other children have. They want to touch to feel the contrast between what is being said by the other children. They want to know what they are better at, and what the other children if at all, have what it takes to beat them. At this point, they are likely to develop their industry. At their level and language, their sense of industry might appear immature but when you do not give them an opportunity, they start feeling inadequate and feel they don't measure up. This is the point kids do not want to get along with others if they have negative experiences at home with their parents. This is the time the guardians and parents are supposed to encourage them even when they fail at a task and they shouldn't tell them that they are not good enough but tell them to try again.

If they fail at something, they need somebody to hold their hand and tell them that they can make it. They need somebody who can sit them down and help them pull up their socks and train for whatever is the missing link and give them a little tip on how to get better than they are but if you criticize them or if you do not encourage them if you tell them that they are not good enough, then they will always feel inferior to other people. They will not feel good enough in a crowd and life going forward will lose their self-esteem. Legendary world boxing champion Evander Holyfield said," I lost my first fight at the boys club at 11 years old and quit the team. My mother told me I had to go back because she raised no quitter, I lost a second fight and quit again, and still, my mother wouldn't let me. She made me go back and try again.

Before age 9, my son Aden had been trying everything his brother does such as music and much more. He joined the taekwondo club. He also played drums in church and even recorded a song; the young man has a great voice too. The young man didn’t seem settled and remained restless until he landed on football and out of nowhere, his joy and confidence came around as every other passion bowed to football. He joined a football academy and he has been pushing his limits by the day, getting better with football. This is the best age range to allow your child to try as many things as possible. It doesn't mean they will end up playing a musical instrument or being an athlete; they are discovering their talents thru trials and they are also learning to tell themselves that they are good at something. All this goes a long way to boost the self-esteem of the child and the parents should play a supportive role.

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SUPERIORITY TO BUILD SELF CONFIDENCE

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT WHEN CHILDREN TRY THEIR ABILITY TO WIN THROUGH SPORTS AND COMPETITION IN SKILLS BETWEEN AGES 9- 12... IT BUILDS SELF ESTEEM / SELF CONFIDENCE.

5. Identity vs. Role confusion

This next stage, between the ages of 12 and 18, is the most crucial in the life of kids. It is the time when kids are beginning the adolescent stage. Within these ages, children resolve two fundamental crises, one is identity and another is roles in future life. Both boys and girls want to answer the question, "Who am I" and this question particularly means who is my father? What is my religion, what is my community, what is my race? What do I want to be, or whom do I want to be like? They explore various roles and ideas. When parents force their teenagers to get accustomed to their ideas about the future, the adolescents feel pathetic. They don't make conscious choices of their identity and what happens is that they develop a weakness of self-concept and self-image and experience confusion in roles of life. In such a case, they will be unsure of their identity and become confused about the future and anything goes for them because they are not checked by their principles and beliefs. They are mostly shaped by the environment and peer pressure. Teenagers who struggle to adapt to a positive role will likely struggle to find themselves because identity breeds confidence.

The teenage is the stage when peer pressure becomes big cancer as young people have neither a drive of their own nor clarity of which path they wish to uphold. When one's identity is properly developed, children are confident with themselves as they mostly know what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. Those whose identity has not developed properly, will mostly not be confident to make decisions or take direction in life, but will rather wait on someone else to make the decisions on their behalf, or they will emulate someone else even when they are being misled. They mostly succumb to peer pressure and are swayed by their environment rather than control their immediate environment. Once a teenager is settled in the mind about what he or she is, and has the aspiration on whom to be in life, there is a degree of fulfillment and direction. Teenage comes with temperaments, value systems, attitudes, belief systems, and character befitting the person you have become and whom you aspire to become.

It is the bigger version of self. Once identity is exhaustively resolved in your mind, during your teenage years, your behavioral patterns and paradigm support a lifestyle that is consistent with what you want to become. Your speech, reasoning, arguments, as well as persuasions, are just as though you are already that person. You, therefore, have the persona. A boy or girl would systematically settle their roles in life and find a sense of purpose thru their mentors, teachers, parents, or even themselves. It is these roles that end up defining the character of the individual to match the roles and purposes they have embraced during this stage.

They embrace the disciplines which are in consonant with their life roles as well as their career trajectories whether they finally play those exact roles or their modified and revised versions. Guiding and counseling departments are crucial in this stage of a child's life and those students who allow themselves to be influenced by teachers, parents, and older mentors end up making better choices for life. Those children who have a family background with a lot of unanswered questions or hidden facts mostly bring up these issues during adolescence. President Obama as a teenager had to leave the great United States to come and answer this question of who am I in a small quiet village in Kogelo.

Role models become very important in this case because they tend to adapt to the identity of their role models. They simply align their attitudes and mannerisms with their role models. Other children make decisions after considering many factors as to what they want to do and who they want to become, they then begin aligning their attitudes and mannerism to suit the person they have chosen to become and the roles they have chosen to play in life. Children, who are not living with both their parents, begin to ask questions about their fathers, and most of the time, they want to meet their fathers and resolve the identity crisis. It doesn't mean they specifically want to abandon their mother for their father, but they want to resolve that conflict of reality by their selves and make their conclusions on how they want to deal with that reality going forward.

It doesn't mean that those who do not know their fathers are damaged in any way, my main point is that at some point, the question of identity is best resolved within this age bracket and whenever it is not resolved, then it continues to bother the teenager into his or her adulthood, causing a lack of focus and a lack of self-esteem and in worse cases self-destructive behavior. Some children who are not raised by their fathers resolve to take up the identity of their mothers' family if they feel welcomed, accepted, appreciated, and loved in the family of their mother. I know people who are close to me who have taken the identity of their mother's family and they feel complete and not in any way hindered by this identity; it is largely because the mother's family has embraced, integrated, and supported them.

In some instances, children take up the identity of their mothers directly. Some communities uphold matriarchal identity and their children have their mothers' names as their last names and that matter is completely settled for them. Dan Oyuga Anne, a computer engineering expert was my fellow leader at the Christian Union choir and he used to tell us that he was raised by his mother and that he is properly grounded by his mother and will forever honor his mum as his surname. Clara, one of my mentees, permitted me to mention that during her teenage at age 15, she took her mother to task wanting to know her father.

After too much pressure, the mother finally helped her to trace her father and after she met her father, she made peace with herself based on the experience she got from the interaction. She was able to move forward after she met her father. The argument here is that identity is a need that even just knowing who it is and having your own opinion of who your father is has settled the case of an identity crisis. The child can move forward without anxiety and unanswered questions. The good, the bad, and the ugly are answers too and they get to solve the anxiety of identity crisis.

The 44th president of the United States is a good example of the impact of identity. As a teenager, he had unresolved identity issues. He made peace with his race and made it clear that he is rooted in the African American community, visited his fathers ancestral home in Kogello to reunite with his fathers family and changed his name from Barry Obama to his father's full name; Barack Hussein Obama. His middle name which was also his father's middle name became a subject of discussion during the 2008 presidential campaigns. Obama would do what politicians do, which is give you what you want to see and tell you what you want to hear. Obama argued that his middle name is Steve, a name I have never heard after he ascended to office, instead, he was sworn into office by his father's full name, which is Barack Hussein Obama.

This goes a long way to remind us that prejudice is an indictment of identity development. We need to equip our children with tools that will make them confident in their identity but also prepare them for the unfortunate reality that they will find mean gestures among their peers. These mean gestures should not make them doubt themselves. We should be the parent who affirms our children to believe in themselves and to dream without limitation. I have attended churches in the United States, which preach in Kikuyu and teach their children the gikuyu language. This in a way makes the children to be more comfortable with their identiy and settle their self esteem in the sense that they should not to fit in the American society by denying who they truly are but should intergrate with their identity intact. However, those children who may notlearn the language effectively should not be made to feel lost and incompetent. This contributes to low self esteem.

I encountered a few friends from West Africa living in the US where in most of their homes, their children are told that that America is out there, but the moment you get through that door, you are in Nigeria. We eat, dress, talk, sleep, and drink Nigerian. To a large extent, it allows the children to enjoy their identity without self doubt concerning the worth of their identity.

Roles

To conclude this stage of identity development, I will discuss roles in the development of adolescents. This is the time when teenagers make up their minds as to what purposes of life they want to play as well as what careers they want to pursue. Role models become very important here as the easiest path to defining and finding roles and purposes in life. When a teenager identifies with a role model, they quickly begin to adjust toward the values, work ethic, and demeanor of their role models. I put together a set of three friends who are neighbors and our sons are friends.

During my son's 16th birthday, I took him out camping in the company of these three friends and three fathers, fathers, and sons. During our born fire discussions, I asked certain thought-provoking questions whereby our sons were to give responses to the other two parents other than their parents. As parents, we congregated to analyze the needs of our sons and came up with a program to help our sons develop thru community parenting. I will not discuss any matter about the other children but I will discuss my observation as a father as well as from my son's perspective as a son in this set of three fathers and three sons. Amongst the questions I asked were questions such as: is your father approachable? Do you feel loved by your father? What are your needs? What is your biggest fear? And what's your one wish concerning your father?

I will single out the biggest fear my 16-year-old son had to assist me make a point on the subject of identity and roles among teenagers. He said, he was afraid of what would become of him, if his father was out of the equation of his life, for example, if his father were to unfortunately die, he wouldn't be able to move forward with his life. This submission took my fellow fathers by a huge surprise, but to me, it was feedback full of deep-seated truths. First and foremost, I was a proud father to realize that my son had already seen the depths of legacy and was already concerned about my legacy and the burden it comes with and doubted his ability to keep up with it. I was also a proud father that he had such competence and aptitude to want to figure out life for himself, outside of me, and my conclusion was that he was trying to define his own identity and his role as a human being beyond and outside the shadows of his role model father.

I concluded that my son was okay to identify with my identity as has been the case, a role model, but was slowly getting frustrated with the fact that he is yet to define his own identity so that my legacy doesn't become his identity but a part of his identity. Every time my son showed interest in one career path, I always supported him the best way I could but I knew how much he felt trapped in my identity and I needed to set him free to explore his own identity. This is a difficult thing for many parents to do but it is worth it and saves time and resources when you get it right in the beginning than later as most of us do. I deliberately chose to set my son free and made him comfortable to feel okay to think independently and attempt to follow the leading of his thoughts. This yielded so much fruit because one year later, my son had been able to bold decisions concerning his future life, career and personal changes within his school life which collectively depict the role he wants to play in society in his current and future life.

God works in mysterious ways.

I had a friend who stayed with us for one week and during the stay, he engaged my son independently to know his passions and his favorites within those conversations, my son narrowed down to two career choices. He came to me with a straight face asking me, to qualify one career option over another and argue vice versa for him. I simply told him that, it will be his own choice and my advice would be that he should choose the career which will allow him to be employed but also to be self-employed if there was no employment coming his way. I will not reveal the career choices because I do not know whether the search has come to an end. He still has time; however, he later returned the following day very excited and told me that he has already decided what he wants to do as a career. Because one of the three parents is a professional in the area he had chosen, I encouraged him to consult some more. I think he engaged immediately and later that evening he told me how excited and satisfied he was with the choice he had made and gave me a lot of valuable reasons for that choice he had made.

What struck me the most was what he said and how he identified with the career path. He said that the career choice he had made would allow him to serve God and humanity besides being a career person and he could as well use the career to directly serve the less fortunate and vulnerable populations with his acquired professional training. I could see ownership, passion, and finally that big long embrace with a whisper saying "Thank you, Dad, for your and support advice". I knew he was seeking approval that he had made a great choice and yes he had so I affirmed his choice and told him how proud I was that he was taking charge of his own life and destiny.

As I write this text, I am a proud father because the entire trajectory of my son has since changed from the day I realized the need to have him determine his fate by himself. He has firmed up his career choice, taken up leadership roles in school and concretised his character to rhyme with the person he aspires to be. A completely new born young man has emerged.

For the record, my biggest worry about his life was an initial lack of initiative which I took responsibility for having raised him as an overly involved father and overly protective at his earier years. God has been gracious to back my intentional parenting to allow him take chage of his life trajectory and it has paid off. My son has great initiative within the family, in church and in school. it is a true phenomena that teenage is a perfect stage to correct gaps of life before. This has been real and true for thec ase of my son Andes.

Disclaimer

It is not only personality development that has all factors bearing on an individual but that numerous other identities are built over time and they all become an integral part of an individual thus also contributing and sometimes compensating for the deficiencies of one identity. For example, as much as one is born in a harsh environment as we observed during the first stage of personality development, their religious beliefs would bend that hopelessness and compensate with hope over time.

A child may be raised in an environment that doesn't foster good morals, but if at the same time, they are immersed in church, the stronger identity can compensate and shape the individual more. In my interview with Dr. Ezekiel Mutua; Chief executive officer of the music copyright society of Kenya says in his own words, "I was raised in a very toxic environment full of alcohol and would pass as a brothel?" One would then ask how come he is the modern moral cop in Kenya; a name he earned while he served as chief executive officer at the Kenya film classification board, where he regulated our public content material. I traced this back to two scenarios. He identified an old man who encouraged his father to take him to school because he was a bright boy. "My father brewed Karubu, the Kamba traditional liquor. He was Kaloleni's finest and his Karubu brought imbibers, from all walks of life to his joint. While drinking, one of the customers, one day noticed my aptitude and asked my father to take me to school. Huyu aende kesho shule, (This one should go to school tomorrow)", he said, and that is how I began schooling. The very toxic environment which could have ruined him became the source of inspiration for his schooling journey. How God works!

He was also shaped by the church which taught him as a small boy the ways of God and trained him to hate alcohol and any form of sin which may be against the will of God. While in school, he ended up serving as a Christian union leader and prefect which means, he was the one preaching morals as a Christian union leader and then privileged to oversee the implementation of the moral cord. With this upbringing, then it becomes easy to compensate for the damage caused in the home environment with the moral values of both the church and school where most children spend their time anyway. The bigger number of hours spent at home are spent sleeping and just a few more during the holidays but there are far fewer active hours spent in the home for a school-going kid.

The example of Moses

This conflict of identity and role confusion is typical of what Moses did in the bible. He was raised in the King's palace as the son of the pharaoh's daughter and adopted that royal identity as a teenager. Moses had Pharaoh as his role model.

He envisaged leadership as his role and grew up fitting into the identity of a leader, a king to be precise. However, at the age of 25, he took a tour around the country, and on further inquiry, he learned of his true heritage and the significance of his name. Being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter is as good as being called a bastard which brings into question the question of who is my father. Moses chose to exit the palace of his own volition and went to live amongst his people and took the side of his people as a means to resolving his identity crisis. He was filled with rage upon realization of how the Egyptians molested the Hebrews and he proved his new identity by taking the Hebrew allegiance when he killed an Egyptian for their sake.

Whereas Moses was raised in confidence, his Hebrew brethren were different and because of slavery, they were brutalized and had no self-esteem. This explains why whenever they were in trouble; they couldn't initiate any solutions except defeatist solutions which included desiring to go back to their abusers. They were not used to standing up for themselves or fighting thru storms. Exodus 13:17 When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them along the main road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest route to the Promised Land. God said, “If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.” God knew better their state of self-esteem and protected them from situations of war which required confidence.

There are highs takes and multiple mentions of the miracles which God performed before the people. The miracles were a form of affirmation that was meant to build their confidence and faith in God. He performed continuous miracles and continued hardening the heart of the pharaoh as a way of causing a paradigm shift in the faith of the Israelites. God was bolting their faith progressively and replacing their weakness and deficiencies of a slavery mindset with positive energy hope, Trust, freedom, and confidence. God was hardening the hearts of Pharaoh so that he can prove to Israelites that these people were breakable and dispensable and that there was a superior power and authority to this authority of pharaoh which they had accepted as supreme.

The miracles were to strengthen their faith and when it was clear that some of them were what we call in psychology, damaged goods, God accepted to let go of them and continued the destiny call with the children born to them.

Adaptation to a new identity and new roles is not easy fete and these are commonplace struggles in our daily family lives. Sometimes our partners are just too stuck in their past like the Israelites born in slavery that they become an active stumbling block moving into the future.

This can be frustrating and time-wasting costing valuable opportunities to the progressive partner who is unable to move forward if the role they have purposed to play in life requires them to move together with their partner into that identity. The bigger problem is when they are unwilling to acknowledge the existence of a problem or willingness to seek help.

It is very unfortunate when for example you are wired for a calling such as a pastor or elder, or deacon which requires you to bring your family along as a measure of your competence and you are unable to tag your family along the path of common understanding. Sometimes, hey find it difficult to let go of their familiar selves because it seems comfortable. They may arrogantly hold their partners at ransom with prayers and fasting believing they are helping their marriages but the truth is that they are selfishly destroying their partners and the marriage which might or might not endure that level of selfish sabotage

6. Intimacy vs. Isolation

The next stage runs 20 years to 30 years and it's the place of Intimacy and in the absence of intimacy development, Isolation. The ages of 20 to 30 years are psychologically established as the best time for young men and women to sharpen their interpersonal skills, especially with the opposite sex. It is the perfect time to know why men are from Mars and women are from Venus; this knowledge acquired of both sexes becomes very vital in an individual's personal development of social skills relating to the people of the opposite sex especially when they settle down in such relationships.

This is the place where adults start to find the need to associate with the opposite sex and learn the traits involved in the opposite gender. They are after developing relationships with other people and trying to find out people with shared values like them and in this state, if they have not been successfully resolved in adolescence, to have a sense of self-image, they have problems maintaining successful relationships with others. We must have a strong sense of self before we can develop successful relationships and this is intertwined with the development of an adolescent.

If you don't have a proper self-image and concept propagated by the values and principles which will set off the perspective of good morals and order, it means, it is at this particular stage that people are willing to share their lives with others and those who do not learn the social skills of the meaning of having shared life with others will struggle with their relationships much later. Most importantly is that others who do not develop a positive self-concept, experience feelings of loneliness, emotional isolation and do not know how to relate with other people in the future and so their families like their married lives are likely to suffer as a

result of these consequences. Self-image is how you view yourself while self-concept is the totality of how you view yourself, how others view you, and how you perceive their perception of you and thus informing how you respond to others.

A dented self-image means you will not project the best representation of who you are and you might attract the wrong opposite gender just because you did not represent who you are due to a lack of self-esteem or worse you represented a version of yourself far removed from your true value and potential. Your response to others may as will not reflect the authentic desires and aspirations of your heart because it is filtered to reflect the opinion of others towards you. The end product will be relationships founded on deceit and misleading triggers which lead to future disappointment of your chosen partners.

There is also a huge conflict of identities in this bracket of people. The traditional African culture, would encourage and sometimes force young girls to be married at this time and those who are not married within this bracket are pressured directly or indirectly to get married by all means. Most of our parents don't give so much liberty to their daughters, especially to date and get to know men of varied characteristics. As such most of the women ended up marrying their first love at their first attempt to date. I do not know if they would have made a different choice had they gotten a chance to date freely and settle only on one who suits them better, but most of them would tell you they were given a raw deal at love.

The Christian folk among whom I grew up within these age brackets in college weren't any better, maybe worse. They were very keen to criticize romantic relationships that it was viewed as bad to date a girl even if shared your faith. As a leader of the Christian union, you were viewed as a bad example if you dated a lady from within the Christian union and vice versa. If you were seen with a lady on many occasions as a platonic friend, then you became a topic of discussion within the ranks of the Christian Union leadership. This must have been very unfortunate considering that this is the bracket of age within which young men and young girls have a practical chance to know their authentic selves where there is no room for acting or false representation of who you are. Those who manage to handle their intimacy within the age brackets of 20 to 30 years find a balance to enjoy their life following and those who are either restricted or are too strict and too serious with themselves may end up struggling to relate with the opposite sex when the time is right.

It is a general observation that women mature faster than their male counterparts. I don't know whether I am safe with the women who pride in this fact if I also observe that they also age faster than their male counterparts.

Women who do not give a chance to have relationships with their male counterparts within the age brackets of 20 to 30 years for reasons such as studies or chasing their careers have a myriad of challenges when they finally decide to date much later in their 40s and 50s. They find their male counterparts either married or chasing after much younger ladies than them. Some of those who show interest in them are broke and not as hard-working as the women who have preserved themselves to earn their education and career. They give up on them very easily because they do not necessarily complement their identity aspirations which they have long held onto. Whenever these career and independent women find well-meaning men who fit their desire, sometimes they find that the men are much younger than them. The young men do not have a problem but it is the women who have a problem with the fact that they can't respect a younger man and the cycle of searching for elusive love continues.

My set of thoughts and values around such romantic relationships were set out by my father way before I left for campus. My father always had discussions with me and was sure I was resolute as to when I will marry and that was agreed to be after my first degree but particularly during my second degree if not after. This was not to be and he believes, rightfully so that it was responsible for a slower path toward Ph.D. Dad also discussed community interests and brought to the table a few stereotypes listing the communities which were not so good to marry from as well as the communities which had wife materials. He made it very clear that he will not take me beyond Nakuru for dowry discussions except if it was in Meru or Embu. The parent's way of thinking could indeed affect how a child thinks and even make decisions. For this reason, parents should encourage their children to venture into friendships while offering the necessary support of advice. It also becomes easier for their sons and daughters to be vulnerable and share their experiences. Do not be alone, have some genuine friends to whom you can be vulnerable and gain the checkmate system to give you authentic feedback.

7. GENERATIVITY VS STAGNATION

When people reach the ages of 30 to 40 years, they develop a sense of generativity. Generativity is the propensity and willingness to engage in acts that promote the well-being of younger generations as a way of ensuring the long-term survival of the species but for our case, it is psychologist Erik H. Erikson's term for the primary developmental task of the seventh stage of the life cycle – caring for and contributing to the life of the next generation. At this stage, people begin giving back to society as a fair number of people contribute to the next generation through childbearing and caring for others, and engaging others to make a better Society for the next generation.

They get a moral that propels them to their desired self-image of respect and recognition in society. This boosts their self-image and self-concept because feel proud of their contribution and in the reverse society views them as a useful and hopeful team player for the future survival of the community. In the net effect, the individual feels he or she has a good standing in the community and that gives them an identity they are proud of. It is also a fundamental; emotional human need for human beings to feel they are contributing something to the society which they live in and this goes a long way in fulfilling this need as those who participate to contribute have a positive self-image. The social task of middle life is finding your life worth contributing to the development of others through mentoring, raising children, and volunteering.

Those who do not define self at this stage experience despair and that is to mean that it becomes impossible to develop the ability to engage the society with pride and purpose. They feel that they are not valued in society and therefore feel stagnant and frustrated at their inability to contribute to their society's well-being. The fact that they do not receive a significant amount of recognition from society means they do not walk around with their heads high leading to a poor self-image and lack of confidence within society. This low self-esteem has a ripple effect of discouragement and withdrawal from community projects, sometimes shame, for not being able to rise to the needs and expectations of your community, and is what we call stagnation. They feel as though they are not leaving a legacy in the world in a meaningful way. They would have little connection with others and they would have little interest in the community.

Within this range of ages, my father had a huge sense of generativity. He was a club president of his football club called Mollases. Dad was also a player and a coach-player and that was not all; he was the sponsor of the team. This account is supported by a friend called Hudson Baraza Ashibende who played for that club at the time. I watched my father play. He was striker 9 and my greatest memory is watching him play at the Ingotse primary school field. On one occasion he made a very powerful shot that the ball went too far into the neighborhood and Dad had to go collect it by himself after scoring a goal. He was age 44 at the time and his nickname was Marango; meaning he had big muscular thighs.

These are not stories that were told to me but things I witnessed because, after the match, all the players would spend the night in our home and would drink alcohol all night eating nyama choma, roast stakes. I was at the center of the action because I used to entertain the guests with my music. There was a Luo album that I had mastered word for word and I used to sing along so well that these footballers would give me money (okhufuwa).

My mother tells me that he played guardian to some of his nephews and nieces some of who lived with him and schooled from his home. Among them were my late first cousin Rose Mukoko and Quantity Surveyor Mr. Benson Munala Mukoko from his elder brother's family, Mr. David Munala, son of my late aunty Oyemba and Omukoyia, daughter of my late uncle Dickson Musotsi. My mother also tells me that he used to do shopping for the entire Onyako family with supplies for all his brothers and cousins.

My father used to rent parcels of land from families which had school-going children and would utilize the land for his profit and inherit the schooling needs of such children until they finished high school. There are many such homes whose children went to school because of these innovative interventions by my father. He began his political activities in his mid to late forties.

I can bear witness that within my thirties and fourties, I was more inclined to mentoring younger men and women to find purpose and exloit their talents in ministry and careers. I also developed a high sense of passion to do community work even volunteering in community projects in my home area and lending a helping hand to my mentees in themusic industry. I also participated support my alumni organizations. In one of my alumni organizations, a friend, George Wafula", shared some review. " The desire to resurrect and grow the defunct KUCU Alumni Fellowship reconnected us with Anderson. After a few regular meetings in KUCU we gladly served together again in the Alumni caretaker committee that was aimed at propping up the alumni that had a leadership vacuum by then due to sudden resignation of leaders of that time.

The energy, the passion and the burning desire to get things done and done rightly typified Bishop Anderson's trait. This trait lent itself appropriately to the crisis management that brought back and redefined KUCU Alumni leadership operations to date. It made it easier to succeed him in chairing the Kenyatta University Christian Union Alumni.

GIVING BACK TO THE SOCIETY

OFFERING PLATFORMS TO MUSICIANS

OFFERING PLATFORMS TO MUSICIANS

8. Ego/Integrity vs. Despair

In aging, people become cognitively retrogressive. There is either a feeling of success, failure, or soldiering on. People, who are at the age of 50 and above, look at the present and future state of their children with so much importance. They also look at their investments and their societal positions as the center of their definition of legacy. When they feel that they haven't accomplished as much, they realize they are sitting at the edge, neither too good nor too bad.
Older men and women also look at their financial security going into the future. They fear the possibility of being a burden to their children especially if their children do not demonstrate the ability to shoulder their financial expectations. Whenever senior citizens think that they do not have enough investments to leave their children as an inheritance or enough resources to sustain themselves coupled with a lack of hope in their children's prospects of prosperity, they have a bruised ego.

One of the most influential theorists of psychology, Erikson 1968 described ego identity as a means for the continuity of the person. Erikson viewed ego identity as serving to protect individuals in the face of change produced by sudden changes in personal or situational factors. To the more aged persons,
their pride is in the fact that they can be looked at as role models in society and that society has a high opinion of them. Seniors, who feel life has been kind to them, look into their sunset years with hope and confidence telling their grandchildren good stories and speaking blessings to their children. They inspire other children directly in Schools and churches. Those who do not feel these accomplishments feel desperate and frustrated.

In my community, a parent cannot ask for forgiveness from a child even when they are wrong but when a child asks for forgiveness from the father or mother, it cleanses even the errors of the parents. I wish to empower parents so that they can also just forgive their children unconditionally and show an example of love towards their children. Didn't God forgive our sins while we were yet sinners that Christ died for our sins, long before we repented - Romans 5: 8 (NIV). Those who feel in despair need to embrace counseling so that they can make peace with their past lives and look into the future with the right perceptive no matter their past experiences.

Support systems for the elderly

Getting a support system for the elderly to share their stories and potentially get some form of therapy or encouragement from religious leaders may help ease this pain. A therapist may have a way of finding the inspirational stories of their lives and magnifying the inspiration to heal the bruised ego. We need to develop more capacity within our communities such that we have mental wellness

programs for the elderly. This will reduce the degree of toxicity within our families and boost confidence for the next generation.

We need a safe space, a *Kamukunji* – a Kenyan colloquial word (a kind of consultative meeting) of the elderly to be guided to letting out this trauma. They can be organized through community leaders that include religious leaders. My father once told me that women who have grown-up sons abuse their aging husbands because they have their grown sons as an insurance plan. I believe this applies to daughters too. The aging husbands have neither say nor authority because the children usually give their fathers one thousand shillings only and give their mothers five thousand instead- a common family relations trend in Kenya.

Old age Insecurity

Those aging envy the strength and physical capabilities of the young because they are limited by their physical strength. Older people suffer a loss of self-esteem because whenever stressful situations which require a rapid response occur, they may not be able to quickly respond like before. Parents start to feel a sense of loss as they give out their land portions to their children thus remaining with smaller sizes of land. If they are still motivated to use their portions of land, the parents may begin to envy their children as people who have taken away from their power of production. Worse is if the child in question doesn't manage the property well or seeks to sell or lease without visible benefits to the said child. It becomes emotionally burdensome to process what could have been if he was still in charge of the property. It is an emotional reality that both parents and children should be aware of to help each other feel secure. Therapy with professionals or a safe space for such conversations to take place will help heal our generations.

Older parents who are still bruised by what could have been of their lives if certain circumstances didn't happen or if certain circumstances obtained are likely to bleed on their children. Without knowing it, such parents may see their children succeed, and rather than be happy for such success, they might feel sorry for themselves that they never had such a chance to feel as successful.

This sense of loss can get more intense if the older parent knows that he or she could attain their dreams if the situation had not twisted. It is very normal for them to feel unlucky and unfortunate. It is a form of trauma that has nothing to do with you or your children but a cumulative trauma leading to insecurities and low self-esteem manifesting as a bruised ego. Your negative actions are portrayed as a bruised ego that needs healing.

Do not run away from the fact that it could be happening to you but seek help to heal. Our old generation should accept the outcome of their lives and be at peace with what they see. If you do not let go of your old-age ambitions, you will die of depression the moment you fail to accomplish such ambitions. They should make peace with what they were not able to achieve and put it into prayer. Sometimes what they see may not look great, but they should question whether they did their best under their circumstances. If they did their best, they should know that the seed they planted will grow.

Those old folks who are too lost in their unfortunate situations of life, may unknowingly delay or stall the progress of their children and contribute to the failure of their children because they will fail to play their most important role of cheering and affirming their children. They will lose their position of guiding, affirming, and cheering for their children because they were overly occupied with the regrets of their unaccomplished dreams and become unhappy. An unhappy father cannot bless you. Is it not the reason, Isaac asked Esau to bring him his favorite soup so he can bless him in Genesis 27:4? The mood needed to be right.

Older parents do not take time to understand whether their children have the means they imagine of them. I know of an old man who used to cry and shade tears complaining that his son has not sent him any money since he went to the city to work. That was just a few weeks after he left the village for the city. The young man was yet to get a job yet his father was already cursing and shading tears that the son is not supporting him. You can be sure that when your parents are not trying to bless you, you will struggle without understanding the source of your struggles. Are such struggles necessary?

Children to aging parents

Most Children invite their mothers to their city homes and overseas while the fathers are left at home to take care of the home. Factually speaking, most men didn't build a good relationship with their children. They left home to provide and missed out on the relationships. That gap is being used against them as if the school fees they paid was not valuable and only the roles played by mothers were important. They need to be assisted to cope with their feeling of loss of love.

Children too have the duty of care for their parents and the elderly in society. The older parents mostly have health challenges and suffer loneliness most of the time. Children should understand that sometimes all the parents need is company and assurance of their children's love and support. On the flip side of it, the relationship between grandchildren and grandparents is very symbiotic.

Under Early Life, I explained how grandchildren raise children with a much more free hand allowing for independence, initiative, and creativity. Grandchildren also cement the concept of identity into the minds of children. The grandparents are the epitome of cultural identity and sometimes religious identity if their religion aligns with the religious identity of the parents. The bottom line is that the grandchildren benefit just as much from history and parables, puzzled, riddles, and idioms from their grandparents expanding their mental capacities and power of imagination. Children develop their identity better when with their grandparents because of the free nature of expression unlike the suppressed individualism around parents if they happen to be strict parents.

Children should prioritize supporting the needs of their parents who may be aging and lacking in strength to actualize some of their desires. Most of the time, the older parents just want to have a sense of assurance and belonging to pride in associating with their children and enjoying the company of their children or grandchildren. Most aging parents are sickly and deserve all the support they can get. One parent can take care of ten children and take them through school with very limited resources yet the ten children may not support that one parent with similar or more resources. That is wrong and children should support their parents with whatever little resources they may have. It doesn't matter whether the parent will appreciate it enough or not. Just do your part. Good parents will appreciate even small support and gestures.

Grandchildren are a reflection of their grandparents. They are the hope, and legacy which energizes the grandparents. The older parents are always happy to see, play with, eat with talk with, and work with their grandchildren as this gives them hope for power in their ego. Modern families do not appreciate the value of allowing their children time with their grandchildren. The value is symbiotic and mutually beneficial. If the older parents have another family like in my polygamous case and that of my polygamous grandparents, the children should isolate the differences between parents and their spouses and concern themselves only with matters that concern them directly while allowing their parents to live their chosen life without interference from their grown children.

1. Dad with visiting his son in school on different occasions
2. Refer to 1
3. Dad holding his granddaughter during a visit to our Nairobi home
4. Levite, Emma’s daughter shows his grandfather around digital gadgets
5. Dad with his tw grad daughters, Faridah and Shirley
6. Dad with my elder brother Tony Munala and myself and our children taking a ride from hospital
7. Dad sharing light moments with his granddaughter Shirley

8. My sons enjoying the gift of chicken from their grandfather
9. Dad received by his grandchildren during one of his visits to our home.
10. Dad enjoying a meal with us at our house
11. Dad gifting his grandson Andes Murunga a goat
12. My son Andes Enjoying a meal with his grandfather

21. Dad with his grandchildren, Kelvin, Eugene and Sarah (Children of my eldest sister Ruth Murunga Makotsi)
22. Dad with My father with some of his oldest grandchildren Dr. Linda Musumba and her sister Racy Ndombi
23. Dad accompanied to hospital by his grandsons Aden and Alex (son of my elder brother Tony Munala
24. Dad sharing a light moment with his granddaughter Farida (Daughter of my elder brother Tony Munala)

Dad kept company while sick by his grandchildren at our Nairobi house.

MY FATHER AND HIS GRAND CHILDREN

MUM AND HER GRAND CHILDREN

Identity Formation

Identity formation, also called identity development or construction, is a complex process in which humans develop a clear and unique view of themselves and their identity. It is complex because many aspects of our environments contribute and constitute an identity by itself and a process because these aspects or identities continue to manifest consistently and coherently until you perceive yourself as a unique being embodied in a collective, coherent, and cumulative identity. Identity formation and evolution are impacted by a variety of internal and external factors like society, family, ethnicity, race, culture, location, opportunities, media, interests, appearance, self-expression, and life experiences but these identities can be broken down into the following: cultural identity, ethnic and national identity, religious identity, gender identity, professional identity, and disability identity. Overall, three core components have been recognized: distinctiveness (seeing the self as unique and distinct from others), coherence (perceiving the self as similar across domains), and continuity (perceiving the self as the same person over time).

Factors influencing identity

The culture, language, geography, and religion surrounding a person can influence their identity. These elements change the outlook that people have on the world and the lives they lead every day. Their opinions, views, practices, and self-image are all affected by these ingredients. As a person grows and begins to piece together the different aspects of their identity, this idea of how they see themselves is formed through their experiences. The most significant factors that impact a person's identity are the family and the cultural and religious setting they are immersed in. In addition to these, there are also cognitive and scholarly influences.

Family

Family is the most basic, most fundamental, most important, and most comprehensive factor which affects identity formation more than any other factor. All other factors are secondary and that is why identity formation happens in the family just like real life happens in the family. whereas people tend to discuss the relationship between boys and their mothers in a negative connotation such as mama's boy, research has shown that boys and men who have strong relationships with their mothers are mentally healthier, more empathetic, and have better relationships with women more so their wives when the time is due. Research also shows that women who never had a father figure in their life have such a hard time in relationships with men. They feel as these opposite-sex relationships are new, even strange. A boy being very close to his mother and how that influences his choice of a wife to be and how girls from a tough father expect a tough husband if not, they downgrade the husband in the

man. It also varies from the global North and the South and how that influences socialization. The kind of relationships that adolescents have with their parents goes a long way to influence their identity formation. When there is a positive solid relationship between an adolescent and their parents, they are more likely to feel the freedom to exploit identity options for themselves. Studies have revealed that boys' and girls' identity formation is positively influenced by parental investments in areas such as social support and monitoring as well as support in school monitoring. In contrast, when there is no close or stable parental relationship, they fear rejection from their parents and are likely to feel less confident in forming a separate identity from that of their parents.

I will throw in a few provocative thoughts. For a son, an absent father leaves unanswered questions which can create problems in building up, developing, and maintaining a coherent and constructive sense of personal identity. A father might be the person who helps his children develop confidence in themselves. Unless your mother was very assertive to become your example, boys who had absent fathers mostly doubt their capabilities. Only a father asks you to take the bike after a fall. A mother will clean you up and warn you not to dare ride that bike again. A mother will come to school guns blazing asking to know the boy or teacher who beat up her son but a father won't do that. A father will tell you to man up and show that boy what you are made of. If you lose the fight, your father will most likely throw you under the bus to fight again or pretend he knows nothing about that situation but a mother will help your cry.

A father plays with his sons like they are wrestling and with daughters like a sprint while a mother plays like she is singing a lullaby. If there were loud noises at the gate, a mother will leave her bedroom and go to the son's bedroom whereas a father will ask all of them to go back and stay put while he figures out what to do. Any time daddy is around home; his children are bold to surpass their boundaries and can easily confront other children who may have mistreated them before. A father and self-confidence are mutually inclusive such that an absent father affects the self-image, self-concept, and self-esteem of a child in a multiplicity of ways. Men who grew up without fathers or father figures have no problem being males but struggle to be men for lack of a template of how a man projects and presents himself in a family setup. They struggle with the lack of software of man's perspective thru issues. They struggle to assert their authority because they don't know how it is done. When a man screams shouts/yells and is verbally or even physically abusive, it is an admission that they are unable to assert their authority with everything available to them. They are gasping for help because all they know is exhausted yet they are powerless and helpless.

As adults, we are never too far away from feelings that originate from our childhood. These feelings can stem from unmet needs during childhood derived from an absent father. Maybe you feel emotionally empty, you feel you are always giving your time to others, yet never getting back anything, or maybe you feel misunderstood. A child who felt emotionally neglected, unsupported, or unloved is an adult who often feels lonely, emotionally detached, or needy. You feel that no matter how much love and support someone provides, it is never enough. Attachment is an emotional bond with another person. Growing up without a father is a loss of what could have been and can be one of the most traumatic experiences. Often, an individual can struggle with feelings of low self-esteem, unworthiness, identity issues, and self-love.

However, trauma begins if a dad leaves and the individual feels not only a deep sense of loss but also an overwhelming sense of abandonment. The individual lacks that healthy relationship model and often seeks to fill that void in a variety of ways. The child ends up blaming themselves if dad left due to divorce, feelings of bitterness, stress, emotional pain, emotional disconnection, anxiety, fear, feeling betrayed, unwanted and unloved. The little child within an adult is longing to be loved and feel connected. Emotional deprivation is the part that craves that the child never knew, or had a chance to fully experience. The adult may find it hard to accept affection from their partner or close relationships and have the inability to socialize.

The first relationship a woman has with a man is usually with his father, and this relationship usually becomes a template for those men that will follow afterward. It is said that a daughter will marry or will be attracted to someone just like her father. The relationship with a father or lack of it teaches a young woman how a man should treat a woman and this serves as a template for the rest of the individual's life. Generally, future relationships will be determined by the first experience with the individual's father. An absent father can be emotionally damaging as the individual can lose a sense of self, and trust in others and be emotionally distant. The negative impact that an absent father has on a child can be seen as a wound that never seems to heal. The child may, as an adult, find it difficult to maintain intimate relationships and a desire for closeness but might be afraid of rejection and be uncomfortable with emotional closeness.

Growing up without a father or father figure can be one of the most painful and traumatic experiences, as often the individual can struggle with feelings of low self-esteem, unworthiness, identity issues, and self-love. According to studies, a father's influence on the life of a daughter has a significant impact on her psychological development. Confidence, clarity, stronger self-esteem, and a deeper knowledge of who they are and what they want, are all traits of those

girls who have healthy relationships with their fathers. Young girls depend on their fathers for security and emotional support. A father is a son's first hero and a daughter's first love." "The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life." "Fathering is not something perfect men do, but something that perfects the man." A father shows his daughter what a good relationship with a man is like. If a father is loving and gentle, his daughter will look for those qualities in men when she's old enough to begin dating.

A grown lady will detect without a struggle if a man shows a form of love removed from that displayed by her father; genuine, gentle, and respectful love. When young girls do not have a father figure, they hardly get the direction and example needed from a father figure; they learn to make up their survival playbook. This can lead to negative coping skills such as sexual promiscuity, total avoidance of intimacy, isolation, substance abuse, anxiety, and depression.

Marriage

Most married people struggle with adjusting and acquiring a new identity as a result of marriage, most of the people rather than adapting, change themselves in the interest of their partners, whose disposition keeps changing; spouses find themselves in a rat race trying to play catch up with their partners who are continuously changing and they feel the goalposts are changing and frustration kicks in. A married couple can suffocate their identities because they are trying hard to find their place and do not know how to keep their identity or change their roles within the relationship and because it is not well thought out nor deliberate; it is always a process of guesswork whose results may end up to become frustrating.

Many people are not happy in their marriages because they were more committed to their partner's happiness or children and did not love themselves enough. When this craving for reciprocation is not met, the person feels wasted, taken advantage of, and crushed. Some other people depend on the affirmation of their spouses as a means to validation especially when they do not have high self-esteem and the absence of the same becomes a greater reason for demeaning themselves. Verbal abuse as well as physical abuse is the greatest threat to identity development in families whether among spouses or parents to children as well as children to children. Bullying takes away the ability of a child to express himself or herself and thus has a helpless and poor self-image hampering their identity formation. An abusive marriage relationship disenfranchises the victim to assert their identity. New weds go through an identity struggle to be identified as a married person and no longer single, sometimes it is the sudden change of name calling or the student change of title from Miss to Mrs. Sometimes it is the expectation of those around you to behave a certain way which needs to be consistent with your new identity.

Where there is no courtship or premarital counseling, couples struggle a great deal to fit into the new identities abruptly and hurriedly. This affects their emotional wellness and raises anxiety levels since everything is changing too fast and they are expected to catch up with these changes to remain comfortable in their newfound identities. There is the other lot of those married but still struggling with a myriad of issues that could put them asunder, especially those in separation. They do not know whether they are married or not, they also do not know whether they want to remain married to this person or want to consider a different version of identity with self or a different person. Some spouses have contradicting religious identities which make it difficult for them to be completely at peace with themselves. These contradictions cause more confusion among the children than among the parents. For example, when couples marry across religions and may end up worshipping differently, on different days, and upholding different entities as sacred. The children born in this family setup end up getting confused as to what identity to uphold and most often than not, they might end up taking neither of the two identities.

In most of the couples I have counseled, the woman card is the biggest grave digger for the boy child. Most men have been depressed because their hands and voices are tied and their individuality is buried. Their women make it a life project to change their personality including the very traits that attracted them to the man.

For example, the women would say they were attracted to traits such as the fear of the lord, being conservative, being social and friendly to others, being confident, resilient, and courageous to venture into new frontiers.
Surprisingly, once they get married, they start uninstalling every software the man has for his identity until the man can no longer recognize or function by himself properly. The power of a woman is the fact that the woman is the happiness and attraction of her husband. his brain pursues his happiness by pleasing his wife. woe unto you if your wife thrives in manipulating her man using her power. worse is if the wife desires his authority like Satan desired God's authority.

Have you heard women say, these men cannot do anything for themselves unless We do it for them, help them decide, or take the first step? That is where the evidence lies because the man has been devoured until their personality is no more. Their self-esteem is destroyed and their feathers are plucked so that they cannot fly anymore unless their women flap their wings. The bad news is that immediately you become that lame duck, your woman starts to disrespect you and no longer admires you as someone worth their admiration. They may even tell you how another man is this great or that great for things you once used to be great in. Some men told me in very express terms that they are tired of being puppets of their wives. This is a common boy-child struggle. I write it confidently knowing that I am not being malicious but speaking for the boy child.

The boy child was not born to make his wife happy; Eve was made from Adam's DNA because Adam was not happy and needed a companion. It is Eve who was created for the happiness of Adam and not the other way around. Shoot me! I am not talking about men and women. I am talking about that husband and that wife. The feminists can wait for another day during the discussion concerning men and women.

Religious identity

After family, Religion is the next major puzzle piece in the formation of one's identity. It plays a major role in the way morals are molded, as well as how a person views the different aspects of life. These views can be completely altered by the rules and history of a particular religion or the complete lack thereof. Although this is not always the case, religion is often a culture and those practices can tend to inform one's identity a great deal.

Religion has always been associated with large groups of people who have the same values. This unity allows them to surround themselves with a similar mindset. Unity of good purpose typically results in a feeling of comfort because the church can provide someone to turn to in times of need. Being immersed in a particular religion can also have the opposite effect on a person. They may be raised in a particular religion, but they might not agree with it. This can cause a feeling of fear and frustration as this can hold someone back from forming or voicing their true beliefs about their identity, therefore certain environmental factors, like religion may threaten our identity. Moments come when one may not be comfortable when the religion they subscribe to is under threat or criticized.

There are many instances of a direct connection between religion and ethnicity. Religion refers to a specific system of beliefs and worship. It is usually closely connected to ethnicity because it contributes to the culture and customs of a people. Individuals with the same religious beliefs are often from the same ethnic group, although this is not always the case. This connection ties in and culture and religion both religion form a person's identity. In many areas of the world, ethnicity is the foundation for the development of religion. When someone has a strong cultural identity, they often have a strong religious identity. This is not always the case, as there are outliers in all religions, but in most cases, the culture you identify with often goes hand-in-hand with the religion you follow. In many cases, the holy book associated with a particular religion often provides a set of rules and views that are primarily followed by those who practice it. This typically has the most profound effect on one's identity. A good majority of the time it can make a person feel down to earth and connected to others.

For those who are non-religious, it can ignite a spark of curiosity to find scientific answers to those universal inquiries. It can also cause them to create their morals

and ideas of right and wrong. But in some rare cases, twisted personal perspectives of religion can manifest into something dark that causes violence and harm to others. Religion is not necessarily allegiance to a deity but to a given lifestyle. For example, there are a particular lot of people who adore fashion and beauty. Papa Wemba, the late musician was once chairman of such. They go as far as us swallowing particular chemicals. They identify themselves with that kind of religion. It is an identity.

African Identity and Christianity

Some people struggling in their social lives today can trace their identity conflict to these conflicting forces between three dimensions of African culture, Christian culture, and the super-imposed Western culture mistakenly propagated and ignorantly to be consumed as Christianity.

Some people have never recovered for a long time and are unable to resolve certain life-defining moments and decisions because they are at war with their thoughts and beliefs. They feel guilty and ashamed of the decisions they need to make yet these thoughts and beliefs have nothing to do with Christianity but purely a Western culture, allow me to give you a few examples so you do not imagine I am just being sensational.

In the African culture, a man was not supposed to sleep with a woman until they are married. Girls were expected to marry as virgins and there were processes to prove that. Your aunties took the bed sheets after the wedding night to confirm that. This purity was honorable and rewarded with more dowry when you had married a virgin who had kept herself sexually pure. I will let you decide whether this was a beautiful thing or not because I am not a girl. An African wedding was a public event bringing together two families who share in food; exchange gifts and the parents bless their children and release their daughter to the man's family. There is a pastor to preach and preside over this ceremony. This ceremony is recognized by the laws of most African jurisdictions as a marriage at this level of the two communities committing to each other and witnessing the union.

Upon customary rights such as dowry payment, the African culture considers that a marriage. We still do these African weddings today exactly the way we did them before. Some communities call it Ruracio, while my community now proudly calls it a pre-wedding (the wedding where the girl's family formally gives you their daughter as a wife). It is called a pre-wedding because there is a main wedding coming. That one was null and void. Forget that something like that happened. That was traditional and African, something inferior. You should have avoided it. It is only that we had no choice; we did it for our parents. If it was African, then it was inferior. It is null and void. It is not sufficient proof that one was married.

You have to do a Christian wedding with white Cinderella excesses. That's what I am talking about. It is the excesses! If I walked to an average Christian pastor today and said "I have found a girl, we have gone thru the process of family agreements and we have a request; that you take us thru premarital counseling and then pray for us during the Sunday service. We shall have our parents in attendance or that there is evidence that our parents blessed us, and we will have our two best couple and the church as our witness before God." Most pastors will most likely have a problem with this situation which doesn't look like a white wedding. That is how much we have considered ourselves ugly and incomplete. I know you are feeling conflicted. It is an identity conflict and it is okay. You do not have to believe in this. How many people today in the church have conducted a Christian wedding? I can assure you that the numbers are very small.

Many people would love to feel complete in a Christian marriage but those who never did a white wedding packaged as a church wedding; continue to be told how they are not really up to standard. Even those who have legal documents from the government continue to be reminded how they are not quite there. They need another programme called marriage blessing. This is the reason people are standing on shallow grounds in their marriages and with less commitment to their spouses because the church has justified how shallow these marriages are until a certain threshold of a church wedding is conducted; some of which is a set of unnecessary excesses. I am not in any way saying that you should not aspire to the ideals of your church. I am a signed-up member of a church that has its prescriptions and ceremonies. I abide by them unequivocally within the context of the church.

By the grace of God, I am a beneficiary of most if not all ceremonies within the Christian fraternity. I am therefore not attempting rebellion but provoking reflection and research. I know that one day, it will count that I stated these facts to improve the Christian experience within the African context. I know that at some point, someone will develop a research question on this matter within the church to aid the church be more responsive than limiting to the institution of the family. Young people are shying away from formal weddings due to the expensive nature of such weddings. Where shall it all end in practical terms? You would hear the church talk about six or ten weddings in a year and this is not a conservative figure, but at what ratio of the adult single or married population? I once attended a couple's event where the couples were led to reflect on the teachings and instructions of the season the families took time in prayer and to raise the family to alter our marriages.

All these couples were married, living together, and raising children. All the couples were led to a joint Holy Communion and renewal of vows. Those married through a wedding had actual vows to make but thinking about those who have not done a formal church wedding, I got some interesting questions running through my mind. My mind went crazy to imagine that it would make a great wedding moment complete with government documents in such a sacred moment complete with Holy Communion, but that was my wild mind so do not give it much thought. There would be critical questions to be answered like the need for proper counsel and teachings before this stage.

That low self-esteem by the African folk trying to catch up with the white culture which I find to be inferior to the African culture in terms of the family structure, family values, Godly values, and ability to offer an adequate support system that fosters good values and morals is an unfortunate occurrence. The Western culture will punish you for displaying your Christian faith in public spaces or challenging immoral behavior such as same sex sexual behavioer. I find it hypocritical when the western church for example tolerate and embrace a man having sex with another man or marrying another man but will want the African folk to feel more guilty when one man has more than one legal wives.

we glorify European lifestyle and mistake it for tenates of Christianity because ethe missionaries made it their business to adjust our identity as inferior to theirs at the expense of our pure sapphire African touch of culture? What we have is gold and sapphire; pure niceness! The hate for self as an African is still rampant in our churches today. We despise anything and everything African. We despise African songs, African dances, and African attire. We still despise African gospel songs and elevate anything and everything white originated looking down on anything African.

In 2008, I went for an interview at family radio. They had advertised for radio presenters. I was interviewed by the CEO, Leo Slingerland. He liked everything about me except that I touched him in a raw nerve fashion. He asked me about my favorite artists. I said Cece Winans, Donny McLurkin, Kirk Franklin, Michael W Smith, and Don Moen. He called me a racist with so much rage because my playlist had three black gospel musicians and only two white musicians. Was it that I mentioned the black names before the white ones? Was he finding it difficult that Black names were top of my list? Wasn't he the racist here? These are the cultural excess I talk about that accompanied Christianity and we continue to pay for those sins with the aid of the church leaders and Christian union leaders in our colleges and universities.

History is a factor influencing identity formation

The Bible has recorded its history with a clear historical background that he is the God of our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The genealogy of Jesus as an identity is also preserved as a historical identity. There is a reason, we have the house of Levi as selected to preserve the service to their house of God in the prescribed manner in the bible. There is also a reason why God asked that the mantle which was upon Aaron be placed on his son Eleazer. Many dynamics of identity can be drawn from history and I would like to dig deeper and bring out a more solid understanding of this.

During their teenage, an adolescent tries to resolve two aspects of their identity development. They resolve their identity as well as their roles in life. As for identity, a boy or girl could settle their identities with their father's lineage or their mother's lineage even though psychologists argue that the identity construct is purely a father's affair. I do not want to argue with that fact. I am only highlighting that there are aspects of identity that are trans-generational and are not a respecter of gender. I may wish to make a bold statement that the quest for the male child is premised on the understanding that genetics and heritage is a preserve of fathers. My biochemistry, genetics and spiritual sense disputes that but I shall forward the debate for another day. I am also exploring the fact that your role model doesn't necessarily have to be someone whom you see every day and I will give you a perfect example myself a little later.

A boy or girl would systematically settle their roles in life and find a sense of purpose thru their mentors, teachers, parents, or even self. It is these roles that end up defining the character of the individual to match the roles and purposes they have embraced during this stage. They embrace the disciplines which are in consonant with their life roles as well as their career trajectories whether they finally play those exact roles or their modified and revised versions. Guiding and counseling departments are crucial in this stage of a child's life and those students who allow themselves to be influenced by teachers, parents, and older mentors end up making better choices for life. My spiritual choices were made at this stage in class six while my role and purpose were made much later while I was in class eight and solidified in high school. My identity has significantly been shaped by my history in a major way and I will try to be systematic about it.

My father has been my role model and remains to be my top role model. I have also gotten to learn the identity of my grandfather, his father and it is such an enviable reputation for his age that he is my role model too, many decades after his demise. The knowledge of his legacy makes me choose him as a role model too. Role models can play a vital role in developing a person's social identity and cultural identity, especially among adolescents.

We already discussed that role models play an important role in the lives of teenagers such that they look up to specific role models and then as they envision themselves as their role models, they start aligning their identity to that of their role models. This was and remains the case with my grandfather I have since embraced his identity and I am gradually embracing my social and cultural identity to accommodate his own identity as my role model.

Mothers are not entirely bystanders in the lives of their children but pass down valuable experiences, lessons, and a hereditary identity to their children too whether female or male. Mothers can become role models to their children in very many ways and these examples if embraced as role models will go a long way to influence the social and cultural identity of their respective children. Throughout history, I have learned a lot of powerful legacies from both my maternal grandfather as well as grandmother which I am extremely proud of. Teenage is the stage in life when most identity and role questions are in high demand among teenagers. They want to know about their fathers and their origin if they didn't know earlier. They are also grappling with what they want to be in life and what they want to do when they grow up; it's the reason why teenagers need role models the more.

President Obama as a teenager had to leave the great United States to come and answer this question of who am I in a small quiet village in Kogelo. In his own words, he was checking into the country when a clerk asked him whether he was related to the senior Barack Obama, and he says, it is the first time his name meant something. He went to learn the ways of his people, the culture of his people, and their social set-up. He met his brothers and sisters and grandmother, then went back to the United States where the rest became history.

From a psychological point of view, the making of this historical trip was a monumental therapeutic experience that offered answers to a lot of questions and settling of unrest. The president speaks in his own words about how growing up without a father affected him negatively in more than one way and the negative effects which came with that, the negative effects being the lack of focus due to many lingering and unanswered questions."My father left our family when I was only two years old and I was raised by a single mom who had to work hard and struggled at times to pay the bills, and she wasn't always able to give me the things that other kids had.

There were times when I missed having a father in my life. There were times when I was lonely and I dint feel like I fit in. so I wasn't always focused as I should have been focused on school, and I did some things that am not proud of. I got into more trouble than I should have.

My life could have easily taken a turn for the worst, but I was lucky to get a lot of second chances. I had the opportunity to go to college and law school and to follow my dreams" Obama, just like Mohamed Ali, resolved his identity and was very happy and proud of this identity. "I am a son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived the great depression and served in Patton's army in the Second World War and a wild white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Forte Leaven Worth. I have schooled in some of the best schools and I have lived in some of the world's poorest nations. "

This simple narration by Obama brings into focus that children and teenagers go thru varied emotions occasioned by their environments and circumstances. In the case of Obama, he may have grown up without a father but he wasn't entirely without a father figure in his grandfather. You can particularly hear the attributes he gives to his mother and his grandparents as follow: A grandfather who **survived** the great depression and served in Patton's army in the Second World War and a **wild** white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Forte Leaven worth. He speaks of his mother a single mom who had to work hard and struggled at times to pay the bills.

Obama continues to tell his story and history, I am married to a black woman who carries in her the blood of slaves and slave owners. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and aunties, and cousins across the world on three continents. He is aware of the multi-linguist, multi-cultural, and multi-racial relations he has and is an identity. Learning about your history reveals a lot about your heritage; mostly it makes your great ancestors, your heroes if they were heroes of their time. A lot of people need to look no further than their heritage to find real heroes whose history can motivate them into taking up a cultural or social identity that they would want to pursue as an identity. If you find heroes within your bloodline, then you will have formed a role model in you and will align with the identity of those heroes. That is why it could be beneficial to dig and find a role model from your heritage if you find one. In the absence of this, then you have a history of life in your community, church, school, and exposure.

One of the inspirations I found for living is the fact that I got hindsight of both my paternal and maternal heritage and realized that they lived a life that was larger than themselves and that they were born to serve humanity. Their lives were those of world heroes and deliverers of their people, problem solvers for the needs of their communities, and beacons of hope for their people. They went the extra mile to make the quality of their people's lives better. They sacrificed and sometimes paid the price with very expensive consequences to serve their courses.

Their dreams and aspirations and their vision for the community were so huge, full of scars of service, tears of hope differed, and regrets of their limitations but a breadth of hope which they upheld to the last minute about the future of their dreams.

Like Dr. Martin Luther King said I have a dream, my forebearers had dreams, very loud dreams, very visible dreams whose pulse is still beat to date and whose footprints are living testaments that they had visions and purpose for their generation. I chose to fulfill those dreams without passing over the magnitude of responsibility to be a burden to the next generation. I want the next generation to live up to their full potential by serving their full purpose and full term. I came to reckon with the fact that my history and heritage are part of my identity. I refreshed the historical significance of my father's life as well as my mother's life. I learned about the historical perspectives of both my maternal and paternal grandfathers and got a much deeper and more diverse understanding of a genealogically set purpose and lifestyle with very clear footprints which are demanding to be preserved. I accepted that I was willing and ready to fulfill the destiny of service to humanity. I considered myself blest that I will do this with more enabling tools like the knowledge of Christ and an education. I also consider myself blest to be living in my time with so many tools available to influence and transform an entire generation into a hopeful future.

Self-concept as a function of identity

Self-concept is an overarching idea we have of who we are- physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and in terms of any other aspect that make us, (Neil, 2005). We form and regulate our self-concept as we grow; based on the knowledge we have about ourselves. It is multidimensional and can be broken down into these individual aspects. For example, you may have a very different idea of who you are in terms of your physical body, and who you are in terms of your spirit and soul. The influential self-efficacy researcher Roy Baumeister (1099) defines self-concept as follows: the individual's belief about himself or herself, including the person's attributes and who or what the person is. A similar definition comes from Rosenberg's 1979 book on the topic; he says self-concept is the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object. Self-concept is related to several other self-constructs such as self-esteem, self-image, self-efficacy, and self-awareness. A healthy self-concept will help you to get ahead in life. It will allow you to maximize your potential and get the most from your strengths, talents, and abilities. On the other hand, a weak self-concept will hinder your potential and progress. A fragile self-concept will most likely lead to self-sabotaging behavior.

It is our self concept that sifts through various factors to form our identity relative to our environment and curcumstamces and how we perceive them as a part of who we are.

Identity grounds an individual

Individuals who have identity crises look up to others for validation while those who have a properly formed identity do not look out externally for validation. Some people need constant validation because they're not confident in their abilities. They're always looking for external validation to feel good about themselves. This can be especially true if they have low self-esteem. However, those who are already comfortable with who they are can chat always chat a path without the need for external influence. When such people fall in their life situations, they always accept the damage that has been done, rise again and rewrite their story on their terms. They always operate from a premise of hope and belief that they can rise again. They solve their crises, take responsibility, and take charge whenever they are in a crisis. Humans have a deep-seated need for connection regardless of their age, gender, or background. men need it just as much as women do, We all need to feel heard, understood, and appreciated; and that feeling comes in large part from validation. If you are in a relationship, think about how much it matters to feel heard, valued, and understood by your partner.

Having a partner who understands and validates your feelings can be nothing short of fulfilling. Such validation builds one's self-esteem and one's confidence in a broader sense. The terms “validation” and “affirmation” are often used interchangeably, but there is a distinct difference between the two. Validation is the act of verifying or confirming something (typically information or data). Affirmation, on the other hand, is the act of proclaiming or asserting something to be true. Everyone needs affirmation from their spouses, grown children, parents, bosses, teammates, coach or team captain, classmates, peers or mentors and fans affirmation simply boosts your confidence and vigor but it is not what validates you. A self-confident person will still go out and do what he has to do even in the absence of affirmation from others.

However, one who has no identity will always require validation to do anything in life, and in the absence of such validation, and then they lose hope, get depressed, and can commit suicide. Such people mostly see life from a perspective of fear as opposed to hope. They are always afraid of being left alone; they fear that life without their affirmer is impossible. They do not solve their crisis but are swallowed by it or blame others for all their troubles.

Identity breeds confidence

When one's identity is properly formed, they are confident with themselves as one mostly knows what to do and when to do it, and how to do it. Those whose identity has not developed properly, will mostly not be confident to make decisions or take direction in life, but will rather wait on someone else to make the decisions for them, or they will emulate someone else even when they are being misled. They mostly succumb to peer pressure and are swayed by their environment rather than control their environment.

Identity shapes your character

Once you have settled in your mind what you are and what you aspire to be, it comes with the temperaments, value system, attitudes, belief system, and character befitting of the person you have become as well as the person you aspire to become as a bigger version of self. Once identity is resolved in your mind entirely, your behavior patterns and paradigm supports a lifestyle that is consistent with what you want to become, and your speech, reasoning, arguments, as well as persuasions, are just as though you are already that person.

The Place of Women in identity formation

It is easy in a patriarchal society to dance around men and forget the value that women bring to our being. Most people have their values more established thru interaction with their mothers and grandmothers. Women are bearers of historical facts thru their storytelling and riddles shared with grandchildren and children. I have been surrounded and supported by strong women including my wife, my mother, my mother-in-law, and my grandmothers whose contributions are noteworthy for what they are. It is natural for an African man to wish to bury the memory and legacy of the African woman. Rarely will you hear about their strength, values, and contributions to our lives as we know them. Some of my cousins, nephews, and nieces might never have heard or known any of these details ever in their lives if I didn't document this. These are my heroines too deserving of their recognition and emulation as sources of our history and identity formation. There are communities where the matriarchy is so strong that it is the most natural thing to see; women in power and leading households. Some of the most progressive communities are those run on a platform of equality between the girl child and the boy child. Their heritage and inheritance cut across both boys and girls. These are the people who have understood what I am trying to enlighten us on. All in all, I have intentionally focused on the place of women in identity formation as they play various lead or supportive roles in society.

From a heritage point of view, I would argue that Joseph father of Jesus was the career of the mantle of the kingship of Judah but it is the mother Mary who was the bearer of the priestly mantle of Levi. A lot of our families which have no male children suppress the heritage of their females only propagating their male identities and heritage. This is largely because of a patriarchal society. However, with more understanding, I wish to state very categorically that in some cases if not most cases, it is the matriarchal heritage that adds value to the patriarchal heritage of their offspring. My Abatamanyini people say a lot of our children have great heritage from their mothers, some of which was not initially present in the lineage.

If people understood that women are carriers of heritage too, we wouldn't be having family breakdowns because of having only female children. My wife was born into a family of daughters only. My father-in-law desired a male child but I guess with time, he got more than he bargained for in life. My understanding is very clear that the females born in such families can effectively represent their heritage if supported by their husbands. I took the prerogative to name my son's middle name Agumba with a clear understanding of this context. My great maternal grandmother was a female lone child born to his father Lukoye in the household of Sakwa. I do not for a second imagine that the Lukoye heritage ended with him. That heritage lived on and continues to live on.

My great mother - Omusikoyo wa Lukoye

As much as my mother was greatly mentored by her father and mother, both her paternal and maternal grandmothers also intentionally mentored her. Omusikoyo, the only daughter of Lukoye was the mother to my maternal grandfather Nangabo, son of Chebeywa and therefore my mother's paternal grandmother. Every time my mother closed school, she would visit her grandmother, Omusikoyo, where an interesting conversation took place. My great-grandmother did not understand that her granddaughter, (my mum) was enrolled in Mukumu Girls which was a girls boarding missionary secondary school.

Omusikoyo believed that my mother was married and every time she closed school, she was believed to have visited from her husband’s home. Mum together with her mother Zaina played along. Every time Mum closed school, her mother, Zaina, would make her two dress matching dresses. She would wear it and then take the other to her grandmother and spend the night with her grandmother. Her grandmother would, in turn, give her a lot of gifts in the form of cereals, ornaments, utensils and live chicken to take to her husband when she returns home. She would then spend reasonable time with her mother but after some time her father would send her to his sister, her aunty, Muka to visit.

Muka wa Nangabo, meaning daughter of Nangabo was a great businesswoman and farmer. Muka's name was not to be mentioned as one name. It was not even mentioned by the husband's name. Her name to date is not complete until you mention it as the daughter of Nangabo, " Muka wa Nangabo". Muka was a great powerhouse of business enterprise and a great farmer in the Eshihongo area. In the area where she lived, her name is mentioned like she lives next door many years after her demise. Muka didn't just become a farmer by coincidence but learned it from her mother, my great-grandmother Omusikoyo, daughter of Lukoye from Imanga, Khusamanzi in Mumias.My great-grandmother was a great farmer and a great wife who celebrated and affirmed her husband.

She used to sing and dance affirmation songs to her husband who was a warrior and administrator in the Nabongo Mumia administration. My mother used to sing to me some of the songs she used to sing and dance for her returning husband after long administrative trips or after returning from war. She used to shout my mother's name, Majuma, Majuma wee, the tone can only be done better by my mum." Itsa urusie Inyende" meaning, "Come and remove this flea from my leg". If my mother was playing as a small girl with others, none else would be interested to do such a dirty job.

When she got there, she would find good and specially made food, specifically for her. She would then teach my mother how to plant various crops and seeds and how to preserve the seeds. She would teach her how to harvest and how to store the crops. The culture of hard work, farming, and passing values and life lessons to your young children stems from here. When I am upcountry, I see my mother treat me in a certain way and when I trace the psychology behind it, I trace it back to this great matriarch; my maternal great-grandmother. It is the same way my great-grandmother used to handle her son, Akhobwa. Sometimes, I wish my mother also took seriously the lessons such as affirming, singing for, and dancing for your political husband. Maybe my father would have succeeded more in his politics. She most likely would have passed a few lessons to my wife too. My dreams are valid, right?

My grandfather Ramadhan Akhobwa raised my mother in such a manner without discrimination on account of being a female child. He mentored her to be useful to her family and community as a whole, a dream that has been fulfilled with Mum bringing the light of education to that community through Tumaini Community School. My grandfather raised my mother with high-handedness combined with care, love, and attention to detail from when she was a child until when he died when I was in form two. Mum says he entrusted her with taking care of his shop when she was only five years of age. She would supervise his building projects, buy building materials and pay workers from a young age.

She was entrusted with her father's bank accounts and secrets. He was vulnerable to her that he would meet his girlfriend, yet-to-be wife, Mama Salim, and talk to her in the presence of my mum. When my grandmother met them, he would say, it is my mother's schoolmate. She was then in high school in Mukumu Girls. For all of my mothers' adult and even married life, he kept her educational certificates and only gave them to her some years near his demise.

He taught my mother how to bank money and how to handle lots of money. Even when my grandfather was sick, he would call all his children and if Mum was not present, he would ask them, "Are you all here?" It is my mother who used to attend to her father when he was sick and if he was very sick, He had taught her how to clean him up. He taught her what she should do in the family and what not to do but to let her brothers do even when she was present. Parents can nature their daughters to be responsible and a source of hope for their families.

Adoptive parenting as a function of identity

If I may explain the adjustments within the bracket of psychology, the kind of relationships that adolescents have with their parents go a long way to influence their identity formation. When there is a positive solid relationship between an adolescent and their parents, they are more likely to feel the freedom to exploit identity options for themselves. Studies have revealed that a boy's or girl's identity formation is positively influenced by parental investments in areas such as social support, and monitoring both at home and school. In contrast, when there is no close or stable adolescent-parental relationship, the young fear rejection from parents and are likely to feel less confident in forming a separate identity from that of their parents.

However, as I narrate all these, I know that am raising critical questions in the minds of my readers who do not have relationships with their fathers at all, those who have fathers that are not engaged, and even the orphans. I want to challenge you and or the mothers to intentionally consider the impact that other people can play over their children even though they may not have sired the children biologically. Adoptive parentiung is a long and confirmed solid parenting module that has produced some of the best outcomes possible in the lives of children. Th old biblical culture presents to us adoption options in very many instances while the New Testament is born purely and exclusively on the premise of adoption.
Let me settle the New Testament as being premised on a son of God that needed a physically present father to play all the necessary roles a father should. Jesus was raised protected and nourished by Jospeh, a foster father who did everything right to raise him well. Jesus grew up in favor with God and favor with men with the help of his parents who loved, protected and cherished him, his own self awareness as the son of God not withstanding.

In the Old Testament, our father of faith, Abraham, begins to age without a achild and his wife Sarah instructs him to sire a child with their maid, Hagar. It is not the story of Ishmael which I wish to prosecute but rather the story of Abraham's servant Eliazar whom Abraham had accepted psychologically as his heir in the book of Genesis 15: 2-5. Also in the book of Genesis 38:3-10, we are also confronted with the story of Onan, son of Judah who refused to sire children for his late brother and become a foster father to those children. God killed him because of his selfish way of having sex with his late brother's wife but then spilling his sperms outside. This confirms that adoption is as old as age itself.

Women and adoption

Women also had their version of adoption where they had other women sire children with their own husbands but the children became theirs. The two wives of Jacob used their maidservants to birth more children for them interchangeably. In our African culture, there are communities where aging wives will identify a younger girl, pay her brideprice and own the girl whom she presents to her husband as a wife under the authority of the older woman. The children born in this union belong to the older woman. Some women who did not bear children did the same. Adoption is a common phenomenon through the ages as a legit parenting mode.

My father's adoptive early life journey and identity

My father grew up an orphan as his father died when he was only three years of age. It must be expected that he suffered the loss of affection given that his father loved him a lot and demonstrated it. His young mother would remarry and so my dad was raised by his stepfather, Kataka. Despite the general perceptions that stepfathers may not treat their stepchildren with love, my father told me with a strong affirmative repudiation of such claims. "Never! He said. Kataka never mistreated me even once. His children like Onami, actually envied me believing that their father loved me more than he loved them and there are reasons. We would be eating and he would hide a piece of meat and put it under my plate.

Because my father had a lot of cattle, I loved grazing at a very tender age. I was a very little boy but I always grazed all the animals of my stepfather and five other families." With this realization, that he took care of large herds of cattle when he was only a little boy, I can now explain why my father found it okay to have me graze his large herd of cattle as a young kid.Dad asserts that " If you say, not taking me to school and using me to take care of their animals while other children went to school, then that's the only way you would say, I wasn't treated fairly but he was always loving towards me. He only beat me once in my entire stay with him. The cattle ate a neighbor's maize and because I was the defacto grazing boy, he assumed it is me who let them out and beat me mercilessly for

that only to realize later that I wasn't the one who caused the damage. The damage was already done and there is nothing that could be done to reverse it, but he always loved me and treated me well."

My father explained that his older cousin Javan Andanje would go to this family and demand that Dad is taken to school which his stepfather obliged to. Dad would eventually go to school and return home to do all the other duties he was already accustomed to. It might have been overworking when combined with school work but he was happy to put in the hours and sweat both ways. His other older cousin Johnstone Yeswa would also come to pick him up from his stepfather so that he gets circumcised but after he healed, he returned to his stepfather's home where he continued with schooling and domestic chores. Dad reckons that it was tough life only when he began going to school but maintains that he was never mistreated contrary to what outsiders may have wanted to believe.

When he began going to school, his usefulness and value in the family were put into question. Dad began schooling when he was 11 years of age at Ingotse primary school, a Church of God mission center. He loved school and had always longed to go to school. In the school, all students were assigned portions where they would slash and clean. Dad's assigned area was in front of a teacher's house.

The name of the teacher was Mr. Richard Okalo from Bunyore. I would imagine that since he was no longer grazing for the entire family, there was less motivation to keep him in school. He grazed herds of cattle belonging to five families. While at school, the young boy did not go home for lunch and would instead do his slashing and cleaning duties during his lunch hour. This caught the attention of Mr. Okalo who watched him every day as he never went home for lunch and neither did he have any packed lunch for the lunch hour. Mr. Okalo wondered why the student never went home for lunch like other students and then went back to class with an empty stomach till evening and sought to understand him better. The teacher began offering him meals and gave him fatherly love throughout his early school life. Later on, Mr. Okalo would be transferred to his home area in Bunyore, and he took my father with him as an adopted son and continued taking care of him like his own son. My dad stayed with him until he was a grown-up teenager who passed his exams so well and was called up to join the Duke of the Yoke, now Lenana School. As I have already discussed in the stages of identity development, the teenage is the place where children resolve their identity and roles in life. Dad must have been going thru the process of identity and roles. From his father dying when he was only 3 years, to living with a step farther than an adopted father, he came back home to unite with his family and his elder brother was gracious enough to accept to take him thru high school.

The only problem was that he couldn't afford Lenana's school fees but he was willing to take him to Ingotse high school where he finished his O level. My father then began seeking employment opportunities and finally afforded his fees at Kaimosi College to train as an accountant.

Adoption is a big solution for our current generation which is starved of parents' love due to many reasons. To adopt one into your family, it doesn't have to be a legal arrangement but a willing heart to show love to other children over and above your own. This explains why my father's hands are always open to strangers. While growing up, we used to discuss him with my siblings and would express our feelings that he loves strangers, listens to strangers and would believe the report of strangers and accord them quality treatment; sometimes over his own family. Jesus was born and raised by a foster father Joseph with the skills of responsibility through carpentry. This is the fact that is uncompromised that He was the son of God. Moses was raised by Pharaoh's daughter in the palace with the influence of leadership. Esther grew up in the hands of her uncle Mordecai and she would finally become favored as a queen. Ruth made her own choice to be adopted by her mother-in-law as a new identity and went back to the people of her mother-in-law, took up that identity leading to her children which she birthed, being in the lineage of Joseph and by extension Jesus.

Jacob adopts Joseph's sons

In the book of Genesis 48, the sons of Joseph, son of Jacob were blessed a great deal by their grandfather in a unique way three-fold. In verse 5 Jacob elevated Ephraim and Manasse to the status of his sons just like Reuben and Simeon. It was a promotion. In verse 16 He spoke a blessing unto the boys and prophesied a great future to them. Jacob laid his right hand onto Ephraim making him a firstborn rather than a second. It was double elevation; first from grandson to son, then from second born to firstborn. Jacob also said to Joseph in verse 22 that over and above the portion of land that was to be shared among his sons, he gave Joseph an additional mountain slope which Jacob got with his bow and sword had won from the Amorites. This was not part of his inheritance from Isaac.

In verse 6, Jacob would talk about how the inheritance should happen and he said that any other children will be given inheritance differently but Ephraim and Manasse will be given alongside the other brothers. So technically, Ephraim and Manasse were entitled to the inheritance of their father and that of their grandfather. This conversation between Jacob, Joseph, and the third-generation Ephraim and Manasse, brings to light the whole concept of adoption and father figures. Jacob adopted the responsibility of fatherhood over his grandchildren and offered much-needed affirmation and prophetic pronouncements over his grandchildren.

It goes a long way to score that many of our single-parent situations can be complimented with a father figure in the equation. A father figure can be a grandfather, an uncle, an elder brother, or even a friend who has been given the space to play the role of a father figure.

Joseph adopts Jesus

In Luke 1:26 to 38, the Angel Gabriel informs Mary of the good news of favor. She would bear the son of God and Mary obeys telling the angel let it happen as you have said. However, in Mathew 1: 20, Matthew 1:20, Joseph is not amused by this news when he finds out that Mary is to be pregnant and had considered abandoning her. In this verse, an angel comes to him in a dream and reassures him that Mary's baby is the Son of God. The angel told Joseph to marry Mary and to name her baby Jesus. Jesus was to be the Savior of the world. Joseph obeyed the angel and married Mary.

Right at this point, Joseph adopts the baby Jesus and plays all fatherly roles without exception in obedience to the words of the angel. He protects him and nurtures him in the right and befitting path. In Mathew 2:13–23 an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream telling him to flee to Egypt with Mary and the infant Jesus since King Herod would seek the child to kill him. Joseph would protect the young Jesus at the inspiration of the angel Gabriel; take the baby Jesus to Egypt for safety only to return when there was Safety. We also see the genealogy of Jesus Christ in the book of Matthew 1:16: “And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." Joseph was a descendant of David through his son Solomon.

We all know that Jesus was born of a virgin birth by the power of the Holy Spirit but Jesus needed to acquire an earthly identity through adoption. Joseph whose identity is 40 generations from Abraham becomes the father of Jesus and that becomes the identity of Jesus, "Son of David”. Matthew begins by calling Jesus the son of David, indicating his royal origin, and also the son of Abraham, indicating that he was an Israelite; both are stock phrases, in which son means descendant, calling to mind the promises God made to David and Abraham. This obedience to God’s idea and order of things makes Jesus get born and raised by his earthly father and mother to become a confident self with clarity of identity and purpose as evidenced in Luke 2:41-50. Jesus and his parents went for the census **e**xercise in Bethlehem and on the way back home, he got lost for approximately two days; on the third day, his parents found him in a synagogue talking and arguing with the teachers of the law. Primarily, when Jesus lost touch with his parents, he didn't go to a school, a neighbor, a club, a casino, a park, a police station, or any other place that children of his age would go to, but went to a synagogue which is the last place a child would go to.

It has everything to do with a predetermined and settled identity. When the parents reprimanded him for causing them so much worry and trouble, Jesus replied: don't you know that this is my father's house? Jesus was not just playing like kids his age would but he was having very philosophical and intellectual conversations with the teachers of the law who indeed were amazed at his grasp of the scriptures. This is not all about the identity of Jesus but also the skill sets that he acquired from his father as they worked together in carpentry. He learned how to work, read, and get along with people. The way the Lord "grew up" is recorded in Luke 2:52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

Moses mother gives her son for adoption

Exodus 2, begins with the background of fear, whereby Pharaoh had no idea who the man Joseph in his palace was. He is afraid that the Israelites are increasing in number and strength. He fears that they might overpower them and overthrow them in years to come. He, therefore, orders that all male children born of Israeli descent be killed. (**Put facts clear).** Moses is born during this Holocaust-type execution of young Hebrews.

To save her son's life, she waterproofed a basket and put the child in it. Jochebed placed Moses in a basket and released him in the flow of the River Nile. The basket fell into the hands of the Pharaoh's daughter who was bathing in the river. Moved with compassion when she discovered the child, she decided to adopt the baby, Moses. Moses's mother, a Levite, later identified as Jochebed (Number 26:59) had married a Levite and given birth to a male child. When she saw that he was a "fine" child, she hid him for three months and when she could do so no longer, she made a basket out of bulrushes and put him among the reeds by the river bank. The observation that the mother saw how a fine baby he was goes a long way to suppose that Moses must have been affirmed as a fine boy and the acts of passion and faith by his mother are a testament to the fact that she indeed loved him to such an extent she would take the risks she took just to give the young boy a lifeline of survival in a setting where other children were exterminated. Pharaoh's daughter found him and took pity on the Hebrew child.

She instructed Miriam (Moses' older sister) to take him and find a nurse for him, even offering to pay for his care. Moses was positioned by his mother, cleverly rescued by his sister, and given back to his mother for nursing and nurturing. When he grew older, the mother brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him "Moses" because she had drawn him out of the water when she first found him ("Moses" means "to draw out"). Erick Erickson's stages of identity formation between birth and 18 months are our eye-opener that Moses was raised in an environment of love and safety.

Moses learned safety, optimism, and hope just by being in the care of her mother, who had camouflaged herself as a nanny. Although the motherly care and acts in which we engage toward our children may not occupy an equally central place in the salvation history of God's people, one never knows when acts of faith may impact future generations in significant ways. So, we should consider the example of Jochebed and diligently pursue the purposes God has for us in the lives of our children.

Moses' mother is an integral part of the story of the redemption of the children of Israel. Her role in that salvation story of the children of Israel into the Promised Land cannot be gainsaid. The highlight of this story is not just that of hope and optimism, but also faith as Hebrews 11:23 would demonstrate Moses' mother's faith in the redemption plan of God In this way, she served as the deliverer (so to speak) of the national deliverer of Israel—Moses. And as it turned out, the child she delivered would later deliver her, and her people, out of bondage and lead them toward the Promised Land. Adoption becomes a part of the divine story of Moses. He was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and this became his identity until when he was restless about it as we shall see the next stage of identity formation stage which is the place of resolving identity crisis and settling of roles in society. We do know that Moses and Miriam interacted later during the time of the exodus and so it is clear that family is key in all of our lives and forms part of our identity.

Although we know little about Moses's mother, we find great significance in her revealed actions toward her son. Not only did she care, protect, and provide for him in unique and creative ways, she was an instrument of God's purposes in the life of Moses and the nation of Israel. As she lived out her life amid a rather desperate situation, she acted out of her faith in God, not in fear (Hebrews 11:23) Adoptees develop an adoptive identity or an understanding of what it means to be an adopted person. An adoptive identity helps individuals answer questions such as: Where did I come from? When you're an adoptee, one of the biggest aspects of your identity is something you had no choice in. Coming to terms with that can be difficult, and it's not uncommon for adoptees to experience an adoption identity crisis at one point or another.

The role of foster parents in supporting the cultural needs of

Foster parents enable the population to have a sense of identity and therefore manage any negative reactions that may emerge as the youthful children interact with their environment. One other hindrance in identity and personal development among foster families is communication. In the theory of family communication patterns (FCP), families have their pattern of information that is rather predictable. When foster children become part of these families, they

enter an atmosphere that has already communication norms. These kinds of families usually negotiate disclosures about the situation of a foster child and that works on the identity of the very child. Brodzinsky, D. M. (2005) identifies one of the established communication constructs – Adoption communication openness (ACO), that is key in understanding adoption-related disclosures.

Restructuring and reforming your identity

Some people get frustrated by the knowledge of certain aspects of their parents that they do not want anything to do with their parents' names or history. It is a factual truth that not all of us are so proud of the things we have gotten to know about our parents. Some of these past events might make us struggle with identifying with the struggles of our parents thus impairing our identity formation. In the long run, the unresolved identity issues end up hurting us, hurting our loved ones and the aftermath negatively affects our children.

Despite Moses having sent out 12 spies into the Promised Land; Joshua did not rely on old intelligence. He sent another two sets who met Rahab, a prostitute. The brothel and the bar have all the intelligence you can get more than anywhere else in the prestigious offices. Rahab gave the two spies all the necessary intelligence, hid them, and then coached them on an escape strategy. She seemed to know the full scope of the military strategy of the city of Jericho with precision. If you thought your heritage doesn't sound cool, think Jesus finds it necessary to attach to the identity of Rahab. It should have been easy to discount that harlot from the list so that the public relations of the image of the person of Jesus is kept pious. Some of the bad attitudes and perspectives which we project to our spouses and children might be fully borrowed from our unresolved anger and disappointment of the bad elements in our heritage.

We want to forget that we have a father or mother because the mention of their name triggers fear, hate, anger, and shame. Heal! Forgive them and move forward. You do not know their story. Nobody understood the story of Rahab the harlot. Joshua, the spies, Jesus, and God knew the story and found it very important to tell you. I urge you my brother and sister to forgive and heal. Your parents might have had victories but were shrouded in failures that were their life. You do not know their story. It is very easy to be embarrassed that Simon Peter denied Jesus three times. It might also be funny to hear that Jesus told Simon Peter, Get behind me, Satan. It is the very Simon Peter upon whom Jesus built the first church and expected him to bear the greatest responsibility to strengthen the church, a role he did to his last breadth. Do not make the struggles of your parents yours. Forgive, forget, and heal so that you are not stuck battling your own identity. Your father or mother might have been violent, thieves, a drug addict, a rapist, a convict, corrupt, robbers or murdered someone.

Forgive the memory. Take it to the Lord in prayer and repent of that sin. Cry to God that he may not remember this against you, or your parents. Pray for restoration to the affected families. Your prayer of repentance and restoration is sufficient justice under God's law of grace. Be free and move forward with your life. Our role depending with your revelation is to own the heritage and speak life into the bloodline destroying all the ignorant and faulty foundations and establishing godly foundations within and into your lineage.

This is not for everyone to understand or attempt. It has everything to do with your level of revelation of God's word. Do not confuse yourself for anything that is not born of faith. If God reveals to you what you should do in your case, he will guide you too and instruct you in a manner consistent with your spiritual identity. I have written some more on this topic in the next volume on the subject of a new creation. I have borrowed heavily from the name change from Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel and what exactly that meant and the change of mandate and destiny. I have discussed the whole concept of new creation in Jesus and the whole new Christian identity and how it relates with your African identity without the need to feel conflicted and easily swept by passing with on the altar of a non-committed comprehensive identity.

Do you want to change your name? Do you want to change your identity? Do you want to change your nationality? No problem. Abraham moved from among his people and changed his name to God. However, when he needed his son to marry, he made sure that his servant Eliezer promised to get a wife from among his people. The very people he had been separated from when he walked away under God's instruction. Jacob married from his mother's tribe. I can never deny my heritage when God has clearly told me that he has made a covenant with me so that I may change the destiny of my heritage. The story of fatherhood is something I believe God would want to be elevated. I would speak with conviction that fatherhood is what caused the priesthood to shift guard from the house of God's priest, Eli to Samuel at a young age. It is the very example of the fatherhood of Eli Passed down to Samuel which causes the children of Israel to ask Samuel to appoint him a king like the other nations. They said with Clarity in Samuel 8: 1-4 to Samuel at Ramah that his sons were not following in his ways.

Even if we say it was an excuse from the people to reject God's direct leadership, then the difference is the same. Samuel's fatherhood created that excuse and it was an example from his mentor Eli. David's dysfunctional handling of family issues led to a full-blown civil war of a whole nation and kingdom.

My father rewrote his fatherhood

The story of my father's fatherhood is key to this book because his childhood as an orphan did not stand in the way of his world view because God placed people in his path to father him. It is also worth noting that he also used his lack of a father to compensate with the love of a father and planted a seed I am determined to carry forward. This means that anyone of us can fuel their missed opportunities to do good for their lifetime.

My heroic father is a great leader and politician who founded the Abatamanyini Welfare Group. This is a formation of our clan which has an expansive reach in both the Butsotso area, and the Butere area, both in Kakamega County. We have a common ancestry and are separated by migration. The clan is divided into two households, Wesaba and Amukhula which are descendants of two brothers who separated geographically due to a family dispute. All the upper Batamanyini are from the Wesaba household while some of them remained within the Marama area. My dad founded the welfare society of the upper Abatamanyini who would later combine with the Abatamanyini of the Wesaba ancestry from Marama to create a bigger organizational unit.

The city dwellers also decided to organize among themselves and so they ended up with a national caucus where my father is the national organizing secretary. The outfit further formed a cooperative society with my father as the coordinator and is now exploring a charter to strengthen both the economic and educational capacity of their people. My father is also the secretary of the Butsotso economic forum comprising the larger Butsotso clan where they agitate for the economic development of the larger Butsotso community which spreads from the largest parts of Lurambi Sub- County, Kakamega Township, and one-third of the current Navakholo sub county comprising of Ingotse Matiha and Shinoyi Shikomari wards. He was the founder of the Kakamega Teachers Cooperative where he served as the first-ever manager cum accountant. He says that his good English is because he used to speak to teachers every single day as his daily occupation. Not only was he a politician but a great farmer of no comparison. Just in the recent past, few years, he was serving three high schools and two primary schools effectively with vegetable supplies. He has always been a supplier since I was a little child. If he was not supplying eggs to hotels, he was supplying cereals to schools within Kakamega County.

My father is the chairman of the development committee at the Ingotse Mission church of God. He says he was the translator of the old-time American preachers in the same church when he was in high school; Ingotse High School. He conducted the school and church choir as well as the marching band orchestra. He played the piano and knew how to make a guitar and tune it.

He was to be sponsored to go and study at Anderson College Indiana but that call escaped him. He says would have made a good evangelist or Bishop, showing more clarity to my calling. What is the story of your identity? Find something and relate with it, it is a powerful tool in the long run; something you will understand as we move further in this reading.

My mother as a pioneer educationist at Eshilakwe primary school, and a founding educationist and site manager at Tumaini Community School where she is currently the chairman board of management is an identity that can never diminish because it is my identity too. My mother was the first woman to be ordained as minister in the entire Kenya Assemblies of God. She was mentored to love education by her father. She was mentored to love education by her father, my grandfather, Ramathan Akhobwa Nangabo. He never gave up on his faith and dreams for serving humanity as a crusader of education and religion as a Muslim preacher. He never gave up on his quest to empower the girl child, educating my mother as the first girl to go to high school in her entire community. When he was told about his daughter's form one selection at Mukumu girls High school, he went to confirm and paid all fees immediately. He took her through school to become a career teacher. He entrusted his daughter with his unfinished dreams to build a community school something that my mother has been able to see come to fruition. I will always celebrate the power of fatherhood.

7

THE POWER OF ESSENTIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

I'm walking on a path, winding u p between thickets of shrubs, slightly thick thorny bushes, and spatially spread terrain of nothing but plain land, just plain. No homestead, I'm yet to meet a human being, not even a cat or rat has crossed my immediate path. This has happened to me for the last five hours. I'm not in a dream. It is happening. I'm beginning to feel like I should have had someone accompanying me on this walk. This is when it hits my mind that John Donne of the year 1624 said: No man is an island entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent. A part of the main! My brethren, the word man here accommodates both genders. Bouncing back home, in Eastern Africa, the former founding Tanzania President, the late Julius Kabarage Nyerere, once said: “Unity will not make us rich, but it can make it difficult for Africa and the African peoples to be disregarded and humiliated”. We shall recall the icon of independence in Africa, Nelson Mandela who was such a great support system for freedom. He will be remembered, for among other milestones, for expanding voting rights to all in Africa.

Let us, therefore, try at this early stage of this chapter, to internalize the meaning of the words: **support system**. The Britannica Dictionary expresses it as a group of people who encourage someone. Perhaps the Thesaurus has a broader definition that we need to adopt in our discourse: a network of facilities and people who interact and remain in informal communication for mutual assistance, a network that enables you to live in a certain style, type of network, web and an interconnected system of things or people. The National Academies of Sciences, based in Washington DC, in its 2006 publication titled: Learning to Think Spatially, confirms that support systems play two principal roles, one practical and one conceptual. First, they enable us to do things more efficiently and more effectively in contexts ranging from everyday life to careers in all domains of knowledge, and two, support systems are tools for thought and lifelong learning. Family is the primary place where relationships are made and sustained. It is the place where learning takes place from the formative years of children into adulthood.

Friendship starts within the family but gradually extends beyond family as people engage a wider scope of persons in a variety of spectrums. Within the friendship, a zone is both an intrinsic component of relationships where you perceive and respond to your gained and acquired values such as influence, joy, and learning from the relationships as well as extrinsic ones where you give value outwardly to benefit others within your circles of friendships. Social support system refers to a group or network such as friends, family, peers, and mentors that we can turn to, for emotional and practical support. At school, fellow students, supportive staff, and faculty may provide support and as we move into our professional brackets; progress in careers, our colleagues and team leaders may also be our source of support. A support system is a set of individuals who provide support, care, respect, cheer, affirmation, and feedback. They do not judge you but provide you with a fertile environment for you to genuinely reflect and better yourself as they have your best interests at heart.

Most people who have a successful life experience have a wonderful support system around them. You are always there for your friends and family when they need you. You listen to them when they need to vent out. You drive them to places psychologically when they don't have a ride, and you cheer them up when they need encouragement. Every person has the confidence to face the world and conquer it whenever they have a solid support system next to them. Research has shown that there are tremendous benefits in having a network of supportive relationships: those with robust social support networks have better health, longer lives, and report higher well-being status. Friends and loved ones can make you more resilient in times of stress, setback, or loss and they can also make the good times even better. In addition to buffering stress, some friends can indeed help you identify when you are stressed or distressed — in some cases, they may notice it before you do. Having a strong support system equips one with better coping skills, reduced anxiety, and low level or no depression, at all.

There are many practical benefits to having supportive relationships, such as knowing people who can provide you with information, advice, guidance, and also tangible support, such as assistance in times of uncertainty. This feature of social support can be comforting and enhance your feelings of security. Supportive relationships can also bolster you emotionally when you are feeling down or overwhelmed. Friends and loved ones will listen to your fears, hopes, and dreams, and make you feel seen and understood. They can help you think through alternatives and solve problems. They can also distract you from worries when that is what you need. Doing all these, encourage and lower your stress and feelings of loneliness, emotions which if not managed can lead to depression.

To determine how to establish a support system, evaluate the following: How do you feel when you talk to this person, do they take your feelings into account? Do they take your needs into account? Do they give advice based on your well-being? Do they tell you tough truths when you need to hear them? Do they celebrate your triumphs with you? Successful relationships require an attitude of giving as much as you take from the relationship. Treat your friends the very same way you want them to treat you so that you become the friend you want others to have. To have happy relationships you need to pay attention to various factors which are essential ingredients for this to happen. We all need to learn gratitude and appreciation. Tell your friends and family how important they are to you and thank them for all they give you. You need to stay connected through phone calls, texts, and emails; reciprocate invitations.

True friends come through when times are tough and so you should be available whenever needed. Be a good listener and allow your friends to confide in you freely, without being judged. We should also be willing to accept support; some people find it hard to accept support, preferring to be the one always offering it instead. This is not a good trait in an interdependent society. Some may fear becoming dependent or want to maintain their self-image as the "strong" and "together" one. But friends and family often want to feel they have done something for you. Let them! Accepting help can help you. It also keeps the relationship balanced and lets your friends and loved ones know that they have something to offer that you also value.

When you genuinely care about someone you will be excited when they succeed. Support their success. If you find yourself feeling a little jealous, you can acknowledge that to yourself, but don't let it poison your friendship. Open, honest communication is the lifeblood of healthy, happy relationships and therefore the communication lines must be kept open. If a friend does or says something that hurts your feelings, try to deal with it directly. Start by assuming that it is a misunderstanding or that the misstep was unintentional. Ask them about it. (Don't stuff bruised feelings.) Your friend will likely appreciate the opportunity to remedy the situation. Whatever the case, accept apologies graciously as you would hope others would accept your apology.

We also need to respect limits as each person has their setting for how much social interaction they need and want. Know your own and respect that of others, even if it differs from yours. The biggest secret is to know when a relationship is not working for you or if it isn't serving your purposes. If you find that you are drained whenever you see a particular friend, or that he or she is inconsiderate of your time or feelings, or is unreliable, highly critical of you, or generally negative, they may not be the friend for you.

Similarly, if they engage in unhealthy behaviors, such as alcohol or substance abuse, particularly if you have had trouble with such deviances, they also may not be a good choice for your social support network. Remember, those in your support system should help you reduce stress, not increase it. They should support your goals and efforts to achieve them, not belittle or undermine or ignore the action milestones toward achieving your goals.

Types of support systems

Family

The family is a beautiful base for the support of children as little children, as growing teenagers, and as they prepare to embrace their relationships leading into their own families. When the family doesn't offer a reliable support system for the growth and development of children, then the burdens and challenges in society emanating from family can become overwhelming. Family becomes a support system whereby children depend on their parents and also on their siblings. Parents eventually depend on their children as their support system in their later life. Many people may not appreciate my observation until I paint the picture more practically but before then allow me to introduce parents and then children into the equation.

Parents and guardians

Parents offer a stability-enhancing support system not only to their children or teenagers but also to their adult children. I will briefly quote three examples where my dad had done just that to make sure that his children are as much secure in their future as possible. I wasn't able to graduate in the year 2003 as I had anticipated. My dad was very concerned about this; he traveled from Kakamega to see me in Nairobi to have a clear understanding of what the status was. I guess he had traveled this disrupted road before with my elder siblings and was just doing what he had done as a father to keep me focused on my career path. We had lengthy discussions as I explained to him that I couldn't graduate with the class of 2003 but I had since finished the 3 units that kept my graduation and that I already had my letter of completion from the university and that I was just awaiting the formal graduation in the year 2004.

When I showed him my letter of completion from the university, which I had used to seek employment in the school I was teaching, my father finally had peace and went back home satisfied that all was well. I graduated later that year. Dad has always reminded me about the plan we had many years ago to study up to the Ph.D. level. He even discussed with my wife to understand what exactly the bottlenecks to this journey were and whether he needed support in any way.

Dad also followed up with my eldest sister Ruth Murunga, to go to college long after she was already married. Childbirth came quickly when she got her first son, my nephew Kelvin Okumu, Kelvin is a practicing Journalist but my dad would not let that be an excuse, he gave it sometime and paid the royal visit to his in-laws to make sure his daughter had earned a college certificate. Upon this royal visit in Emanyulia at Apollo Ongullu Okumu's home, the prince, wife of the late, George Makotsi Okumu was expecting baby number two, Eugene Maxwell Munala. Eugene is a great entrepreneur but most importantly,the next big rap artiste. He goes by the stage name "Izzy Black." This did not dampen my father's spirit; he was an accountant and knew how to work dates. He was soon going to show up as the African king and demand, "I want my daughter in college at zero options". My sister as I have always called her ended up in Eregi teachers college where she graduated as a teacher.

Ruth Murunga now a teacher at Koinange primary school, in Nakuru, about to retire from the profession many years after is grateful that she had the son of Munala for a father. She can only imagine what would have become of her years later when she was widowed following an unfortunate accident that took the life of my brother-in-law, Sir George Makotsi. George was my friend. I got used to him introducing me to his friends and meeting my "Omkhwasi," brother-in-law. We used to go to church together at St. Stephens Cathedral, the ACK church in Nakuru where he sang in the choir. My sister, Bishop Emma Murunga has narrated in her books how her college studies at Kagumo teachers training college were disrupted and it took 7 years before she would resume completing her training. All this while, there is not a single day my father was not pulling one string or another to get this education plan to completion. He was so resolute with the fact that he needed to give all his children college training and he didn't spare any effort to make this a reality for all of his children without exceptions.

Siblings and cousins

Siblings also depend on each other for friendship, encouragement, and protection. When I was in Mumias Boys primary, my elder brother Antony Munala protected and took care of me. He would later house me in the period between high school and campus. The only thing I participated in was sometimes buying our food since I was working, but my elder brother paid all the house rent for all the houses we lived in as a guardian. As a young Christian between the ages of 12 and 18, my elder sister Bishop Emma Murunga was a great support system for me. I would later become one strong pillar of her support system at her wedding after which, she introduced me to her church where we served together as worship leaders. When she later got delivered of her first daughter Lisa Tracey Lyanga, a great and angelic musician of versatile artistic talent and academic ability; Emma and her husband were having a financial downtime.

They had both just lost their source of livelihood where they worked. I used to walk on foot from Huruma flats to Dandora, where they lived so that I could use the little money I had to have her make a meal for the two of us rather than eat alone. I used to visit her at the Kenyatta national hospital every single day on foot when she was hospitalized with her daughter. It was many years later when my sister Emma was going through a traumatizing moment in her life, I called her to my house and asked her to stay with us. She stayed with us until the time she was able to figure out how she wanted to progress. Much later when she was to travel for an international mission in Brazil, she requested me to stay with her daughter Lisa who had just passed her primary education exams; something I gladly did. When her time to join high school was due, I admitted her to form one and attended her school functions as her guardian until my sister came back to the country and picked it up from there.

When my brother Allan Murunga finished high school, I took him in and lived with him before I got married and after I got married. I took him through computer studies and introduced him to business whereby he used to manage my business while running his own business. He later went to stay with my elder but soon after, he was due to join Sigalagala Technical Institute to study Information Technology. My younger sister Getray Murunga studied early childhood education but her study was disrupted at some point and was unable to finish her studies. I kept pushing her to finish her college studies just like Dad used to and when one day I found "Evihande" in a good mood, I convinced her to come to stay at my house and study at a nearby college. I paid her fees and that is how I helped fulfill my father's desire to have all her children with college training.

When my sister Isabella was going through a difficult time at one time in her life, she called me in distress and requested me to assist her to come to my house. I advised her to go and talk to Dad but she was adamant that it was not an option for her at that time. I did not hesitate to offer my sibling support to my ‘twinnie’. We have studied together and lived together for much of our childhood. And we call each other ‘twinnie’ to this day. I facilitated her travel and housed her with her two children. Incidentally, it was a school season; so, I had to make sure that her first son, my nephew Brook Sisah had to immediately find a school and continue learning. Later when she had calmed down, my dad asked her to come go home where discussions were held at the parental level with the inclusion of some of my older cousins Lawrence Peter Munala, son of Javan Andanje; and that is the point at which my sibling support system ushered in the next phase of her life. Isabella is the most caring member of our family than anyone else. Isabella cares that her siblings are okay and comfortable. She would deny herself everything to help her children, her siblings, or her parents. She is a great homemaker since her childhood.

Whenever I was in my village city home, especially during my days with depression, she used to visit and encourage me. She is a businesswoman trading in the markets within Kakamega County. My sister would always do the shopping for me and my mum and sent a rider to bring them home. At the time, Mum was running a shop, whereby Isabella used to tell her to make sure she comes home to make my lunch without failure. She would call to find out whether Mum came to prepare my lunch. It had to be fresh food. Whenever my sister was trading in a market that was along our road, she would make me breakfast and bring it home then continue with her journey to her market of choice. Whenever I was able, I would send her money to buy goods and boost her business.

My eldest sister Ruth Murunga Makotsi, was my huge support system as a child, as a teenager, and as an adult. When I was a child, she spent one month with me in the hospital when I had abdominal challenges. As a teenager, she supported my father through my high school days and later supported my trimester studies at the university. You should see my sister dancing for me when I visit her in Nakuru. In our African culture, family is larger than your children and your parents. When my brother-in-law George died, it was very natural for me to want to offer moral support to my sister and my nephews. I visited regularly and whenever I was driving to Kakamega, I always made stopovers. Sometimes I would take my entire family with me and sometimes I would go by myself or with my friends to say hi to my sister. I mostly stop over at her house when driving home even if it's in the middle of the night. She never gets tired to wake up, and preparing a late-night meal or an early-morning breakfast especially when I am traveling with my whole family. I have introduced my friends to her and vice versa.

Cousins provide a huge support system within the community. It is when children play and interact with their cousins that they learn interpersonal skills, initiative and independence in life; a trait that enables adult independence and intiatives. Cousins were a huge part of the psychosocial support system for children and teenagers to vent their frustrations and find internal solutions for their challenges among their peers. Today that support system has been dismantled leaving our children and teenagers without mates to share and exchange information.It is within sets of cousins that young men were curcumsiced and after the rites of passage became more committed to each other bearing one anothers burdens in life. We remain vulnerable as a people who have collapsed the systems which served us well. We shall continue to raise a generation that is defeated because they are without the support systems which cushioned us before now. Parents also do not have the realization of how to create alternative support groups.

Our existential support systems such as church and school are time bound unlike blood relations which endure. Despite the suspicion which existed between certain families, the children knew how to break those barriers and still put up a strong face.

Here is the 1st photo gallery of my siblings and cousins

1. Emmanuel Ndombi Ambindi son of my uncle LIchina, son of Ambindi
2. My cousin Martha daughter of my aunt Levinora Oyemba
3. From left to the right, my brother Allan, My sisters Emma, Ruth and Isabella.
4. My cousin Linnet daughter of my aunt Levinora Oyemba
5. My elder rtother Tony Munala
6. Refer to 5
7. My cousin Susi daughter of my uncle Charles Okute
8. My sister Isabella
9. My brother Tony Munala, dad and my cousin Enock Lichina
10. My cousin Lawrence Peter Kirato Munala son of my uncle Javan Andanje
11. My sister-in-law, the widow of my late cousin Advocate Seth Osundwa Andanje.

SIBLINGS AND COUSINS

Here is the 2nd photo gallery of my siblings and cousins
With my brother Allan Imbali Murunga

1. Dad with my kid sister Emmy Munala and my Kid brother Jimson Munala.
2. My dad during the installation as county ward administrator of my sister in law, Wife of my cousin Lawrence Peter Kirato Andanje.
3. My dad, my step mother and my kid siblings, Diana, Emmy and Jimson.
4. My father during the graduation ceremony of my cousin… son of my uncle Jafeth Makokha Kataka.
5. Visiting my sister Ruth in their Nakuru home with my family.
6. With my elder borther Tony Munala
7. with our father
8. With my cousin Ben Munala Mukoko and his Wife Mrs Cristine Munala during my graduation ceremony
9. With my siblings during a visit at the Lumino nursing home where I was admitted for a surgical operation.
10. With my cousin Jeremiah osundwa Makelo
11. Refer to 10
12. Refer to 10
13. My cousin Lilian daughter of my unlce Yeswa Ambindi with my my son Andes
14. My cousin Moi son of my uncle Charles Okute
15. My borther Allan, his wife and my son Andes
16. My Cousin Byron Makokha, son of my uncle Jafeth Kataka
17. With my kid brother Allan
18. With my cousin Lilian and daughter of my aunty Shisya.
19. Uncle Charles Okutemy cousin Okute and his sister, my cousin Susi
20. With my cousin Selipher daughter of my uncle Stephen Makelo, David Munala and Nick, both sons of my late aunty Levinorah Oyemba, Jemimah Musotsi, Ruth Murunga.
21. With my wife and sister Emma Murunga
22. My dad and my younger brothers Allan and Jimson

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MY SIBLINGS AND COUSINS

MORE OF MY FAMILY PICTURES

1. With my son Andes visiting my sister in her hostel at the Catholic University where she is studying law.
2. My daughter Shirley receiving a gift from my step mother Mama Margaret Munala
3. My dad with his grand daughter Shirley.
4. My father speaking to his grandchildren, my children Andes, Aden and Shirley
5. With my sister Emmy in Nairobi after a visit to out Kinengela home.
6. With my elder brother Tony and our father during a lunch break in Buruburu
7. Dad and Jimson at Lenana school.
8. With my father at Lenana school visiting my brother Jimson
9. Visiting Aden at Merishaw school with my sister Emmy
10. With my sister Emmy assisting Aden to choose his subjects at Merishaw school.
11. Myself, my sister Emmy and my daughter Shirley visiting Andes in Lukenya school
12. Shirley and Emmy visiting Andes in Lukenya boys school.
13. My sister Emmy and my daughter Shirley
14. my daughter Shirley and her aunty Emmy out swimming
15. my two sons Andes and Aden with their aunty Emmy Musimbi Murunga out swimming

Uncles and Aunties

Right when I was still in college, I used to take my nephews Kevin Okumu and Eugene Munala with me during the holidays, something I continued to do after campus. I took Kelvin with me to venture into a man's life on his own. Soon after his training at the Mombasa Polytechnic University where he studied Mass Communication, I took him in and lived with him until much later when he would later chat about his life path and is happy with his developing career. I took in Eugene too, where we had a conversation about finishing his IT course but I guess, he was already distracted with his business ventures and music career and wanted to push his business ideas more, so I let him and continue to support him along his lines of passion. However, I spent more time with Kelvin.

Kelvin Okumu

"My uncle is very cultured and disciplined in his ways. He is also very caring and loving. He is the one reaching out to me most of the time. It is my uncle who got me out of my mother's house and ever since, I have never gone back. I stayed with him when he introduced me to business and events management. My uncle was always doing events or participating in events. I traveled with him around the country in most of his activities. I endured his high speeds but when I couldn't handle the extreme sport, I would tell him. He always listened! I never knew I could multitask until I learned my trade on the job with my uncle. I was coordinating his logistics, and then driving him to the venue as soon as I got on sight, he would hand me over to his trusted friend Chrispin Njogu, who would then direct me on how to take the video footage of our events. Once the video recording was over, my roles quickly changed from videography to handling logistics and finally, a rally driver to catch up with the next assignment.

It is with his car that I learned how-to drive-in Nairobi, particularly East Lands where he used to send me to make deliveries. Driving in Eastlands is an extreme sport. My uncle later introduced me to the music business where we sold his music on the streets of Nairobi and soon after he entrusted me with the entire business. I was to maintain the car, organize production and packaging of the products which were the CDs, organize to pay licenses, manage the sales crew, master the market dynamics and routes; and finally, balance the books of accounts after paying all the commissions and doing stock taking. I was my boss because my uncle allowed me to pay my wages before I gave him his part of the money. This apprenticeship is probably the most defining moment of my life ever. From my interactions with my uncle, he is a much-focused person, meticulous in what he does, and keen on details. I learned a lot about how to handle family and how to always depend on God. My uncle loves his family you cannot cross the line concerning his family. If and when you fail to deliver what you said you would, then he is not a pleasant person to be around.

He is very strict." Family is a great place to become each other's support system in good and bad times.

Stepmothers and stepfathers also play critical roles stepping into the roles of fathers and mothers when duty calls. My father is grateful to his stepfather, Kataka who raised him well as a child. He also raised and educated his step-siblings. We never felt the difference around them as our uncles, aunties, and their children as our cousins. My mother as a young girl was taken by his father to live in town while her mother, Zaina lived in the village. Mum stayed with her older step-sister Mwanamisi Chausiku who was her guardian. They have remained the best of friends and confidants to date. When I was to wed, my mother and father's situation was too complex for me that it was practically impossible to bring them to play their respective roles in my wedding ceremony. When I had my in-laws visiting, Mum was not at home and so I had no other means to show her the honor I would have loved to accord her. I just had to function how a polygamous family operates with the team players on board within the family.

I acknowledge and appreciate the roles my stepmother, Mrs. Margaret Munala, played to host my guests when it was not practically possible for my mother to play such roles at the family level and specifically in our home. She has my respect for taking good care of my father, especially when he had multiple bouts of illness in recent years; something that is very important to me. I however ensured that my mother got her due honor at an individual level and I do not doubt in my mind that my mother appreciated the honor I accorded her in various circumstances.

I also love my sister Emily Munala so much that the word step sister would be strange to my lips. She visits my home with open doors and while in college she is duly in my care and that of my elder brother. She enjoys the company of my children and has visited all of them in their rspoective schools. My children visit her in her hostel and she spends time with my family where they have created a very strong bond. My kid brother Jimson Munala is great friends with my sons and I enjoyed his company when he stayed with my family in Nairobi over Christmas the same way my sons enjoy his company when they visit their grandfather.

1. My aunty Dinah
2. My aunty Floridah Owano and my father both coming from hospital.
3. With my Florida Owano after taking her for a medical review
4. Walking with my aunty Dinah
5. My aunty Ondeso daughter of my late grandmother Anyangu

6. With my aunty Alice Muhenje Kataka and my sister Rutrh Murunga
7. My aunty Alice, sister Ruth and mum
8. My Dad and my step mother
9. My late aunty Levinorah Oyemba
10. My aunty Nyakoa and my cousin Lawrence Munala during my prewedding
11. My aunties Ndeta. Eleminah Omukoyia and Ondeso
12. My aunty Dinah
13. My aunty Akombe
14. My aunty Berenedah
15. My aunties Berenedah, Ondeso, Floridah and Ndeta
16. My aunties Rachel , wife of my late uncle Dickson Musotsi and Nyakoa wife of my late uncle Mukoko

Family mentors

Family mentors are important in our lives and these are people who share the same family values as you do but have the experience and the interest to walk with you on the family journey. I was blessed to meet someone from my family who also share my christian values. Most important was the intentional mentorship that Rev. Chris put into our relationship. We first met during the funeral of my late cousin, Pamela Mukoko in Ematioli. I was not famous at the time which points to his intentional extension of care and love to a young man in his community. The moment I told him that I was a born-again Christian, Chriss took me under his wings.

He invited me to his office somewhere along River Road where we met frequently. I was then at Kenyatta University when he introduced me to his church, KAG South C, where he was the director of music and that is how our friendship grew. Rev. Chriss is a great graphic designer. I thought I sho uld remind him that he designed our covers for the New Creation music album. It is Rev. Chriss who introduced me to high school ministry at Mary Leakey girls' high school where he used to minister. We visited each other regularly when I was single and later when I got married while I was in Kahawa sukari and continue to do so to date. He remains intentional to this very date when he calls for those two-hour conversations full of wisdom but mostly laughter and fun. We enjoy each other's company at the family level.

Rev. Christopher Mmosi Khatela

"Anderson is well known to me, I met him about 20 years ago when he was in college. We have done college, school, and church missions together. I attest to the call of God upon his life and his contributions to the body of Christ. I have been his mentor from that period to date and I have been a part of his Christian pilgrimage. I have walked with Anderson in his service as a youth under his seniors in various capacities and up to when he accepted the call of God and founded a spiritual formation called Progressive Christian Church; including courtship and marriage to his wife Susan in the year 2005. We have maintained a good relationship with his family and they are a great couple serving God together. I have personally ministered in his church and he has on several occasions ministered in our church. He has demonstrated a zeal for the gospel and God's people through music and he has made tremendous strides toward success in the same through media and other related platforms with honor and dignity. He is very useful to the body of Christ thru evangelism in crusades, conferences, and various church services for God's glory." Rev. Chriss Khatela is the lead pastor of Ngong Restoration Assembly Kenya. He is also a lecturer at the KAG East Africa University and Ph.D. candidate at the same university. He is a father of three grown kids together with his wife Juddy Mmosi.

Mrs. Juddie Mmosi

"I knew Anderson in early 2000 through worship ministry at South C KAG and during school ministry. He has been since then a close friend in ministry. Anderson is an intelligent, easy-going, and caring person, a people person yet Independent and ambitious. He is focused and an achiever. He is resilient, exhibits strong willpower, is creative, and is a gifted minister through music. Anderson is energy, vision and focus personified. He operates under uncommon grace engaging in projects that many would shy away from due to resources. His ministry to young people through music and teaching God's word was and is outstanding for me.

He has in addition operated in prophecy and healing gifts that I have been a recipient of. He is a true minister, anointed and with a solid ministry." In 2005, in the lead to my wedding, The Thuku family as well as the Njoroge family became very close to me with time. Both Professor Charles Njoroge and Mrs. Grace Thuku were committed to church so much that it was admirable seeing Professor Charles committed to leading the Tuesday prayer meetings. Mrs. Jane Njoroge was part of the music ministry taking up various roles as times would demand. I was on-site to see her tirelessly lead and engage. She would join our mass choir or the worship team depending on the season. Our friendship would endure because long after I had left Kahawa Sukari, where I lived and served in the Deliverance Church, we had some projects on gospel music, all the way in Kitengela with Mrs. Jane Njoroge and I believe that she is still committed to using her musical talent in God's kingdom besides being a pastor.

Mrs. Grace Thuku was such an encouraging mother that when I and Susan were planning to marry, she mobilized a set of three mums namely, Mrs. Jane Njoroge, herself, and Mrs. Jane Theuri for regular prayer and fasting weekly on Thursdays at their house for three months without fail till our wedding date. Such commitment cannot be learned in any class and there is no demonstrating love in any bigger way than this. These are the lessons that the environment can teach you and these are the people that formed my regular. It is worth noting that all these people are professionals and have a busy life. They however deliberately set aside time to commit to God on my behalf and that of my fiancée. Our best couple, Mr. Bernard and Mrs. Sylvia Muchiri are our great friends to date inspiring us every day. Mr. Muchiri said: "I met Anderson about 2004 when he came to Deliverance Church Kahawa Sukari. Anderson was noticeable firstly through his gifting in music. He transformed worship moments at our church. He exhibited stage talent in leading worship, playing instruments, and coordinating well with the rest of the team. Secondly, he led some of the singing and his voice was gifted in this. One of the unique aspects of Anderson was, he could easily engage with the congregation while not on stage.

We could discuss any issue freely. He contributed to any discussion that came up. He had no place for naivety. This made him likable to many members of the church. He had many admirers. Anderson became a mentor to many young people in our church. His talent for singing, his educational background, and his outward-looking personality all combined to make him a role model. I entrusted him in addition to take up the mentorship of our sons, a role he executed with excellence." "We are privileged to be part of this family of friends. One more point to mention is the guidance Anderson got from the Senior Pastor Rev Dr. Wangombe. He (Anderson) was allowed to manage projects and services in the church and at the pulpit.

This confidence that the pastor showed in Anderson allowed the latter's gifts to grow. By the time Anderson left for a larger ministry, we had already seen in him, a well-molded preacher, motivational speaker, a gifted singer, and a young person daring to do exploit in life and ministry. We thank God for His faithfulness in keeping and protecting Anderson's family in those 18 years. It is like it was just yesterday. “We have had a respectful relationship. We have shared great moments and events that range from family to business. We have openly discussed business ideas and family dynamics celebrated small gains and looked up to the horizon with new lenses. Anderson has an admirable drive. This is the drive to perform and succeed. It has enabled him to conquer challenges and move on. Secondly, he has an eye for detail. There are many times I have noticed the level he has gone in planning an event, and how everything will fit. Thirdly, I have admired his ability to maintain relationships with diverse people and in hordes.

This aspect comes in handy when managing events, or working through projects. Fourthly, Anderson speaks out; if he needs assistance, he will shout, and this is very admirable. There have been seasons, yes those grey seasons that we all go through. There are times Anderson has had to make large decisions in ministry and reorganize his business. There have been times of running very low on 'fuel'. However, this man of God has always had a strong character trait that holds that a better day will come. Truly, God has been faithful in providing new opportunities. My comments are not complete without mention of the excellent support Anderson has received from his family; wife and children. We are humbled to be witnesses of this support.

Here is a photo slide for some of my mentors

1. With Retired Senior Assistant Chief Josephat Kombo
2. With the Cotu Secretary General Mr. Francis Atwoli
3. With the Chancellor and president of the Lead Impact University Colorado USA.
4. With my primary school teacher and friend, Mr James Kasyamani
5. My Chief Principal. Stanley Ingosi Ashitiva
6. Ashty
7. My mother during my designation to the office of Bishop
8. Bishop Elisha Odero praying for me in campus
9. Mr. Sam Omukoko, MD of Metropol
10. Rev. Chriss Khatela
11. Rev David Njuguna and his family
12. Rev. Dr. Peterson Wang’ombe
13. Rev. William and Woinnie Odero

14. Bishop Jonathan Tate Snr.
15. Johns Wambetsa- Motomwaka
16. Rev. Johnson Anyoba
17. Refer to 16
18. Bishop Elisha Odero paying me a courtesy visit in my church
19. Eric Andefwa Muleri
20. refer to 19
21. Bishop Tate and Lady Jeanine Tate
22. Mr. Oliver Minishi

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MENTORS & COMMUNITY SUPPORT SYSTEM

Community support system and role models

It can be strongly said that one is born in a home but nurtured by the community, the environment in which the baby is born. It is my case as friends to my dad interacted with me and each had a unique lesson or inspiration. Some of them have since been lifted to glory. There is this one **Stanley Mangala**, God lay his soul in an eternal piece, one of the greatest champions of the cooperative movement in Kenya. He and my father taught me loyalty to one another from their youth, thru adult life and old age till his demise, inseparably loyal! They had each other's back. I gained a liking for cars whenever my dad and I joyfully took a lift on his Peugeot 504. The ever-vibrant mood in Stanley made it easy for me to know some basic mechanics when he one day gave us a lift then I noticed that the car was driven very slowly and in one gear.

As the curious kid that I was, he had to explain to me that the car had a faulty clutch. In his, car, he always played some nice Rhumba music such as, "Mama Helena- by Passi Jo. He would then adjust his spectacles and dance with the nodding of his head. Most notable was the fact that my father would send me to him and he would host me as a kid and we would talk about anything and everything until late into the night, whereby he would write me a note to take to my father the following morning stating, "I was with the boy". Mzee, Stanley didn't shy to ask for his favorite beer even in his old age. They kept talking with my father about aging in dignity.

David Okuku Zalo, whose piano drew my interest, showed me a raw piece of paper, on which the lyrics of Endelea Moi, kujenga Kenya, a patriotic piece in praise of the late President Daniel Arap Moi, one who gave mileage to the growth of musical talents to young and the old like David Okuku Zalo. What makes his life nostalgic to me is the wide piano that was in his house causing me to visit regularly, every time curiously looking at the Italian instrument labeled as personally gifted to him by former president Moi. His random questions like, how many rabbits are there in Australia, made our conversations very nostalgic. When I fumbled, he told me the answer is many. He was a very humble man, who never showed off his power and influence although he had the ear of the late former president Moi.

David never over-displayed his power to other people. He was very calm, and humble but firm with powerful eyes and a disarming smile. His sense of humor was written all over him. He spoke in parables a lot. Our paths would cross again in 2002 when I was performing in the Kenyatta University choir during the Kenya national music festivals. Mr. David Zalo was the one conducting the inter-university mass choir bringing together all the universities, which participated in the music festivals, and was performing for the then president Mwai Kibaki.

Today his family, Barack Zalo, and the rest of the family remain to be great friends and inspirations in academic circles such as Dr**. Kenneth Zalo**, a lecturer at Moi University, and also **Robert Zalo** and his wife **Linda Zalo**, both senior educationists. Linda and Robert at one time during their master's programs at Kenyatta University, were my neighbors while I lived in a lecturer's quarter during my fourth year at Kenyatta University. We still do music with one of the Zalo sons, **Patel Zalo** as he is a member of the Ingotse Church of God choir where I do some projects with the church choir where my father is a willing sponsor. Mr. Barack Zalo, the Director of, Sure Cleaners and Suppliers, has also been a great friend and confidant for a long time.

My mother's younger brother, my Uncle **Mr. Isaa Mulama Ramadhan** saved my childhood when he offered to stay with me to change my environment at the age of 9 years in Mwitoti, Mumias. He showered me with love and care. He changed the trajectory of my life when I was lost in bad peer influence. His elder brother, **Mr. Yusuf Nangabo Ramadhan** always offered me love and support too. Whenever I was in Kakamega town during my high school free walks, I would visit him at his garage and spare parts shop in Kakamega town. He never missed offering wise counsel and encouragement. He showed me around his farming activities, his dairy cows, chicken business, and beekeeping. His advices are priceless as he always gives me good and sound advice to this day. When I was growing up, his phrases were, "I was born in a family where two biro pens had passed by." He meant that both my father and mother were educated and so I had no excuse but to excel. I love my uncles very much.

One man worthy of my salute is the tall dark and handsome **Stanley George Mukoko Munala**. He was an assistant chief in the early 60s and also worked as a senior executive at the Ministry of Works (MOW), Stanley George Mukoko Munala, popularly called Mow. My uncle loved me with such a passion that he paid one full term of my fees at Kakamega high school. He taught me many lessons about life that I can recall in a one-on-one interaction. He was large in life and hosted many guests just like my father. He also had a huge count of laborers. He is the one who educated my dad in high school as a responsible big brother. He taught me our family history and answered all my numerous family questions to my teenage curious satisfaction. The unity of the family displayed between him and my dad was enviable and worth emulating. He lived largely and encouraged me to be like him and his brother- my father, for he also was a man of style and status. Mow praised my dad for raising his sons as his, as they would follow in his footsteps and mentorship to become accountants just like my father. Mow used to tell me his children preferred discussing their school work and career choices with my dad than him and molding me into a fine young man was the best gift he could give to his brother.

He told me that despite being older, he respected my dad, and would never call him a kid because he would not have a name to call me if he did so. He explained to me why very old people called me uncle or even grandpa. He used to send me to buy him his favorite drink and a newspaper from Kakamega town. As he grew older, He visited my home regularly for the company where we spoke and laughed for hours. He always questioned everything that did not match his expectation of excellence. He challenged the size of my bedrooms, and at his word, I had to review the size of my house. It was his choice to take me with him to some of his special life memorable missions. I drove him to some events and shared very special moments with him. He would bravely give me the history behind such events entrusting me with so much information including his vulnerabilities and our family history. He was particulary impressed by my inquisitive nature to understand the things I wished to grasp better.

On one occasion just after building my new home, he came to visit me. Dad was also in sight. It was a beautiful sight to behold my two papas sitting down as we waited for a meal to be prepared by my wife. My uncle Mow was carrying my first son on his lap while my dad was carrying my second son on his lap too. As the grandpa and grandchild play ensued, Dad got off his godfather hat and put it on my second son's head. My uncle also got off his hat and put on the head of my first son. The two boys looked very funny but historically funny in one place. Having two of your fathers sitting in one place and two of your sons sitting in one place is a seed of unity, a seed of legacy that remains my most cherished moment with my uncle Stanley George Mukoko son of Maxwell Munala. My uncle is the pride of our community. When there was a clamor for a sub-location in the early 60s, the Abatamanyini people took pride in their son, Stanley George Mukoko Munala who was then a clerk at the time and endorsed him to be appointed the sub-chief, a prestigious role he used to serve our community well for 4 years.

It is on record that not only did "Mow" pay my father's high school but Mow walked to Kakamega High School and paid my one term full school fees to appreciate my father for assisting him to admit one of my cousin's first term form one entry when he didn't have the fees for my late cousin, Pamela Mukoko many years back. My father reiterates their brotherhood together with his late brother Papa Dickson Musotsi Munala. They always boosted each other's financial situation whenever they harvested cane as a merry-go-round. Following this example, my cousin Ben Munala Mukoko supported most of his younger siblings through high school and college. He also supported me when I was at Kenyatta University. He asked me to come and get advice from my sister-in-law on how to cope with ulcers which was a big challenge for me at the time. Ben played a big role in my hospitalization process. His wife Mrs. Christine Munala would do shopping for me whenever I visited their home in Muthithi Gardens, Kiambu.

Nick Luvembe Mukoko used to tell me when I was a little boy that I would make a good lawyer. As much as that didn't materialize, it is beautiful to note that an older cousin would notice your talent and inspire you toward a noble direction. They both have been great role models. Certain names from your community and family will always ring a bell in your life. One pet name**, Shombe** for this uncle that made me know how to drive a land rover, deserves credit. My student chances with pocket money made me always pass by Sembi Motors in Kakamega town, where my uncle worked as a mechanic, whenever I was going to school and during our free walks. **Uncle Dickson Musotsi Munala** would always throw the entire family into a frenzy whenever he harvested his sugarcane. He always shared his fat check with his two brothers, his wives, and his children. He was a very compassionate guy always armed with a smile and his deep voice. I entered the wide field of politics in 2013. My dad did not approve of it. The winds of good breath and relief at this turning point for me were from my mentor, uncle, and friend Shombe.

My uncle argued in my case that my dad must accept that I am an adult who must be allowed to chart my path without too many parental controls. I have the recording of this conversation which was follows word for word. "How can you send a son to go look for employment, then start choosing for him which work he should try?" you do not know which one would be his luck, let him try everything until he hits a jackpot. Isn't this the support system that saw me wade through my moments of political pilgrimage? As for Pachosi- meaning Papa **Josephat Indimuli,** he was my confidant, who at an early age, introduced me to the capital city of Nairobi. As a master mobilizer, Pachosi knew everyone and their homes, not only in the city but in the village too. Very sharp at people skills, I took after him. A disciplinarian, he had good counsel. When I desired to be my own man, marry and start a family, my dad thought that time was not yet ripe. It is the considerate Pachosi, who negotiated with my dad on my behalf. The magic worked.

My Uncle **Reuben Anyungu Ambindi** was not educated because one of his older brothers stopped him from going to school so he doesn't become a burden to them. However, he is a pivotal point of the Ambindi family unifying and offering guidance to the family. He always supports my endeavors. This is the man who went to pay the dowry for my wife when I was to get married. He also travelled all the way to attend my designation as a bishop. Together with my Uncle Dickson Musotsi Munala, it was very clear to them that a son belongs to the entire family and community and must be covered by his fathers a. they travelled in the company of my cousin Emmanauel Ndombi Ambindi; my namesake and immediate neighbor.

Dr. Eliud Abucheli Birachi was part of my college day's support system. He is a post-Doctoral Research Fellow, Market value chain specialist for Africa at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). Whenever I visited my sister Ruth in Nakuru, I would sometimes go to spend the nights at his house. I consulted a lot with him just before I enrolled for my undergraduate university education. He was lecturing at Egerton University at the time, whereby he invited his friends to come and listen to me and give me career advice before I joined Kenyatta University. This was to help me make better career choices. Whenever I was to go home, I also stopped by Dr. Birachi's house whereby he would send me home with money or shopping to my uncle Festus Oneko Ambindi, his father.

When the younger Eliud was called up to join high school, it is my father who paid his first term fees at Ingotse High School. The list goes on as I reminisce on **Habil Musundi,** now a pastor, who used to give me lifts when I was in class eight. I remember him saying that if you do not have an educated fellow in your home, people can defecate at your gate and walk away with it. He was a senior manager at Caltex.

Mr. Sam Ambundo former chairman Board of Directors, of Barclays Bank, and his wife, Bertha Ambundo welcomed me to their home. Sam taught me humility, service to the community, and generosity. He supports the local Ingotse dispensary without complaining and he has been educating bright children within the community for as long as I can remember. He even referred my younger brother to one of his former employments. Bertha, a great women leader of integrity celebrates my leadership and affirms my stature as a national figure of positive influence. She once asked me to preside over a church event and when I said I didn't feel as endowed to match their expectations, she told me, that she was very clear in her mind that she wanted to celebrate the fact that I come from that community and that the community needs me with or without much money.

Retired Major General. Hezron Vuyoywa Murunga was born two weeks apart from my dad. They were buddies just like their fathers were, I also have been friends with his sons Michael Andalo Murunga and David Murunga. I got interest in the major General as a role model when I was a small kid. When he was doing a house warming party for his house, my mother was part of the Bushiri Church of God, choir that sung for the event. The lyrics of the song; "Mgeni wa Heshima, Kuja Kuingiza, Nyumba ya Hezron na Dorah Murunga", portrayed a powerful man whose chief guest was meant to the former president. During that time, my mother described the kind of house he had built whose detail made me desire to one day do the same.

Maj. General Murunga has been my cheerleader and encouraged in my musical pursuits. He is a big fan of my music; subscribed to my you tube channel and following my activities with pride. We discussed the contents of this book and he was happy to give me his wisdom on determination and resilience.

Shem Okhaso was the most trusted of all our workers. One unforgettable incident that cemented our friendship was during this season of long hunger in 1994 that was called in the Western Kenya community "*Saaba Lulala*- Wash your hands once or better still, one meal a day. There is this moment when our parents were away. Shem would make us a meal, make sure we have eaten but not eat any of it and walk home to his family. I watched this happen for some time, till that opportune time when I engaged him over this trend. He swore that he can never sit and have a meal with us when his wife and children had nothing to eat. I would thereafter, on several occasions, take some of our groceries from home and deliver them to his family, without my parents knowing this act of support to Shem until Dad returned and paid him his dues.

As I write this book, part of the chapters are written away in a writing retreat that is not in a hotel or holiday home, but in the office of my major support system on this mission. **Marcella Koigi Andanje**, my *Mulamwa* (sister-in-law) who does not call me by that social title but prefers calling me Bishop, has supported several levels of my growth spiritually. Fast rewind and I vividly recall the husband, my cousin, the late **advocate Seth Osundwa Andanje**, who would take me to moments of meditation as we relaxed in Muliro gardens in Kakamega town. It is here that he advised that I take up art subjects in school, to pave my way to becoming a lawyer. His iron of support lives today through his wife Marcella.

As a mentor, she supported me a great deal during my studies at Kenyatta University. I would visit her in Kiambu for material and moral support. The retired police inspector has influenced me into studying criminology and judicial mediation. My new venture into large-scale farming has been illuminated greatly by her farming activities. The canopy of support by this blessed lady is not only covering me but my extended family members. Marcella has supported morally and materially everyone I know in the family, when you call, she answers and when she says jump, you ask how high. This brings to the equation my elder cousin **Lawrence Peter Munala** whose father named him after my father just like I have also named my son after his father. He has been a guide and role model within the family, even my best man when I was having my traditional rights of marriage. The rudimentary non-formal lessons I got from the village electrician **Philip Lomen**, a nephew in the family, inspired me to choose electricity as my technical subject in high school.

Not just a man of wires and gadgets but a great counselor, for he is the one who noticed the wrong peer group that I had joined, the beer party, and advised strictly that I quit that company and followed up to check on me. I obliged.

The retired Chief of Umoja, James Anunda is my uncle and friend, who rose from the ranks of administration police. His son Adolph Anunda is my high school friend. James has always been a loyal friend since I was a child, later gave me my second job opportunity in the city during the 1999 national population census. His counsel and moral support and advice are without seasons whether in the city or the village.

Mr. James Litali Kasyamani who was my primary school teacher offered me help with tuition while in class eight. He remained a friend and guide to all my community-based projects. He is instrumental in our community development programs with a track record of success. Immediate former Member of Parliament for Lurambi Subcounty **Hon. Raphael Milikau Otaalo** has been a friend and mentor within the community. We love each other's company in the city and the countryside looking out for each other's welfare. We always encourage each other on matters of politics. He sobers my head by asking me the tough questions with a long checklist of what I have done and what I have not done as a measure of whether I was ready to venture into an election cycle

Retired Senior Assistant Chief Mr. Josphat Kombo Keya, first became my friend when I had just finished class eight. He signed and stamped my documents when I was to join high school. We would grow our friendship to date. He continues to teach me the history and ways of our Abatamanyini people. He is a great advisor and support to my endeavors. The insights and knowledge of the Abatamanyini people are something I would love to write about someday. I acquired this knowledge from my father, Mr. Kombo, and other elders including Rev. Johnson Anyoba, Mr. Johns Wambetsa, and Mr. Phillip Wesanza. Mr. Josephat Kombo also shared some history known to him about my grandfather.

Retired General overseer in the church of God fraternity Rev. Johnson Anyoba, who also fought in the Second World War as a member of King George's, King's African Rifles, KAR, taught me the history of the church in western Kenya, but above all integrity in church ministry up to his last breath at 103 years. He influenced me thru the power of history and the necessary integrity in the service of God and humanity. He told me a lot of things relating to the history of the church in the whole of western Kenya and also shared with me his vision and efforts to grow and strengthen the church of God within our larger region of Kakamega, Bungoma, Kitale, and Vihiga, which are regions he presided over with the church of God mission based in Kima.

He used to ride a taxi that took Nyerere to the airport when he was going to negotiate Tanzania's independence. He was Tom Mboya's most trusted taxi driver. Rev. Anyoba says, his house was directly opposite Tom Mboya's house and whenever Mboya had guests, he would ask Johnson to drive them around. Rev. Johnson Anyoba enumerated a lot to me about my paternal grandfather Maxwell Munala some more. Mzee Anyoba had joined (King George's African Riffles military) KAR at the age of 21 and had already served for six years and returned home after the Second World War. Mzee Anyoba had stayed around our community for three years, between 1945 to 1948 before my grandfather died. It was just the other day when Mzee Anyoba died on 10th November 2021 at the age of 104 years. He was born 1918 yet my grandfather was born in 1906. My grandfather died in 1948 at the age of 42 years which means by the time he died, Mzee Anyoba was 30 years of age which is a significant age to have your facts right within your community.

Johns Wambetsa also known as "**Motomwaka"** is a man who inspired me in music as I watched him perform at the Bukhungu Stadium when I was a toddler. This is a great man, a once-in-a-lifetime human being. John wears many hats and has influenced me in more than many ways based on his array of experiences in so many disciplines than you can imagine. He is the epitome of being multitalented, versatile, and resilient. This man is a musician and used to entertain President Moi and the public in many functions, especially agricultural shows. He plays the guitar and performs what we commonly call a one-man guitar. John has a long history with some of the biggest political figures in this country. In his home are trees planted by the late western Provincial Commissioners Yusuf Haji and Mwazera. He was selected amongst those who toured Israel in the 70s with a song which I have remixed called "Mulayi Aliba Wina" (Who is a good man)? I have since recorded a remix of this song.

He has served in the St. Johns ambulance as well as various disciplined forces which saw him serve in the homes of the first two presidents. He says, Kenyatta knew the culture of every community with its deepest secrets and stories. John has been a forest conservationist and on his farm are many species of African indigenous trees. He shares his indigenous knowledge with various Kenyan institutions of higher learning such as Egerton University and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Some of his works in medicinal plants have been tested and commended by the University of Nairobi's pharmacology and pharmacognosy department. John toured Buckingham Palace where he met the queen who greeted him with bare hands without gloves. His skills have seen him tour Geneva in Switzerland, Israel, and the Netherlands. He is a 91-year-old. He is the man who used to take care of my grandfather's herds of cattle as a young boy.

I have tested his thread severally from different angles and perspectives and compared it with other narrations including those of my father and they have stood out as true accounts of my grandfather Mr. Maxwell Munala. Both John's mother Priscah Atulo and my great-grandmother Omukoyia were born in the same family, the first household of Abakobero people; the family of Chisambo, the same family as mzee Andrea Shikoto who was once assistant chief, chief, and former mayor in Kakamega. This made him to be very close to my grandfather. He says that is where life happened. At my grandfather's home, everyone had a place to call home.

1. My uncle Dickson Musotsi Munala
2. The father to my Step mother
3. The sister to my Grandmother Emily Munala, her name is Jeredina from Ebwambwa
4. The family of my sister Ruth; Ben Okumu and Ruth's mother in law, Mrs. Okumu
5. Refer to 4
6. My Uncles James, Jafeth , My Dad and uncle Dickson Musotsi
7. My Step mother and next is her mother
8. My Dad, grandmother Emily, my sister Rutrh and my uncle Jafeth.
9. Refer to 8
10. My extended family during my wedding in Nairobi
11. Dad and his cousin Manoah Ingosi
12. Refer to 11
13. Dad, Uncle Dickson and their mother.
14. Our village elder, Emirundu, Dad, His cousin Festus Onego and Reuben Anyungu Ambindi
15. My dad's friends, Stanley Mangala and Maina Otseili
16. Mr David Okuku Zalo
17. With my uncle Dickson Musotsi; next with him , dad and my uncle Reuben Anyungu after the burial of my Cousin Mrs. Lois Musumba in Bunyore
18. Refer to 17
19. Refer to 17
20. Refer to 17
21. During my wifes graduation in our home in Nairobi
22. With Johns Wambetsa (Motomwaka)
23. Refer 22
24. With Mwalimu James Kasyamani, Rtd Assitant chief Josphat Kombo, Rtd. Chief of Umoha, Nrb, James Anunda and my mother when they paid me a courtesy visit in my rural home to inspect a water survey programme.
25. Selipher, daughter of my uncle Stephen Makelo

26. Refer to 25
27. Refer 25
28. Refer to 25
29. My mother-in-law and my step mother
30. Mr. Paul Etemesi
31. Mr. Johnson Anyoba during the second world war

MY FATHERS EXTENDED COMMUNITY

In-laws

The family of in-laws can become a strong support system if a good relationship is built. The parents gain a new son or daughter while the children gain a new father and or mother. The family of siblings is expanded and the children gain a new set of friends and confidants to interact with and play within a safe space. I gained a great mother and friend in my mother-in-law when I got married. She became my advisor, confidant, support, prayer partner, and intercessor.I also gained a family of brothers and sisters as well as friends, aunties, and uncles among my wife's immediate family. I also became a beacon of strength in her family; Holding together the family as a spiritual leader who shepherded and sometimes presided over some of the weddings of those who were members of my church. Together with my wife, we supported the education and housing of some of her younger siblings.

My house in the city became their home where I offered them assurance and safety to make it their home. We always stood out to protect each other whenever duty called. When I look back, I think the lines of a brother or son-in-law and a pastor, was overtaken by events and I just became a member of the family. I did what I do best which is to nurture and build. I did so with confidence after my mother-in-law told me during our traditional wedding that I had become her firstborn son. We helped each other navigate some of our tough situations.
My wife also embraced my family and supported my mother and siblings a lot. They each relate to her differently as a friend who accommodates them all. My father and mother hold my wife in very high regard and I thank God for that. We share many platforms with my mother-in-law as servants of God inspiring and preaching hope to the family and beyond masses.

I made friends not just with my wife's cousins but also with her aunties, who have become my mothers and friends too such as Mrs. Rose Giteya who just retired as head teacher at Bondeni Primary School in Kayole. She taught me how to survive in Nairobi. We also became great friends with her late husband Mr. David Magwaro Giteya, who retired as Director of Industry in the Ministry of Trade. My cool and best auntie Lorna Kageha became a best friend and her husband Pastor Harrison Mutenyo Katimu of Ebuchelo Church of God became a close friend and music partner.

Peer support system

Research shows that peer support is a great path to pursue in your lifetime. It can improve people's well-being, better self-esteem, and social skills. When I was in High School, my support system was Joseph Njoroge with whom we would later serve as prefects.

I also had a set of close peers within the choir and within the drama team. I also had a close relationship with about four prefects who were my confidants. By the time I was joining Kenyatta University, my life had taken shape to a significant extent; I knew what I wanted in life and I was sure of the direction of my purpose in life. With some of my classmates, we shared all courses while others shared certain units but we took our friendships beyond the class. We had a small unit of friends such as Bancy Ireri, Irene Mwende, Josephine Munala, and Sammy Mutisya with whom we shared a lot in common. We studied almost all units the same and we were all born-again Christians taking our activities beyond class into the Christian union.

Immediately after I joined campus, I put together a singing group. We also did out-of-campus missions with Sammy and Irene in places such as Kahawa West in Nairobi. Josephine and I were solid support systems to each other over time as we would wake up very early, as early as 5a.m, and meet in the science complex to hold academic discussions, we would do the same late into the night. We tasked ourselves with revising and studying all our mutual subjects with dedication and commitment. There were a few whispers here and there from those who saw us together frequently but that never really mattered to us because we were so innocent and committed to our studies, that we never accommodated such that could deviate us from our academic pathway. This was a brother and sister in the real sense of it.

As the years would progress, the bracket of the close circle of friends would metamorphose specifically because I studied during the trimesters and some of my friends didn't. Therefore, a new set of friends would come to the block. Some of my friends happened to be ahead of me in the academic calendar and naturally fizzled out as soon as they wound up their studies. You may also understand that during this time, friends could start specializing in friendships and if that happened, their availability gets limited and the dynamics follow a natural course.

In my second year, I joined the Kenyatta university choir which was viewed by the KUCU as not being within the paradigm of the Christian faith. This move landed me in trouble with the Christian union and it was very difficult to explain myself in diagrams and present my certificates of excellence in traditional dance and choir as a soloist in traditional dance and a master performer in solo pieces of the choir as well as general performance. This explains why I only participated once in the Kenya music festivals while in college where I won the best tenor solo and never participated again. After this horrifying experience with the Christian union, I almost fell into depression with this forced isolation from the Christian union.

Eric Muleri

While on campus, I met Eric Muleri, who was a high school friend. I needed so much support given that I was sickly and I also didn't have enough financial resources to sustain myself through one of my semesters. Eric took my burden like his own and helped me survive a whole semester. Despite our prior history in high school, it is this semester that defined our relationship with Eric. He was my support system and remains to be my support system to date. He is my best friend and knows my secrets, especially the bad ones. Why should I write using saliva while we have ink to write? Let Eric write about being each other's support system.

"Anderson was 2 years behind me at Kakamega High School. We met in the school choir. The most outstanding trait about him was his singing talent. He also was a member of the school drama club where he stood out both as an actor and a soloist in the traditional dance for which Kakamega High was renowned nationally. In my thinking, it is these talents that made him known among his classmates such that he was elected a prefect right from form one. It was school tradition to host a carol service somewhere in the third term and this gave him a perfect opportunity to showcase his talent to the whole school. It is these early conquests in form one that paved the way for the later roles he played in the school leadership. Even that early in life, I found him to be very good at expressing himself and with a sense of maturity that made it possible for him to make friends with a wide range of schoolmates including senior prefects.

We, later on, met again at Kenyatta University where we both did our undergraduate studies. In college, he came across as once more a natural leader. Again, we were both members of the Christian Union and served in the CU choir where he was deputy director. He also established a choir and a mission-oriented task force which I was a member of. One trait that I think he has maintained in all our years of interaction is a clear ability to define what he wants to achieve and the ability to work for it. In a sense, I would call him a go-getter. In school, he was a natural leader even when dealing with his seniors.

His ability to define what he wanted made it possible for him to think through things earlier than the rest and articulate them clearly. That is why he determined very early while in college that his music would make him a public figure and he sought to marry before that happened. He identified his girlfriend early on and was very clear in his mind that it would lead to marriage, something he achieved. I was that partner in crime who accompanied him to meet his girlfriend for the very first time in the hostels. I also accompanied him to meet his fiancées family and the rest is history. He put together money to build his first house at home as a third-year student.

After college, we worked together as teachers for about one year. We have remained family friends ever since and celebrate each other's achievements in life. After campus, he has played different roles in life and the major thing that has remained consistent is his service to God and the church. In the social settings we interact, he is always candid in speaking his mind. He has also remained bold and confident in his pursuits and is never afraid to make decisions. When we worked together in a private school, he was not afraid to try business, something he dragged me along, though unwillingly and we made losses, it is life. I guess it is the reason I refused to join him in buying land in Kitengela when it was selling cheaply. He went ahead and bought and years later we are neighbors on the same size of land which I bought four times the price of his plot when he bought it.
Anderson still helped me to find and buy my current home and even helped supervise my building project. He is great friends and very casual with my father, something I wish I could achieve with this very father! I hope he won't read this comment. Anderson is a loyal friend who reaches out to his friends when they need him; even when you think you do not need him. It is up to him to decide when he thinks that you need him. As much as you may not invite him into your situation, he will take your situation like his own and attend to it like a paid mission, and only when he is sure that you are okay will he get out of the picture. He will always reach out on his terms and serve his purpose and then retreat only when the mission is accomplished; when he thinks you are emotionally and or technically assisted.

For example, when I lost my job, I had a young baby, Sydney, and a stay home mom wife Maggie. We honestly didn't know our next course of action. Anderson visited me with his wife in the town where I was living, gave me a shoulder to cry on, and then prescribed a path according to his perception and then followed thru to see to it that the path was followed to the last detail. He asked me to keep my items with a friend, items I never took afterward, then took me in with my wife and baby at his two-roomed house in Kitengela and cheered me on to find a new purpose until I got a job. We stayed with him and his wife until I had enough money to start all over again and that is when he got off my back. He is such a loyal friend who always reaches out to his friends unconditionally and without demanding reciprocity.

As a go-getter, he focuses on the goal and does what it will take to achieve it. In the course of doing this, he would sometimes step on the toes of people close to him which becomes a burden on the relationship. But he is always quick to make amends when he notices that he has created a problem. Too bad when he doesn't realize!

He has a high sense of accountability and I think that is why he keeps as mentors and accountability partners, friends he met along the way who can challenge him and rebuke him when need be! He is big on parenting and he is not shy to share his parenting skills with those around him. He recently launched a father-to-son capacity-building program and as usual, I am his guinea pig to try out whether it works, together with another friend of his who has now become my friend too. He is a lawyer who used to be Anderson's tenant for a while when he was building his own home in our neighborhood. We are now mutual friends and neighbors. We all have sons in high school and we are collectively trying to sharpen ourselves and our sons as a common village and support group.

In summary, I think he has a strong personality that makes him stand out among his peers. His leadership ability has been developed over time and it was natural for him to take up challenges including church leadership and even delve into politics. The main weakness he has to constantly work on is moderating the force of his personality so that he can accommodate others. He is not ignorant of and deliberately makes an effort to do so, though I don't know whether it is good enough or is it because we are mostly in each other's space."

Festus Musyoka
"One evening we met after a Wednesday Christian Union fellowship at the instrument vestry; following a request by the then Instrument-in-charge (Samuel Maweu Muthoka of Ipsos Synovate) that anyone who had an interest/knowledge in playing musical instruments and was willing to serve in the Christian union remains after the fellowship. We were quite a number, but somehow, Anderson is the only one I got to know - at a personal level. He was staying in Nyayo 4 hostel, room 87, while I was staying in room 88 (just opposite his). Soon after, we got to interact much more closely. I admired his zeal, his honesty, and readiness to pay the price of what he wanted to attain. I accompanied him for my first ministry ever, at Kahawa Barracks. Anderson is a worshipper of God and an eloquent worship leader! I loved his humility so well balanced with the ability to communicate his opinion. He was strong in identifying 'weak' talents and in nurturing them with such patience. I am a beneficiary of that patience…"

Dr. Robert Wafula; lecturer at Kibabii University in Kenya **"**We had personal interactions with Anderson at KUCU and held personal fellowships to a level of attending weekend challenges in high schools and Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) together. I loved the zeal and commitment to higher praise and deeper worship that he oozed from the inner man.

His real ministry turnaround happened when he underwent a surgical operation due to appendices, cysts, and other related complications. The situation birthed a great ministry in him not only in singing but also ministering healing and deliverance. As students, Anderson and others released a powerful electronically recorded pact cassette, full of worship and inspirational music, embedded in God's faithfulness and healing power. I remember we had an earth-moving weekend challenge in Kilimambogo TTC, where the heavens opened and signs manifested. We held a joint photo and video coverage during our graduation ceremony at Kenyatta University. Later he joined Kahawa Sukari Deliverance church and invited me to share in a revival weekend at the church. After moving to Kitengela and establishing the Progressive Christian church he equally invited me to minister.

I know Anderson as a good mentor to the family. Anderson resigned from a well-paying job at the prestigious Safaricom Ltd to pursue his desire and passion for music. This is an indication of the love for music ministry and serving the Almighty God. His footprints are awash in our media stations. His impact is good and huge.I invited him to minister at Kibabii University, and he did not disappoint. Our families are friends and our friendship endures."

African Rights of Passage

Various African communities had their rights of passage for both their boys and girls. As much as each community had its unique rights of passage, the basic principles behind the rights were standard and sought to achieve the same objective. The first objective was integration.

Integration as a peer support system and identity

When a certain age group or age set was initiated, they became an integrated family all familiar with each other. They knew about their backgrounds, nakedness, weaknesses, strength, family tree, talents, and behavior. This set became so closely knit that they became a new version of a family involved in each other's life. This age set became a form of identity and also became a form of support group and therefore a peer support system; they identified each other as belonging to the same set as the other and in most cases they had a unique name to their set. They attended each other's ceremonies and played lead roles in each other's lives. They took oaths to protect and defend each other and do no harm to each other. Their oaths included such conditions that if you do another evil, the covenant will cause evil to befall you. They did not gossip about each other and told each other the truth. In some communities, they had a sense of shared resources including spouses.

That is the depth of integration that existed. Much as some of these practices are not exactly to be encouraged in our modern world, we must find our African groove and substitute our traditional culture with an approach that causes practical integration. Our young men and women are committing suicide because they do not have peers who share common bonds that they can be vulnerable to. Our young men and women do not have the will to aspire enough because there is no sense of positive peer pressure emanating from their peers to rise to a certain shared expectation to which they pledged allegiance to attain or sustain.

Affirmation

Through these rights of passage, the young girls were taught and trained in the art of being a woman and self-care. They were trained on how to be good wives and good mothers. They were affirmed on how good enough they were now that they had been trained. This included specific rights of passage which programmed the mind of a young woman to see the new internal strength and beauty after their rights of passage.

As much as female genital mutilation is truly an abuse of the female human right to have their sexual architecture and experience completely in place, it will be intellectually irresponsible not to challenge the logic behind the practice. If we understood the logic behind the practice, we can then be able to have an intellectual conversation of the value it was intended to offer and intentionally make use of the most powerful human organ which is the mind to gain the same intended values using mental circumcision. Most communities that practiced female circumcision and or female genital mutilation were either pastoralist communities or warrior communities.

The pastoralists would be gone to seek pastures for their animals for many days and months as their way of livelihood. They believed that a woman who had been circumcised was better placed to be married because she wouldn't be having high sexual drive otherwise called high libido. The warrior communities also went to war with other communities defending their territories or conquering other territories. Some went to war specifically to steal livestock from other communities in a practice called cattle rustling. They wanted their women not to be sexually restless behind them as they sought the family livelihood in this context. This circumcision of the girls was a form of affirmation too because the young men also went through the cut; something that made them proud of themselves and gave them recognition in society. Young girls had come to believe and accept that Circumcision was the necessary pain to be recognized as worthy and honorable like the boys.

I will also say that it will be intellectually irresponsible not to challenge the value it carried to our mental strength and have a well-thought-out idea on how we can build the mental capacity and resilience of our young girls in the alternative. How do we affirm them to feel and believe that they are well equipped to face the lives ahead of them?

Grooming

Modern girls are educated unlike in the past but we completely lost the art of training our young girls about personal responsibility beyond beauty therapies. We have lost the beauty of household etiquette, morality, motherhood, and the art of being a good and effective wife. When our women aren't able to be good and effective wives, four errors occur simultaneously in the family. Their daughters take their example. Their sons are programmed to settle for less when they grow up after thinking that the example of their mother is a good normal. The husband's ego is bruised limiting his potential and finally, the sons are raised by a present but ineffective father; potentially becoming a toxic father. When a father cannot exercise authority over his wife, he tends to project it to the children to whom he is surer to assert his authority. Where are our platforms to affirm our daughters, and teach them about mature life, sexuality, the responsibility of motherhood, and the art of a good and effective wife? The beauty and valuable lessons that were well cultured in our African processes are what I seek to achieve in the end. We need effective and pragmatic alternatives if the family unit is to survive in the future. The family is the unit of God and whenever it is threatened, it breeds too much confusion than you can imagine.

The modern young man knows little about responsibility as a man. Once they get into the place of marriage, those premarital counseling lessons of three to five sessions will not be enough to mentally elevate their awareness and conscience to step up to the roles of a husband and father.

Strength and resilience

During the Rights of Passage, not only were the young men taught integration but also trained on resilience and strength. They were taught their culture and traditions and how to conduct ceremonies as well as the significance of such ceremonies. They were taken through rigorous hurdles that groomed them to be resilient and strong both physically and mentally. They were taught the art of physical war and how to defend their families from danger; both human and animal danger. That is how we raised strong men who can withstand pressure and still protect their families even in the toughest of situations.

The young men were also affirmed in a big way to head their families, raise their children, be an authority over their wives, and protect the family honor. They were charged to be good ambassadors of their communities and make them proud. It is this kind of affirmation that breeds strong men; something that our men lack and cannot pass to the next generation of men. Could this be the reason we largely have weaker versions of men leading to the siege of the boychild?

We need to constructively enhance the conversation on how we shall integrate our young men to find a reason to be loyal to each other, vulnerable with each other, and leave no man behind. When my son went to an initiation camp recently, I spoke to the parent who had their sons in that camp intending to build a community for the young men now that they even attend the same church and live in the same neighborhood. I felt like, some of the parents were interpreting my suggestion as an intrusion I wanted to create into their families.

Mentors

One beautiful thing which happened during these rights of passage was that you were assigned mentors whom you could talk to any time you needed advice and guidance. If you had a crisis in your life, your peers intervened but also mentioned the same to your mentors to intervene. We were properly cushioned against most unforeseen circumstances in life.

The church as a support system

Church service is a great support system. This is where we affirm strangers, by greeting them by the door with a smile, we say good morning and they say back "hi". That is finding **meaning** when someone is interested to look at you and greet you with honor. You become important as we courteously show you a good seat to occupy with **respect**. We offer **acceptance** and **appreciation** to strangers and even regular members. We show them **recognition** and **attention** when we acknowledge their presence in our midst. We go much further and **affirm** them by clapping for them as an entire congregation, something some of them last felt in decades when they were baptized at age 10. We show genuine joy and pride to have them around us and finally show them **gratitude** for making a good choice to come to our church.

We go a notch higher when we embrace them at a personal level and show genuine concern to know their name, their family, what they do, and what they need. It is done over a cup of tea after the church service. To some of our visitors, we thereafter set up the burning bush for them and they gradually get to their 'Egypt. Some of them either find our liturgy not suitable or decide that it is challenging to serve within our church family.

We introduce them to "I am who I am" - the altar call, and send them to Egypt, where they complain, whine, and be leaders of rumors. You argue how you are not eloquent, how many Egyptians you killed in your past, but what God helps us to see in you is the burning passion to do something about the Egyptian who dared to kill your fellow Hebrew. In you, we see the royal training at the castle of the pharaoh even though it was an adopted identity. In you, we see the wonders of God and the seed of purpose and greatness because we know you left the palace to go and live among your people. We know your quest for justice and justice is your birthmark. When you meet men by the river bullying women over water, you defend them. You are a deliverer, a defender, an advocate who would do anything at all to save the weak. There is a shred of cascaded all-knowing evidence that when God wants to destroy the whole nation of Israel due to their disobedience, you argue with him for mercy and remind him that the mockery will be unto their God who couldn't deliver his people and the nations will say it was a hot air journey and a lost cause from the very beginning aimed at destruction in the desert. In the long run, you run, turn back, and get to Canaan-the Church and become such as support system.

In church, we see your gifts and your talents, we know the power in the rod you carry, the power of God in you, and the miracles ahead of you, only you are well prepared for your mission and it will take many years before God raises another man or woman to do carry forth your kind of mission. We shall take you thru spiritual formation through a discipleship program, and connect you to other people who will be instrumental in your journey. Despite your misgivings, offer you more support within our support system, so you can function; whether it is Aaron you need, or the affirmation of Miriam as a sister to function properly, we shall try our best to make your function in your assignment and assign you to a connect group. If you are married, we shall assign you to a marriage enhancement group. If you are single again due to being widowed, divorced, or separated, you will be assigned to a rebirth group.

We shall be there cheering for you as you start to get self-confidence and join the worship team, protocol, ushering, wisdom for mothers, men fellowship, youth, and next generation, or children ministry. Celebrate will be ours as we watch you rediscover your identity and witness God change your identity from 40 years of a herdsman, to a deliverer of a nation, the Moses we see today. That is the support system called the church. That is what we do because my church International Christian Center Kitengela under the leadership of Rev. Winnie and William Odero did exactly this Moses burning bush experience to me, and look how far I have come, that you are now reading this book in confidence.

That is what a support system does and I want every usher, protocol, youth worker, worship team member, and any other person serving in church to internalize and appreciate themselves. Value and fulfillment must come from the fact that you are contributing to the body of Christ and have found meaning in serving God. The value of having meaning and contribution to anything is beyond what I can explain from a psychological perspective. You have become an integral part of that system and the church system has become a part of your support system. You may not realize the value of that greeting by the door when an usher greets you with a smile and welcome you to church. Some people have not been greeted nicely all week long, be it at work or home but they are sure of being greeted nicely on a Sunday morning.

Do not underestimate the affirmation using the word of God that comes from your pastor when they conduct those sermons at mid-week prayer meetings and speak blessings over you, those blessings are an affirmation by the use of the word of God. Do not underestimate the affirmation that comes through praise and worship in threefold: we affirm God's kingdom through worship and adoration and that should tell you that if we are created in God's image and likeness then, we also function inclusive of affirmation among other factors. The seas, birds, and all creation affirm the glory of our king and so do we. We are also made in the likeness of the Almighty God. We are affirmed in bible study and subsequently equipped with knowledge and skills to serve. As you will read about our emotional needs, you will realize that a lot of people have lost the taste of life and life has become meaningless. The self-esteem and ego of many people have been bruised due to several factors. Men have brutalized their wives until they have no self-esteem left in them while women have verbally abused their husbands until their ego is bruised to the core. Hard economic times have destroyed the family unit as more men are unable to provide for their families and if by chance the women can step up, have used that situation to take over the place of authority, thus damaging the ego of their men even more.

The workplace is no longer the place for individuals to find meaning and a sense of contribution because the competition has obscured our humanity and we are corporately driven by the need to make sales any employee who shows weakness is dismissed without human considerations due to this pressure. All these people come to church because the church is mentally and systematically structured to offer a support system through all these. The church has structured its support system to offer spiritual nourishment, encouragement, support, teaching, and training service but most importantly, once the person has been healed spiritually, mentally, and emotionally, the church helps most people find a place to meaningfully contribute to the life of the church and right there they find meaning.

They may be treated as useless and feel low about their inability to meaningfully contribute to their family decisions, but they will find meaning when they serve, for instance, as ushers in church and when they teach Sunday school or just guide at the parking lot, as part of the protocol department. When you get fulfilled by serving in church, you become a happy person and export that happiness to your children and spouse. This healing happens when you are affirmed by God's word and gain faith by hearing repeatedly. You gain an understanding of a new identity through the eyes of the word of God, an identity that now superseded the identity of your workmates, spouse, or siblings. Once you gain this identity, your self-esteem is driven by the engine of this identity and you become productive at work, at home, and in the marketplace, including yourself.

To those who claim that the church is a place of brainwashing, you got it all wrong. It is a place where spirits of ego are crushed, rebuilt, and given new meaning. Right there, the persons involved feel so nice being around this environment that they stay on and on and on and do anything in the name of this system which makes them feel great about themselves. They sing and dance for the Lord and feel great. Why wouldn't I stay? Isn't it the same feeling you get in the club when you dance your worries and fears away? Isn't it the same experience you gain when you drink your sorrow and worries away in the club? The impact is the same between singing in the club, shouting in a football match, and dancing in the church with a few differences. The result is happiness and decreased stress because that dance, shouting in a football match, or singing in a concert releases the hormone oxytocin together with what we call endorphins and they produce the feel-good effect while at it. It is the same hormones produced when you do physical exercise in the gym. Do not be afraid to shout and dance in church, it produces the same feel-good in hormones.

Huge quantities of oxytocin are produced during orgasm accounting for a good mood, relaxation a good immune system. The big difference in the church is that you invoke the spirit of God which comes with all the benefits I have explained in the support system by God. It comes with a clear mind that you have not wasted money, stolen anyone's woman, or hidden from your spouse and you are not drunk. You are affirming God himself rather than a fellow human being and you are gaining knowledge of the word of God. In church, you are being helped to attune to forgiveness, self-acceptance, and a chance to become a new creature through salvation. You can redeem anything lost from the past and you are a participant in meeting your personal growth, something you will never achieve by attending a football match. Some people say the church is overrated, I beg to differ, and the church offers you what science can back and much more beyond science. Praise and worship for example is an experience with multiple benefits to an individual.

Singing by itself energizes the brain and the mind into the spirit for those who just want to sing while still or calm. Those who clap, dance and jump gain a more heightened experience through the same experience as physical exercise which floods the bloodstream with happy hormones as well as the melodies which strike the brain waves to vibrate and release the feel-good hormones. Worship music is the most misunderstood and the most misapplied tool for an enriching encounter in the spiritual realm. A lot of worship leaders like me make worship music for ourselves. We have favorite playlists that sound right to our ears. We choose our favorite songs whether favorite means genre, language, or culture. We care less about our congregants. Sometimes we do not get to fully choose who comes to our church and need to have an open mind to effectively embrace the people whom God has given us. We subject sixty-year-olds who have sung their local traditional music and hymns for the last six decades to quickly learn and enjoy music from a different culture and still have fun within one Sunday.

No one cares to teach or involve their audience in the new music. After introducing new music this Sunday, rather than help our congregants to learn, appreciate and love the new music and connect with its message, lyrics, and meaning, we bring to them a whole bunch of new music every subsequent Sunday and expect them to connect in authentic worship. As much as music is a universal language, we shouldn't always stretch our imagination and turn our worship service into a marathon class that gives people more headaches in a church service. Trust me when I say, people have headaches playing catch-up during praise and worship defeating the very reason they came to church. Some people catch up while others get frustrated and miss the joy of worship in the service completely.

Sometimes, we are super hungry for the latest hits. Most of our worship teams imagine that the more the merrier and convert a worship service into a concert of presenting one song to the next with such pressure to deliver a set number of songs. Have you ever been in a worship service and through a certain worship song when there was a palpable atmosphere of worship as the church bursts out in prayer in any form: praise, adoration, or thanksgiving; then just when it is getting started, the worship leader pulls you out of tune to perform the next song. They pull you out of tune, start a new and strange song then start blasting you with instructions to pray yet they just spoilt your moment of grace a few moments before. You become obedient and start worshipping only for the worship leader to repeat the same transition. Worship is personal but congregational worship is not. It is collective and synchrony is the way of effective worship. When the worship experience in the church is well thought out, then it becomes a condusive support system in a wholesome way.

School and institutional support systems

Children spend more hours in school than they spend at home in a year whichever way you look at it. In early school days, children only believe what the teacher says over what the parent says. It is for this reason that every parent should find it absolutely important to understand the values of a school and have the conviction as to why you have chosen one school over another. Finally, the parents should find a way to support the school to attain certain benchmarks of care and wellness offered to the children; not just academically but also an investment into the student wellness.

You need to know what exactly your child is getting from the school you take them. If you are a teacher or investor, learn to define what you want to offer the community. I know that not all my readers may have their children in schools exactly like the ones I have been to or where I take my children but I intend to bring values and principles that matter to the surface. You can identify a good school for your child based on the values of the school. You can pick a value that you can practice in your home with your children. Some of the values I have picked in schools, I have enhanced them at home. Sometimes you do not need anything technical to enhance a value. Just learn the core values of a school you have identified and enhance these values at home.

There are more problems attached to joblessness as a country such as training courses that have nothing to do with the economy's main enablers of our country and teach everything that is not an available opportunity within our economy. The other problem is to teach for the sake of today. We taught our children based on the opportunities which surrounded us, opportunities which have become obsolete and redundant over the years. Artificial Intelligence is likely to create about 13 million jobs in the next 30 to 50 years to those children who are currently investing in technology and new generational innovation. The same way email and Whatsapp are our modern-day letters and telegrams, Google meet and zoom are our new boardrooms. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tik Tok are our new space for social connection as well as marketing platforms for today’s business.

In days to come, all these shall be old news moving into the future. It is therefore imperative that our schools should position our children to be the game changers, part of the game changers or ready to roll with the game changers into the future technologies and innovations. Two of my children seem to have been blest to find space in two separate schools that are laser focused into this kind of a future.

Nova Pioneer

Nova Pioneer, where my daughter Shirley goes to school, looks like a pool where you learn how to swim in the deep end of the pool at any age. To start with my view is that their highest premium is in personal development as much as they may not shout about it. The founders are excited by their cutting-edge being innovation and leadership for which I applaud them. Whereas that is the promise of the future heading into the era of artificial intelligence, I have observed strength that they probably haven't paid great attention to illuminating. My experience has been that of personal development. The philosophy of the school is laser-focused to develop all the faculties of the child. It digs to create a new human being besides the one society has attempted to program before. Personal development in all of the mental and emotional capabilities is a priority. It is a place you can leave your children to live and never come back home, and the outcome will be a child you will be proud of.

The community has a clear understanding of birth what they call the three Cs. The first C is Character which is founded around six cultural principles; Joy of learning, Greater together, Servant leadership, always growing, Solutions first, and Higher expectations. The second C is an emphasis to develop distinctive capabilities of every child and no effort goes unexpended to extract the capabilities of the child. Most parents do not know that a child who has low self-esteem cannot perform well in school and life. However, when your unique capability is established, your child will develop self-confidence through their genius in a sport, music, or entertainment skill which will boost their self-esteem that eventually translates to all-around self-belief in other spheres of their lives and relationships. Your child can develop their self-esteem through acting or singing even if they will never do it at a professional level.

A child who doesn't feel loved at home can heal all that toxicity when they excel as footballers and basketball players even if they won't play at a professional level. Just the mere fact that someone will cheer for them, recognize and award them and affirm their strength and uniqueness is what they need to feel affirmed and needed. Affirmation is a human emotional need. The need to contribute something to your community is a human emotional need. To thrive within a community is an emotional need and that is how we fulfill the needs of our children when we allow them to thrive within a school community but most importantly help them find a unique capacity that allows them to contribute to the universal matrix of success when they create a reality around their capabilities. The other C is the connection with each other and the community. These are the tenants that our forefathers inculcated in us when we got initiated through rites of passage. In my community, the group with which you were circumcised was called vakoki.

You connected deeply, carried each other's burdens, helped each other through marriage rights, became each other's support systems, rescued each other, and became completely loyal and vulnerable to each other. My deeper experience is within the Athi Campus which is a day school. If my observation were to become a boarding experience, the happiness index of our children would be phenomenal. With a little more intentionality to build mental and physical resilience as well as emotional intelligence, the child will be complete to thrive and dominate this universe.

No parent on their own can match the personal development culture in this school. They appeal to possibilities and not impossibilities. They appeal to potential and not weaknesses. Their instructions and teaching mode appeal only to what you can do such that even when you can't do it, they still appeal to what you can do in its stead. It is the emphasis on aptitude, self-awareness, values, responsibility, and initiative in a holistic environment. I would gladly run a school with a slogan on personal development and proudly articulate it as my strength and emphasis. The lack of developing personal capabilities is responsible for first-class honors graduates being jobless.

I do not write these things for any other reason but because I know that a teacher will read this and better their understanding of their students. An entrepreneur who invests in education like my brother who runs a school will read this and propagate a value for his children in school. Your children may not have all the classy items to use for technology, but your children can surely learn business with all the basic tools they can find anywhere and make profits. These are the wasted dreams we experienced during our business education and business studies in school and on campus. It was all theory and never gave us a chance to develop a concept, pitch, and make sales with a focus on profit making. We never touched money coming from our ideas and we never put to practice the numerous theories we learned through school and university. No wonder we have first-class honors in business courses but cannot convert any of those skills to make money. This is where a complete human being of character, values, confidence, talent, and innovation is groomed. These are my perspectives.

Discipline is another angle that coincides with my perspectives. Our old disciplinary methods were handed down to us from our forefathers, slave traders, and colonialists who tortured our people to subdue them. It is regrettable that we still think it is the way to program our modern children to be well-behaved and still be trailblazers in their fields. Even our military doesn't train us to be subdued. It teaches soldiers endurance, duty and obligations, respect, self-service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. As a student of psychology, I will tell you that a lot of what we call indiscipline is not necessarily because a child

intentionally chose to do or fail to follow instructions. Most often than not, it is the subconscious mind projecting inconsistent mental patterns which are borrowed from varied experiences and other people around you which could be friends or even parents.

When your still and blissful mind tries to process these patterns to bring order to your mindset, it magnifies and brings to the surface the thinking patterns which are inconsistent with your mindset. Indiscipline, mistakes, and errors as we know it is a Godly gift that we have to bring to the surface those thinking patterns which are influenced, externally acquired, or forced on us but inconsistent with our mindset. Indiscipline and bad behavior are like the fever you get when you have Malaria, diarrhea or vomiting you get when you have food poisoning or the back pain when your spine is not aligned. You do not punish someone for vomiting as much as it is disgusting. It awakens your conscience to offer help.

The parenthesis of this submission is that error, mistakes and indiscipline are indicators of what is wrong with us. It is a shout for help, a scream for attention. Mistakes are not entirely bad because they help us correct what is wrong with us. Suppressing the conflicts through punishment without an audience doesn't always help construct the holistic person.

i. Teaching and enforcing alternative habits and patterns is indeed one way to cure the pure mind and that is what we mostly do. Enforce, remind.

ii. Teaching a new value system puts the mind to order and with that, the mind organizes the entire life of a person.

iii. Correction is that attempt to condition the mind in a certain repetitive pattern that seeks to amend, substitute, improve, or rehabilitate the wrong mindset and habits. Correction may include punishment and chastisement and this aspect calls for awareness, objectivity, capacity, competence, and above all jurisdiction. I appreciate their methods of correction and instilling discipline.

Merishaw School

This is where my son Aden goes to school; a place of big dreams, class, and firm grooming for the boy child. It's the place where mothers are complaining that the boys should be allowed to be babies just a little but the fathers are saying; "thank God! Finally, someone understands what it means to raise a man" we say quietly! The school environment feels like an international university with the state-of-the-art facilities. The buildings, pitches, and all other facilities are high-end. Their school buses are high-end platinum comfort and luxury buses. The subjects taught are technology supported and very practical in execution as the school is very huge on technology. Computers are not a special subject like most schools

but a necessity for every student and every subject. All subjects are taught technologically and the investments in labs and technology are high end like those of a private university. The school is very big on discipline, resilience, and self control.

The expectations of the boys are high-level responsibility and discipline. The chairman of the school is very particular that he is saving the boy child by offering an actual home. He has a story of his life which serves to motivate his dreams as a life of a very humble background. He appreciates a lot of what our local curriculum offers and then polishes some of the concepts to produce a seasoned and toughened warrior that can face a rough global world. Christian Character is loud in the school and that clarity is loud and emphasized. Everyone is encouraged to respect their choice to be a school founded on Christian principles unapologetically. Merishaw is merit! The school is the best environment to groom high-precision careers such as engineers, doctors, pilots, military personnel, co-operate leaders, accountants and finance executives, space scientists, chemists, biologists, and pharmacists just to mention a few.

The school also seems to have a high stake in sports with state-of-the-art facilities which have been training ground for olymic teams in soccer, swimming and basketball. No effort is unexpended to have the boys participate in major tournaments within the country and across the world; the latest being the trip to Barcelona, Spain has gained momentum and another regional tournament to Tanzania. There are more competences in engineering areas such as aviation but I have just singled out a few observations which inspire my confidence in the school as a parent. With more personal development programmes, it is a great breeding ground for men of valor.

Lukenya Boys

My son Andes is happy to be in Lukenya Boys. My understanding of their environment brings something unique to my son and he needed just that. He says that his character moulding and hard work was built in his former school but a chance to express it was more profound with the change to Lukenya school. Lukenya environment is a place to mold leaders of integrity and character. Moral values and personal discipline is up in the sky. There is a lot of power and freedom given to the students and a lot of responsibility asked of you. Children are given guided freedom and encouraged to bring out their personality and elevate their personal confidence and personal grooming. Accountability seems to be the bottom line. Servant leadership is what is taught here. It was interesting when my son told me that he was thinking through his business ideas. He told me that they are allowed to explore their business ideas within the school as longa s it has been discussed with the principal.

The prefects have a place of service, and a duty to the country while serving in those capacities. Serving as a perfect means standing to be counted as one willing and happy to serve humanity. It is a badge of honor like the patriots in uniform. If an ordinary student from Lukenya vied to be president of this country today, I would vote for him, even if I am the only one voting. They mold the best servant leaders, and best humanitarians and would make the best doctors who would do anything to save lives. If my son told me that he wants to be a doctor, diplomat, lawyer, judge, policeman, or politician I would believe that he would make an exceptional one. My son didn't believe when I took him for admission; that form four students were carrying his bags around. They went out of their way to bring his mattress and spread his bed then took his suitcases to safety. If you asked anyone for assistance, someone will genuinely stop, attend to you and make sure you have been assisted. That is a culture built over time and I find this very valuable. I missed such stewardship in my days. Students and teachers talk like brothers and sisters on one hand and on the other hand, distinguishing where the line of authority starts and ends.

As a family tradition, the concept of the family is highly encouraged here. Visiting days are regular every month when the entire family can come and spend time with their child and engage with teachers on academic performance. If you found a husband from Lukenya, you will find a connected, grounded, and integrated man willing to share his life with others without much effort.

The level of personalized effort from teacher to student is admirable. A teacher who doesn't teach your son will tell you about your son in detail, leaving you wondering where exactly they interact for him or her to gain all that detail about your child. There is a clear chain of mentorship; where form one has a form two mentor who has a form three mentor has a form four mentor and the entire set share a cubical with mutual responsibilities to each other. Chain reactions and the ripple effect are their collective bargain. Mutual respect and shared responsibility are something money cannot buy. No wonder their motto creed is Romans 12: 9-10 "Let love be genuine, hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. The school lives this scripture to truth and their vision is implemented to the core. To be highly regarded for academic excellence and active contribution to serving and improving people and the environment. Their philosophy is a tradition of excellence and I can attest to its authenticity when I see my son elevated to serve as a dining hall prefect and also the prefect in charge of the Sunday service. When he becomes the lawyer that he aspires to be, He is likely to make a great judge.
It has come full cycle as I saw my son get out of his way to share the food we brought him with what he calls "his form one". It is a mentorship pyramid among the community of students.

Kakamega High school

I chose to let my Head prefect, (my Number One) Rev. David Njuguna, describe the school on my behalf. Kakamega High School was started during the colonial period. “This environment developed my confidence in leadership. Though small in stature, I acted with authority because I was in an environment where student leaders were highly regarded. There I learned to exercise authority, unlike in any other place before. As prefects, we also learned how to settle disputes and offer leadership. The school had students and staff from diverse backgrounds; Different religions –Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and probably traditional – met in Kakamega High School. This provided an environment for one to learn how to either articulate their faith or defend their faith from attack.

Diversity of ethnicities taught me how to relate to people from different cultural backgrounds. The large student population exposed me to different behaviors and influences. Here I had to learn how to form and stick to my values and convictions. I learned how to choose the people to identify with and associate with. The Christian Union taught me vital lessons about embracing people from different denominations, offered me an opportunity to discover and deploy my gifts, and provided me with a fellowship from which I would draw my encouragement and nourishment. We made huge flaws and learned our lessons. My ministry as a Pastor has been influenced greatly by this exposure in High School. The environment played a critical role in forming some of my convictions and character that I have today. Though I have grown and regret some things I did as a prefect, the high school life contributed a lot toward shaping me." says Reverend David Njuguna Gichuru, Lead pastor of KAG Transformation Assembly Rungiri.

Kenyatta University, Christian Union (KUCU) also shaped my faith trajectory. George Wafula who was the worship Committee chairman and my close friend said “KUCU's leadership structure that encompasses administrative and biblical ministerial aspects is one of its strengths e.g. executive boards comprising Discipleship, Worship, and Missions among others provide a rich balanced foundation in which the member's spiritual growth is rooted. Furthermore, close and deliberate mentorship by FOCUS is a great plus that helps in enhancing sound doctrinal aspects taught in its fellowships as well as leadership training. Finally, the uniqueness of KUCU is heavily drawn from the fact that it has a complex denominational diversity. From the conventional religious groups on campus, any student who doesn't belong to the Catholic community, SDA, or Muslim, by default belongs or joins or at least attends the KUCU fellowship.

As such, you will find a rainbow of doctrinal variety that KUCU has to deal with to a level of balance and harmony while keeping the soundness of the gospel to meet members' needs. Unique, isn't it? The Christian union during our time had more than 2000 members.

WOMEN AS SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Women who lifted their Communities as Support systems

It is natural for an African man to wish to bury the memory and legacy of the African woman. Rarely will you hear about their strength, values, and contributions to our lives as we know them except on the peripheries. Not many women are written as heroes and their solid contribution to our communities as a support system is fast forgotten soon after their demise. I have chosen to write my kind of heroines whose stories would never have been told if I didn't document them because they are largely stories of strong women who contributed to the social and cultural identity I pride tremendously.

KUKHU ZAINA RAMATHAN - Onzinzo

My beautiful grandmother, Nabakolwe, Khalunga mala, (Great cook), Onzinzo, Karakacha (Agricultural genius), Imwo Indayi Yokhumitsa (Quality seed). Kukhu Zaina was an astute farmer and a leading businesswoman in western Kenya. She farmed maize, millet, cotton, coffee, and vegetables. Her markets ranged from Bungoma to Kimilili, to Kakamega and Kisumu. The famous Stendi Mboga between Shikoti and river Sasala along Kakamega Bungoma road was named after her as it is the place she always stored her vegetables which would be transported the following morning by the Mawingo bus. She supplied cotton to the milling machine in Kimilili. There is a song to it that my mother used to sing for me. She did barter trade in Kakamega town where she offered maize, vegetables, and millet in exchange for fish from Kisumu.

Even in her old age, she still traded in vegetables. Whenever I drove past the famous Stendi Mboga, in the morning, she would call out my name a voice that only her used to call me. I would give her a lift to Kakamega town. Despite my insistence that she stays at home so we can take care of her from home, she insisted that she needed this to remain alive. She knows better what that meant. She raised her children with strength. My uncle Yusuf tells me that his mother was a strong woman who used to hold him with one hand, tie my mother on the back and hold the bicycle with the other hand and ride the bicycle to take them to school every morning from home to Kakamega town. That’s the power of a strong Woman, my Zaina, “Onzinzo”. When her political husband was detained together with Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, without trial in 1969, she managed her family with a strong hand fighting off all manner of persecution from state operatives as well as neighbors who terrorized her family.

She stayed put and protected the entirety of her husband's empire. She surveyed and registered all her husband's parcels of land in his name and protected the husband's empire with strength and courage. My grandmother had a sense of community and sang to us songs that pointed to a clear message that all of her children were welcome to the" Ikulu" (Statehouse). She made us understand that we belonged to each other and that we must love one another. This is the support system I am talking about. She would tell us stories every so often and engage us in house chores as well as farm work.

She was extremely generous and cared about all her relatives to the extent that she knew every bit of detail concerning her own family and those of her extended family. All her nephews and nieces lived in her home. My grandmother was protective but also a strict disciplinarian up to the very last minute of her breadth in old age. She intervened in my mother's decisions any time she wasn't amused at some of her decisions. She came home and articulated herself without mincing words. Our bond began in childhood and it lasted the entirety of her lifetime. I used to take her to the hospital and she would insist that the nurses better treat her well because she is the grandmother of a powerful kid, "Leopard". Any time she was not treated well, she always mentioned that she is the grandmother of Man Ingwe and she would soon after receive better treatment.

She cared very much about her beauty and gave me a photo which she requested me to share with all my cousins. She never wanted to be forgotten and look how it's going down! She is now known by more than her great-grandchildren. You now know the queen of beauty, style, class, power, money, and hard work; my beautiful, intelligent, strong, wise, and powerful Onzinzo. She was revered far and wide in her days of glory. Her children were called, amabwechele ka Zaina. I don't have the English equivalent, but Zaina's strong, groomed, and smart kids. If my grandmother lived in our times, she would have been a powerful icon. I have preserved her beauty and shared it in this book with the world to see how beautiful my powerful grandmother was.

My grandmother told me stories about her family and ancestry. She learned how to make chapatis by observing their Maragoli stepmother make them as much as they never tasted the chapatis. She told me that I should let my father give me land willingly and freely without a struggle about it. I implemented that advice even when I was tempted to do otherwise. I honored her memory and I am proud I made her proud. I am giving all this detail because some of your grandmothers may not tell you these truths. I am preserving this wisdom so that my grandmother could become your grandmother when it matters the most. When I wanted to build my house, I asked my mother to help me out with some logistics such as getting the mason and when my grandmother got wind of it, she came to

stop that nonsense. She insisted that Mum should let me and my father handle that matter exclusively between us as father and son. That's exactly what finally happened. I have never told anyone this but my grandmother wanted to come and live with me during her old age, for reasons best known to her. When I explained to her that my uncles may not like the idea and possibly cause a rift between us, she agreed with me and that's how I finally promised her that I will get involved in her daily life including her medication during her old age until her last day. I am proud I fulfilled my promise to her. Any time she saw me drive into her home, she would say she is now healed and can now sleep without pain. She would take a nap and a deep breath and sleep until I woke her up from sleep many minutes later. It was real because you would hear her snoring. We would hug and embrace and laugh and I would see tears of joy in her eyes. I was happy to see her cry tears of joy and not tears of pain.

My grandmother told me to be warned and to also warn my younger brother not to get too close to our stepmother. She said, stepmothers, especially young ones, have a very simple weapon that can destroy the relationship between an adult son and father. They mostly lie to insinuate that the mature son showed romantic interest in her. They may also deliberately seduce the mature son and set them up for the father to believe it is the son who is seducing her. That being an abomination, is sufficient ground for such mature sons of the first family to be banished from their father's home. The relationship will be so damaged that the father will curse his son from the first family and now start putting all his hopes and favors in the sons of the younger wife not knowing that it was a plot from the very beginning. She told me that the famous Nabongo Mumia was never meant to become king. He became king, as a younger son thanks to deceit by his mother who was the younger wife who lied to the older son Luta. Mumia was enthroned as king through deceit and Lutta was disinherited for having committed no fault at all.

That is why it is important to sit with elders and learn certain things. If Lutta had spent some time with the elders, He would have known that what Wamanya, The stepmother was asking him to do was an abomination. By tradition, Luta, his elder brother, was the heir to the throne. However, Wamanya tricked her husband, Shiundu into believing that Luta wanted to overthrow him. She privately told Luta that the father wanted him to wear, an ishimbishila and present himself before the father who wanted to see him. Unknown to the Luta, it was taboo to do so. It meant he wanted to overthrow the father, something she had already been whispering to the aged husband. That's how he was disinherited and banished by the father for absolutely no wrongdoing of his own. Instead, Shiundu disowned Luta and denied him any rights to the throne and royal property.

Mumia, son of Wamanya was appointed successor upon the death of his father. This account by my grandmother Zaina who hails from the Wanga community of Abakolwe is backed up in the written history of the Nabongo dynasty. I am proud to be born of her bloodline and desire to keep her name and legacy alive, the very reason I have written her story as a celebration of her social and cultural contribution to my identity. I have extended her name "Zaina" and Nick-name "Onzinzi", to my daughter, Shirley the identity of this great, intelligent, strong, wise, and powerful woman.

Mwajuma Auma Chana, daughter of Manyasa from the Abakhayo people of Busia was my mother's maternal grandmother. She was married to Hajj. Lukhanda son of Shibwabo from Mumias and together they had a daughter by the name Zaina Necheza (Harvest). I saw my great-grandmother with my eyes. She used to wear rubber shoes, was slender in body size, straight standing, soft-spoken, and loved my mother a great deal. On one occasion, when my mother was pregnant, she took her time to visit and take care of my mother for three months. Her sons complained that their children were unable to feed well despite those children having mothers. Chana was a great support to my mother and her grandchildren until she breathed her last. My last memory of her is the huge cream cup given to my mother as her gift. We call it Lisubila.

Taria Mwimali

There were other great matriarchs of our family worth my mention. My grandfather's, first Wife Taria Mwimali was the mother of all my uncles and aunties; I mean all including those that had mothers. You will hear stories within the community and they will all point to having grown in Mwimali's house. Despite the death of her husband when she was still young, she stayed on to protect her children and her husband's empire. She fought unimaginable battles but soldiered thru them all till she achieved her end which was to preserve an inheritance for her sons. She only birthed one son, Stanley George Mukoko, and many daughters but she fed and cared for all the other sons of her husband including my father during his high school days and my uncle Dickson Musotsi.

A lot of my uncles and other relatives mention that their hope for survival was with this matriarch. She was a business lady too. My interactions with my grandmother, Taria, were one of extreme love and care. She used to show me how to prepare a sim sim. She gave me sim sim in plenty and all the time. Whenever she met me, she always sang and danced for me. "Owala Muhindira x2, Owala muhindira waraka isimu mumalwa. Owala ovolanga uri? It was a song of praise for my grandfather whom I was named after. He sang the very song to me and always danced before me. She used to call me Owala, which was the pet name of my grandfather Ambindi.

The Matriarch of the Munala family was Taria Mwimali the daughter of Luvembe from Mumbetsa, among the Idakho people of the Abamasava clan. Luvembe's nickname was Eshipwondo Shilisiakala and is the same clan as that of legendary musician Jacob Luseno. Taria Mwimali was raised among her maternal uncles where her mother was born. Her mother was Pakati, daughter of Anjeche, son of Oremo, son of Anyembe, son of Ashiruma, and son of Alutsachi of the Abang'onya people. It is the same family as that of legendary musician and politician Peter Kombo. Peter Kombo is the son of Ondiebo, the son of Muyeshi, the son of Kombo, the son of Ashiruma, and the son of Alutsachi.

When I was a little grown, I would get to know these (Aunties) of mine whom I was born and grew up in their absence. The daughters of Munala scattered far and wide but they always came back home to visit and would introduce themselves as Senje the follower of so and so. It is until I grew older that we began having a closer relationship with my aunties. By God's grace I would later share high school with some of my cousins Kizito Werashipala and his elder brother Weramdogo came to Kakamega High School for teaching practice. One, Lawrence Werashipala, a prison warder in Busia is also a pastor and a great friend of mine besides being my cousin. Interestingly we sat in the same Old Boys Association of Shikoti mixed primary school with their father, Mzee Werashipala.

The daughters of the great Maxwell Munala, My Senjes, (my father's sisters) in no particular order are, Elemina Omukoyia, Dinah, Berenedah Opanya, Florida Owano; daughters of Taria Mwimali, Levinora Oyemba daughter of Emily, Akombe daughter of Eclai, the late Shisia and Ondeso daughters of Anyangu and Teresah daughter of Veronica. The other siblings of my father, my Uncles, and aunty are the late Francis Caleb Munala, Mr. Jafeth Makokha Kataka, Mr. James Kataka Wesala, Alice Muhenje Kataka, and the late Josephat Indimuli Kataka.

Kukhu Emily Echiechi Munala

"Mkhana weliuba," as she was popularly known to mean the "daughter of the sun," was a loving and devoted mother. She was the daughter of Eliuba son of Khalwale, whom the bullfighter is named after. The senator of Kakamega, Dr. Bonny Khalwale calls my grandmother Senje, (Paternal aunt), a cousin to my father and my uncle. I remember taking my grandmother to Dr. Khalwale's clinic for treatment in Kakamega town when I was in high school. By the time my dad had now joined high school, my grandmother used to sell food items to students in Ingotse market and will always carry some food for her high school son. Emily loved farming and was always a businesswoman. She was on the farm up until her old age. She once hurt her leg soon after I finished high school. I used to take her to the hospital every day. She always got embarrassed about it fearing that people would think my dad doesn't take good care of her.

The truth is that she was addicted to the farm and there is nothing anyone could do about it. Dad always made sure that my granny had more than enough for her needs. I am the one who took milk to her every morning and the other supplies from my father. After the farm, she would always go to the market in the afternoon. She loved business and I also traded with her. I sold her my maize for a profit after buying it wholesale. The son thought she wasn't making many profits but she worked hard the best way she knew how. The very son would once in a while turned to her when he needed some shot in the arm. How do I know?

She once told me that she was waiting for Dad to pay her so that she can also pay me for goods I had delivered to her. She was a great business mentor. She loved me a great deal and was always proud of me. She always danced for me whenever I came home. She always called me "Mlamwa", meaning Brother-in-law. Ambindi was the brother of her late husband. Whenever I gave her money, she spits on it and wiped her face, and said that I should prosper and bring in more money. While she lived, there is no single function of mine that my grandmother missed. She was motherly in every sense and full of advice. My grandmother's parental style was not that of scolding you when you made a mistake but praising you whenever you did something right.

She was a favorite support system of her brothers who would in turn become my friends up until their demise. Paulo Ingosi was a pastor until his last days and always had parables to pass his message to me. His other brother Shamia knew that he can always get his favorite desires from me and I was a willing giver. Kuka Ingosi loved his nephew, my father. He always visited and coached him on many life issues including politics. He was a loving grandpa. I have memories of how he came to fulfill the traditional procedure where an uncle gifts the sons of his sister cows. It's called Eshikamo. This cow would multiply and every time it births a calf, it is given to the next son. I have a clear memory of being the one who received this cow, we even called the cow Khotsa, meaning Uncle. I also remember the women and children, which included me, visiting this grandpa to say thank you for the gist of the cow. We were in a brown pickup owned by a man called Opwora. We sang and hit the pick-up body for the rhythm of our drum. This community life was great and our culture was a great culture with the strongest support system you will ever find anywhere in the world. Our traditions and culture enhanced our bonds and sense of duty to the community. The last time, Kuka Ingosi came home was to celebrate the memorial service of my grandmother. I made sure that it was a great one and made sure that all the great music superstars whom she had met while she was alive, came to entertain her guests during her memorial service. Emily loved all her children and grandchildren without discrimination of any kind.

My mother, Stella Majuma Atemba Munala

A lot has been said about my mother concerning my upbringing but it is important to bring to life her role within her family, our community, and the larger community including where she was born and where her mother was born. Much as my mother was raised by a Muslim father who was an Imam, she was not afraid to chart her own path in life when she followed her husband into the Christian faith. That example has helped me a great deal to stand to be counted even when I am all by myself. My father temporarily converted to Islam and was Called Musa but it didn't hold for long.

Mum was the pioneer teacher at Eshilakwe primary school. While teaching here, she was a beacon of hope to many people in our community. A teacher was and remains a very inspirational figure. Many young men and women would, soon after school come to our home, specifically after Mum had come back home from school to help with various chores and farm work. The motivation was not to get paid but to have their first meal of the day which would sustain them until the next day at such a time again. In one case, the mother of one of the great political leaders elected in our community today came to visit my mum with gifts of grain, chicken, and varieties of food. She would bring one load every day and tell mum that she wants mum to accompany her for a visit to a far place. On the last day, she would reveal that Mum was the, far away guest to be visited and that she wanted Mum to help her take her son to high school for the very first time. Mum did as only a community leader would do and helped.

Just like his father and mother, their home was home for relatives and strangers alike. A lot of young men and women within our community considered my mother as their mother in need and deed. Some of them were young ministers joining bible school and didn't know how to go about it. They lived in our home. We sometimes hated it because it meant that we had to give our beds to esteemed visitors. Every evening after school, our home became another school because her students including relatives from other schools came to her for coaching, advice, and sometimes for a meal. These are not reported stories but facts which I saw with my eyes.

Mum was a great pride for the entire of the relatives of my father as well as those of her side. I already said how the distance between my mother's birth community place and my birthplace is a river. Whenever my grandmother's relatives from Mumias visited Zaina, the trip would not be complete until they visited my mum. They would spend a few more days at our place than their sister’s place before going back to Mumias. My uncle Charles Okute said to me, that even when his cousin, my father couldn't give him what he requested, he was sure that my mother would give it to him.

Mum raised all my father's step-brothers and sister. She housed and took care of most of my cousins. She knew how to take care of the vulnerable establishing support systems for widows, and orphans as well as those stigmatized by HIV and Aids. This is besides her church ministry and her school vision, a vision stated by her father. Rev. Stella Majuma Munala who was the founding pastor of Ingotse KAG church, also founded a church based care center called Tumaini, meaning hope. This was a learning programme for the less fortunate and orphans. Much later she would find sponsors in the name of Literacy for all, LIFA. LIFA sponsored the medication and feeding programme of the children which later became a school where my mother was appointed as the site coordinator. The sponsors constructed calssrooms and an administration blocks making Tumaini community school the most expansive school in that region. Mum would later leave the Kenya Assemblies of God following family challenges and also left the administration of the school. When the sponsors were leaving the country, they consulted my mum who adviced them to give the school to the Kenyan government who took over the management of the school and posted teachers to the school.

God would be very gracious to restore my mother ten years later as the chairperson to the Board of Management, a position she still occupies as at the writing of this book. She still provides leadership to the community and the school administration to expand the reach and impact of the school to enlighten the children and open up the region for economic growth. She has remained a role model in her entire community as the first woman to be educated within that community. Being the agent through whom God built a school in her community of birth is indeed a great inspiration. The fact that she still sits at the helm of the school management board is also a great inspiration of beginning well and finishing well in the safe hands of God.

God was gracious to honor my mother with a ministry role where she currently fellowships at the Word of faith church Naluchira where she has been appointed as an advisor to the pastoral team. She is allocated to preach once in a month and honored by the church. She also assists the church in evangelism and family ministry. God has been kind to her

The value of African Support systems

When we talk about losing our culture and heritage, it means that we are losing out on the community support system which existed back in the day. If your father couldn't afford to take you to school, someone else looked out for you. When Dr. Eliud Birachi was admitted to join high school, it is my father who paid his entry fee. Everyone was everyone's son. If your father wasn't present in your growing up, your uncles and grandparents were.

If your father died, you had many father figures to look up to and they were in plenty. This finally brings me to Mr. Wilson Savatia.

Larger than Life individuals who were support systems to their community
Larger than life support systems are ordinary individuals who carry their communities, even nations on their shoulders through trying times and usher them into stability or prosperity. Such individuals define a generation with the values they inculcate among their people. Nelson Mandela became the face of those who carried South Africa on their shoulders to transition through difficult moments to birth a new nation. Mwalimu Julius Nyerere carried the aspirations of the Tanzanian people and ushered them into new dispensation post colonialism. Barack Obama carried the aspirations of the whole world to inspire a generation that all barriers can be broken if you aspire to do so for the welfare of the many around the world. Dr. Martin Luther King Jnr carried the people of color through some of their trying moments into a non-violent revolution and civil rights agitation.

These are political figures on the global stage including the likes of Mother Teresa, Mahatma Ghandi, Kwame Nkuruma, Jomo Kenyatta, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Daniel Arap Moi, Mwai Kibaki, Raila Odinga, Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto each bringing to the equation their immense contributions of breaking barriers, representing something great for their people and navigating their communities in a specific ideology. William Ruto for example may seem untested as to whether his domestic policy would hold; much as he will be tested as a new entrant in Pan African politics. He has however within just months taken over the global stage emboldening the African voice and representing the plight of African sovereignty like no one has ever imagined possible. He has broken through all taboos in the geopolitical spectrum questioning the setup of the global financial architecture, challenging the setup at the UN Security Council, pulling off the numbers on Climate change realities and within a record time steering the agenda for an African union that has real political power to represent Africa against other world powers. Africa is now mainstreamed and supported to join the G20 and no one has been more eloquent and convincing than President William Ruto.

I have captured the story of two of my heroic and role model teachers who have contributed immensely to who I am today. They may not have had the nation at their call but they had a student population which they turned around forever and wherever they went. I have also shared the story of two other heroes whose story speaks for itself. My grandparents' may not have been national figures but they carried their communities on their shoulders and contributed meaningfully to the way of life of their communities.

Their story fits well under History as a function of identity formation but I have decided to narrate their story under community support systems because of their immense support to their families and communities to avoid repetition of facts. Since these great people might never have another chance to have their stories told by anyone else I have detailed their story a little more in their honor.

Mr. Oliver Minishi is a prophet through playwriting. He has foretold a lot of events in our country including HIV- and Aids, post-election violence, and many other societal moments in our country through playwriting. As an author of many Physics books, he says he breathes his life into the books to make future physicists and engineers. He offers chances to students who had not yet found meaning in life to find meaning through drama and rugby. He is not only an award-winning play-writer for decades but a patron of rugby who has taken his schools to nationals and the East African region. He is the principal who puts in the time, the discipline and takes chalk to teach physics, unlike most principals who only do administration work. Mr. Minishi has produced the same academic results and award-winning plays as a constant achievement in every school he has been to starting with Bungoma High School, Kakamega high school, Koyonzo Boys, posted to Musingu High School but quickly taken back to Kakamega High School, Nanyuki high school or now his private practice in retirement, Fesbeth academy in Kakamega town. My kid brother Jimson Munala is a product of Mr. Minishi's Fesbeth Academy and proceeded to join my father's dream school, Lenana School.

We can all make an impact in our small ways with consistency and replicate our values and culture through investing in our children. Sometimes it is the school while sometimes it is an individual teacher who makes the most meaningful impact on a child's life. **Mr. Stanley Ingosi Ashitiva** the man is best described by his son, Advocate. Nelson Ashitiva. “Words are yet to be framed that can adequately describe “Ashty”, the leader, father, coach, and friend. He was phenomenal. A good father shows his son where the son wants to go but a great father shows his son where his son ought to go. Most sons would begrudge their fathers and invest a lifetime of offense against them if their fathers were to even dare recommend a career path for them, but not so with me, I happily deferred my career discretion to my dad's wisdom.

After all, pre the internet age, how would an 18-year-old, like I then was, know how to fit into this complex world? My father is the reason why I studied law and why today I am happily serving the world as a legal practitioner. Stanley or “Ashty”, as we would secretly refer to him, knew me more than I knew myself. A good dad must make it his business to know their child. It was easy to respect, love, and honor this man. In the village, he was called "Mwalimu" which means

"teacher". Great teachers convey lessons not merely about academic theories but about life. A great teacher encourages his son to have the temerity to dream of the unthinkable, he inspires him to believe in the impossible, and to pursue his dream destination but also assures him that the journey will be replete with obstacles, predators, snares and turbulence, He shows his son how he can channel his emotions when met with such obstacles, failures or disappointment, and ultimately how he can grow from within to be part of the good in this complex web of life.

He was a soccer lover from an early age, through High School, where he played for his school team, Kisii High School, and later for the University of Nairobi. When he began his teaching career, he volunteered to be the soccer coach for the schools where he was deployed including Friends School Kamusinga, Kakamega High School, and Musingu High School. But the one that endured great results was The Green Commandos football club of Kakamega High School where Coach Chris Makokha was his right-hand man. In his later life, he fell in love with rugby but grew in love with the creative arts. All the schools which he led featured at the national level in the drama festivals and performed exceptionally well. I did not take to the soccer fanatism at all but my son seems to have compensated for this disappointment. What I picked however was a passionate fascination with film and stage works. I once heard that a mentor lifts his mentee to the level where he has been but a coach inspires his apprentice to go farther than he has ever reached.

“Ashty” loved people to a fault. He believed in the potential of his students and certainly of his children. His students and fellow teachers say that it took a lot for him to expel a student from his school. He never caned us but we would die a thousand deaths when we thought that he would ever find out that we failed him in our actions or inaction. He was the kind of coach that you would not want to let down. It was such that you would want to score the goal not for the spectators, not even for yourself but for the coach. That's the man I knew and loved. Once in a while, a humble sage resides among us and bows out of the stage without pomp and flair. I think of him as living in the hearts of those he touched for nothing loved is ever lost and he was loved so much. I see in Anderson the same servant leadership spirit that was in “Ashty”.

Professor George Eshiwani

The late Professor George Eshiwani is a man who needs no introduction in any space within Africa as an astute scholar who stirred Kenyatta University as a beacon of knowledge. He served as the president of chancellors and vice chancellors across Africa for a long time, was the president of African Virtual University, and introduced trimester studies first in Kenya at Kenyatta University.

He was also the Vice-Chancellor, Mt. Kenya University. Professor Eshiwani was critical to the birth culture week which brought to the front a lot of creatives to learn and showcase their talent from Kenyatta University to the entire globe. Culture Week produced creative artists cum politicians such as Walter Mong'are a.k.a Nyambane and the current Member of Parliament for Dagoreti North, John Kiarie. In 2013, Prof. Eshiwani met me at the Pan Afrique Hotel and engaged me in a political conversation which I have treasured to date. I would later meet him near his home before his demise as I dropped the legendary Musician Sukuma bin Ongaro home who is his neighbor. Professor shaped a lot of my ideologies as a student at Kenyatta University as he engaged with students in arguments in different spheres. He was down to earth and elevated the space for creative arts and choir which remains cherished to the core of my heart.

Mr. Wilson Savatia

My best friend, Eric Muleri told me an inspiring story which was confirmed by his cousins. One of their grandfathers is the government to whom tax and honor are due. This is figurative to say he is the patrician who runs the family philosophy. Mr. Wilson Savatia, a retired teacher who was also a tutor at Kaimosi TTC educated his children and also did something spectacular. He took one child from each of his siblings' households and educated them. He then tasked them to not only educate their children but to see to it that the rest of the family goes to school.

In one of his brother's households, he took Eric's father, Mr. Benson Andefwa, a former district education officer in Lugari district. Mr. Savatia, to this date, supervises and follows through to make sure that all the children within the family are going to school. It is a crime for any child within the family to miss school for any reason whatsoever. One child out of school is a crisis for the entire clan and no one will know peace until all the children are in school. The entire set of family members will do anything and everything to make sure all the children are in school. You might just be summoned by the Patriarch, Mr. Wilson Savatia, for a date in his family court to explain the rumor he might have heard about a child that is not in school. When he seeks accountability, he seeks it from everyone and anyone in the family. This is the classical meaning and epitome of a community support system.

My maternal grandfather Ramadhan Akhobwa

My maternal grandfather is another enigmatic man. I only knew my grandfather for a few outstanding things: His sparkling white robes, his humongous house, and his commanding voice and demeanor. I also saw him supervise the making of the main bridge connecting the land of my community Abatamanyini and his community, Abangonya. After he died, I was in high school and I recall my

grandmother saying, people are missing Mzee, Grandpa because he used to maintain the bridge at his cost. It was now in a dilapidated state. As a child, there wasn't much I would make of this old man, but as I grew older, I got to know about him from different dimensions. The details I got of him, astonished me beyond words, I couldn't reconcile with the frail old man I had known through my childhood and youth.

When my grandpa was at his best and the height of his influence, my mum was still a young school-going girl. At the time I used to interact with him, he was already in retirement and his sunset days. At this time, he used to tell my mother a parable, " Inzofu ya Nangabo, khoyilwana nende Eshisia, inyekungwa amakhandia yakhola khushisia, " meaning, "The elephant of Nangabo, is pushing itself on the hill. It's insulted of its wrinkles while going uphill during its weakest moments." Interpreted, it means, he was a great guy with a great history, but since he is in his old age and wrinkled, it's very easy to be insulted because he now looks exhausted and looks nothing like his former glory.

Ramadhan Akhobwa, son of the great Nangabo, (Inzofu ya Nangabo, meaning the Elephant of Nangabo), was three things in one: he was a politician, a great humanitarian entrepreneur, and a successful mason (builder). My grandfather was a prominent mason within Kakamega with most of the buildings he built still standing today. He was the chairman of the Kakamega business community and doubled up as a Muslim leader, an Imam who traveled to Mecca.It is also worth noting that my grandfather, Ramadhan Okhobwa, was an entrepreneur so committed to the development of his people that he traveled to China on the 22nd of November 1964 to lobby for funding that would enable him to set up a soap-making factory.

My lovely uncle Yusuf told me that, he still has in his custody, the original designs and the plans and raw materials for making soap which were gathered by my uneducated grandfather. He had the vision to eradicate poverty within his community and traveled wide to seek funding and international support to actualize this dream. He set out his land for this purpose. Whereas he was not educated, the government employed and assigned him an interpreter. After the funding was secured, the then-labor minister, Dr. Julius Kiano visited his home to inspect the proposed sight for the soap industry.
Unfortunately, that's the last time my grandfather came close to his vision. The government supposedly denied him the necessary approvals because he was not educated and therefore incompetent to run an industry; how his education didn't stop him from securing the funding is your guess. My grandfather was hurt by this development for a very long time and there exists a hypothesis to the extent that two other industries were set up one in Kakamega as a bakery and another

in Nairobi as an oil refinery using the sweat of my grandfather. My grandfather valued education so much. Because he was punished for not being educated, he did everything possible to support his children to go to school. He educated all his children. When my grandfather went to Mukumu Girls together with my mother to check whether she has been selected, he was so happy to find that she was selected for her dream school Mukumu Girls. He paid fees for the whole year right away.

During Independence, He was the serving elected Councillor of Majengo ward in Kakamega including the township. He ensured that there was land allocated for the mosque and the cemetery as well as the Muslim school. Ndani Primary had my mother as its first student, under a tree. It is my grandfather who cleared that bush to make way for the school. He loved education and always longed to establish a school and an industry in his home community. He charged my mother to promise him not to let those dreams go to waste. As God would have it, my mother began her vision for Tumaini community school which would eventually get sponsorship along the way and that dream has been fulfilled. Most children from the Nangabo household now go to that school and a majority of the workers are within the local community which is my cousins and uncles so my mother kept the dream alive as it's a collective dream from generation to the next generation.

My grandfather Ramathan Akhobwa is my role model too and I am aligning with that identity as a social-cultural identity, an identity of service thru religion, Christianity for my case, thru political leadership, and philanthropy and community development. At the attainment of Kenya's independence, my mother tells me of the songs which were sung as he was carried shoulder high within and around Kakamega town as the country marked Independence. Mzee Akhobwa would later join Jaramogi Oginga Odingas' Kenya Peoples Union when Jaramogi formed the party following his fallout with the founding president, Jomo Kenyatta. When Jomo Kenyatta outlawed KPU, my grandfather suffered the very consequences Jaramogi Oginga Odinga suffered. He suffered political isolation and was later detained at the Kamiti maximum prison together with Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. His thighs were as white as a leper, marks he suffered while in detention.

He used to tell me of his pains and the hardships he endured at kamiti maximum prison. He used to say that you can cut right thru his flesh and he will feel no pain. My grandfather, Akhobwa, was among the youngest sons of the legendary leader, Nangabo, who served in Nabongo Mumia's administration. Not much is known about Nangabo, but I have been told a lot of stories by different persons about him as a powerful politician and one of the early Muslims in the region

spanning thru Kakamega around the Lutonyi area where part of his family is settled. His first wife called Muka died, and when his second wife bore a daughter, he named her Muka. She is a powerful matriarch around the area of Eshihongo known for her prowess in farming and business. Her legacy leaves on to date that if you mention her name, you have to mention the full accolades, Muka we Nangabo, meaning Muka daughter of Nangabo. She was a powerful farmer and businesswoman.

Nangabo married his second, Omusikoyo, we Lukoye, who came from Imanga, Khusamanzi in Mumias and was a lone daughter of Lukoye. She had a stepbrother called Mwanza. She got married to my great grandfather Nangabo who is said, would travel wide and far to execute the delegated assignments by the king, Nabongo Shiundu. Some of the territories he traveled to preside over administrative disputes were in Bungoma and as far as Naivasha, which my great-grandmother used to call Njoro Narok. They had many children but the ones who are well known to me are his first son Hassan Were, Shikanda, Omunyokho, Ndubi, afula, anyone, yeswa, indumuli, okaba and Akhobwa my grandfather. Hassan Were raised my grandfather, Akhobwa. Hassan Were, son of Nangabo and their father are largely responsible for the settling of the Islamic and Nubian community within Kakamega, and a lot of the land around Lutonyi was largely Nangabo land with his first family and the larger Abangonya community, where I am uncled. One of his cousins is the powerful chief, Omutsembi from the same family of Abangonya people.

Nangabo was a leader with a bloodline of the leadership of their community called the Abanyanza people. They are presently called Abang'onya but it was a nickname acquired over time. Nangabo was the lone son of Chebeywa who died young. His mother would also die soon after making him a total orphan as an infant baby. Nangabo's aunty took him with her to where she was married in Mumias. Nangabo grew to become a strong man that got first recruited as a warrior in the Mumia administration. He would later ascend the ranks to become a trusted administrator with military assignments against the territories of Bungoma on one wing, Nandi along the boundaries with Kabras and Njoro, and Narok. He always won his battles and settled disputes with neighboring communities. His greatest strength was the ability to make diplomatic settlements with adversaries and won all his conquests and fights without fail.

The reason that made him fall out with the Dynasty of Mumia is the very reason Nabongo Muwanga and Mwima fell out with each other. The elders know the story but I do not see the reason why I should discuss it now. Nangabo retired from his role and was asked to choose a place he is most comfortable settling

which he did and retired from the Mumia administration. Nangabo began grooming his heir apparent, his first son, Hassan Were to be appointed as paramount chief as that was the direction of the colonial government Unfortunately, Hassan Were Died mysteriously! When Nangabo set out from his home in Emakhumbi at 4 am to go and bury his son who was to be buried immediately according to Muslim traditions, he broke his leg while crossing river Lwatingu. Word was sent to come to carry him back home. He didn't witness the burial of his son Hassan Were.

He later developed Hernia and died two years later. Nangabo was from a family of rulers among the Abanyanza people. He was buried in Shikoti where they buried their rulers. In that, burial place called, Eshiembekho, are buried only three rulers, Nangabo, His father Chebeywa, and his cousin Mbukuli. These are my uncles as I am Ambindi, Son of Majuma, daughter of Akhobwa, son of Nangabo, son of Chebeywa, son of Mulima son of Alutsachi.

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GRAND PARENTS & GREAT GRAND MOTHER

MATERNAL UNCLES

1. Mwanza was the half brother to my great grandmother Omusikoyo, daughter of Lukoye.
2. Zaina, Onzinzo and her cubs, (called Amabwechele ka Zaina) starting with my mother, uncle Yusuf, Uncle Isa, aunty Ruki and aunty Mariam
3. My grandfather, Ramathan Akhobwa; the Elephant of Nangabo
4. The Matriach herself , Omusikoyo wa Lukoye
5. The religious Ramadhan Akhobwa in the middle and his brothers, Ndubi and Omunyokho, all sons of Nangabo.
6. Refer to 5
7. My grandmother Zaina as a young girl
8. My grandfather as a young man in 1964 in China where he had gone for a successful mission to seek funding for a community Soap making factory
9. Refer to 8
10. Zaina during my parents wedding

In the next photo

1. My uncle Isaa Mulama
2. My uncle Yusuf Ramadhan Nangabo
3. My uncle Ishmael Ramadhan

The other photos are my mother and his brothers then our uncles and my brothers

The next photo is the extended family of my mother; are the children of Ramathan's first wife Ang'ai. Most notable and personally known to me are my uncle Ishmael in photo number 1 and my aunty Chausiku who mentored my mother. Her children used to live with us. She is standing with a walking stick on the extreme and sitting with my mother in photo number 5.

The one in a brown hat and orange dress is my grandmother Zaina
Photo number 7 is a collection of all the grandchildren of Mzee Hajj Ramadhan and the children of his third wife , Kukhu Namwasi, some of whom are our contemporaries. Just to name a few are uncle Salim, Sulleiman, Kamadi, Juma, aunty Mwajuma and the children of our uncles and aunties.

The next photo shows them with my grandmother when they were much younger.

My Mothers extended Family
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My paternal grandfather Maxwell Munala

The story of my grandfather is cumulated by my dad, the late Rev. Johnson Anyoba, and Mr. Johns Wambetsa who grazed his animals and plowed his farm. He was a major businessman who kept large herds of cattle and huge tracks of land full of millet maize, sorghum, and millet. He was a great butcher man with six butcheries in all the 6 major markets around our community but I only know factually about 5 locations with evidence of the specific shop which still exists today; namely in Shikoti, Ematoyi, Ingotse Mission, Ingotse market, and Elukume. He had huge tracks of land and was among the wealthiest men of his time.

Mzee Anyoba's record of my grandfather included his love for entertainment. My grandfather used to dance the Maranda dance, which was a dance with sisal skirts, and what was famously known as "Ingoma Ya mabwi." The dance was a dance around drums with spears and jingles on the legs and a spear in your arms. It is in this dance that wrestling and boxing rivalries were settled and the tougher wrestler was known. The entourage danced around the drums as they were played rhythmically then a fight would be authorized. Maxwell was also very aggressive and a fighter with hard left-handed tackles which earned him the name Box Moja, meaning one hook. The musical background is rooted here but not until it had to go thru my father. My father also told me of the story of my grandfather as a footballer who was simply called center forward which makes him a typical striker at number nine.

Munala the politician and humanitarian

Details have been scanty about his political life because he died in 1948, before the height of the struggle for independence. Many people can only put into context the Independence politics and the after-independence. The period before is beyond the capacity of many people to contextualize especially the people of his time and age. The mention of his name among people born in the 30s, 40s, and 50s is very clear that you are referring to a larger-than-life politician. My father alludes to him as a nominated politician specifically covering the northern frontier something most people are not able to contextualize. My facts are very clear, coherent, and irrefutable with my grandfather being a member of the Native Local Authority which was established in the early 1920s and was disbanded in 1952 about 4 years after his death and ten years before independence. I would understand why there is a lack of congruence between independence and post-independence politics. The Native Local Authority was the equivalent of local authorities and was composed of rich businessmen and leaders of communities which helped the colonial government to mobilize goodwill among the locals towards initiatives such as education, health, and infrastructure. The description of my grandfather's influence during his time easily fits this type of person.

My grandfather and our clan in general were expansionists conquering our our current expansive lands. My grandfather had huge tracks of land. He then moved to Kitale/ Eldoret where he began by working in a bakery. He later got the favor of the managers, a white settler called Maxwell who lived in Kitale, a white from South Africa. Our people called them Abasotsi. My uncle is named Omusotsi signifying the arrival of South African white settlers. My grandfather managed his farm where he got the skills he got of being a rancher and large-scale farmer back at home in Ingotse, Kakamega. The journey from Eldoret to Kakamega used to be on foot. They would spend the night in a bush, tying their chicken in one place and sleeping a few miles away so if the chicken made noise, they would know people are passing or danger was looming.

Due to his many herds of cattle and large farms of millet and maize, my grandfather became rich and attracted people from far and wide as his workers. He had learned how to manage a large workforce from the bakery in Eldoret, to Maxwell's farm and now to his farm in Ingotse. Some people organized self-help groups and worked for him for no pay because my grandfather sustained their entire families around the year. Whenever a cow could get sick or broke its leg, some musician would project his voice calling in people to come to participate in what was called **"Kwakhobolo**" where people used to barter trade maize and millet with meat from him. Some would take the meat and pay at a later date with their grains.

Many preferred to work for my grandfather because they would take home meat and grains. Working for my grandfather entitled one to be treated like a member of that family. No one walked into Munala's home even for a mere greeting and walked out empty-handed. Many other wealthy men were harsh and with punitive remunerations, deducting workers' wages to account for the food they ate. However, my grandfather would punish his five wives if anyone walked out empty-handed or worked and wasn't properly fed and given enough for their children and dogs. Munala had community ceremonies once every year where all the people I have spoken to do not recall these ceremonies taking place anywhere else as much as it's a known practice in our Luhya community. These ceremonies happened only at my grandfather's home to their recollection.

Amalwa kobuchenjeli/Beer festival

This was a beer-drinking festival among elders only. They would come to my grandfather's home to drink where the beer was taken from the same pot and it was announced to all the elders to attend this special event. Those who drank from the same pot were brothers and wished each other well in all things and this drink was traditionally binding. The scope of elders, the caliber of elders, and

their number were huge and everyone looked forward to this festival at my grandfather's home.

Those who drank from the same pot did not wish each other ill, did not harm each other and didn't do anything to harm the other. If you did, there would be repercussions against you from the creator. Some people traveled far and wide looking for this famous powerful man from as far as Uganda, from among the Abalupi and Abalaalu people of Uganda. My grandfather gave them land to settle with their families as they worked for him. Workers were coming as far as Tanzania among the Nyamwezi peoples of Tanzania specifically looking for the home of the powerful Maxwell Munala. There are many Maragoli persons settled in our community and a majority of them found their way there as workers to my grandfather. And they were settled by him. The Nyamwezi family still lives in our community to date and their patriarch died when I was in high school around the Shikoti area.

It is at the height of his wealth and power as a rich man of influence, that my grandfather was appointed by the white government as a member of the Native Local Authority, a position which most people are not able to make sense of as they only understand the politics of independence and not before independence. This fact underscores the uniqueness of the political role my grandfather played in our community. If my grandfather had lived longer, our community would never have been the same. Munala was the people's choice because after working you were all fed, paid, and still given food to take home with strict instructions that even the dogs, the cats, and the chicken need to be fed well.

My grandfather wore both traditional dress codes and interestingly also adorned himself with what South African farm masters dressed. They were called Abasotsi meaning South Africans. The dress had very many pockets all over the garment and that signified my grandfather’s dual looks. If he was in business mode, he dressed like the boss man whereas while attending to his traditional functions, he was authentic African complete with a skin and a belt around his waist. He had a spear and a shield, a walking stick and traditional stool. John had a closer relationship with my grandfather because his mother Priscah Atulo and my great-grandmother "Omukoyia" came from the same community of the Abakobero clan. They had a self-help group comprising those who were uncled in Ebukobero. It was vibrant ever since the days of my grandfather Munala, and his elder brother Ambindi son of Onyako, whom I am named presided over that organization until his demise in 1979.I was born in 1980 and named Ambindi, after him. Ambindi was a legal brainer and the best you could find at the time in our community; It is no wonder a lot of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren ended up being lawyers, the late Advocate Seth Osundwa Andanje, His grandson and his great-granddaughter Dr. Linda Musumba, daughter to my first cousin the

late senior nurse at Kenyatta National Hospital, Mrs. Lois Musumba ended up in the legal profession.

Ambindi as an elder was appointed by the colonial government to advise the appeals tribunal on legal matters such as customary laws and land laws. My people say Ambindi was an appellate judge and the man whose final word was law in the appeals tribunal. My name is Ambindi and I proudly wear that badge as Ambindi, son of Murunga, son of Munala, son of Onyako, son of Alubu, son of Abukaya, son of Shimukutu, son of Sore, son of Kwirakubi, son of Chilishi, son of Wetsochi, son of Wambo. The list goes on upto Wesamba. The oldest and most informed person among my Abatamanyini community can trace our roots up to our ancestor called Bukachi, 14 generations from me, who rested in Alego, a palce called Kaogaki. He had one son called Wetsochi. When most people refer to Bukachi, they ignorantly talk about Bukachi the grandson. About 14 generations from mine.

This lineage goes much further by 8 generations to my knowledge. The much talked about Bukachi (Grandson) had three brothers called Mutobera and Wesamba; all sons of Wamukhula, son of Wetsochi, Son of Bukachi. The father of Bukachi senior was called Khakono, whose father was called Walukhoba, whose father was called Tsingano, whose father was called Shiusi, whose father was called Namukhula. It is a funny joke that we call our women Namukhula. This was the name of a man, a partrich. This explains something but for another day. The men are called Abamukoyia. Putting this into perspective, Namukhula whom I have just explained was also a grandson. It was a set of two grandsons both called Namukhula, one born to a father called Amukoa (Who were called Abamukoa, and others call it abamukoyia); and another Namukhula born to Amukoa's brother called Omumarama (Birthing the Abamarama people).

Most of my elders trace our ancestry to Egypt , but our people came from Namibia, then settled in Egypt and later travelled along the river Nile following the Egyptian invasion by the Roman as well as Arab disruption after the fall of the last monarch of Egypt; Cleopatra, daughter of Ptolemy XII. They travelled to the current Democratic republic of Congo, later Uganda which by default became Kenya following the annexture by the British of what is called the Uganda Plan; a territory that covered the current Nyanza and Western provinces and parts of Rift Valley.Long live the memory of Maxwell Munala, (EshiboelaMbako, EshikhayaNzofu, Unyamashenji Safi, Eshisakasaka shakhaya abakukuni okhuhayakwo ameno son of Mr. Onyako and Mrs. Omukoyia; who was daughter of Abakobero people).

Here is a summary of the story of my father, Hon. Peter Boswell Murunga Munala.

- The patron of the Abatamanyini community and self-help group
- Chairman Ingotse Church of God development Committee
- Chairman Butsotso Development Forum
- Former Chairman Kakamega Town planning
- Former Manager cum Accountant kakamega Teachers Coperative Society
- Former Councillor Kakamega Municipality
- President of the Mollases Football Club
- Former Chairman ODM, Larger Lurambi Constituency 2007.
- Former Kanu Organizing Secretary

THE STORY OF MY FATHER

Why do we need a support system?

All in all, we all need to have a support system not just for the bad times but to make our good times better. We turn to our social support system in times of need, or to enhance the quality of our lives and so they have to be in place because we need them to enhance the quality of our lives. However, each one of us needs a kind of safety net. Now is the time to nurture the relationships you already have and to start making more friends. Don't wait! You will enjoy the benefits now and in the future. It is also time to assess whether the network of friends that you have been serving your varied purpose lanes or taking virtue away from you. Above all, be the friend you want to have and uphold the values you learn from the good friends to receive from your friends. If you want love, offer them, love, if it's attention, offer attention, if it's authenticity, be authentic and if you want availability, be available because a friend is a gift that you gift yourself. If you need ideas on how to make these support systems work for you, here are some ideas. Identify a cause that is important to you and get involved; commit some of your time to a community organization or a local place of faith.

Volunteering can give you the gratification of acting to further your values and will bring you into contact with others who share your interests and ideals. Take up a sport or join a gym because it is good for your physical and psychological health and it may also provide the opportunity to build up new friendships. Start a book club and invite some people to join. Discussing interesting ideas and sharing thoughts and observations is a wonderful way to make new friends. Meet your neighbors and co-workers. Try to get to know some of the acquaintances you see regularly. Join professional organizations. Such noble decisions will extend your social network to encompass others in your field. Sometimes friends in the same profession can understand the stresses you face better than anyone. Use online resources. Social networking sites can help you stay connected with friends and family. Several sites can provide specialized support if you are going through stressful times or changing circumstances, such as becoming a new parent, facing a life-threatening illness, or some other challenge. There is a need to look out for reputable sites and be wise about planning to meet people in person, especially, those that are not your acquaintance.

Every individual should have within their support system, mentors who influence them directly or indirectly in their day-to-day decision-making processes. These mentors largely shape the thinking paradigm of their mentees and by way of example, teach or give the example of specific attributes and characteristics to their mentees which progressively become embedded as part of the personality of the mentee. From this concept, it is clear that most people thrive in their lives when they are in consonant with the rhythm of this small set of people who have their best interests at heart. It is not always about what they give but that general

peace, tranquility, and assurance which allows you to be vulnerable to them and allow them a chance to give you feedback as well as a shoulder to lean on when duty calls. It is all about that affirmation and security or even a platform to expose your ignorance so that they can better your set of knowledge. Mentors train and equip you with higher ideals and competencies which catapult you into a superior version of yourself than you would be without their input. It is important to have a support system among your peers but also pay attention to mentors.

The diversity of your support system also determines the diversity of the influence you receive. Take the instance where your support system has individuals who are competent and experienced in financial management. They are more likely to influence the prudent utilization of your financial resources and will support and persuade you towards trimming your excesses on financial management. If you have on your support system people who are sound in character or are solid in their spiritual formation, they will help you grow in discipleship and help you gain a balanced ministry exposure and possibly gain the much-needed ministry etiquette.
If your mentors are big on family values, yours will get better from where you are through their influence and their example. If your mentors are big on investments, chances are high that you will learn a thing or two which will drive you to become a better investor or even interested in making long-term investments. Whenever a person's support disengages with their support system, or their support system disengages with them, they are most likely to show gaps in their personal lives. I have already argued that social support systems are meant to improve the quality of your life or cushion you when the time of need arises to manage the stress and anxiety that comes with distress through emotional or practical support.

Disagreements with parents, siblings, friends, or mentors mean that you are likely to miss out on the value they add to your daily life and therefore certain gaps will show in your life without your knowledge. I will give a few examples. Fathers affirm and inspire confidence; they are also granted the power to bless because they are the bearers of the seed of trans-generation procreation. When you fall out with your father, which was my case, you miss out on a lot of things even if your father doesn't pronounce a curse on you. You miss out on affirmations, and you miss out on the chance to be blessed when you need to be. There is nothing more fulfilling than that call that asks: how have you been? And how are you? Is everything okay? When a father or mother genuinely is interested in your well-being and prays for you to succeed.

I know some parents would worry you when they call because their phone calls are either complaining about you or they are blaming you for something you

didn't do right or just complaining about their situations that have nothing to do with you. My father for example doesn't know how to hold it when he is not happy with you or even himself, so he will call and then criticize you where he needs to, correct you where he feels he needs to, and blame you where you deserve the blame then will complain about his concerns and worries. The direction of the call will be dependent on whether you can listen to him and respond appropriately. The moment you acknowledge your wrongs, apologize and recognize his authority, he opens a new book full of goodies. He will tell you all his nice times, all his jokes, all his dreams, and aspirations, he will tell you his wishes for you and his desires for you and will affirm you and build a whole heaven and earth with you. You will laugh and laugh for two hours none stop on call and my father loves to listen to good English language, something I am abundantly blessed with. He is inspired by great ideas and big plans. He comes alive when you mention good money and progress.

The bank account and Mpesa are his good friends but if you want to get him knocked off his feet, bring in a nice shirt, suit, cologne, and some nice shoes. Nothing beats this feeling if you know what I mean. Falling out with your parent means all these affirmations are thrown out of the window and believe me, you need them. You need your father or mother in your corner whether you are standing or falling. I will give another example of falling out with your Pastor. If you have a mentor who keeps your sermons in check, equips you with unsolicited knowledge, and affirms you every time, encouraging you to hold on or inspiring you to get better, you want to keep these standards intact and not fall out with such systems. If you are a member of a church and you fall out with the family for any reason at all, you can imagine how much you will be missing out. The rule of thumb would be that if you have functioned within a structure of a support system, then improve the relationships or make sure you have equally found a befitting replacement for any aspect of your support system which has since been compromised. As much as possible, restore your relationships as Apostle Paul tells us to make peace with all men for as long as it is dependent on us.

Every human being needs to feel they contribute to something and that they mean something. The church is the perfect place to serve, whether you are serving in the ladies' ministry, men's ministry, youth ministry, children's ministry, ushering, mercy ministry, leadership, worship team, discipleship, protocol, or whichever other ministry in which you find meaning and get to contribute something valuable to your church. The church is the only place you have space to find meaning and service without having extreme qualifications as you can always find something to do no matter your qualifications and competencies. If you can't sing, you can pray. It is the beauty of standing with one another when

we are bereaved and have lost a loved one. Church is the support system to turn to.

Meeting a few friends on a Sunday morning who will genuinely ask to know how you are doing and probably secure a mid-week date is what makes life get sweet. It is a compliment from a friend whether male or female about your nice Sunday best dress or hair. It is that special welcome to a new member with a card and a cup of tea or juice after service. It is that hug from your friend whom you haven't met in a long time and whom you met in this church. It is the hearty conversations after a church service. Church leadership that understands these have created a few minutes between 1st and 2nd service for instance. When I preached in the United States, I realized that most social settings are in church and that after service, people gather around for a meal or snacks to reinvigorate and catch up with each other right in church halls. I love that. I hope you understand better the purpose it serves.

Church is a multifaceted support system. Affirmation is the rate-limiting step to your emotional balance. You can face any adversity for as long as someone is affirming your abilities. You can beat any odds and surpass your limitations if you have someone affirming you at home or in church or at work. Affirmation and motivation both respond to the reward system. The church has systems to meet the needs of the poor and those who are with special attention needs such as widows and widowers, orphans, single parents, and other special groups such as those whom I would call single by circumstance. These are support groups cumulatively forming the church support system and you wouldn't find these for yourself outside of the church environment. I do not know how much the church could do for those needing support for rehabilitation with addictions such as alcoholism and drug addiction, including prostitution and other negative vices.

My general observation is that these are areas in which the church has turned a blind eye, and condemned these groups to eternal judgment without much chance to rise again. I do not have solutions and I'm not pointing fingers. I am opening up the conversation with the hope that the support systems could consider the possibility of actively supporting these groups to rise again.

Husband and wife

The reason a man or woman wants to have a companion is not because of sex, but because of the need for a support system to hold you when you fall and also because of the need for someone to affirm you. If you are telling that woman how good she is, how beautiful she is, and how grateful you are for the things she can do for you or with you, you are withholding love and denying her emotional needs, if not rights. We all need attention to feel important and valued

and it's the reason in Genesis chapter 3: 8, God used to come and visit Adam very often. We are attention seekers and should give that to each other. It is the reason your wife will appreciate the attention from a workmate, church-mate, or boss if you do not give her attention at home. It is also the reason your husband will seek the attention of another woman or anyone in that capacity as a confidant if you stop giving him the attention.

When anyone distances from support systems, their personal lives begin to show gaps, a disengagement or disagreement emanating from any aspect of your relationship means that you are missing out on the value they add to your life in terms of polishing your person and also the affirmation that comes with their involvement in your life.

Most people in abusive relationships deteriorate their career and personal lives until they either leave the particular relationship or can effectively counter the abuse with professional help or compensate with an alternative support system. Most people, who have progressive plans but have not been able to execute them, end up thriving the moment they are surrounded by people who believe in them and support them in whatever they are doing. It is not always approving which is supporting. Critiquing is also a mode of support.

Toxic and defective support systems

Parents have a close grip on their children as they grow up, but only a few parents change their parenting styles when children grow much older. When parents do not let go, of their adult children and continue desiring to control them and have their own parental opinions carry the day, it could cause friction. Some parents wouldn't take this kindly and might feel offended when their adult children no longer consult them regularly or no longer rely on their opinions. Whereas the fear to lose power is the fear of the aging population, how they react could be toxic if they cause a crisis as a result of their new-found thoughts of being sidelined.

Some parents have the habit of hipping upon you a lot of guilt and shame reminding you that they have sacrificed for you and done so much for you and that you should listen to what they have to say and only what they have to say. Some parents do not know their boundaries and continue to meddle in the private affairs of their adult children both female and male causing more friction in their marriages. Grandparents should also be wise about how they contradict the parenting styles of their children toward their grandchildren.

They may disagree with a parenting style but must not make it difficult for the parents to continue playing their roles as parents by criticizing their children before their grandchildren or inciting the grandchildren on any subject against their parents.

Overly controlling spouses

A spouse who doesn't appreciate your individuality and won't allow you to express your ideas or express your preferences is toxic. A spouse who falls in love with you, only to start making it a priority to change everything that defines or describes you is being toxic. We should allow our individuality to thrive. A spouse who wants to budget for all your money but will never be open to you about their finances is toxic. A spouse whose ideas and wishes are the law is toxic.

A spouse who makes the home unbearable, unfriendly and withdraws emotionally from you, sulking because he or she didn't have her way on a matter is toxic; especially if he or she wants to have their say and way both on matters which concern their ideas as well as your ideas. It is a home for both of you to thrive and whether you are a man or woman, there ought to be space for your partner to bring on board their strengths and uniqueness. It is worse if you want to guard your space against interference but then still want to control the other person's space.

Friends who are overly involved without boundaries

Some friends criticize every decision and every fashion choice you make without caring how you feel. They will criticize your boyfriend or husband and tell you what you must do. Not only do they impose their idea of what you must do but they follow through to make sure that you have done the necessary adjustments. Some of these so-called friends, would change their wardrobes, change their living room and buy new beddings more often, and change cars, whether they bought them using their money or with the support of their spouses. This is a beautiful thing if you have the means to do so but the problem is when they dictate that you keep to their lane of life, without being considerate. If your lady friend had a new car bought by her husband, it is not right that they should cause you to push your husband to do the same in record time. As much as you might succumb to peer pressure and push your husband to buy this precious item, let it be your pressure. It's a lesser ill than if the pressure was coming from your friends.

Overly controlling pastors

Some pastors do not realize their boundaries and sometimes impose their will on people who are outside their jurisdiction. The people who come to your church do so willingly and after learning your core values and culture, submit themselves by signing up for membership.

It is only fair that a pastor moderates the extension of their authority strictly to people who have voluntarily signed up to their creed. Some pastors do matchmaking. They will propose their ideal man or ideal woman for you and push you to get exactly what they feel is a proper match for you. They will stand in the door to criticize or even block every single suitor you bring up for proposal if they have their idea of whom you should marry.

Religious environments that distort the family order

Religion being a form of identity makes one to live and practice what they are taught and abides by the culture of the religious grouping. In the event that the teachings, beliefs and culture of the religious sect doesn't not help to heal and restore the insecure attachment of an individual, most often than not it creates a new dysfunctional worldview in the life of an individual. Whereas the individual might appear on the surface of it as peaceful and solidly attached to their religion, the teachings and practice of that religion might alleniate the individual from his or her family and friends. I have known religious groups which have incited children against their parents for standing in the way of their children when they wanted to serve the lord at the expence of their studies or house chores. I have known religious groups which incite children to abandon their school learning so that they can learn the word of God only. Some children do not help their parents with work but instead serve the church course and work in the pastors farms and home as their way of obedience to God. Such religious culture is surely more alleniating and causes insecure attachment.

I have known religious groups which consider everyone who is not a member of their sect as a sinner and not worthy to assotiate with. Their dress cord is well known and their associations are ususally just among themselves. I have had an insider confession that if your spouse doesn't subscribe to this religion then you are considered as unmarried and that you are free to abandon your spouse and get married afresh to a spouse within the sect.

I have had relatives who have joined specific religious groupings and as a result cannot greet anyone else with their hand if the other person is not a member of their religious sect. In these religious groupings, there is a tendency to incite their members against members of their families as being the enemy of their members. If they are not branded as witches, then they are branded not believing in God correctly and this religious group is the only one that gets it right and in every manner and way. Some of these religious groups have the tendency to support their members in abusing their relationships with parents, siblings or spouses with bad conduct and separatist tendencies.

Rather than teach their members on how they could correct their situations and heal their family relationships and marriages, they assist their members to pray and manipulate the will of their spouses and family members to become blind to their bad conduct and continue adoring them with all the atrocities intact. If this is not witchcraft at its best, I do not know what is. Such individuals' perspectives may just becme ridiculous where they perceive their family members as, in fact, sinning if they get angry when they are offended by them. The individuals hope that God can turn the heart of every man like water and just manipulate the family members rather than acknowledging their mistakes, work on their challenges, forgive one another and transform objectively.

Anyone who complains about their misconduct or extreme tendencies exposing their misconduct or bad behavior becomes an enemy who needs to be tamed through prayer to be defeated in their witchhunt and attempt to bring shame unto them. A rallying call to prayer supported by orher church members is made so that such a person becomes completely blind to the distorshions of the family order and continues adoring their spouse in total silence despite their misgivings while avoiding to solve any of the misunderstandings completely and intentionally.

Any desire by the family members to have the individual perceive their life in a certain way that builds the home, is treated like a pagan who is in fact an agent of the devil and an enemy to the will of God in the life of the individual who should be tamed and disempowered through the power of intercession to have the will of the individual prevail because she perceives her will as the one and only will of God supported by her spiritual partners.

If the individual belongs to another church, then the primary separatist spiritual leader speaks her will into that church concerning leaders and conduct of church affairs where the individual also participates to align to the will of the sole and all perfect spiritual leader. I have known of an individual who conducted herself with total loyalty and obligation to a spiritual leader while attempting to impose that influence to a different church that was not aligned to that other spiritual leader to the extent of changing the theme and culture of the church when the individual was in a position of influence.I have personally been to a church where I was given instructions on how to pray and when I was still figuring out how that model of prayer was to apply to me, I did not respond quickly like my native friend who took me there in the first place.
A more aggressive prayer was conducted to cast out the demons which were holding my mouth from confessing.

In this church I had the rare priviledge of hearing everything scandlous about all the servants of God whom I knew because the demons cast out of individuals within that church had bad mouthed the pastors calling them by name.
The pastor told me that a lot of pastors come to her for prayers and begin making jokes such as saying and I quote, Lord we worship you. You are worthy to be praised. She said that the only form of prayer is repentance of sin. Whereas I have no problem with repentance or even the exaggeration of repentance, I have a problem with underrating the full context of the lord's prayer which has many other themes such as worship, adoration, thanksgiving, self control, provision etc.

If the pastor for example teaches and mentors a man or woman in a way that distorts the family order and obligations, then the teachings will trigger the old resting traumas of failed family attachments. If the pastor continuously makes you believe that you are in everyway right and doing everything right and that your husband is unfortunately doing everything wrong, this will further trigger your old traumas and make you perceive your husband as a threat to your life.
You will therefore fail to securely attach to your husband but live with your husband in suspicion rather than in trust. You will not perceive your husband as the head of your family but a looser who needs redemption by you with the help of your perfect pastor. Woe unto you if that pastor answers to no husband, or doesn't uphold the family order or has a traumatic background with family.

If your pastor is the type that sees mistakes in everybody else that you relate with but has never rebuked you as a person over anything, then this mentorship is not balanced. If the prophetic ministry always has a bad report to give about your husband and his family and to the best of your memory has never told you anything that you could change in your character, conduct, behavior or attitude; that pastor or prophet has successfully planted an insecure attachment in your marriage making it impossible to enjoy your married life.

Marriage is another factor of identity and a man or woman who is insecurely attached to her spouse hardly embraces their marriage as an identity further damaging their chances of havinga quality life. The strain of their marriage becomes a source of distress in their spiritual life. It becomes a source of self doubt and causes conflict within the Christian identity as one begins to consider options such as separation, divorce and remarriage.

8

PARENTING BY FAMILY AND SOCIETY

Family is the best place for meeting basic human emotional needs like peace, happiness, fulfillment, acceptance, admiration, and contribution. The first and primary caregiver to a child, as they begin to define life, is the parent. It is therefore without a doubt that parenting is the greatest gift and at the same time biggest responsibility in life. Family is among the types of support systems but I want to first elevate the pedestal of parenting within the family before we look into the dynamics of the family concept being one version of support systems. Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them. The best kind of parent you can be is, to lead by example. A wise man once said that it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men. As parents, we are supposed to train our children by teaching them good values. The scripture puts it right, "*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it*" (Prov.22:6).

This is wisdom from God Himself, that we should train our children. It does not say we live with our children; it says we train them. Some parents just live with their children, they don't train them. My advice is: from today try not to just live with your children. Train them too. I attempt to have bonding and learning moments with my two sons and one daughter. I try to intentionally pay close attention to them. Before I offer more reflections on the family front, I would like to bring to your attention the studied parenting styles. Once you know which one applies to you, you will know how best to adjust, improve, correct, or enhance yourself.

Parenting styles

Parenting styles used in psychology today are based on the work of Diana Baumrind, a developmental psychologist, and Stanford University researchers, Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin. Each parenting style has different effects on children's behavior and can be identified by certain characteristics, as well as degrees of responsiveness which is the extent to which parents are warm and

sensitive to their children's needs, and demandingness, which is the extent of control parents put on their children in an attempt to influence their behavior.

Authoritative
The parent is high on responsiveness, warmth, and sensitivity to their children's needs, but also, high on demandingness attempting to influence their behavior. In an authoritative parenting style, the parent sets clear expectations for their children while practicing flexibility and understanding. The parent communicates frequently to listen and takes into consideration the thoughts and feelings and opinions of their children. The parent allows natural consequences to occur e.g., if a child fails a quiz when they didn't study, the parent uses that opportunity to help their child to reflect and learn. Authoritative parents are nurturing, supportive, and often in tune with their children's needs. They guide their children through open dialogue to teach values and reasoning. Children who have authoritative parents tend to be self-disciplined and can think for themselves.

Authoritarian
On the other hand, this parent has high demandingness and low responsiveness. Parents enforce strict rules with little consideration for the feelings of the child or their emotional and behavioral needs. Whenever a child questions the reasons behind a rule or consequence, Communication is usually one way from parent to child.

Permissive
The parent (s) has high responsiveness and low demandingness. The parent communicates openly and usually lets the children decide for themselves rather than giving directions. Rules and expectations are either not set or rarely enforced. The parent goes long lengths to impress their children, sometimes at their own expense.

Neglectful
This style has the commonality of low responsiveness and low demandingness. The parent lets the child fend for themselves, perhaps because they are indifferent to their needs or are uninvolved and busy with other things. The parent offers little nurturance, guidance, and attention. Such children often struggle with self-esteem issues and have a hard time forming relationships. This uninvolved parenting style exemplifies an overall sense of indifference. Neglectful parents have limited engagement with their children and rarely implement rules. They can also be seen as cold and uncaring but not always intentionally, as they are often struggling with their issues.

Parents who may be having a difficult time providing for the family, struggling with the loss of a loved one, or even an addiction could easily disengage if they do not have a support system to debrief their anxiety. Parents who may be fearful of an eventuality emanating from a court case, a health scare, or a threat to their lives may appear neglectful if they do not handle the situation intentionally.

Wisdom from senior parents

One of my mentors is Prof. Charles Kimani Njoroge; a professor of food processing and post-harvest technology, and a father of three girls; 33, 30, and 26 years old. He gave me some insights into his journey of parenting. He says "It's important for the children to know your background both social and financial. It's good for them to know that nothing comes easy and without hard work one cannot achieve anything. Also, it's good for them to know that you can't achieve anything without support from others both relatives and others in society. For us to raise successful children, we have to be there for them in their dreams. When children are very young, play with them, treat them to something that makes them feel loved, help them with things they can't do themselves like homework, etc. Treat their mother/father well particularly in their presence. Teach them to respect other people if they want to be successful.

For us Christians, let them know that God is central in our lives and most of what we are is not necessarily because of our abilities but because of his favor. Support your children at all times. Discipline them and teach them the word of God. If they want something that you can't afford, tell them so and buy what you can. If you can't buy any let them know. Kids are very smart. Treat them so. Discipline them when you are not angry and are therefore rational. They should obey the set rules and if not defined consequences will follow. Motivate them with rewards when they achieve something. Don't openly compare them to other better-performing ones otherwise, they may get discouraged. Find out what their dreams and goals are and support them to the best of your ability. If it does not work out, support whatever else they want to do. Don't make them into what you are or wanted to be, if they are not interested.

Mrs. Grace Thuku, an advocate of the high court and a mother of three and a grandmother has very interesting advice on parenting. She says that children need to be allowed to do their own thing without interference irrespective of the losses and or damages which come with it. If a child goes to the toilet, let him learn how to clean himself or herself up without undue interference from the adults. It doesn't matter whether the child will roll the entire tissue roll on the floor. The child learning the craft is the most expensive commodity here. Mrs. Thuku asserts that the old traditional proverb that when a child cries for the razor

blade, give him or her, holds. If the child wants to put his fingers atop the flames of a candle or lamp, let them.

That is the only way they learn caution and internalize that not everything should be put through the mouth and not everything is to be touched. In the process, the child internalizes a selective mechanism by observing and applying restrained curiosity, and in the process, they can regulate their safety. Mrs. Thuku emphasizes that, when you try to control and overly stop them at everything, they persist with aggressive curiosity and you just never know when their curiosity will heighten in your absence and more so, in the most dangerous circumstances. She has a thought-provoking philosophy that the child should be allowed to feed themselves. “Whether they are putting the food in the nose or the eyes let them learn!” She says. Isn't that the best way to know where exactly to put what? It must not be a worry that the child is making their clothes dirty or your house dirty. It is not your house alone; it is theirs too.

The parenting expert adds that it doesn't matter whether the child starts to feed from the living room and finishes in the bathroom. “Let the child learn how to eat and how to starve and you will never have this nonsense of choosing which foods are good for eating and which ones are bad for your child. When a child is starving, they eat anything and everything without being choosy.” She says. My mentor Mrs. Thuku, suggests that you should give the child small portions of food so that the child can learn to ask for more food or can still have some appetite just before feeding. “Do not give the child excess food such that the only language the child knows is to reject food before the first bite. Let the child know how to beg for food and he or she will appreciate the value of food and will never waste food when they grow up, they will save a lot of money on their food budgets and become wealthy just because you taught them how to eat food in small portions.” She says.

What is a healthy and thriving family experience?

There is no manual from which we can copy the best family model but we can continuously learn from each other's experiences and lessons over time. I will be happy to share my experiences on the family front in my household as well as what I have observed across other families. I have also received interesting feedback from my children on how some of their friends have experienced family life. I get to hear a lot of feedback from teenagers as I offer counsel and advice in different setups including church setups.

Family is a safe space for the expression

All our children need to properly develop the right people skills. Parents need to create a safe space for their children to express themselves without fear.

Most parents have not developed communication skills on how to communicate with their children creating gaps between them and their children. I have been to forums where children cannot spend a significant amount of time with their parents without immediately disengaging. Last year, I attended a camp for my son Aden; five days after they had been in camp, the parents joined in on the sixth day. They spent the whole day together with different activities which were to foster bonding, learning, and transition of mentality from a boy to a man. I will only share three observations. Within less than an hour of meeting our sons after a week of absence, most of the boys had retreated into their groups away from their parents meaning the span of sociability had waned away. This is an area where we can intentionally grow and create a safe space for our children to talk to us and vice versa.

The problem with most of us is that our communications with our children are mostly transactional when they need something or about school work. We should create more space that allows us to communicate casually, play, and have leisure such as camping, riding bikes together, and playing a sport. After spending the night with our sons in tents, some of the children confessed to having the longest nights of their lives. Being in the same space with your father across the night and unfortunately with him looking at you was torture for some young men as they would share among themselves. What does it mean? It means we have not cultivated friendships with our children. We are missing important stages of their lives and so we are unable to tell whether they are in need unless they come and say it. Even when they come and say it, they may not be sure that they can take you as a confidant. Most of us are struggling because our fathers didn't have relationships with us. We do not have the template.

In the evening, we showed our sons how to slaughter a goat. I also learned here because I had never slaughtered one before. We then cooked and roasted together with our sons. After some time, the boys got disconnected again and retreated to their safe spaces among themselves contrary to the expectation of bonding. I can speak with humility and truth that it was only my son who stayed with the older men roasting goat meat until the very last minute when we shifted to go and serve food. It was not because I was present as I was out of the picture serving in other duties as the designated leader. Being comfortable around older people is a product of being comfortable around your parents. I also learned the same experience from my father who made it possible to be comfortable around him. I am not suggesting that our model is the best but we are intentionally trying something out. In our house, we usually try to create moments when we switch the Tv off and have family time where the children can speak their minds without being reprimanded. We laugh and make jokes and learn from each other. I

encourage you to try something out until you find something that allows you to have a safe space for expression within the family.

When I took my son to school for the second term of form one, most of the teachers and some parents would reach out to speak to me. I am also the class representative for my son's class. For some, it is because I am a public figure. At some point, I stopped to engage with the boarding master Mr. Franklin. My son Aden came to me and said, "I have something I wish to say respectfully!" "Sometimes you punish me. I have to wait for a long time while you speak to your friends that you even forget I was there waiting for you. Like right now, I have a heavy bag and don't know whether I should put it down first or just hang on. You took a long time speaking to Mr. Franklin. Please do something about it. I am requesting respectfully!"

This was a good realization on my part but that is not what makes me proud. What makes me proud is the fact that my son feels he is safe to speak his mind and is not afraid that he might be skinned alive for speaking his mind. The respect is the other gold and I thank God for it.

Family is a place to be known and understood

I am not a body language expert! All I am trying to say is that as a parent you should have an idea about those non-verbal cues of your child such that you can probe them further to confirm your fears about them. You cannot tell without spending quality time with your children so that you can connect a specific reaction to an event and a consistent pattern of behavior or expression with specific stimuli. That way you can always tell when your children are being bothered by something even if they don't say it. I have already given discretion that all I am doing is share my experience which may not directly relate to your set of children but can awaken your alternatives in the circumstances I share.

It was one morning when my daughter knocked on my door and asked me, "Dad, can you come to pick me up after school?" I said yes pretty! She gave me a very long hug and squeezed it in. I asked, "With the car or on foot?" She says "With the car. “As I drove from her school and into our compound, she looked into my eyes, said nothing, then kissed my cheek and kept staring into my eyes. When she does this, she has a controversial topic to unpack. As we got out of the car, I knew she wanted to say something but dint have the confidence to initiate the talk. Shirley knows how to be detached, and knows how to attach but when she has something in her mind, she elevates her presence around you, checks your heart rate, checks your mood, checks your attention rate and when she is sure that you are relaxed and focused on her, she will talk to you like an adult woman would when she wants you to do her a huge favor. She doesn't just ask for things,

she aligns with your mood, makes you comfortable and calm then with surety and assurance that all is well with you, asks.
Could this be what they call the power of a woman? That's indeed her way of communicating but in part, that was also a sign of a lack of confidence to just articulate her mind without fear that she might face rejection in her desires and requests. As we get out of the car, I sit on the staircase to make sure Shirley knows my heart rate is just fine. She says “Dad, in the school of Calvin, not his real name, they are allowed to keep hairstyles. For example, Michael has shaved his hair just like yours. He has done this here, and that there, and the other there...All this while touching my head like a dummy in a laboratory presentation. She was very soft-spoken as she does all this which to me points to a deep desire to experience what she was talking about but at the same time, not sure that this desire might conflict with my principles. I have always asked her not to compare herself with others but develop her independent desires.

The paradox is when we observe others, then realize something which becomes a genuine desire, how do we draw the thin line between peer pressure and genuine desire? I have no answers to this because you can only tell the difference based on how well you know your child. You can only tell when your child or even spouse is succumbing to peer pressure or evolving by how much you know and understand them through quality time. The following morning, I wanted to know more so I dropped her to school walking on foot. We talked about a lot of things but nothing came up. I always like my children to be in charge of their conversations and so I only lead and probe but do not take over the conversation. As we said bye at the school gate, she asked, “Can you come to pick me up in the evening?" I said yes and asked, "By car or on foot? She said I could come on foot. Her school was within the Air View estate where we live.

That evening I picked her and as we walked home, she asked “Dad can I ask something? I know you told us not to be comparing with other children but you also said if you see something that is good or okay, you can try and if it involves another person, like a parent paying fees or paying for an item in the supermarket then I can ask. "I said, "Go ahead!" "Is it okay if I wanted to go to Nova Pioneer"? She asked. "I like the school but that is if you are okay with it," she said. She explained to me the many things she had heard about the Nova Pioneer group of schools and wished I could give her that experience. After studying and considering what my daughter would benefit from the school, I also said we could only change schools the following year if she performed well in specific subjects. She put in the effort and qualified for her desire. I took time to learn the philosophy of the school and its core values and style of teaching. I knew that it was the right environment to build my daughter's confidence, something I was by then concerned about.

After Joining Nova Pioneer, Athi campus, my daughter changed drastically within a very short time. Most important was her confidence, something I observed when I joined her on the school tour. The children had the same kind of confidence I had witnessed among most American kids even when they engaged with adults. I wanted that for my daughter. It paid off as she can now express herself in any set up including that of adults; something which she was hesitant about before. In our family gatherings, Shirley can express herself more, something I am always keen to make sure she is not interrupted by the brothers or her mother when she is talking.

Being a lastborn can get you shut up by your older siblings. The older siblings always undermine the younger ones. The last-born children in most families have been unheard and oppressed much of their lives and when they get married, they project the anger of not being heard by their spouses. Any little moment of telling them, no, Wait, or criticizing their opinion becomes the third world war. It is usually transference where one is expressing how bad they felt for being denied a voice by putting that disturbance to their partner as the object of aggression.

The level of self-reliance and personal responsibility is on another level. Her confidence is at another level and her happiness levels are skyrocketing. She wakes up, prepares for school, and takes her breakfast. She has learned to cook in the baking class and loves cooking for the family. She has learned more responsibilities and confidence in her new school, something I appreciate that we were able to have the difficult conversation when we needed to. Luckily, she was also able to identify a sport and joined the basketball club. The main point is not about my daughter's clubs but the God-given chance to me as a parent to spend time with her and learn her language. You can cultivate yours too.

Knowing Shirley

If my Shirley came home and hugged you playfully, she is having a good time and wants you to share in the energy of joy. If she came and began picking and pocking at you, then she is asking you to play with her. If she held your hand and began pulling you around aimlessly, she wants to go to walk or ride her bike but wants your company. If Shirley has a smile that doesn't look complete, she is shy or intimidated about something or has done a mistake. If she walks like a model with calculated footsteps, she is hiding something from you; a feeling or a discovery. If she walks without a care, then she is having the best time of her life in confidence. If she repeats what she has said, it is because she is sure you did not listen to what she said. She asked you a question but then you answered unsatisfactorily leaving her hanging.

Shirley will clarify and paraphrase your statement to make sure she got you right. She will ask for alternatives so you choose one with clarity. She loves clarity and doesn't like ambiguity. If she fails to do your assignment, most likely, the instruction was not clear. Anything ambiguous remains undone. Before shouting at her or punishing her, find out what she understood before pushing her away. If she nods her head, she got you loud and clear or agrees with you. If she just looks at you, she probably didn't understand you and the environment wasn't right to seek clarification. She most likely won't do as you expected. Shirley doesn't like someone dismissing her style and patterns. It is her individuality and identity to do things as she perceives them.

Dismissing her or trashing what she is doing without reasoning with her makes her hold back and will do nothing at all until told in detail what you want her to do. When she has your confidence, Shirley is the most creative person in various situations. She can navigate difficult situations if allowed to express herself and assert her style of doing things. She is task and goal-oriented with big capabilities if given the space to express herself without excessive controls. She may appear slow, but she is not. She has the burden of seeking the approval of her mother, and elder brothers before she acts thus appearing to act slowly. She will always want to be sure that what she is doing is right. When allowed to get something done by herself, she is the fastest and most accurate with her intended results of all my children. She is keen to detail if she knows that her individuality counts but careless with details if she knows that no matter what she does, you will still dismiss it just because she is the youngest member of the family and that is the challenge of most last-born children.

The parents have to intentionally navigate this realm with caution and in a helpful manner. Shirley reminds me that I once said she is my favorite child and always tests to see whether it still holds by asking me who my favorite child is. Each of my children is unique in every way. When Shirley was born, I was there for every process of the pregnancy, took the mother to the hospital, witnessed the entire process inside the delivery room, and cut the umbilical cord with my hands. That makes her very special and the brothers should bear with me on that one. My lowest moment was when I returned from an international trip and daughter could not recognize me. She refused to come to me at the airport. That was a heavy lesson for my life with Shirley.

Knowing Aden

Aden will always come straight and say what he wants before you swallow your food. You will be about to take your drink then he will call and say, “I am in a supermarket and the ball I told you about is 3k, are you able to send the money so I can buy it?" Aden has no hidden language, what you see is what you get.
If he is angry, he will show you and if he is happy, he will show you. If he wants something, he will tell it to you right there and then. He doesn't wait to say it. He is keen to finish one thing and go to the next. Lately, he has learned to be patient after asking for something. But he will not forget about it. He will remember, then remind you and start the wait and if you forget, he will remind you again. After two months, he will remind you about the shoe you two had talked about even if he was the only one talking at the time. He is the epitome of sharp memory and fine details. As much as I know, he is really trying to be accommodative to the rest of us; I would want him to know that he should not loose that ability to be persistent and consistent. It makes the difference between successful people and those who give up on their dreams. The only thing he should do is to be patient and empathetic with those around him but still not settle for less.

To Aden, as long as you listened and didn't offer an alternative view, that was an agreement and it immediately goes on record as a deal. When you behave as if you have forgotten and he is quiet about it, he will remind you and claim for it in the most unexpected circumstances leaving you wondering whether the time in between isn't too long to still expect that pledge to count. He captures too much detail that he attempts to address all the details in the scenario leaving nothing to chance. Being forceful and patient at the same time is a strength that is rare to find. My son doesn't give up or give in. We used to play a game called arrest, his favorite game. No matter how much you attempt to subdue Aden, he never quits and never gives up. He would rather break his arm or leg but not lose the struggle. I saw him shed tears in pain but looked at the other side and still told me that he won't quit the arrest. If you let him win, he would feel very bad that you have cheated him, maybe undermined him. You have to fight truly until he wins.

You don't fight with probabilities, you fight so he wins. I watched him get hurt on a football pitch. He got first aid and stuck to his guns to lead his team as captain. After the first aid, I saw him cry and cover his eyes from the rest of us with his jersey, but then pulled himself up and continued playing leading his team to win a bronze medal. That feels like Mbappe fighting for France in 2022 world cup and Messi fighting for the GOAT (Greatest of all-time badge) in the final tournament. I have no doubt that Aden will play football at that top global level. Taekwondo was a natural selection in his former school because he loves fights. Soccer is his passion but he prefers to win a fight.

Aden's sense of humor is unparalleled and his humility is often mistaken for weakness. His level of organization is impeccable and he will need to be tolerant of others who may not have as high a standard of personal organization as him. His need will be to set personal limits to his ambition because anyone setting ambition for him is planning to fail. He knows no limits and knows no barriers, so he will need to set personal limits so that sticking within his bounds becomes his self-defined goal. He must never let anyone else set life, professional, career, or innovative goals for him because you will never know when and if the goals could be set up to blunder in the process of chasing the goal. Aden has always been a leader and a darling to all his teachers in all of his schools. He is organized, obedient, hardworking, a team player, and a leader who inspires confidence but most importantly pushes and pulls his mates as the need may be. He attempted many talents until he found football.

He looks forward to being a world-class footballer, something I believe he will achieve because he has the talent and also has a role model. The Brazilian footballer, Neymar is his role model. He has sketched his portrait on his door and above his head on the ceiling of his bedroom. He knows all about world football in all of the leagues internationally so much that you would think he is a sports journalist. He has the discipline of CR7 (Christiano Ronaldo) going to the gym religiously and observing all his routines without fail. I know that he will make a great footballer in his youthful days on the world stage and be a great ambassador of Jesus Christ around the world through his fame and influence through soccer. If he chooses, he would make a great military general due to his high level of discipline and character. But he fits to be more of a military scholar and an academic giant of science which will make Africa a superpower in technology or energy. If he chose to take his aviation course beyond high school, then he would become a great gift to his country as a military pilot or scholar around such aeronautical sciences.

Since Physics and Mathematics are his default subjects of choice, he would make a great researcher and astute scholar who will make world discoveries and solve complex intellectual problems of scientific nature. My son breaks barriers and hates limitations. He thrives in competition. I would want to see him put his brain to good use as a world changer who will invent great technologies that will change the world as we know it today. He is also an innovator who bargains for profit in his endeavors. He has big budgets on his mind and when he asks for favors from me or his mother, he is asking for big money. The interesting thing is that he works for it. He asks you to give him an assignment for which you are willing to pay him. When he visits our rural home, he always joins the workers and asks whether he can be paid alongside them. Interestingly, he delivers just as much work as the adults will do.

His resilience is admirable. His choice of a wife will need to be someone who is content with herself with a high sense of self love, self-control and emotional intelligence. She should be someone happy to chase her own dreams and stick to her lane or be happy joining in the dreams of her husband. By sticking to her lane, I mean, being happy and content to chase her dreams without trying to turn the attention of the husband to prioritize her dreams at his expense because Aden will always want to fight for his dreams at all costs. You don't want to be an obstacle he has to conquer on his way towards his dreams because he will beat the obstacle. Aden's love language is affirmation and so his choice of spouse should be someone who can affirm her husband without viewing it through the eyes of a feminist. Aden motivates and inspires those around him. He offers solutions and gives inspirational insights that turn problems into solutions. Aden is generous. If he finds genuine love, he will easily love someone whom he can pamper with gifts. That is if gifts happen to be her love language.

Aden must resist the imagination that a woman who loves gifts is materialistic. It is a love language to some. His assignment will be to know whether she is a gold digger who comes without the package of true love for him or just desirous of exploiting what Aden has to offer without caring about his well being and his needs. The only practical way to find true love is to follow my example. I knew when I was still young that I will be famous and powerful; therefore, vulnerable with women. All women want a man who loves unconditionally, inspires confidence, who can protect and offer security. Provision is key but some women can meet that need by themselves. I was very clear in my mind that I will marry early when I had more of my character to speak for me. I wanted someone who values my character above everything else. I would encourage Aden to follow this path before he becomes famous and powerful because at the top, you will never distinguish true love from infatuations.

Knowing Andes

Andes will come and hug you, then hold your hand. If he hugs you longer and leans over on you, it is he who wants to feel loved and noticed. If he stays with you and says nothing, then he doubts himself. His grades were slightly less than he promised or has come short of your expectation on an assignment you gave him. If he looks at you and then shies away, he is seeking your validation that there is hope. He wants to be sure that you have not judged him. He just wants to feel the love and assurance.

If he comes to you in confidence and hugs you holding on tightly, He is saying, "I hear you and I feel your pain. I got you, Dad." If he came to your bed or your couch and leans on you in confidence, He is saying, "You can trust me, I am here for you. Don't worry, it is well and it's going to.

I saw it all and heard it all, you have me, and I am here for you." if he puts his hand around your neck or shoulder, it is him saying, "Dad you can count on me. I hear you; I see you and am your man". He is the most self-controlled, selfless, and loyal to the core. He knows how to empathize with different people differently. If he withholds an answer from you with a smile, He is not stupid; you most likely won't like the answer if he told you the truth. He will find a way to let go of the need for his answer. If he withholds an answer but looks disturbed, you have pissed him off and must stop it before he loses it. You don't want to know his limits, let him be. He is both spontaneous and conservative, it just matters the situation. He is very intelligent, wise, and analytical and sees the world in 3D most of the time but chooses where to display it and when to act foolish. If he determines that you are not as intelligent, he will come to your level and engage at your level without making you feel intimidated. However, he doesn't waste his intelligence; if he knows you measure up or don't value him, he won't waste his breath to prove anything to you. He runs on low battery around people who have no regard for him. He will tag along with you in your misrepresented opinion of him. Andes can intimidate you if you rattle him and mistake his calmness for weakness.

My son is accommodative and flexible; he will put his hands around my shoulder minutes after I punish him. He is saying that "Despite the punishment you gave me, I understand you just had to. I am here for you and with you. Don't stress!" When Andes locks with your fingers and sits down facing you with his eyes facing down. He doesn't know how to begin his conversation and you need to probe him or begin the conversation. If he looks down, he is ashamed of himself and remorseful. As a parent, knowing the language of your children will make you take the appropriate action for his or her season. For example, a child who is already remorseful should not be punished the same way as one who is not remorseful.

Andes has the versatility of arts and a genetically gifted physique. Good in basketball and soccer. In soccer, he can play virtually all positions. He can play as a goalkeeper, defender, and wing striker, and also as a midfielder. He is more gifted in music than I ever will be with great vocal abilities. He plays piano, guitar and is learning saxophone. He can survive any situation adapting to different situations. He can give different answers to different people asking the same question. The different answers depict the same meaning but to each person, the answer is according to how he perceived you when you asked. If you spoke to him like a child, he will answer you as a child would. If you asked him with disdain, he will follow the cue and if you showed respect, he will reciprocate. If your question desired his brilliance, then he will give you depth and insight.

His arguments are those of a deep thinker who can influence a generation through philosophy and analytical research and intellectual writing and dissertations. He sees miles ahead while still giving you the impression that you are walking on the same path. He can take detours three times before you realize what his first detour was. He will make you believe he didn't see what you thought he shouldn't see if that will make you comfortable around him. He is vulnerable only when he trusts you, otherwise, he takes the need to survive very seriously. He is an astute debater, who would make a great lawyer. Sometimes he baits his opponents to argue before he shows you his arsenals. I have watched him concede arguments with his friends, his brother, and even his mother only to ask me on the side, who does that? How can you think this way and still expect it to make sense? How can you say this and still say that in the same sentence? For lack of a better way to explain the depth of his critical thinking, Andes would tell you that you can't vomit and eat at the same time; Joy can give you tears but tears can't give you joy and if you can't see that, He doesn't see why he should continue with the argument. He rather concedes so you save his energy for more useful arguments.

When he keeps quiet, he is still talking with his body language and eyes. He communicates in parables and speaks more by his silence because that is where his intentions are found; in silence! After every moment of Silence, he has something useful, even phenomenal that comes out of the silence. It is up to you to want it. When he was younger, the teachers used to say he wonders his mind and loses concentration. The truth is that his mind is too creative in designing things and conceptualizing ideas. If you let him speak what's going on in his mind, you will be amazed at the magic of his mind.

First and foremost, he would make a great communication strategist or a musician. He would also make a great military strategist, a great political strategist or a great architect if he chose to. He would also make a great politician, philosopher, or career diplomat. If not a lawyer, he will make a great judge driven puirely by a sense of justice. He doesn't labor to find the just position of things. He would have made a perfect king if that culture still existed as he is perfectly woven for leadership, justice, empathy and unconditional love to all around him. He most likely will make a great politician due to his ability to adjust very fast to his environment. This attribute also makes him well suited for pastoral work as he can easily come down to the level of his congregants to understand them and their needs but also inspire them to grow. He has spiritual gifts that can serve God well in a church and ministry environment. He has the confidence and supernatural power of a lion. He carries the mantle of an emperor.

With natural stardom around him, he can influence his generation. He is very lovable and will make a great celebrity and influencer in his generation. If he takes on a media career or became a public figure with a course, his courses will be successful and his ideas and philosophies will find their way to the hearts of many people. If he scripted movies, he would influence the world like my mentor Oliver Minishi. If he became a musician, he would change the world with great messages like the great Bob Nesta Marley. His sense of humor is very compelling and his charm is the perfection of tall dark and handsome.

Andes is very humble among his peers and doesn't show off. He loves deeply and is concerned about the welfare of others. He puts others before himself and lifts others at his expense making him withdraw his strong personality to make it possible for him to lift the weak and speak to them at their level. As my friend Eric Muleri says that moderating my strong personality along with others is my weakness, Andes does this effortlessly. Most of the time, he bears the personality of a spiritual leader or humanitarian which could make people take advantage of him and manipulate his will by appealing to his sense of empathy. He must always guard against those that would want to take advantage of his empathy for selfish gain. No one should be too special as not to be indispensable especially if they use his empathy to manipulate his will. That will be my advice for my son Andes as the secret of his life. “Do not let people overuse and abuse your empathy except when you have determined by your own judgment what to do and how to do.”

I have a sister-in-law of mine, Inspector Marcella Koigi Andanje, whom I have known people to exploit and still talk about it. Whenever she is at her rural home, people ask their children not to go to school but to go fetch water by the well which passes through her home. They know the script! She will quarrel with them for not being in school, and eventually pay their school fees. Unfortunately, some of the children do not have the passion to learn. They just waste her efforts to pay their fees. Some even drop from school after she has paid their school fees. This is a classical case of abuse of her empathy.

Andes' ideal wife should be someone who is secure with herself and believes that she has something to offer to this world all within herself. Andes must not be afraid of a strong woman who seems to believe in herself and knows what she wants and what she can offer to this world. A woman who asks what she can do to the world as opposed to what the world can do for her is the perfect choice for his being. This is the type of person who will offer Andes the type of love and support which he needs to thrive. A strong woman doesn't mean a loud one but the substance of their character, values, will, and a clear purpose and total submission to God.

You cannot serve God and humanity effectively when you are surrounded by a spouse whose worldview is insecure, and pessimist and who thinks they need you to themselves completely. If you are called for greatness, you can hardly manifest your full potential if you are crowded in your secret and private space with criticism rather than encouragement, questions puzzles, and pessimism rather than optimism and affirmation by the person you trust the most. Andes's love language is physical touch and so his choice of wife shouldn't be someone shy to express their affection and feelings as this is what fills my son with life and happiness. If the individual has any form of emotional trauma, it will be important to get therapy because people who are suffering emotional trauma may be shy or withhold expressing their true feelings and affection. Sometimes, they resist being romantic because it is their coping mechanism, not to be romantically vulnerable.

Andes is also very attentive, listens actively, and pays attention to the needs of those around him. If he likes you, he will want to be in your presence and show you his love and support through his physical presence. Someone whose love language is attention will gain greatly from a relationship with him. A woman whose desire is a present husband and father will gain the most from his union. A woman who wants too much independence and individualism and or has a poor world view of family will be an unnecessary headache and heartache to Andes.

A family is a place for encouraging independent decisions of transitions in life

Most of the time, we question why our children did not make the right decisions in certain situations. In part, it is because we crowd our children with our decisions leaving them little space for making independent decisions. As I have already said, I can only share my examples hoping that they will inspire something unique for your situation. I also share the things I learn from schools hoping that it will influence how we learn from each other for the things that inspire us.

Andes subject choices

When my first son Andes joined high school, he was sold out to study a specific set of subjects. He joined my former prestigious Kakamega High School and pursued his love in that field. I supported his choices but a little later, I didn't like the grades from two critical subjects in his field of pursuit. He wanted to study this though. During one of the school visits, I explained to him that he needs to decide whether he wants to pursue his studies up to university and whether his current grades would take him to the university based on the average score. If not, then he needed to double his efforts to meet his targets. I left him to make the decisions by himself. He also made sure I take note of the fact that he finally performed them well and he closed those books with good grades.

He showed me the evidence recently and that was very encouraging that he is determined to bring good closure to all the things that concern him.

Change of school for Andes

Sometimes, the initiative is from parents to the children where a parent wants to make certain major changes but doesn't listen to the opinions or feelings of the child and how that situation may affect the child. The outcome can be good but can also go south if the feelings of the child are not processed. It doesn't mean that the child will have their way but they can be made to understand rather than to be shouted down. When my son was to join form three, I had major concerns about him. I felt that his school was crowded masking his ability to maximize his potential. When I told him that I wished to change his school, he declined in the first instance. I asked him to take time and think over it then let me know his final thoughts after two days. Sometimes people just fear change as a fear of the unknown. After one day, my son told me that he is willing to change schools.

In his new school, he found a second chance that exposed his unutilized potential and has become more confident with himself. He is self-driven, disciplined, and a great leader; the chairman of the school choir and a leader in the Christian union. While we set the academic targets for the next exams with his class teacher, he set them higher than I thought he would. When I challenged him not to set targets to impress us, I almost felt my son was sounding loud on me; but again, that's what I wanted from him. Bold! "Dad, I know am setting my targets. I know what I am doing and what I want" he said. I had waited for 16 years to see that version of a man and that's how much transformation had taken place after identifying the correct breeding ground. I was proud to have met the needs of my son. His grades were good, and have continued to get better each day.

The career choices of my son were solidified at a time when I spent some time with a friend of mine called William Ogonda, a veteran broadcaster there and media personality. We were working on a project for about ten days. During that time, William and my son Andes had conversations on many topics among them career choices. He later came to me with clear career options and asked me to help him choose one of them. All I knew was that William had convinced him in an analytical way that his subject combinations can pave the way in specific courses. My feedback was that he should take a course that enables him to be employed but also one which enables him to start a business in self-employment if he was not employed by someone else. He later settled for Law.

In our forum of three fathers and three sons, one of us is a lawyer. Andes went to hold conversations with him as someone who was already working in one of the fields he was interested in.

I allowed Andes to make his choices only guiding him on the principles and fundamentals. It did not matter that he once was fired up for engineering. It also didn't matter that at some point he desired to do communications and said that as a tall dark and handsome guy, he will do fine. He is only in form three and if he changes his mind along the way for something else, I will help him navigate that too. It doesn't mean the first decisions were bad but I do not doubt in my mind that he now appreciates more than one angle and perspective in decision-making. Noteworthy is the fact that I have told my son, that he is not bound by these choices if he changes his mind. All he needs is to aspire to have a good career.

Search for a new school for my son Aden

My son Aden loves football and wanted a school that will promote his football talent. He was admitted to join my school one more time, Kakamega High School. However, my son doubted the chances that my school would nature his football as he wished. He felt that the green commandoes were no longer the shining stars. I seemed to agree with him because the school had largely focused on academics and suffocated the extra curriculum activities which defined people like me. To settle this confusion of feelings, I promised to call my friend who teaches there and happens to have been two years ahead of me; we made a telephone call conversation which my son was listening to.

After the call, my son was convinced that his football didn't have a chance to take him to the premier league if what he had heard was anything to go by. So I had to start looking for another school for him and not the prestigious Green Commandos which was a pale shadow of itself on matters of football. I took him to the home of the boy child Merishaw School. It was not an easy decision to make but because I was removing his older brother from the school, it made it easier for me to take both of them to new schools each meeting their unique needs. The school has served my son's needs and I am grateful to God. He is the captain of the junior soccer team comprising form one and the CBC. I have watched him play and encouraged him to follow his dreams. He is doing well in his classwork. He told me he was asked to be class prefect but declined because he was already soccer captain. This is all about working together with your children to help them make better decisions concerning their life but most importantly allowing them space to give an opinion on a matter especially a matter concerning their lives.

Aden subject choices

When Aden joined Merishaw School, we discussed subjects then I left him to make his decisions behind me. When we returned for the first academic day, he said he had chosen French but didn't like it that much.

I asked why he chose it anyway. He said, he wanted aviation but he thought he could use a foreign language in the future as an international footballer. He also got the peer influence that said, his friend told him that the captain was very tough. In our discussion, I reminded him that in his soccer training sessions, all his coaches have been tough and he always survived getting the best recommendations. I reminded him of who he is as a fighter and the fact that he always wins his battles no matter how tough they are. My son thrives and shows his abilities in battles and obstacles than he would in a quiet life. His potential shows the best with something worthwhile to show. We analyzed his performances in primary school in languages, arts, and sciences. It is the sciences where he scores highest and mathematics is like dessert to him after the main meal. I showed him the need and importance of balancing all his subjects but most importantly going for his strengths. I also reminded him that Merishaw as a school had some special privileges not available in any other school.

Schools teaching aviation in the country are only four and if he has the aptitude for sciences, geography, and mathematics, then I was sure that he would score better here than in the language in which he was already getting disinterested. The value of making decisions you regret while you are a child is that you become wiser and brighter in your next decisions. You eventually value decision-making as a process backed with logic and not just a swing of ideas and moods.

Shirley's change of school

When I finally mentioned to Shirley that I wanted us to make the switch of schools, she was not happy. She said I should let her stay one more term in the school. When I asked for her reasons she said, her teachers were very kind and if she needed to know anything, they would explain it to her very well. They would allow her to ask what she did not understand well but above all, she loved the culture show. I could tell there was something big about that culture show for her. She also said she loved her friends very much and did not want to leave them. Since it is natural to resist change, I decide to go back to the basics and asked her that we go to the new school for a tour then we shall return home and I shall be guided by her decision. This move yielded many results because we didn't return home for the decision; she decided while still on tour as she decided to join her current school, Nova Pioneer Athi campus immediately and not after one more term as she had initially suggested.

Within a very short time, I began to observe the changes I had wanted for my daughter. She grew in self-confidence and was more eloquent to articulate her mind. She became bold with her decisions and joined the baking club where she became a good student. Coupled with the level of responsibility at home, she makes good meals for us at home.

Her sense of responsibility also grew tremendously. I would think it has to do with the capacity and ideology which informs the principles and philosophy of a school environment. All three schools my children go to bring very different experiences and strengths each informed by the ideology and principles that inform the philosophy of the founders and administrators. They speak to the needs of my children differently. I will gladly share some of this uniqueness because I know that it will help some parents think critically about the needs of their children while it may also inform certain teachers on how to do a little more within their jurisdiction with what they have.

Shirley's choice of clubs

While selecting clubs with my daughter Shirley at the Nova Athi campus, she went to play basketball during the exhibition; she loved it and came to pull my hand so I could see how good she was. I was hearing about her basketball experience for the very first time. When we went to the visual arts and media arts section, the media person in me was seeing the cameras and all the details of pictures and properties of making a documentary. My daughter was asking deep questions and was interested in every detail of photography, graphic design, and documentaries. She remembered everything she had been told. The coach loved her efficiency on the basketball court as a first-timer. Surprisingly, she picked basketball and baking as her clubs. I struggled with that decision because she had shown a high level of aptitude than what an adult would grasp.

After all, I do teach adults some of these skills. I tried to explain to her in a language that would change her mind but she was resolute so I just had to let her be! I had to choose between letting the confident and assertive person I was trying to nurture and restricting that personality with my influence. I said to myself, "She is only in grade three and has many years ahead of her to discover more." We are talking about enabling your children to make and own their decisions. My mentor, the late dean School of Business at Kenyatta University, Dr. Jonathan Chege, taught me that life is too short to learn from our mistakes. We can learn from the mistakes of others. All that notwithstanding, I have come to also accept that t is okay to make bad decisions while younger than to learn from them and to make mistakes when one is older. The process of decision-making will never be solid in the heart and mind of a child until they have learned how to make decisions before.

Making decisions includes making bad decisions and learning from the mistakes early enough to correct the outcome, especially before the outcome. It is the role of the parent to bring on board the experience which Dr. Chege brings to the surface to help our children avoid making bad decisions by learning from our

example, experience, and knowledge. When a child is allowed to make their decisions, they take pride in their success which breeds better confidence.
When they fail in their decisions, they learn the value of advice and appreciate the contributions of other people in their decision-making process. Even bad decisions are valuable as they teach your child the difference between, those bad decisions and good ones based on the outcome.

A family is a place of inspiration and motivation

I was taught, the philosophy of the Nova Pioneer School to program the mind of the learner with what they can do and not what they can't do. It's to instill a mindset of possibilities and to motivate their gifts, not their weaknesses nor learn by fear. The underwriting is that their strength can always override and cushion their weaknesses if we bring out more of their potential than their failures to the surface. So, we don't say, stop wasting time on TV but we say the other thing they should do like it's time to sleep. We do not complain and insult the child for not having cleaned their room, we should whisper into their ability to clean and say something like you should by now have cleaned your room, please hurry up! We retain the fact that the potential to do it is right there and we activate it rather than magnify their weaknesses and mistakes. You do not insult the child by saying "You can't even do simple things like washing dishes" but no matter your tone, just say. "Wash those dishes; Now! It's easier to just use the whip but, we need to realize, that the whip is easier for us because we were whipped so our subconscious takes us right there as the first instance but it should not be the first instance. We should motivate more than we chastise.

Someday, I attended a book fair at my daughter's school. Guess what! The kids in grade three had written an actual book complete with a preface, table of contents, and a glossary. They own the book as the authors and some kids are publishing their books at lower primary. They had written about water; the uses, the sources and the properties of water. They discussed elements such as hydrogen and Oxygen, and the process of purifying water such as decantation and then boiling. They demonstrated all these processes for us as their parents.

The kids had written books with details such as how water solidifies and melts, condenses, and evaporates and vice versa with demonstration. I saw how my daughter and other learners confidently moved from one parent to another showing them the books they had written while explaining the work they had done in this process above. The learning was practical and their presentations engaging. When we returned home, I congratulated my daughter for a good performance. She opened up to tell me more about the things which happen in school and the role that she plays. I discovered that the more I inspired and affirmed my child, the more she got involved in school work and the more she

was motivated to do more in school work. Immediately following this feedback, she began having more self-initiative.

One morning my daughter woke up half an hour earlier than usual, took a bath, and used the same time she uses to take her breakfast to do her homework then requested whether I could take her to school. She explained that there are teachers in school by the time, 7 am, for coaching, unfinished assignments, and extra work for those who need it. She wanted the teacher to give her extra work. After some time, she took a book from the library and began reading it at home or early in school. I think the place of inspiration, reward, and motivation plays a big role in the mind of children more than punishment would. If your child does something good, motivate them and possibly reward them, and then it will become natural and self-driven to do the good and right things and not the battle which I see all over the streets, scenes of mothers with whips and crying children being dragged to school, etc. that make me wonder whether the child was finding school to be a terrorizing environment.

It is a beautiful site to see my daughter wake up early, bathe herself, dress up, and make breakfast for the whole family. I always appreciate her efforts and when she forgets one thing, I remind her with inspiration and motivation, sometimes firmly and strictly but find a way to appreciate her. The Brain recognizes more negative comments and criticism because it's wired to recognize danger and threats for your survival. If you do not affirm, reward, and praise your children for their small wins, all they will remember about you is the criticism and harsh punishments which is not a good legacy.

Be present in body, soul, and spirit as a parent

Sometimes parents are not present for their children and when they are present, they are too busy and removed from their children. We go to events but remain celebrities neglecting our children whom we brought out for dinner or coffee. We take our children out and then call in our friends to join the outing and talk to our friends for the entire time. Anyone who has been around me knows that I don't allow my children to feel like the church is a substitute for them. I always give them my attention even while I am in church. If my children walk to me while I am in church, it doesn't matter how high-ranking the person I may be talking to will be. I will excuse myself and listen or attend to my children. I will have to explain to my children that they have to wait but to talk directly to them first. My children don't need an appointment to see their father. Sometimes they are just asking for a hug and they will walk away asking for nothing more after because that access and attention is available.

I have known many children who do not like associating with the church because their children feel the church is a burden to them.

In my son's former school, Andes told me that whenever he was found in a mistake, he would be punished like everyone else, but suddenly the teachers would begin discussing whose son it was, and some other teachers would start caning him without justification and claim that they are caning him so he doesn't shame his father. Honestly, I feel like that is just seeking self-importance for yourself for feeling like you punished the son of a famous or powerful man which is wrong. Unless I particularly asked you to monitor my son for me, I do not understand why you should give him an extra load just because he is the son of a famous person.

It is very clear to my sons that they should live their lives and are expected to make mistakes like any other children without the burden of being children of a celebrity or children of a pastor. If my children were found at fault, I will not burst into anger claiming that they are shaming me. I will take it as it is and deal with it as it is without exaggerating the consequences for something they didn't bargain for. If you sent me a photo of my son in while he is in error, I will not call him but will wait for him to talk to him like any other child without the pressure of importance and fame that I have.

Listening to our children

I know people without numbers whose children couldn't tell what they were struggling with and when they said it, they were not listened to. It can be painful and sometimes, we may not be able to tell the depth of their concerns which refers to the initial point of safe space and being available. Three of these cases are cases where children wanted to change their careers and in two cases, they wanted to change schools but the parents would hear none of it claiming that the children were not being responsible enough. One child was sexually abused in school and when he asked the parent to move him to another school, maybe the parent was not as equipped on how best to realize what the problem was. The parent refused completely and insisted that the child must return to school without excuses. The son committed suicide a day before opening day. Another young man was finding it difficult to cope with his college course and wanted to change his career. When he told his father about it, the father didn't have an appropriate way to handle the situation. Maybe, there were other underlying issues that the parents didn't know. The young man committed suicide.

Learn to get feedback from your children

Feedback is a critical part of parenting which most individuals use to improve at work and in church but don't think it is an important tool at home. Husbands do

not want feedback from their wives and wives do not want feedback from their husbands. Feedback from parents towards children is a positive ingredient in developing a good family life.
However, the best way to have your children value feedback with enthusiasm is to create avenues where they can also give you feedback useful for furthering your family experience. We need to Leading by example. The three most outstanding observations for my commentary were that within a very short time when I began writing this book two years ago, I challenged my children to contribute to this book by telling me how they genuinely felt about themselves, each other, and our family and their role in the family.

Their feedback largely coincided with what I expected as a parent, but I was able to realize how much a drastic change in the family patterns had affected the younger ones. The firstborn may not have realized any changes because he was in boarding school. I used that feedback intentionally and when I sought fresh feedback a year later, it is encouraging to note that I intentionally sought his feedback. Since I think I have an idea of how best to extract information from each of them used different methodologies to arrive at the same result of personal reflection and individual roles within the family. I asked Andes to tell me what would constitute a healthy family relationship but then gave Aden a questionnaire. I invite you to look at this feedback and immediately compare it with similar feedback one year ago to prove that it has been an intentional process lasting eleven months.

Aden First feedback
My parents have brought me up the right way. My father isn't around most of the time. I feel that my father is distant from me. I also love my brother so much as we have fun when playing soccer, he always takes care of me. I love my sister for being so loving and caring. (I would love to draw your attention to this observation for comparison in the second feedback). To be honest, l feel loved and supported by my parents but l don't feel the same with soccer. I need more time to play soccer. Mostly I feel denied the chance to play soccer as I am being given teachers to teach me as other children play even in the holidays I have no day that l can rest even on the weekends but l feel loved.

I value God, the talent he gave me in football, and my family the most. I don't know how my life would be without these three. I dislike the absence of my father. I also dislike when my mother ignores me and has denied me the chance to play soccer most of the time. I would like my sister to be a dancer as she wishes, my brother to be a basketballer as he wishes, my father to win a seat as president as he wishes, to buy my mother her dream car, and lastly for me to be a great footballer greater than my role model, NEYMAR DA SILVA and also be a

role model to other kids out there.It is the feedback I used to meet his area of need leading to his second feedback a year later.

Aden questionnaire

How do you feel about yourself?
I feel like I have a bright future. First of all, I have God by my side and I also know l have talent both academically and in sports.

Do you feel understood by your parents?
Yes! They are very good listeners and take their time to be with me and invest in me

Do you feel listened to by your parents?
It depends! Sometimes they listen, l understand that this may be due to my many demands but otherwise, they are considerate.

Do you feel listened to by your siblings?
It depends. Sometimes my sister is stubborn but my brother is most considerate. (I wish you can compare with the first feedback. The reason here is because the sister is now more assertive and more confident with her own identity)

Do you listen to your siblings?
Most of the time I do listen. I don't know their take on this but I think I am a good listener

Do you enjoy being with your family?
Yes, I enjoy their company. Whenever l am around family I feel safe, happy, and good. I would say an east-west home is best

What role has your family played to make you who you are now?
They have disciplined and raised me in an upright way, and they have also been a support to me as my cheering squad.

Who are your role models and why?
Jesus because he was the perfect example spiritually in life!
My other role model is Neymar because I like how he plays and also has a strong Christian background and as a footballer would be my example.

Andes Murunga
This was the first response of my son Andes.
My name is Andes Murunga, a firstborn of three children. I love music and am trying out my skills in basketball. In our family, we care for each other very much and we are always looking out for each other. My parents have always been there for me when I needed them in all areas of my life. Their affectionate love for me is like no other. My brother and sister have always been there to keep me joyful, and happy; sometimes furious but either way, I have never stopped loving them with all my heart. As a family, we have strong faith in God; we are a family that puts God first. We are a disciplined family and my parents have always led by example.

They are not proud of punishing me but if and when I do not tear the line of discipline, they will not hesitate to instill disciplinary measures. I mostly thank God that they haven't lost faith in me. My family is very supportive. They always help us nurture our talents, support us at our weak points, and are ready to help us in any way they can. They give me advice when I need it; they help me learn how to deal with life problems and are always ready to help me reach the top of my game. This shows just how loving they are.

My father is the kind of person who will always help me to get better and is himself my example. He delivers to the fullest and has always encouraged me to do challenging tasks and give it everything. He is my loving father, my role model. The picture I see of my family in the future is that we will be living very successful lives. My parents will be living in huge mansions, my brother playing for "Paris Saint Germain" in the Champions League, my sister living a desirable life as a famous person and I will be a successful lawyer, great Musician, or global basketball superstar. We will all be living God-fearing lives having achieved extraordinary goals in life. Two days ago, before Aden returned to school, I asked him to describe what a healthy family relationship should look like. This feedback is one year apart from the former feedback.

"I believe that parents and their children's relationships are strengthened by the bonds which they share. What is important is how these bonds are created and natured. Parent-children relationships are natured through spending time together and how this time is spent. This can be through constructive talks, playing with the children, and sometimes just being present when they need you. Buying gifts can make children feel appreciated and valued. A good parent and child relationship can be natured by the parent trying to know and understand what their child is into and what they don't like. Know what your child loves to do and support their happiness and avoid pushing them into something you are sure they don't like. Parents can also be a good example making it easier for the child to have mutual respect given the efforts of the parent to lead the way in the areas he or she wants their children to follow.

Siblings also create good bonds with each other as they grow up. The younger siblings tend to mimic the older siblings and the eldest sibling will most likely take the example of their parents. The kind of habits that will run in the family will most likely start with the parents and run down to the last born. In my view, a healthy family relationship is where everyone is free to express themselves and they seem to be free with each other and enjoy the company of each other." he said. Parents must get such feedback. The feedback doesn't just end with the parent receiving feedback but rather, the feedback forms a template against which the child will carry forward into their own family lives many years to come.

Be an example of the values you teach

When I went to pick up my son from school on closing day, I was with a friend who also had his son. Immediately they alighted at their destination, I remained with my son in the car. We later stopped by the supermarket to buy the items he will need the following term, I will explain that shortly. After the shopping, he hugged me and said. "Thank you, Dad, for coming to pick me up from school and for taking me to the supermarket." I was honored that my son is not entitled. When we give our children the finer life, a sense of entitlement can easily set in. Unfortunately, there is no class to teach gratitude or entitlement except by being an example of someone grateful for life and the small things to those around you.

It hit me, that he must have learned this from somewhere. I am not claiming that I don't exhibit entitlements but I try not to behave like someone who is entitled. As a public figure, sometimes I get favors where others won't get clearance but I try my best to follow procedure unless the favor is extended to me. I do not demand to be treated a certain way differently from the rest. Sometimes I get treated better but it is after it is offered or in very rare circumstances, I would make a kind request. I want to hope that this could have been a factor because I dint ask my son about that. I only got excited that he is humble and not entitled.

Andes speaks of the father's example because we have spent quality time with him upcountry whereby, we wake up together and go to the farm together. We would put fertilizer on our maize together and support our construction workers together and many other assignments. He knows that I value all people no matter their social class and I have demanded some of these standards from him when opportunities presented them. I usually take them to children's homes to see that not everyone has the assurance of a meal and a place to call home. We take donations to children's homes regularly in the company of my children. They play with the other children and have very interesting feedback about their experience in the children's homes. As for the supermarket, it is another topic together about responsibility.

Discipline and punishment

A lot of parents struggle with how to cause discipline in their children with some feeling helpless. Mostly it is because they were disciplined and punished differently than what our environment dictates. Some are raising their children exactly how they were raised and punishing their children the same way they were punished. Most of the punishment we received as children during our error was unfortunate. Some of our parents intimidated us and traumatized us in proportions that have never healed. In the process, some of the children have carried the trauma of the constant threats and fear-mongering which came with such parenting styles.

Some children used to calculate when their fathers or mothers will leave so they can feel alive again and when their fathers or mothers returned home they felt like a new prison has been created in the home.

Today, we still have children who coalesce around mothers and when daddy comes home, all the children retreat to their rooms. This is not a healthy relationship with your children. It is not good that the only time you talk to your children is when you want to punish them. Sometimes, we punish our children when we are angry with other parties and situations from work or within the family. It is important to punish your children only when your mind is processing their situation and not when you have carried your office stress to your son or daughter. A lot of what we call indiscipline is not necessarily because a child intentionally chose to do or fails to follow instructions.

Most often than not, it is the subconscious mind projecting inconsistent mental patterns which are borrowed from varied experiences and other people around you which could be friends or even parents. When your still and blissful mind tries to process these patterns to bring order to your mindset, it magnifies and brings to the surface the thinking patterns which are inconsistent with your mindset. Indiscipline, mistakes, and errors as we know it is a Godly gift that we have to bring to the surface those thinking patterns which are influenced, externally acquired, or forced on us but inconsistent with our mindset. Indiscipline and bad behavior are like the fever you get when you have Malaria, diarrhea or vomiting you have when you have food poisoning, or the back pain when your spine is not aligned. The parenthesis of this submission is that error, mistakes and indiscipline are indicators of what is wrong with us. It is a shout for help, a scream for attention. Mistakes are not entirely bad because they help us correct what is wrong with us. Suppressing the conflicts thru punishment without an audience doesn't always help construct the holistic person.

Enforcing alternative habits and patterns is one way to cure the pure mind and that is what we mostly do. Enforce, remind. Teaching a new value system puts the mind to order and with that, the mind organizes the entire life of a person. Correction is that attempt to condition the mind in a certain repetitive pattern that seeks to amend, substitute, improve, or rehabilitate the wrong mindset and habits. Correction may include punishment and chastisement and this aspect calls for awareness and objectivity as you punish your child using models that yield results.

Affirm your children before predators do

When possible, I do take my daughter to school and pick her back and as I talk to her on our journey to and from school, I like telling her words of affirmation. As parents, when our daughters hear from someone they can trust like a father "That they are beautiful", they believe it and internalize what parents say to them because they want no favor in return. Anyone else bullying them and saying negative things cannot break their spirit as they are late. Imagine your daughter believing a bad report about themselves before they believed your report and God's report as told by you. Tell your children good reports about them. That is all they need to win in life.

When daughters grow up, some bad boys are smooth operators and can sweep her off her feet, if she is craving attention and appreciation. If your daughter is not desperate for attention, a boy telling her unrealistic words and flatteries just to mess around with her destiny, won't be enough to convince her because she has heard and believed the genuine report from her parents. She will be looking for inner value in the man because she is secure about the outward value if she was already trained by her parents. Children do not internalize the classroom teaching of what love is; they define it as they experience it. If their parents demonstrate what love is, the children can easily rate and measure love when they come across someone offering love.

Most of our children experience what I would call transference and mistake it for love. I mean, a young girl who has experienced cruelty or lack of affection from her father or mother will be desperate for someone to appreciate her. If your daughter has felt unloved, unwanted, neglected, and treated harshly, she will project this need onto someone else by desiring that someone who represents a male figure do the things her parents didn't do for her. The male figure will interpret that the young lady loves and needs him. She will indeed need him but for completely different reasons. She will be needy and insecure seeking constant confirmation whether you love her. She will be possessive and jealous because

she is coming from a place of insecurity. A young man who doesn't feel loved by his father and mother will also be desirous to feel loved and will project this desire to a female who will interpret that the young man loves her. He will be needy and insecure most of the time with an exaggerated need for affirmation and confirmation that you love them. He will be excessively possessive and jealous because he is coming from a place of insecurity. Incidentally, these are the types of relationships that end up being toxic when these needs are not met. When two insecure people meet, they are trauma bound to each other because there is little true love that exists.

True love exists when one feels they have something to offer and wants to give their portion of love. Receiving love is necessary but it begins with someone being in a position to offer love. None is giving love but instead expecting to draw love. What binds these two people together is their need for love. Unfortunately, both of them are seeking to be loved with little love to offer which becomes traumatically binding and toxic. We should learn to love our sons and daughters and show them their significance and importance beyond demanding that they read and pass exams. We should particularly build their self-esteem.

Teach them compassion and empathy

It is important for your children to understand that life is experienced differently by each individual child. This will enable them to empathise with others thus not loosing out on valuable friendships based on misunderstanding. They will also learn to acknowledge their weaknesses and deal with their failures and mistakes because they have come to appreciate to give other people a fair chance, second chance and room to redeem themselves from their mistakes and failures. Trhis can only happen in the midst of compassiona and empathy. if you can not have compassion towards others, you are likely to judge yourself harshly. You are also likely not to have self love if you cannot empathise with others. Empathy enables you to view yourself in many different perspectives making it possible to acknowledge and validate yourself in various changing curcumstances.

YoungNation
Helping the needy
PARENTING.

'Our father has helped nurture our talents', say singing siblings
Photo album

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9

RESILIENCE TO SOAR ABOVE STORMS

I sit to write this chapter and a snappy memory comes: the song Hide me by the group Hillsong. Here is the refrain:

When the Oceans rise and thunders roar
I will soar with you above the storm
Father you are king over the flood
I will be still and know you are God

Across our journey of life, we are on a sea, roaring our boats of life towards a shore. Storms hit our boats, strong winds, at times we lose energy to roar the boat. When one has a gift, talent, calling, aspiration, or passion, there will always be obstacles that could discourage. Sometimes betrayals can hold you back or completely deviate you from your goals. Sometimes, you will fail in your ventures due to the prevailing circumstances or environmental factors. How we use the failures to inform better decisions in the future is in most cases the challenge.

This is the best gift I ever got from my mother, the mantra to always hope and never give up. It is a value that was also passed down to her by her father who always admonished her to hope for the best no matter the odds which stuck in her face. There are many things in her life for which she has never given up, even when the course looked like all lost. She has never given up on the hope to fulfill her dreams, most of which I have mentioned in this entire book. I see the footprints of her father and mother all around her life. Her father taught her hard work while her mother taught her excellence. My father is hard work and excellence personified. My grandfather traveled to China to solicit funding for a community-based soap-making factory. He got the funds but the government of Kenya denied him a license because of his lack of formal education. For this reason, he turned that unfortunate event to fuel his passion for education.

He educated my mother as the first in her community to go to high school and always believed that her unfulfilled dreams will translate into a community project that will cause education in his community. He insisted on this vision as his dying wish.

By God's grace, the dream has been accomplished with my mother being the vision bearer of the Tumaini Community School. I was the translator for the first donor when a community water borehole was first sunk in the place long before the school started. Later a school would be built funded by Literacy for All (LIFA) and later handed to the Government of Kenya. My mother is currently the Chairman of the Board of management of the school. Considering the experiences, she has gone through no one would have expected that she would live to see the dream of her father thrive with her being at the very helm of it. I believe, my grandfather is very proud of her. My father never verbalized the same words but his life has been a life of resilience and never giving up. I have seen him hold on to bounce back a million times in the face of adversity. He has risen again and again in all the failures I witnessed in his life. When his children seemed off track, he always kept pushing them and hoping that his day will come when he will see that particular child come out the way he had hoped for him or her.

When my eldest sister, Ruth Murunga, cleared high school, she immediately after, got married against my father's wish because she was yet to get to college. My father let her settle in her marriage but persisted in the pursuit of her advanced education. He got her a chance at Eregi Teachers training college. Unfortunately, when he took her the admission letter to her marital home, she was expecting her first son Kelvin Okumu. When my dad visited the home to renew this push, he found her expecting her second child, Eugene Munala. My father did not give up. He kept pushing until he saw my sister join college and finally graduate. She has since retired as a very successful teacher. All my siblings have a story of how my father has never given up on them and how he has always pushed for a better day for all of his children. His mantra is very simple. He has always done everything he can, from the early years of the family to date, and attends to every child of his like that is the only child.

I saw my father practice dairy farming when one day; anthrax wiped all his nine Friesian cows. He had borrowed a bank loan for that business. I saw his sense of loss and watched him helplessly sitting by a stone with his face covered for a very long time until late into the dark evening of the day without moving. He did not give up. He fought through it all and as I write this book, he still supplies milk within our local community to date and ever generating noble ideas on how his breed can best improve. I was conscious enough when I watched my father lose employment and bounce back.

I walked by his side through political election cycles; watched him campaign hard for himself and other colleagues and watched him lose an election and bounce back into politics through nomination as a councillor. I watched my father's lowest economic moments when he withdrew five of us from boarding school to a day school. We were embarrassed at first for going to a village school after the prestige of our former schools. Mumias Boys Primary was and remains a prestigious school with a national reputation. He did not buy the shame. He embraced the moment as a father, took care of us, supported my mother in her theological college pursuits sometimes walked us to and from school with pride and determination.

I watched my father lose a whole chunk of sugarcane land to fire. It is the very farm I now live on. He didn't give up. He bounced back and planted again. I would later see him seated at the famous *Omukhuyu* tree, with a mammoth crowd of cane cutters receiving payments the following season. I saw him witness crop failure due to drought and the following year he would sink a borehole. I walked around the farm with him as he showed me which harvest will next pay my school fees and which crop will be our school fees the following term or year. His projections of farming were three years ahead. He always bounced back and had the last laugh and dance. I have been present during my father's difficult and depressive days emanating from a series of unfortunate events but he always bounced back. In some incidences, he would say things that looking back as a psychologist would argue that they bordered on suicidal thoughts but he bounced back and pulled himself out of the pits of emotional pain and by God's grace found a reason to dream again.

At the worst of my father-son relationship crisis, my father never gave up on me despite the challenges that existed at the time. He found a way to demonstrate the love of a father. Even that gap did not diminish his broader desires for his son. He found my best friends and the people I respected the most to talk to me and he finally won me back to be the good son he always wished for me. It was just a few weeks ago when we had a father-son moment over his 79th birthday.

My father reiterated what he has always told me ever since I finished campus; that he looks forward to a Ph.D. He never misses a chance to remind me of this pursuit. He never gives up. It is this character trait of resilience; bouncing back and rising above limitations which I inherited from my parents. Their example has shaped my worldview that no matter how low you may have sunk, there is always hope for a better day. No matter how desperate your situation might become, there is no room for defeat, you can always retreat, re-energize and reinvent yourself for victory. I admonish you my reader that there is always hope for another day, despite your failures or mistakes. Dust yourself from the fall and rise again. This can only happen if you never give up.

The word of God assures us in Deuteronomy 31: 8 (NIV) that he will never leave us nor forsake us. Do not be afraid and do not be discouraged. My journeys of resilience are summarized in my Family life, Church Ministry, Music career, Cooperate career, and Leadership threads. I also battled life-threatening illnesses for seven years.

Agents Of Mental and Emotional Stress

Betrayals

Friends have betrayed each other; confidants have betrayed each other; teammates have betrayed each other and left a bad taste in the mouth. Trust has been destroyed between partners leaving behind a sense of loss and betrayal. The pain of betrayal is very painful because it comes from people you love very much and people whom you have trusted deeply. Such betrayals are too deep that their pain takes a lot of effort to heal and restore.

Rejection

A lot of adults are facing rejection at work and home. Many people are struggling with rejection within their social circles and do not know what to do with their situation. This can cause a lot of emotional pain and if not properly processed could cause damage that will affect other faculties of our lives. Fathers and mothers are rejecting their children when they wish to follow a different career path from that of their parents. Parents are rejecting their children when they make mistakes that are construed to bring disrepute to the family name. If a girl gets pregnant while still unmarried, parents are likely to send her packing and ask them never to come back. Fathers and mothers are completely turning their backs on their children because a child was concerned about the welfare of one of the parents who seemed to be vulnerable in their misunderstandings as a couple. Children have been rejected and disinherited. This can be very painful and impact the mental state of an individual so much such that if not properly assisted, it could change the course of their lives completely.

Widowhood

As a widow, the moment you lose your husband through death, you are confronted with many unforeseen circumstances. If he died in the house, then you might as well be the first suspect; something which is nowadays common. In some communities, you might experience a raft of cultural expectations to prove that you were faithful to your husband. In some cases, you might even be called upon to prove that you were married to him. In such cases, succession and inheritance of property would be the motive. One might face alienation from critical decisions regarding her late husband.

A lot of cases end with the widow and the orphans being disinherited of the late husband's properties and possibly displacement from their matrimonial homes. One thing I would like you to gain insight into is that I am not referring to the drama and dynamics of everything I have mentioned. I have my eyes on the prize which is the fundamental principles of the psychological person namely; Support systems, affirmation, identity, and emotional safety.

It is the loss of these fundamental needs which breaks down the life of a widow. The solution to this is to intentionally embrace loss and grief therapy but above all start to meet the needs afresh. Set up a new support system like I have explained comprehensively in the chapter "Support systems". Is your support coming from a support group of other widows, peer support, therapy, church, mentors, or community support? Where do you get your affirmation? Figure out your new identity and process it to your satisfaction. Finally, heal your emotions thru therapy and conduct a new self-awareness so that you can represent yourself accordingly and put yourself only in environments that assure your emotional safety.

Widowers

Widowers share a lot with their widows in the sense of the loss of a loved one. The loss of a support system becomes visible. Women are known to be very good managers and organize the lives of men in a significant way. The support of a listening ear and an adviser who encourages you and cheers you on is the epitome of affirmation, something which is usually lost. Men who had a good and reliable support system and an affirming wife do not rush to marry despite the common belief that men cannot stay long after the loss of a wife. Those who marry too soon were most likely not getting the support and affirmation from their late wife. To some, it may seem like good riddance. The alternative would be that the men couldn't function on their own in many aspects and were too dependent on their wives that their lives seem coming to a standstill.

Widowers have a second version of pressure and that is the pressure of suitors who position themselves as ready and available for takeover. A financially stable widower is very lucrative to suitors who might be single, single mothers, or widows and this pressure can be overwhelming leading to misunderstandings if not well managed by the widower. Widows too might experience this pressure but younger widows face more pressure from suitors, unlike older widows. Older widows get suitors but hardly do they get men who want to commit to marriage as they mostly get passes from opportunists who just want to exploit them sexually and socially without lifelong commitments.

Widowers need to be grounded in an environment of peer or mentor support systems as well as church support systems so that they can get honest and genuine help and affirmation from people who genuinely care for them. During this period, I would highly advise widowers to spend more time with their sisters and mothers for female affirmation because it is unlikely that other females won't be exaggerating their affirmation with a predetermined result. Prayer and belonging to a church support system or support group will be helpful.

Orphans

Nobody seems to care much about orphans whether they lose one parent or both. How many parents imagine seeking counseling for their children? How many parents or adults follow up to know how exactly their children feel days or months after the loss of a parent? Most widows and widowers believe because they are managing their emotions, their children are managing at the same rate and competence. Contrary to what adults believe, children mostly have less capacity and competence to express these emotions, leave alone to you. The loss of a mother or a father continues to haunt the children emotionally unless they have adequately been able to vent it out in some form. Such a do not scenario does exist anywhere for an orphan. Just check around you. You will find a support group for widows and another for widowers but will hardly find one for orphans. There is counseling at the individual or group level for widows and widowers but non for orphans, yet they are more vulnerable given their younger ages.

False accusations and malicious damage

False accusations and malicious damage can be very damaging to the emotional well-being of an individual. False accusations take place in churches, in homes, the office, and in the marketplace. It is sometimes very sickening to note the length and depth some people would go to achieve their end. Some people do not care whom they hurt along the way and would do anything at all to achieve the advantage at the detriment of others without a care of how that would affect their families and their future.

Job losses, business losses or loss of an election

Job losses an dbusiness losses come with a huge impact of pain due to loss of income and opportunitry. Sometimes job losses take away the dignity of the person who has been providing for the family. Taking children through school can be tough and loss of income can take away the dignity of a provider to any parents. Some job losses come with shouts of shame and undignified dismissal which may leave an employee destroyed emotionally.

Polictical leaders invest a lot of money, time and related resources through an election cycle. The family suffers the brunt of that election loss. It is very painful to bear with such political losses especially if the loss was unfair and malicious. I have lost an election and I have also suffered emotionally when my preferred candidates or candidates whom I supported directly lost elections unfairly or even squarely. Election loss can cause severe depression to the looseses as they count their losses and put up with a new form of disorientation from their previous life which was serving their purpose effectively. Some have to put up with the loss of dignity when they are unable to meet their personal needs or sustain their families after loss of resources or having resigned from employment.

Workplace Trauma

Every employer indeed wants results and value for the shareholder but my argument here is that an employer might gain more value from the same employee with the same remuneration if an effort is institutionalized to cushion the employee's unforeseen workplace trauma. The greatest workplace trauma is experiencing stressful events without support or understanding. Sometimes, unrealistic expectations at the workplace or abusive workmates and bosses can cause continuous vicious cycles of stress until the employee is not able to focus, be creative, or becomes unproductive due to workplace stress which is without workplace support systems. Severe workloads or a toxic work environment can become workplace trauma. Employers have a duty of care to support the mental health, safety, and wellbeing of their employees making sure the work environment is safe for them to thrive. It is also worth noting that best practice disciplinary action has certain procedures such as gaining an initial understanding of a matter, investigating thoroughly, inviting the employees to disciplinary meetings, deciding the action to take, confirming the outcome in writing, and granting a right to appeal or review if applicable. If a proper procedure is not followed then the disciplinary action taken may be considered to be as unfair. The purpose of disciplinary procedures is to correct and not punish work-related behavior. Shortcuts leave a lot of unanswered questions and mostly leave a trail of hurt to individuals and families. It usually ends in misinformation and misunderstandings.

Employers may also afford counseling services to individuals facing disciplinary action to elevate the human face and duty of care of our workspaces. The absence of counseling services may causes may cause a lot of pain to individuals whose outcome may be in the domain of the unknown especially if the extent of the pain is to the extent to affect the mental wellness of the affected person to desire to retaliate or harm himself or herself. It is not only the employer which has a reputation to save or preserve. The individual human being too has a life deserving of preservation.

To summarize my work experience in this season, it was a great experience with beautiful people and lessons of growth. There are a few dynamics that caused me workplace trauma that I wouldn't wish on anyone else. The first trauma emanated from the geographical expanse of my assigned markets. I was hired in 2006 February and assigned to serve along Mombasa Road while my satellite office was in Kitengela and the branch office in Machakos.

A colleague of mine was already serving the Machakos junction called Kyumvi and was operating in Salama town already which meant I had to travel all the way to Sultan Hammud as my starting point. Our branch territory ended in Kibwezi. I still had to come back to Kitengela because that is where my operational satellite office was. The drive was two to three hours between these towns and my satellite office. Mombasa Road was not the smooth highway it currently is; in fact, it was under construction with diversions for the greater period of 2006/7. We also did not have the current market hubs we have today along the way between major towns. We just had Kyumvi, salama, Sultan Hammud, Emali, Masimba, Makindu and Kibwezi.

Konza junction had only one tyre repair shop. I ended up covering the main markets along Mombasa Road and their outskirts. The travel cost due to distance was high. This experience was made more traumatic with the construction of Mombasa Road during this period of 2006/7. The diversions along the road were too many and the entire stretch was dusty causing me to have continuous tonsillitis and unending coughs and flu. It was scary to wake up and go to work. One wished they didn't have to wake up.

The second workplace trauma for me was the social-cultural shock unique to some of my clients. When it was time to service the loans, sometimes I would meet my clients in their designated markets wearing jeans and jackets and with very educated and enlightened designated leaders to argue their case for lending. After training and lending, some would change their character and wear their pastoralist clothing and personality and would be gone grazing as far as the neighboring country, Tanzania, for months. Some would pay upon return without being pushed while others would need to be pushed through the area chief to pay up their loans. For the time they were out of reach, my portfolio was at risk and I had poor ratings in my performance. I would be in Emali town or surrounding hoping to meet my clients on the designated market days but will get reports that they are in another region such as Mashuru in the interior with transport available only in the morning and in the evening. Sometimes I would get reports that they are in Elbisil, towards the Tanzanian border. Tactfully but costly, I would have to travel there to redeem my portfolio.

This dynamic presented me with a challenge that would later cost me heavily. When I met my good clients on market days, they would sell their cows and goats and pay what they owed, saying, "Here is your money, take it ". This is what cost me my job and reputation. It was never easy to convince a nomadic pastoralist Maasai man to leave his herd of cattle in the marketplace, "carry your cash," go to the bank and deposit that cash, and then bring you the deposit slip. They tactfully obliged to follow procedures to qualify for the loans then changed their attitude soon after they had their financial needs met. This policy instruction seemed like a disruption of their lifestyle because the banks were too far, costly, and time-consuming. Someone working in a city would not understand this experience of the expansive Kajiado County.

Picture this! The only banks where all my clients could bank were Kenya commercial bank in Kitengela, Kajiado Town, Machakos Town, and Kibwezi Town. The clients in Sultan Hamud had to travel to Machakos town as the nearest banking facility while the ones in Emali had to go to Kibwezi or still travel to Machakos. We did not have the mobile banking which we currently enjoy to make payments directly from our phones.

Picture the distance in between with two to three hours of travel from the bank to the business location. Having sought this pastoralist man from Sultan Hamud or Emali only to find him way later in Elbisil as he is almost crossing into Tanzania as his next stop, what would you do? That is how I desperately ended up carrying with me, the cash belonging to my employer just to survive confirmation of my employment. I took responsibility for the policy error but this error was exploited out of proportion to settle something greater than my circumstances.

Around this time, drought was biting too. Looking back, I think there could be something practical by the employer to enable an employee operating in such expansive territories to be effective without expending too much energy on non-work-related experiences such as traveling for three hours from Makindu to Kitengela from 5:00 pm which is close of business for most workplaces only to get to your town at 8 pm. These three hours do not even account for the day's job but the burden you bear after you are thru with a day's job. There needed to be a threshold of income and clientele to warrant opening a satellite office in the area; a strategy that is sound by all means but I was paying a very heavy price.

I couldn’t live in Sultan Hammud or Emali where the majority of my clientele was because I would need to report to the office in Kitengela anyway. I would later begin to recruit within Kitengela and Athi River up to Kinanie but the damage was already done. This work experience was traumatic as loan recovery became a nightmare in later days. Loan recovery could keep you awake thru the night considering I was hoping to get confirmed in my position as a development

finance officer after I had been promoted from being an assistant Development finance officer. The desire to succeed would not let me realize that I had spread myself too thin for one human body that could only be in one place at the same time. I got some of my foundations wrong or overlooked details which would finally haunt me. I wish there was some form of platform to help deal with the emotional drain if and when an employee was experiencing such drain and fatigue.

I never had any leave days for all the days I worked for this employer. Eventually, I became a little bold to end my suffering and made peace with closing down the non-performing portfolios in some of these markets. I stopped lending more loans to non-performing groups while pursuing those in default. When it was not possible to have a seat down with some of those in default, I applied the group co-guarantee principle with the help of the group leaders. The logic behind group co-guarantee is using the savings of the loanee and co-guarantors to clear the outstanding loans while the group members would recover the said money directly from their member whom they co-guaranteed. With no hope for career progression and unbearable stress, I resigned. The company refused to recognize my resignation and instead punished me some more by dismissing me instead.

Since that time, my mental and physical wellness became a priority at all times. My family became my priority and any institutional interest became very disposable when duty calls. As much as I didn't have a second chance to prove myself in the very environment, I granted myself the version of a **second chance where you accept your losses, heal the trauma** emanating from your losses, and open your heart to experience a new life experience and reality. I trusted in the God of second chances to come my way and rewrite my story again. I chose to seek other employment opportunities **until God gave me a second chance** to rewrite my cooperate story captured in my career path.

As much as I felt very bad about my ending in this employment, many years later, my heart healed because I was vindicated to the extent that the challenges which I faced were systemic and not eunique to me or even my colleagues. The company which had opened a fully-fledged bank in the region closed down that entire banking branch and released all its employees in this branch. The team leader, who was at the helm during the time I left, had been flashing a track record of success everywhere he had been before. He was unfortunately dismissed just like everyone else and lost his senior ranking position together with the collapse of the entire branch on account of non-performance. I had initially been enraged vowing to one day seek legal redress but I was eventually vindicated and just let go of it.

Stigma and stereotypes

There is a constituency within our society that faces what I may call in legal terms, double jeopardy. They have to go thru a new set of judgment, condemnation, and stigma over and above the tragedy they have already experienced in life thru widowhood, separation, divorce, or children out of wedlock. These challenges are not only a product of cultural perspectives but also religious perspectives. These are the single parents, mothers or fathers, widows, widowers, the separated and divorced. It is our call to offer knowledge that may not solve their challenges but could genuinely alleviate the pain of those in those brackets and make it easier to cope with their situations. There is also a group that you won't hear mentioned anywhere until they join the separation or widowed group and sometimes they get to be heard only after they join the suicide group or the murdered group. These are people in abusive relationships and toxic marriages.

Disability

This is another vulnerable group that hardly receives the love of society for whatever reason. They endure stressful lives facing rejection, discrimination and stigmatization. They move around watching their backs because they are sure that someone is making a negative comment behind them. Those who are visually impaired, physically challenged, autistic, with speech impairment rewuire our love and support.

Finally, there is another angle to the above description. To place the scenario of the proposer of this proposal in context, reference is made to Anthropologist Nancy Scheper –Hughes who found that when infants and toddlers from poor families were quite sick from diarrhea and dehydration, mothers could not be convinced to use medicines to save their children. These mothers would not even accept back into their homes those children who recovered on their own. They believed that these children were sick and fragile and would always be a burden. Thus, it was better to let them die, so the family's few economic resources would more generously be divided among the healthy.

When this occurred, parents accepted their sickly child's death with stoicism and equanimity. Scheper- Hughes concludes that the mother love is not absent (because it is lavished on other children), but that maternal thinking and practices are shaped by overwhelming economic and cultural constraints *(Scheper – Hughes 1992:340- Parents & Children, Myths & Realities).* In the same breath therefore parenting children that have suffered and Cerebral palsy and continue to live with the effects of the same, pauses serious economic and cultural constraints on their parents. Some of these parents have resigned from regular employment to optimize the provision of care to that special child at home.

Family members on the other hand look at these mothers as social misfits in that culturally cerebral palsy is not a medical condition but is brought about by some witchcraft or it is a result of denial of certain rites to ancestors. These mothers ought therefore not to be assisted but left to languish in poverty and rejection as they take care of these special children.

Cerebral Palsy (CP) is categorised as neurodevelopment disorders that in this 21st century is on the rise globally especially in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Governments, Kenya included have no precise policies and mitigation structures for neurodevelopment disorders that include CP, intellectual disability, dyslexia and autism. Access to public information about these disorders in children is very limited with medics being the main reservoir of why and how it happens to the very young children, who are in most cases ignored, locked up at home or chained to limit their community calls stubborn nature. Worse of the CP cases is the growth abnormalities that come with folded limbs, twisted necks, lack of or very limited speech and very limited mobility.

Discouragements

This musical journey has not been without its moments of discouragement. Some years ago I used to sell my music CDs. I mean music on Disc on our streets around the country using my car. It was a white Nissan Wing Road, with an in-built sound system. I had a team of hard-working young men and one lady who used to help me sell the CDs. My nephew Kelvin Okumu, who was staying with me at the time, joined my team and later managed the team as the sales manager. While on a sales trip, I met a young man called Thomas Aswani " Papa Tomaso" in Nakuru who asked if I can allow him to drop his bike at home and join us. That was so fast. He never looked back and never went back home to his parents. He made himself a man by selling my music onwards. He later moved to Nairobi with me and continued doing sales for me. He later recorded his music and would sell alongside mine until he became independent.

He is now a great artiste doing well in the Kenyan music space. Papa Tomaso is one embodiment of resilience but I have one discouraging moment that impacted him during one of our sales trips. There is this one day we were selling in Bungoma town. A young girl shouted at us saying "You guys are broke and that's why you are hawking music". Thomaso, as we used to call him was very discouraged. I wasn't discouraged but it got into my head to realize how easy it is for one to be discouraged by bystanders in this entertainment business where opinions matter. Thomas was very upset the whole day. It got into his head that it affected his morale for two days. His sales went low but I encouraged him.

Looking at this, I realize how much self-affirmation should be full in the tank. People are mean out there and will bring you down with their speech.

The Burden of Fame

As a celebrity in Kenya, I would love to advise my fellow celebrities who have the burden of becoming famous. To you my friends who are Actors, Media personalities, sports personalities, Musicians, pastors, politicians, socialites, and anything that puts you in the limelight, I have discovered certain truths which if understood will give you a peaceful life forever. I have dubbed them the 10 Rules fame. Being seen and heard on TV and radio should not be a punishment for you. Grow a thick skin for attention because you will still need to use the same public busses and shop in local markets like everyone else until further notice when fame equals money in the pocket. If you make a mistake to change your lifestyle before further notice, then prepare to be poor and depressed.

Your family members may become famous too and every time you visit them, the shop attendant will call your relatives to remind them of their overdue debt and they won't believe that your relatives can't pay up yet their celebrity brother or sister was seen around. Explain this reality to your relatives, at least those whom you visit lest they isolate you without intending to. You may later wonder why they do not seem excited when you visit them. Understand that people will judge you for the very mistakes they commit seven days a week if you commit them once a decade. Just dust yourself and rise again as though the public judgment only happened in your dreams.

Please understand that it gives the masses pleasure every time you struggle and face defeat. Not many people recognize or even notice your good deeds and accomplishments in such moments. When you get a bad name, they get savage and throw huge and sharp stones at you. Isn't that their moment of fame? When they hate you, they are simply projecting their self-hate and anger.
People who are happy with their lives have very little chance of using NKT on others. It takes more than disgust to get happy people so angry at anyone. Do not feel stressed when your personal life is not all knit together. It's not a qualification to be famous. Just pray to God to help you improve the quality of your life for you and not for anyone else. You need a good name for your brand, not for your haters. If the masses are hell-bent to call you a bad boy at every bend, embrace the character. You might mint the money from the character, just remember that it's brand; so keep your personal life out of it.

Do not commit suicide because of your mistakes and moments of shame. None of these guys shaming and laughing at you have their lives in place. They are miserable, bitter, haters of self, and dysfunctional. They are in abusive marriages,

some of them have not had sex with their spouses for months, and most have side chicks and tomboys if not sex toys. Some are porn addicts, some are divorcees, some are on disciplinarian from their employment, some go without food, their house rent is in arrears and they have changed schools for their kids leaving arrears in previous schools. Some are adulterous and fornicators, some are drunkards and some are witches but they will spit on your face for one tragedy in your life. Do not judge them but do not give them the joy to judge you either. Face off with your God and declare" case closed."

It is what it is! It sells only when a man bites a dog and not the other way around. Expect the pastor to muddle the musician, the journalist to celebrate the fall of a pastor, the politician to eat the journalist, and the musician to mock the politician. That's just how the ecosystem works. Isn't it a "man eat man" society? When your song or your act becomes a big tune, understand that you are not big yourself as a brand. Please live by that understanding. It takes more than being a main actor in one TV series to build a brand. Do not move houses or take a car loan because of a big hit or a big gig until your brand will afford it for you. It takes time to build that brand and even much more time to cash from the brand. To Franchise from your brand is the epitome of branding and sometimes you may have to rebrand even more than once before the brand is stable. Remember Airtel was once Celtel or was it Kencell? ABSA was once Backlays Bank and Unilever was once East Africa Industries. Sometimes they say fake it until you make it, but it doesn't always favor all. Calculate well your risks because some remain fake for good!

When you are stuck, just know you are on your own. No one will understand that you can lack as a person or suffering lack. If they help or lend you, they won't understand that you could lack as a person and so prepare to be called bad and ugly names not because you are bad as a person but because their psychology can't reconcile your big brand name and the little matter under discussion.
Look here; the giant supermarket "Nakumat went down and it's okay, Kenya Airways was 33 billion in debt and it's okay as we must save our national pride from the exchequer. Then giant Tuskeys went down and it's okay for those brands to go down except yours. Nations are in debt and operating in deficits but your brand will be crucified for one non-performing agreement. My friend, do not commit suicide when your brand is not performing. Accept the downtime and pull your life together. Work your way up and God will see God thru by faith.

I agree with Kenyan music sensation Akothee that the government doesn't pay you to be anyone's role model and neither do parents intentionally support you so that you can be a role model to their children. If you happen to inspire people, that is good.

However, do not carry the burden of being a role model to parents who take alcohol in the presence of their children, abuse their husbands and wives in the sight of their children, Insult teachers in the hearing of their children including insulting the very children with unprintable vocabulary, are never present to teach their children morals then find a perfect escape route whenever you are at fault to say you are a bad role model to their children. Let them scream their lungs out. Do not cry because of such nonsense unless you have chosen to make being a role model a career by itself. Let every parent raise their children without transferring their parental responsibility to you just because you are famous.

If you are a talented basketball or soccer star and your personal life is not near perfect, will you stop playing soccer or basketball until you have exhaustively fixed your drinking problem? These fellows do not resign from their careers to go and fix their divorce cases first but continue with their daily work as they go around it. You shouldn't be punished for not exploiting your talent just because you don't have it all together in your personal life. Fame is not a career but just a consequence of your career. Your acting or singing talent is motivation enough for someone else to try their talent even if your family life isn't the best. I agree that your talent will take you up but only your character can sustain you there; that said and done, your lack of character is not a creation of your talent. You would still be the same character in obscurity. Work on your character as a necessity for life, more so because you are talented but do not stop trying your talent because of your inadequacies otherwise Jesus would have had only himself for a disciple. It must serve as a lesson to preachers like myself that Jesus did not expel Judas or any other disciple knowing very well that one among them would betray him.

Thomas doubted the resurrection of Jesus while Peter denied his knowledge of Christ. Jesus prayed for him to weather the storms and after to strengthen his brethren.

Peter went to the house of Cornelius a gentile, and when the disciples questioned that move, he explained himself and the disciples were satisfied. Our modern-day Christians, pastors, and bishops do not inquire to understand a brother. They bring on board their perceptions and judge you. When you feel weak, remember that Jesus told his father, "The spirit is willing but the body is weak". He also questioned God why he had forsaken him like we also question God when things are not going right. Above all, never give up! Let the will of God be done as we play our part thru faith

Separation and divorce

Some religious beliefs conflict with the concept of separation but no individual should feel bound to stay in an unhappy marriage or to endure a marriage that destroys their ego, self-esteem, and identity altogether. It is of no value to become a shell of a human concoction reduced to no value and no purpose because of being bound in a marriage that destroys your humanity. These are my views and I will not take responsibility for any choices made by an individual, or will I judge anyone who finds themselves in a place where they needed to make the difficult decision to separate or divorce.

If people were united by genuine love and have the commitment to make the home front conducive for a happy life, they should do everything possible to save their marriage before it gets to the point of separation and divorce. That is not a comfortable place to be and no one in their right senses desires to find themselves in a separated or divorced state. Trust me when I say that those who are in separation or divorced state, most likely have a valid reason to be in that space because it is one of the most uncomfortable and painful places to be. It is so painful to the extent that the person who is walking away, walks away while in pain, and the person who remains; remains in pain and if there are children involved, they bear much more pain than both parents. This is a painful place to be and I would be slow to judge anyone occupying this place.

From a married person's standpoint, many people say that loneliness is the hardest part. It takes a very long time to get used to being single. Not only have you lost your partner, and perhaps your best friend, but you have possibly also lost your common friends, your in-laws and the extended family that you are married into. You, therefore lose two critical components which are support systems and affirmation which come from the entire ecosystem. Finances become a new strain because some things which are shared in marriage become a double cost when one party starts life anew. Separation also implies that you are living away from each other but legally married until you get a ruling of divorce from a court of law.

Children are not entirely bystanders in these situations of separation. They are likely to show anger, stress, and confusion. They may have difficulties concentrating in school, and struggle to bond or play with their peers. The most affected children are the ones who often have an intense desire for their parents to get back together and may promote reconciliation. Children also feel anxious about the future. In an article by the Children's Services, titled: Practice notes for North Carolina's child welfare social workers; it is confirmed that, following their parents' separation, children may regress, display anxiety and depressive

symptoms, and they appear more irritable, demanding, experience problems in social relationships and retard in performance at school.

In an article by a scholar Paul R. Amato, published in 2001 by the journal of family psychology titled, the effects of divorce on school performance and behaviour in pre-school children in Greece: an empirical study of teachers' views, an argument that is worth consideration emerges. It is that, separation is often associated with increased parental distress, reduced attention paid to the child by one or both parents, disruption of the home environment, conflict over money, custody/visitation, and reduced economic circumstances, all of which are stressors for children.

Divorce on the other hand strains the social life and financial bearing of partners. Both men and women find it devastating and may lose self-confidence, start battling custody, and may lose hope of ever finding happiness again. Some women find it difficult to return to their normal selves again after a divorce. Withdrawal and depressions are common outcomes of divorce among the concerned parties. Children and adolescents who experience the divorce of their parents also have higher rates of depressed mood, lower self-esteem, and emotional distress. Parental divorce is also associated with negative outcomes and earlier life transitions as offspring enter young adulthood and later life. Prolonged separation of children from their parents usually causes poor performance in academics, loss of interest in social activities, mood disorders (including depression and anxiety), socio-moral immaturity, and inadequate social skills, regressive behavior such as bedwetting, is a common response to separation.

Research published in the Journal of Men's Health established that divorced people, both men, and women, years after their divorce, suffer higher rates of mortality, depression, illness in general, and substance abuse than married people. Going through a breakup is experiencing real loss and the bigger the love, the connection, and the intimacy, the bigger the pain and suffering. This loss can take over your thoughts and emotions and you will most certainly experience grief. You lost a loved one, who is still living and now there is a void in your life.

Mid-Life Crises

Erick Erickson, a respected theorist in psychology, argues that the conflict is between generativity and stagnation in middle life. Fears of stagnation may trigger a middle-life crisis, while a move towards generativity (giving something to the next generation) may help resolve the problem. He argues that every mid-life crisis is different, and the sources of middle-life concerns differ.

They may include: societal messages about aging, such as the idea that middle-aged people and elders are less attractive in their physical sense, which may trigger a midlife crisis. Therapy can turn a middle-life crisis into an opportunity for growth and generativity. A good therapist can offer advice on how to deal with a midlife crisis, support people facing a midlife crisis understand the root of the crisis, gain control of their emotions and take meaningful steps towards goals that make life feel meaningful.

To bring this home allows me to relate it to my life. From the year 2019 through 2020, I was right in the thicket of a middle-life crisis of age and circumstances. I was feeling frustrated, tired, out of focus, and full of regrets. I was looking at my past life and past glory and observing a lot of inconsistencies with what I had hoped for in life. My life purpose and dreams were all crushed and without promise or chance to become actualized. I had hoped to build my mother a house, which was postponed, and the second one, which I had undertaken to build with so much sacrifice, was down in debris. The home I had labored with much sacrifice to build, the resources to the fence, beautify and build structures was all in the rubble. The parcel of land I was given as a gift of love by my father was no longer mine, and I had lost a valuable relationship with my role model, my father.

While in the United States, I used every dime I made to buy laptops, projectors, lighting equipment, music, video production equipment, desktops, and Mackintosh computers to furnish my dream resource center. I had spent time and resources seeking technical books in science, business, law, music, computer studies, health sciences, architecture, and building construction, to equip my dream library for my rural community. While gathering all these resources, I was also in part funding the treatment of my sick dad who had a life-threatening spinal disc dislocation back in Kenya. I cut short my trip due to the immense emotional toll on my being. It was difficult to handle my family's emotional gap in a long-distance relationship with my wife as a result of being overseas, my parent's illness, and the fact that my parents were fighting over the developments I had initiated before I traveled to the United States. By the time I was leaving the United States, I was so broke and broken that I couldn't even afford to ship home all that I had bought.

I kept them with a friend who later told me that her partner had complained the items were too many and were occupying too much of their house space and I understood this because the items were very many. I requested two of my other friends to share the items, and each keep a portion of them in their garages, but after they got to the location, they said it was impossible to keep the items in their houses. My first friend thought I was irresponsible and insensitive to her situation and told me that she donated the items to a charity with the Salvation Army church.

I was heartbroken to lose such a huge investment worth two years of gathering in one event, but my heart made peace with the fact that my friend had explained herself and even given me time to redeem the situation. I was never angry with her; instead, I remained remorseful that it ended that way and that her good gesture to assist me became a burden to her. Grace, today I say, thank you. As I processed all these happenings, realizing that my dream had been cut short and there was nothing I could do to recover the vision, I admitted that I was right in the middle of a midlife crisis.

I was also confused between building my own family house and building the resource center which I had planned for three years. I ended up revising the progress of an almost complete family house to accommodate my desire to do a resource center on the side. These were not easy decisions, but I made the moves and regretted them later because once more, I felt how much unaccomplished I was with none of the two achievements I had hoped to register. The family house project had stalled, and I needed more resources to complete both. Frustrations set in in a big way, and right there was the height of my middle-life crisis. I looked back at my ministry desires and goals after 12 years and had nothing to show for it. This was painful and deeply hurting to my soul and spirit. I got into depression.

During the compilation of this book, I spoke to two of my mentors to tell me what their midlife was like and whether it was without flow or with any form of anxiety, fear, and crisis. Dr. Peterson Wang'ombe, who has been a lead pastor with Deliverance church Kahawa Sukari in Kenya for 20 years, says he felt the turbulence of his life around this time and age when he was 40 years to 45 years. Taking three children through university was no mean fete, yet he was getting largely frustrated with his work-life realities. He felt that he didn't belong enough to the community where he served, considering that he didn't have a home of his own within the community. His major crisis was everything to do with the fact that he was evaluating his achievements relative to his hopes and dreams. He was anxious that he didn't look or feel exactly like he had wanted and his family were not operating in the environment he had hoped for. His wife was also going through career transitions, and they were unsure how the ending would be. They trusted God. He says he had to put on a brave face for his family and the church where he leads, but deep inside, he felt a lot of concern for the fear of the unknown, especially for his family.

As pastor looked upon to offer encouragement to many, there was little room to allow him to trip and fall. This would linger until his late 40s as he continued praying to God until his aspirations began falling into place by God's grace.

Another of my mentors, Dr. Ezekiel Mutua, recalls how his midlife was characterized by immense frustrations emanating from career disruptions.

He had risen at a lead media house in Kenya -National Media Group (NMG) from a trainee reporter in 1994 to sub-editor in 1998 and later, an editor, became the secretary of the Kenya Union of Journalists (KUJ) and recalls vividly advocating for the rights of journalists when he was the KUJ chapter representative at the NMG." I used to tell the NMG management that they need to train their journalists to conventional quality and pay them well." At the KUJ, he got a good amount of support from the membership that saw him elevated to the position of KUJ Chairman without campaigning, when the then chairman Mr. Joseph Olweny was promoted into management as the NMG editorial manager, thus ruling him out of the KUJ affairs.

Dr. Mutua had used his union role to advocate for the rights of journalists and did not hesitate to confront the employers, including his employer NMG and the government when duty called. "In February 2002, a letter was dropped at my desk on the third floor, Nation Center. It was a summary dismissal. My nine years at the NMG had come to an abrupt and painful end. He would later find himself in tumultuous circumstances with journalists and event sponsors in the journalist's awards gala, which didn't go well. He ended up taking much of the blame for a situation that was brewed away from him.

Dr. Mutua avers that the period between his sacking and his next breakthrough was emotionally draining. His friends made fun of him because he was no longer driving his car and was walking around town using cyber cafes as an office. In retrospect, he was disturbed by his poor background and the fact that his own family looked up to him, and so did his parents, and here he was, having lost it all. He had written a protest letter to the American government criticizing George Bush's invite of President Kibaki to the white house, and he got an invite to deliberate on the matter. This made him an enemy of the government, and he felt that he was being trailed by the government everywhere he went through that period. Dr. Mutua felt the deep emotions of a bleak future as if his best days were behind him, but his faith in God sustained him. He trusted in God as much as his strong Christian faith could carry him. He attributes faith in God as the only factor which carried him through this midlife crisis.

As the God of miracles would have it, Dr. Mutua was sought after by the government of the day. When he reluctantly met the then-president, Mwai Kibaki, and his senior officers, he made a 360-degree turn, from being a government critic to being the government's agent.

Firstly, Dr. Mutua served as information secretary from the year 2007-2015 at the Ministry of Information, communications, and Technology and as Director of information and public communications at the same ministry. He later served as the Director of information from 2011-2015.

He would sooner be appointed the Chief Executive of the Kenya Film and Classification (KFCB) board. Currently, he is the Chief Executive Officer of the Kenya music copyright society (KMCS).

The middle-life crisis among men

Little research supports the notion that men and women experience significant differences in how they process a middle-life crisis. Research shows that similar numbers of men and women report middle-life crises. Thirty-four percent of men and 36 percent of women report middle-life crises. Both men and women reported that awareness of time passage was a trigger for their mid-life crisis, and 14 percent of both men and women said the middle-life crisis is a time for making major personal changes. In popular media, the middle-life crisis in men centers on fancy cars, affairs, toupees, and unusual new interests. For men, a middle-life crisis is less about outward signs of youth and more about finding meaning. Gender roles of socialization may affect how a man experiences a middle-life crisis; for example, a man may worry about how aging affects others' perception of his masculinity, how age-related maladies will affect his desirability or strength, whether he is sufficiently successful in his career, and how his career decisions have affected his relationship with children and other family members.

The middle-life crisis among women

As would be the case with men, women are as likely as men to experience midlife crises just like men, their experience being colored with some gender norms and socialization. Women face immense pressure to remain youthful and desirable and may worry a lot about their partners becoming interested in younger women. Women are more likely than men to seek plastic surgery and some of these surgeries may be due to a midlife crisis or anxiety about growing older. Women can experience the same midlife crisis symptoms as men, such as career success, desirability, and relationships. Women may also struggle with how childbearing decisions affect their midlife.

Women are more likely than men to quit working outside the home to rear children, while some women may regret this choice years later, especially during midlife, if they feel limited by career options or less fulfilled as the children grow older. Contrary to popular norms about men abandoning their wives for younger partners, women are significantly more likely than men to divorce their partners. Women initiate 69 percent of all divorces. According to the national center for Family and marriage research study, the divorce rate for women aged 55 and 64 has tripled since the 1990s. Women may pursue divorce at the end of midlife or as a way to resolve the crisis.

All said and done; middle life is not easy for anyone; it looks like crying all the way home from dropping off your college-bound kid. It seems like zoning out on a conference call because you no longer know why you're doing this job. It looks like a reunion invitation crumpled in the trash because you didn't become all you planned to become. It feels like waking up in the middle of the night, wracked with financial worries, like an impending divorce, and exhausting caregiving. Midlife crises were once defined according to gender norms: Women were disoriented and disappointed by relational changes and men by career changes.

Midlife crisis is a period of doubt and anxiety during middle age when an individual questions whether the life they live is the life they had hoped to live. It is a standard period during the lifespan when we transition from young people to older adults. During this time, adults evaluate their achievements, goals, and dreams against what they had wished for in the past and what stage they are facing. If the individual feels they are far removed from the person they had hoped to be, they may suffer a midlife crisis. I was experiencing a midlife crisis too because with all the massive losses of opportunities, relationships, and property, I was not living the life I wanted and the future was looking darker and bleaker than I had hoped. Midlife crisis and depression manifest in similar ways and experiencing both at the same time is a hugely traumatic experience with far-reaching consequences and manifestations.

The main point is that pain, sorrow, anxiety, fear, shame, disgust, anguish, failure, loss and grief, midlife crisis, abuse, brutality, bullying, marital crisis, separation, divorce, imprisonment, job losses, life-threatening accidents, disability, sickness, rejection, abandonment and many other life situations which cause an individual to have prolonged moments negative emotions and thoughts can cause one to fall into depression and alter their mental balance. When these prolonged experiences resulting in negative emotions and thoughts are not helped to get neutralized an individual's mental balance is destabilized causing the brain not to function properly. Put in layman's language, the lack of mental balance causes one to lack focus, creativity, and clarity of mind thus being unproductive.

Mental health is a world issue today, Mental health has affected both rich and poor, young people and old, civilians and non-civilians, people of the west, east, north and south, and the list is endless. Depression is living in a body that fights to survive, with a mind that tries to die. Depression is being color blind and constantly told how colorful the world is. Depression is a prison where you are both the suffering prisoner and the cruel jailer! From personal experience, I can say mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common and also harder to bear. The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden. It is easier to say "My tooth is aching" than to say "My heart is broken".

I have been to Emakombe (hell) and back. I juggled four conflicts all at once and fell into depression. But God sorted me in the wilderness to piece things together. I always hung on; I always hoped that a better day will come. I had hoped for so much and aspired for so much to give up. In all these God kept me alive to tell the testimony because I now speak from a point of strength and victory.

My Battles with Family Crises

Long-distance relationship dynamics

When I began having international trips from 2015 to 2018 when long-distance relationship dynamics began to show cracks in our communication with my wife. We had two major windows of communication, one being her wake-up time at about 5AM, which was the time just before I went to bed in Boston at about 11 PM. Here, if we didn't talk immediately she woke up, then the rest of the time would be a rush to catch a bus from Kitengela to Westlands where she worked. The larger window would be my morning which was her evening until late at night. During my 2017-2018 tour, my dad was sick, and on a different scale, both my dad and mum had major misunderstandings which drained me emotionally while away. Being away from my wife and children was emotionally draining enough, and now the issue of my parents. All my desires were being curtailed due to a lack of focus and depletion of my resources as I was sending money often to help with one step of the treatment process or on the construction project which I was conducting for my mother.

I got angry and restless most of the time. I began to withdraw from people. I also avoided my wife and whenever we talked on the phone, we would argue. We argued most of the time until we dreaded receiving each other's phone calls. Meanwhile, she began being independent in making major decisions, unlike the consultative format we had gotten used to over the years. When I returned, we would argue about a lot more than before. On my return from the 2017-2018 trips, our levels of disagreement were more vicious and passionate.

Marital crisis

There was a season of compounded distress from different external forces at the same time in our marriage. The distress birthed a marital crisis that threatened our marriage in a very fundamental manner. I have generally explained marital crisis at the end of this chapter- soaring above storms. The crisis emanated from a combination of factors playing out all at the same time and with such intensity than we could withstand. I felt I had expectations which were not being met. On the other hand, my spouse also had expectations that she felt were not being met. I believe she also had her version of midlife crisis due to unaccomplished dreams which we shared as a couple.

We treated each other with contempt and were insensitive to each other's emotional and mental wellbeing. We were angry and bitter with each other. I was also angry and bitter with other scenarios beyond this marriage. I had challenges in my church ministry and with both my parents. My business was also not doing well and so I was overly sensitive aggressive and reactive to all my situations.

Parental Distress

Discussing my parents and their differences is like dancing at the sight of their nakedness. I will therefore just summarize by saying that my parents are divorced for many years now; a process that took many different turns, all of them painful to both of them and the children too. Speaking intellectually, most people do not yet comprehend that separation and divorce are both painful processes to both parties involved no matter how anyone of them my portray themselves on the outside. It is intensely painful, mentally draining and emotionally bruising. It comes with disorganization at many levels in the family.

Another fact is that children would be affected negatively by such a development and each child will react differently. When the parents do not have the priviledged information which I am sharing now, they will never underatdn that the behavior of their children is a reaction to the disruptions occasioned by the separation and divorce. That union is the identity of the child and so the child perceives and vies himself or herself in that complete and functioning unit of their parents. Disrupting that system creates a conflict in themind and heart of the child who may still be in denial. The children may react in a manner to show their anger towards one or both of their parents. The children may also feel withdrawn and not attended to because their parents would use more of their energy fighting their battles. It is only with awareness that both parents would protect the emotional and mental wellbeing of their children through such a process through continuous engagement, love and care. The parents can do a great deal of justice by letting the children know that whatever is happening has got nothing to do with them and that they should not make it their business. they can also give assurance to their children that theor place of love and care is secure no matter what is going on at parental level.

I attempted to settle my mum with my father's consent but the script did not end up exactly like my father would have wished nor like my mother would have wished. Being my project, I was right in the middle of both parents whose aspirations in context could not be directly achieved. All did not go well for either of us especially when I traveled to the United States and left an ongoing project. When my father got sick, I came back home but that did not necessarily help the situation because the events following escalated the tensions further.

I might discuss events and situations between me and my father or my mother but not about the two of them. Every time I mention the word “my parents”, it may sound unclear or incomplete but it is what it is, my parents! Let me shoot from the hip and save you speculations. Because of the dynamics of my parents, a lot of my development plans were disrupted and interrupted because of my parents. Before this major disruption, we as the children were allocated land to settle on but my allocation was revised severally due to varying dynamics beyond my control.

When I was planning to travel to the US, I wished to put my plans in place in such a way that I can continue with my projects remotely as I pursued other interests abroad. My father showed me a parcel of land, where I could do my development. I didn't do everything according to how he wanted; because I felt I was a grown-up man with a wife and three children who would just go about his business one way or another. This became a source of our misunderstanding as I felt my father had a very prescriptive script beyond what I could satisfy. I said to myself that if I allowed this to continue, I will be treated like a little child all my adult life. Some of my mentors’ think that was leadership for my own family but it came at a very expensive cost. There were numerous mistakes committed by but in the end, my father was gracious to extend an olive branch and forgive me.

The secrets that helped save my marriage

In my case, I analyzed our situation and the consequences of whatever decisions I would make. We realized that none of us would be happy if the other wasn’t happy. We both realized that we had come from homes where we wished something could have turned out differently than it were. We realized that divorce or separation is a painful process of loss, abandonment, rejection, and sometimes humiliation to both parties no matter how you look at it. If it were to happen, the amount of trauma to the children would be devastating. We chose to become each other’s intrinsic support system through patience and freedom. We were patient with each other and offered each other the freedom to perceive things and process them at our pace.

Above all, her willingness to cooperate with some of my ideas; ideas which I have shared through this book was the evidence of her submission. It was sufficient for me to perceive her as a friend and partner as opposed to an adversary. We were in the same team. At some point we both took our personality test and got a revelation of what our potential personality disorders would be. Through these tests, it was easier for me to understand how she perceived and interpreted information and why she reacted in a specific way when she was triggered.

She also took note of my personality as well and understood when I was triggered as we both devised a mechanism that would effectively make up for what would otherwise constitute misunderstandings while triggered. In mental health terms, a trigger refers to something that affects your emotional state, by causing extreme overwhelm or distress. A trigger affects your ability to remain calm or present in the moment. It may bring up specific thought patterns or influence your behavior to be irrational. Eventually, I was able to tell when she was in her element (acting normal) or acting as someone who was triggered and therefore out of character. While triggered, the conversations are like a broken telephone conversation, where you say one thing and the other person hears a completely different message acting on the message, they supposedly heard contrary to what you said.

Without knowledge and understanding salted with empathy and a little grace, such conversations end up badly. Sometimes it took waiting for minutes, hours or even a day to be able to complete this conversation that had aborted when one got triggered to perceive things in an unusual way. During this period, I had to learn to do what I call bypassed communication syndrome. Bypassed communication means communicating with someone according to how they perceive information and not necessarily according to how you had intended to communicate or how you wished they should perceive it. Let me give you an example. If you do not allow the person to communicate through a broken telephone conversation or what they want to hear, the situation will still recur once a specific word is just immediately used. A nonverbal gesture or topic comes up again. Allowing this bypass also exposes the vulnerabilities, desires and needs of the triggered person irrespective of what the past trauma was and how it affected the person.

Our triggers are rooted in our past traumatic experiences. In an effort to protect us from further harm, our brains scan for stimuli that might indicate a threat. That means that whenever one is triggered, they would need to put on a helmet before engaging. The helmet could be distraction, unnecessary movements and avoidance of discussion, shouting, counter accusation, misrepresentation of facts or just tantrums that have nothing to do with the subject matter. All these are an attempt to avoid vulnerability and helplessness to protect us from further harm.

Intellectually speaking, you will never master what will trigger an individual, but you can know when an individual is triggered and acting on some traumatic energy which has been awakened or provoked by certain choice of words, body language, tone or topic. If I start talking to you and from my first statement you get triggered to become defensive before I have even made my point, you will talk to me like the victim even if I was the victim.

Before this, I used to ask her, so what exactly is it that you were responding to? What is your argument? You have a fair anti thesis but what exactly was my thesis against which you have so eloquently argued? You have accused yourself, and then defended yourself yet I am here still waiting to make my point which I haven't even started. In all honesty, she would feel so strongly about the things she just said or did while I am here suffering and waiting to be heard. We haven't even gotten to the place of feeling respected. I just want to be heard but instead I am the one who needs to hear and hear it in an uncharacteristic manner; a triggered manner. She would say the same of me according to moments when she would perceive that I am acting on a triggered mode.

Patience and empathy become an important value to assist the triggered person to get into a safe mode. Besides feeling listened to, the triggered individual subconsciously feel they have put up enough defense mechanism to achieve safety to avoid being criticized, corrected or given direction or suggestions. Looking at it from the surface, it is a form of manipulation. To someone with insights of psychology, it is not a form of manipulation neither is it consciously intended by the individual. It may feel like listening to you set your exam, mark it and just ask me to count because your mind is conditioned to pass the exam anyway, just to make yourself comfortable. I have to count the marks first and give you, your score; which is what your subconscious mind wants to hear. Only then can I discuss with you a second question set by me for our discussion. Surprisingly it works.

Allowing someone to go through this process eventually makes him or her feel safe enough to engage. Subconsciously, they are ready to hear what they want to hear because they have already directed you on what you should say and how you should or should not say it to them. They are now ready to hear the truth, unless unfortunately a new version of a trigger occurs. If you are empathetic, focused and patient enough to bypass that unintended manipulation without being distracted by what was otherwise said during the triggered period, you will be able to make your point and reason conclusively with each other and objectively. Without this understanding, most people burn the house down during this moment of triggered reactions. It will be unfortunate if the other person also becomes triggered as two triggered persons cannot resolve a disagreement safely without hurting each other further.

It is also worth noting that no man or woman can change another party until they willingly choose the path of transformation; something which only gets to happen from a point of understanding, revelation, or conviction. If you keep your faith and continue learning, you will most likely learn the right attributes necessary for a healthy relationship and transform internally.

During a couple's retreat, my wife spoke to me in a manner that convinced me she had realized the need to work on her transformation from within. I would say that must have been a moment of conviction. My heavy heart healed at that moment in that single conversation because it was her own realization and conviction which was more bankable than if it was coming from me. The church is one of the greatest support systems for humanity no matter how you may wish to look at it. This is my story, and she definitely has her story. I would encourage you to take every chance to attend any forum where there is empowerment in a safe setup or any other professional forum for family and marriage. You do not have to be in the best of terms with your spouse to do this. Our steps towards recovery took the richness of different sources, time and effort to get it right. It also took time before my spouse showed genuine concern for what my needs would be and what she could do to support me or to make me feel honored and supported by a spouse. I believed I had already articulated myself enough and only her personal realization and conviction would make the difference.

Knowing how far we had come and the contributions she had made to my life, I hated the possibility of not having her by my side during my success. As much as I had genuinely processed to accept any eventuality should it prove impractical to create a safe space for each other, I wanted us to succeed. I had very many excuses I could use against her and I believe the reverse is true but I genuinely wanted us to succeed. Despite our struggles, I needed her to believe in love again and know that I got her back no matter what. I composed a song for her; an assurance that I got her back, all the way no matter what. She is the one I love and the one I want. The song is called "*Wasi wasi*" - by Leopard. I was willing to wait on her before I can fly again. I wanted her to be there when I walk the red carpet. I wanted her to be there when I get rich. I wanted her to chop my money, and fly in my choppers.

Before this turbulent season, she had stood by me through the toughest of times and endured hardship with me sometimes taking the family burden when I was out of business. Many men would only wish for that, but I am blessed with a great woman. I believed in the song I sung for her *"Sweety Wanje"* when we were four years married and what I hoped for then.

The secrets that helped with my father - son distress

Because of deep-seated challenges which existed between my parents, I found myself on the receiving end of pain. I was hurting and yet my parents were both hurting differently. When I realized that both of my parents were hurting, I decided to be part of a conscious support system for both of them. I could only do this independently for each one of them. I had to quickly learn the needs of each one of them and accord them as much support as I possibly could, never

mind I was in part the source of the problems in some instances. My father's needs were much easier and clearer. He needed my respect as a son to a father no matter what had transpired between us. I could only demonstrate this by showing remorse which I spared no effort to demonstrate. There we also some practical steps which I needed to do so as to rectify the mistakes I had done. I went step by step to meet his expectations until he was satisfied with my efforts.

Beyond these needs, the other need was deduced by my psychological background. He needed reassurance that am still his friend, I still love him and do care, and that the events before had not damaged us irreparably. He always reminded me that he has forgiven me. Whenever I met him, he held my hand or shook my hand after saying so over and over again. Forgiveness takes many paths but, in my culture, a father does not ask for forgiveness from his son no matter the errors he may have done. Sometimes they might regret deeply the damage they have caused to their child or even to the legacy of the family. Because they cannot apologize to you, it means their guilt hits them hard when it sets in. If they feel, that they erred in their actions, the only chance they have is to make peace with that error and forgive themselves; something many people don't know how to achieve.

Most importantly, when the child comes and asks for forgiveness from a father, they are cleansing their own mistakes and the mistakes of the father at the same time. Your humility to ask for forgiveness represents both you and your father. There is a pearl of spiritual wisdom in this, as summarized in the statements of God's word that God's Children should obey and honor their parents Ephesians 6: 1-3(NIV) It is the only commandment with a promise; which is long life. If you can obey and honor your father, you have what it takes to obey and honor God. The very way if you love your neighbor whom you can see and you surely can love God whom you cannot see; 1 John 4:20.

My father would always reach out to know how I am doing while expressing his concerns whenever he felt I was not able to rise in various aspects of my life as he hoped for me. Sometimes he could tell when I was straining financially, especially with his struggling health and related financial inputs. "My son, I had and still have so much hope in you. You are not where you are supposed to be but God is good". He said to me.

Hospital moment

Last year, Dad was involved in an accident that saw him undergo a surgical procedure. I stayed behind to watch over him across the night and when he had fully regained his consciousness, he narrated to me how my former. Chief Principal, Mr. Stanley Ashitiva made him promise that he will take good care of

me for him. Dad said in certain words that Mr. Ashitiva had seen my potential before him. He said that Mr. Ashitiva assured him, I will be a great man in this nation and beyond. Hearing those words from a father was the affirmation I was long accustomed to and God blessed me to be affirmed one more time by my father; something I had given up on. This was very nostalgic. The following morning, at the hospital, I remember him telling my siblings and my stepmother that they should always remember that we have a *Mheshimiwa* (Honourable senator) in the family. "My son is our senator", he said.

A Christmas date with the elders

The Christmas season of 2021 presented a pleasant surprise for me. Dad was hosting the elders of our community when I walked in to check on him. He asked me to stay and join him in the meeting. It was an honor and a very humbling moment for me to receive such validation and approval from my father. I loved every bit of the ceremony. We shared the meat from the same bone steak and this is very significant to my cultural understanding. He served some food on the plate and gave it to me before the elders and spoke kind words about the future of our community as the statesman and elder at the apex of the community. It reminded me of one time when I listened to Bishop J. B Masinde of Deliverance church, Umoja in Kenya, talk about fatherhood. The good Bishop said, the father of the prodigal son validated and affirmed his son amid the multitude when he threw him a party. He also defended his son and spoke on his behalf before his elder brother. It is the father who went out to negotiate on his behalf and asked the elder brother to come in and join the celebrations when the elder brother wasn't amused by his fellow brother's return. I felt that my father had taken the chance to cleanse my image before his elders.

This defense, affirmation, and validation would continue within the extended family. In one incident when we lost my cousin Joab Lwaka Andanje in Bungoma, Kenya, we were all set as a family to board the Emulakha secondary school bus for this event. When we were all gathered and had all saluted each other as a family, dad took the front seat. He called me out to surrender the seat I was occupying at the back of the bus and come sit right next to him. This gracious love from a father indeed covers a multitude of sins. I remembered Apostle Paul tells in 1 Peter 4:8(NIV). All my doubts were washed over a time as my father went the distance to prove that he cared for my welfare and safety.
On a certain evening, I visited him and after we stayed late into the night, my car battery failed. When I wanted to walk home, he insisted that my safety was paramount to him. He gave me a ride on his motorbike, a reminiscence of when as a child I used to take rides with him. On this nice evening, he took me right to my doorstep. This felt very warm to my heart.

I have had the privilege to hear a lot of history from my family lineage, thanks to my father. It was a deep history that I do not think anyone else in our larger Onyako family knows the depths of. Once when I was with my cousin Jeremiah, he told us a lot of our history. He too was able to know the origin of his name Osundwa. In our last discussion leading to this book, it was refreshing to hear my father tell me about his high school story with music and football. Now I know that his nickname is not just Suti, for wearing fine suits but Marango for having big muscular thighs on the football pitch and that he knew how to make a guitar from scratch, tune it and play some music on it. This is prove of the African proverb: a mangoe fruit does not fall far from the tree on which it was made.

On his 79th birthday, I didn't have much to show off to him. God gave me a precious moment to share a heart-to-heart talk with my father for three and a half hours. We shared a meal with him and he expressed his wishes and desires for all of his children. He let me know what was happening in his life but most importantly shared his expectation of me. Like the same man I have known all my life, dad wanted me to fulfill my academic promise of many years to him. I took the chance to tell him certain things I had never had the right environment to tell him and he was very pleased to have gotten the opportunity to clear his mind and soul too, non over the same. He gave me his advice and later told me how peaceful and restful his night was. If this isn't God, who else can be this gracious to bring such joy to, a son and a father like it happened to us? The love of a father knows no boundaries and much more the love of God. In this life-defining moment, we have had many other defining moments orchestrated by fate and destiny to rebuild our friendship and trust.

What is my point? It was a process and I do not have specific answers for your situation as my reader but one thing I know is that accepting and recognizing the challenge for what it is, is the first step towards a consciously constructed support system to navigate the challenge. Every situation is unique but it lies on the willingness and desire to make things better and even restore the former relationships, possibly surpassing the levels of engagement that existed before. I intentionally offered the support system which my father needed and my father became the support system that I badly needed to reconstruct my bruised esteem. Patience is a fundamental aspect of healing and restoration.

It took me two years to completely heal my relationship with my wife and three years to heal that with my dad. When I use the word completely, I do not mean perfection but getting to levels of confidence, security, trust, and non-vulnerability.

Church

The storms of church ministry were largely because I was hurting in my personal life. I want able to attent to our congregants effectively and I wasn't able to provide the best leadership to our team. if we had already developed a stable network of churches, we probably would have had a minister seconded to our congregation. Two of our pastors had the capabilities of leading a congregation according to me but they did not feel competent to do so at the time when I was going down. I guess they would have been confident if this was happening at a time, I am available to cheer them on but not when I was myself asking for leave of absence. They could also see through how my family was holding up together.

My wife is a great leader and good manager who assisted us manage church affairs very well. We had a pastoral team of four pastors including my wife whom I had appointed as the lead pastor of our branch. Whenever I was thru with my international trips, I always came back to my home church. There are times I would be engaged in the other churches which I was overseeing or in preaching engagements within the country. The reflections I am mentioning don't imply that my thoughts were accurate or the truth but indeed that is how I felt at the time. Within my local assembly, I felt ignored and that my opinion or directions were not respected. It is also true that as a first-time minister who was still learning the ropes, she would make mistakes like all of us do. I had set in place operational systems which I desired to be consistent and sustainable to fit how I wanted a network of churches to be run according to my vision. Some times, I felt that my guidance was not fully implemented. Maybe I would have helped myself by consulting my mentors who were running networks of churches. Since I didn't find a safe way to express these concerns due to our already preexisting strains, I felt helpless.

As wounded soldiers the quality of our ministry to the church was unhealthy. There were other challanges which were as I did not feel whole and healthy to serve the roles of a pastor effectively. A pastor needs to be in a condition that he can listen to the people he serves with patience, empathy and understanding. He or she needs to be in such a condition to provide leadership to the people of God with kindness, gentleness, humility and respect. A pastor should be temperate.

I was in war mode with anything and anyone who threatened my wellbeing, establishment or progress. 1 Timothy chapter 3 was largely out of reach. He should as well be able to provide the same leadership and earn genuine respect in his household from both his wife and children. The wife and children also have an expectation of how they should conduct themselves. It doesn't entirely mean that the man should cause them to have that character but I also believe in the

wisdom that when these conditions and environemtns are created then the husband is able to effectively serve in the role of a pastor or overseer. All these challenges coincided with covid 19 hitting the globe with restrictions to church attendance. This posed a new challenge of sustainability with no one knowing when the pandemic will end.

A break from a Nazarite oath

While I went through depression following the combined breakdown of my marriage relationship, my parental relationship, and a recession of my business empire; my church ministry suffered a great deal too. I blamed myself for many things and I dint think I was in a good position to lead the church. I attempted to challenge two of my pastors to take over the mantle but they did not feel ready. I asked one of them whether I could support him to plant another church but he was categorical as not yet ready. I respected that. The only person who could continue with a pastoral role was my wife but I thought she won't go far without my support which was not guaranteed given the marriage deterioration at home.

I never doubted my call and still believe in the power of God's anointing which I carry, but I consciously and deliberately took a break from the Nazrite oath. It is a spiritually sound phenomenon. This is a topic I would love to speak about to help some people heal. Many of us keep the Nazrite oath at bay during hurtful seasons thus making ourselves susceptible to certain risks which may have damaging effects if unattended. It is possible to burn out during our hurtful seasons and make our situations worse than they might be. It is also possible to twist truths to fit the situations we might be going thru and possibly form a doctrine out of these twisted arguments. Sometimes, we may project our hurts to other people without knowing it. Sometimes, we may not be completely in control of our emotions and thoughts and could project those thoughts to other people affecting them in an unintended manner. It is therefore very important to heal and reflect in the course of your execution of your Nazrite oath of service so that you carry along sobriety and objectivity in your labor of service.

In the book of Acts 18:18, Paul took a break from his Nazrite oath and cut off his hair; then Returned to service when it was all knit together. Nobody speaks from these scriptures.

The Bible prescribes how to take a Nazrite oath of total separation and service to the Lord and how to exit the oath and how to return to the covenant. Scripture speaks about this without a shred of doubt at all. Numbers 6:1-21 talks about how we get to undertake the Nazrite oath and has a clear procedure if one wants to quit or suspend the Nazrite oath; as well as the procedure to resume the oath and service.

The parenthesis of my argument is to make it abundantly clear that there is that room to take a break from ministry and reflect. You could make a more formidable decision with the help of the Holy Spirit than when you do not introspect.

Unintended Consequences within the pastor's fellowship

It is a frequently-observed phenomenon in which any action has results that are not part of the actor's purpose. The superfluous consequences may or may not be foreseeable or even immediately observable and they may be beneficial, harmful, or neutral in their impact. One day we were in an Annual General Meeting where we experienced divergent opinions on a matter in which some people were emotionally invested. As the person in charge of Legal affairs, it had taken me a long time to build consensus over several issues. We used to mainstream the reform agenda every Tuesday for one and a half months before the annual general meeting. After we settled what I considered to be contentious issues, we had an informal meeting called "Kamkunji" to discuss the document ahead of the annual general meeting.

The objective of the Kamkunji was to get more collegiality and more consensuses. The Kamkunji was a success, or so I thought. During the AGM, there were new suggestions and we had passionate arguments as we thought over the issues under consideration. Because the issues under consideration were new to me, as the person who had been guiding the conversations on our review process, in disappointment, I abstained from the conversations completely. i was not the onlyone who expressed this disappointment but it wont be fair for me to speak for the person. While I had switched my mind completely off from the affairs of that meeting, the event ended badly with unintended consequences. The worst happened while we watched right before us; a very regrettable turn of events than anyone would wish for but that is the last time, I saw or would ever see my chairman who was a great and trusted friend. The arguments had absolutely nothing to do with him but I believe that, besides the fact that he had been unwell at the time, he was overly burdened by the weight of the bigger picture of the organization he intended to hand over to a new leadership that very day.

I regreted being a part of that argument, an argument which had lasted about three years as we navigated with alternatives before I thought to myself that we had resolved it only to loose the argument again. The trauma of this incidence took me more than two years to resolve and get over the events and bad memories of that day but God helped me to forgive myself and get it behind me. I chose to preserve my best and last memory of our organization. In this confusion, I knew that that no one would understand me for what I was going

thru; I could only go thru this stress in isolation. I had to forgive myself for the bad emotions and thoughts over and over again but as I forgave myself I found closure and movde forward with clarity of mind and consciense. God gave me a second chance one more time in his own time and wisdom.

Failing health

In high school, I developed stomach ulcers at around form two and used to feed on a special diet while at school. A special diet meant white cabbage as opposed to kale. When I was baptized, I took Holy Communion which ushered me into extreme pain while still at the point of baptism. As I joined the campus in late 2000, I had regular bouts of pain with this condition that I suspect there was no one else who had more visits to the university health unit than I did during my first and second year.

I would be in class, and out of nowhere the pains would show up. I would have to head to the health unit for medication. I would be studying in the library or having a group discussion and out of nowhere; the pain will register its presence. I would be doing an exam mid-way; the ulcers would strike and strike hard and I twice repeated my exams after aborting the first exam midway. My friend and study partner Josephine Munala made a few of those health unit trips. My other friend Festus Musyoka, was also handy because we shared many activities and he was also a next-door neighbor in the student hostels. He always took me to the health unit for medication when I was in extreme pain that I couldn't even walk on my feet. I became an expert in all the relevant medications for ulcers.

On one occasion, I was scheduled to lead the praise and worship in the Christian union. We were at the vestry praying and meditating ahead of the worship service when ulcers struck 15 minutes before the service time. All I recall was finding, myself admitted to the Kenyatta national hospital. I was admitted to the Kenyatta national referral hospital more numbers than I could count because I wouldn’t go three weeks without hospital admission. I did the barium meal tests and the dreaded endoscopy whose results were scary. I was thin, emaciated, and skinny. My file of medical records at the university was huge, and my medical prescriptions were numerous so I guess no one else had much more records than mine during my time. My admission number was I20/1613/2000. From the results, I was having esophageal ulcers, peptic ulcers, and duodenal ulcers all at once, which explained the degree of pain I had to endure as my entire gastrointestinal tract was ulcerated.

It was even more disturbing every time I went for a review and Doctor Bita, as I knew him by one name, would ask me, "Do you cough blood?" I said no, "Do you vomit blood?" I said no.

On another occasion, prof. Otieno asked me to usher in the patient, and when I said I was the patient, he said he wasn't expecting someone walking like me. My reality and the image painted by the reports were contradictory. There are times when my friends and relatives would visit me in the hospital and find me kneeling on the floor because of how much pain I was going thru. This pain was extreme that if I was asked to go thru the same for any reward at all, I will never accept even half of it. I spent more time in the hospital than I spent on campus. I missed classes and exams and just had a difficult life. It was music activities; Christian union activities and spending time with friends which made me come alive. My first and second years at the university were pathetic.

During the end-of-year holidays of 2001, I was at home in Kakamega when I began experiencing excruciating pain in my lower abdomen. This was new and different from the ulcers whose symptoms I had mastered. The other regular pains used to be in the stomach area, what we call the solar plexus but this was much lower. It was assumed to be the usual ulcers and I was admitted to the Nala nursing home with the usual ulcer treatment and painkillers but I did not find relief. When my pains didn't subside, at Nala Hospital, Doctor Hezron Ogondo who has been our family doctor for much of my adult life would call in a consultant surgeon; Dr. Anjila who observed me thru an intrusive procedure and afterward determined that my problem was a swollen appendix and surgery was the only option. I was prepared for surgery the following day in the evening. All my family members supported me and came to encourage me to go thru this. I would soon recover and return to normal life and went to college for my second-year studies at the university.

One evening in 2002, we had a walk around campus with my girlfriend when I started feeling discomfort that I couldn't explain. We cut short our evening walk as I went back to my room. She went to her hostel and before I got to my room, I had a sharp pain in my lower abdomen that I couldn't walk anymore. I went to the ground for a while before holding my lower abdomen and walking slowly to my room. The next morning, I was in pain, had a swollen lower abdomen and something was wrong. I couldn't pass urine despite the urge to do so. I was rushed to the university health center where I was quickly scheduled for transfer to Kenyatta national hospitals. After ultrasound examinations, I had open surgery to remove a mesenteric cyst that had engulfed a portion of my small intestines. It happened that the cyst collapsed with a portion of the small intestines on my bladder and that is why I couldn't pass urine.

The cyst was subjected to further examination to ascertain whether it was malignant or non-malignant at the Nairobi hospital. My cousin Esther Mukoko was always on time with her liver stew while mum came with fish stew.

My cousin Nick Mukoko would make a joke and ask me whether I have read the label on my head that am not allowed to eat or drink. My brother Tony came in, held my hand, looked at me, nodded his head, and kissed me; I still feel the love and the many unspoken words that were spoken in that single brotherly embrace. It is the same affirmation he gave me when I was wheeled to the theatre during my first surgery (appendectomy) in Kakamega. My father and mother were united in supporting me and so were my brothers and sisters. Dad was a people person and maybe I was too as my extended family as far as it could get was here in great numbers. Anyone related to me who was in Nairobi was here to wish me well; the power of a support system!

I remember Mr. Isaac Litali, then a director of finance at the Nairobi hospital, a relative, and a family friend, telling me that if I wanted to heal faster, I should stop running affairs in college but concentrate on my healing right here in my bed. The entire Christian union supported me, and my team of new creation choir was on site every single day to support their leader. My girlfriend was on site with her set of friends and always brought me fruits and food. I always had food sufficient to feed the entire ward. Some of them never had visits yet my bed had to be managed to control my visitors. These visits helped alleviate my great physical pain. I felt loved from every angle except God whom I was questioning why he wouldn't just heal me already. I asked God many questions for which I never found answers. Once I remained alone, it was painful and discouraging to be in my position of unending pain which kept getting intense.

One morning, I was in so much pain that I had tears flowing down my cheeks all day. I didn't talk to anyone since morning. I was giving up and I was lost in sorrow beyond words. All my visitors came, saw me, and then moved aside in small circles to talk in whispers. My father is the only person who was seated all by himself in a pensive mood, inconsolable. I also didn't want to see anyone. I wanted to be left alone but I had no way of saying that. I think the threshold of my pain had been exceeded. I watched them come and leave we all knew that something was wrong in the atmosphere. I was in extreme pain and full of free-flowing tears. I gave up too and felt I had come to a logical conclusion about my life after the battle. I knew I had gotten to that place where at funerals we say, "He was in so much pain, that we are also happy that he has rested from that pain."

At about 6 pm, the ward would be cleared. My girlfriend Susan, was the last on-site. She mostly waited until I was free to allow my other friends and relatives to have their opportunities with me. I told her that I have had enough and that I have given up. She whispered back and said, I should also think about those who love me and left. I saw thru the window, she was crying as she left.

That night, I gave instructions for my food to be distributed to everyone in the room. That's how someone who is living his last moments behaves. A lot of memories ran thru my mind in that hospital bed. I recalled how I had prayed and God wasn't answering my prayers. I had fasted for my healing and mid-way through the fast, I would end up admitted to the very hospital. I recalled how one day I went to the chapel at 10 pm with my medicines to pray and after praying went to my room only to be taken ill in the middle of the night. I woke up at the Kenyatta hospital.

I doubted God and doubted my faith. It was difficult to comprehend how I had done a concert at the university with my singing team and someone told me that he was in pain with ulcers and as I was singing, the pain went away and two weeks later he was able to eat every food the doctors had said was bad for him. This God was not fair and didn't love me enough like I had been made to believe that he has mega plans with me and for me. I gave up on my life and gave up on God and what seemed to be unreliable and selective love, or so I thought. I slept off in deep thought wishing death to take me but woke up the next morning still alive. How disappointing! I wished I could do something about it, and thought about it, but my body was tacked to my bed. I wouldn't even move to execute my death wish if I were to do so. In my heart, I desired death.

Something peculiar that changed the trajectory of my life completely happened that morning. I was lying on my bed when I saw a young man almost about ten years groaning and wreathing in pain. I was convinced that he was going thru worse pain than me. I would later learn that he had duodenal tuberculosis and was due for a surgical procedure that morning. As he wept loudly, I pitied him because I understood pain very well. I charged myself to go to him. I crawled out of bed and walked slowly holding on to the walls and beds until I got to his bed about ten minutes later. I wanted to pray with him. I was driven by empathy more than anything else. I laid my hands on him and immediately I did this, the boy went mute. He was silent, not talking and not crying, and not moving. I didn't understand what had just happened. I decided to do what brought me here, I prayed for him anyway, and when he said amen, he opened his eyes calmly and sat on his bed calm, with no pain, and no tears. I crawled back to my bed and after about an hour, the nurses came in to prepare him for theatre as he was due for theatre at 10 am. The nurses kept asking him how he was feeling. They were amazed when he said he had no pain.

They repeatedly touched and applied pressure on different parts of his abdomen but there was no pain. I slept off soon after and when I woke up, the young boy was with his parents, had prescription medicine in his hands, and was parking for discharge.

His parents came to thank me for prayers and said the doctors were astonished that he was not in pain and when they did a second ultrasound, the findings were different from the first. They couldn't explain this and thought there was a mistake somewhere. Nonetheless, they gave him prescription drugs and discharged him that very day. The miraculous healing of the young man gave me a new reason and purpose to live for. That is how the desire to die subsided in me. I felt the desire to live again so that I could do God's work to bring healing to those who need it.

That very afternoon after lunch hour visitors had left, I went to the bathroom and found a man chained but sitting on a basin. I asked him what was happening. He was a guy in remand, awaiting his appeal case. He had along the way developed bad colon ulcers. Ulcerative colitis is a long-term condition where the colon and rectum become inflamed.

The colon is the large intestine (bowel) and the rectum is the end of the bowel where poo is stored. Small ulcers can develop on the colon's lining and can bleed and produce pus. He told me that he had been advised to sit on a basin soaked with warm salty water. I dint ask whether he had undergone an operation but all people on our floor and ward 7 D had had a surgical procedure. I asked if I could pray with him and while I was still praying mid-way, the police wardens came and pulled him out of the basin and hurriedly took him away like a terrorist. I would later learn that he was supposed to bribe them if he wanted to be allowed to talk to anyone.

The following day in the afternoon, John Kamau came back to the ward for the same procedure. He had promised the policemen guarding him that he will come to talk to me to offer the bribe so he can talk to me. I won't try to be holier than thou here. I paid 500 bobs to listen to john kamau, a stranger from Nakuru. It was empathy and pity at the same time. John had two reports, one good and another bad. The good news was that for the first time, he had passed stool without pain and there was neither blood nor pus in his stool. He said he will not reveal that to the policemen because they will take him back to the maximum-security remand where there is untold suffering. The second great news was that his wife had managed to sell their bed to afford meals. He told me that his was a story of mistaken identity. He said he was just a man going about his business and had a good family life and a thriving car rental business. His rental car business had buried him in this mess of a lifetime. Someone rented his car, and that night, a magistrate was murdered and the murder was traced down to his car.

The person who rented the car was a no-show and he had not done due diligence on the client before renting him the car. As the owner of the car, he was the suspect who had to pay for the crime.

I prayed for him and trusted God of justice to come thru for him. These prayers were made in 2002 in my second semester which should have been in October of 2002. One day while watching TV on campus, In 2003, I shouted at my girlfriend that I had seen the man whom we had prayed for during my hospitalization days on TV among those pardoned by President Kibaki's first presidential pardon decree of 2003. I believe I will one day meet John Kamau from Nakuru.

A few days after these two encounters, I got discharged from the hospital and returned to college with a huge decision to make. I made up my mind that when I returned to college, I would defer my studies until my health was much better. This was a painful idea because I had plans to record a music album with my singing group and it bothered me that I would miss out on the realization of that project. The second reason is that I had accelerated my degree program by studying thru the summer trimesters and looked forward to finishing my degree in three years something which was now slipping through my fingers.

Within three days, something happened. On the third day in the morning, I was in pain like all familiar ulcers pains and internal wounds to heal. My body did not show me any love or care. I would need to support my tummy with my hands to move from one point to another. I also used much support from the walls once in a while. I remember that early morning at about 8 am; I was in my university room, Nyandarua 1 room 4 b; full of faith and hope that one day I will overcome. I was watching my TV when the famous televangelist, Benny Hinn ministered and taught the word of God. He would later pray for people to receive salvation and later for healing.

I heard him say the following words, "You have just had an operation, and God is healing you. You can try and do what you couldn't do right away. I believed these words and walked out of my bed. It was possible; I tried to walk and it was possible, I tried to bend and it was possible. I received my healing right there! Glory to God! The ulcer pains that I was having disappeared immediately after the prayer. God had finally remembered me. Right there, I changed my plans and decided to continue with my studies. That very evening, I miraculously joined the Christian Union choir and taught them my song of testimony "In the suffering lives, be gloried". We later sang that song on Sunday during the service. The introduction before the song went something like this."I shared a ward with some guy who would snore all night. It was so annoying that I wished he could just stop snoring already. One night the snore was no more and I was happy that finally I could sleep.

How sad to see him being wheeled away lifeless the following morning. That was the reason he wasn't snoring no more" The confusion made me conclude that let God be glorified in the lives of those in pain.

As we performed that song, there was no dry eye in the Christian union. The reverend Lucas Owako, then the worship secretary had a difficult time conducting that service because some of the choir members were all in tears and out of character after the performance. The chaplain came to speak to me after the service to know whether my story was figurative or fiction. I simply unbuttoned my coat and shirt to show him the bandages running like latitudes and longitudes on my belly. I was all bandaged and banged up, but still standing. I was now soaring above storms and showing off my scars with pride as badges like the biblical apostle Paul. This was a new man living a second life on borrowed time. My passion for God and his work was typical of someone who had been given a second chance to live again. A man on a mission!

It is a miracle I still managed a good GPA at the university. I know the power of Jehovah Rapha. Let me share something with you about God. The scripture says His name is the "I AM". The root of this word according to the original translation is to become or becoming. This means that God can become anything you want Him to! If you need healing, He can become a Healer. Should you doubt, ask me or the woman who was bleeding for 12 years. If you have lost hope, He can bless and fulfill his promises. Should you doubt, ask Abraham. If you are in debt He can become a debt payer and should you doubt ask the widow of Shunem who encountered prophet Elisha. God can become anything to you, as long as you believe and put your trust in Him. This is the reason why in the Old Testament they used to refer to God with names suggesting what He has done or become to them, for example, Jehovah Rapha (Healer), Jehovah Nissi (Banner), Jehovah Jireh(provider), Jehovah Shalom(peace), and Jehovah Ramah (Shepherd). He became Jehovah Rapha to me.

I believe in healing ministry more than I believe in many other things. One day, my lecturer, professor Kokwaro, lost her voice and for two weeks, she couldn't teach by voice. She could only write. After class, I got frustrated with this situation and asked her whether I could pray with her. I brought my two friends Irene Mwende and Sammy Mutisya along. After prayer, we left and got feedback the following day from the senior lab technician commonly called JP telling us, "Some of you are pastors. How can you pray for a voice to come back and have it come back immediately?"After my healing, I expanded the scope of my singing ministry and formulated a hospital ministry outfit. Together with my girlfriend Susan and many others, we visited Kenyatta national hospital every Thursday and prayed with patients.

During our Thursday hospital visits, I once laid my hands on a lady who was supported all over with metal bars due to a road crash. She was paralyzed neck down. I placed my hands on her legs to pray and before I prayed, she screamed because she had sensed my touch for the first time since hospitalization a year earlier. We gave glory to God for that and many more healings that day. We prayed for many people who received instant miracles. We thank God for allowing us to minister to different people in his name.

10

Self Healing out of Depression

To heal the mind, you need to understand how the mind works. You also need to comprehend the capacities, potentials and competencies of the mind and how it relates to the brain. The brain seems to have a predictable pattern of events and outcomes such that if you feed it one way, it interprets it only that way and responds by aligning all the body arsenals to survive. It is this kind of predictability that made it humanly possible to design robots intelligent enough to be powered to perform human functions with precision and intelligence. It must be the study of the brain that makes it possible to venture into fields such as artificial intelligence. There is one pedestal that even artificial intelligence cannot achieve and that is the pedestal of being self-determinate and the possession of the one thing humans have that no other creature or object has in mind. Others will call it a soul while others will try to argue that a soul and mind are two different entities.

I would like to introduce you to knowledge that will put power at your pulse to determine outcomes for your life in the comfort of your privacy. I bring you very simple and pragmatic explanations which will automatically elevate the pedestal of your understanding to an extent you will solve many of your issues without too much external intervention. My book doesn't seek to lead you to someone else to heal you but enables you to get healed as you read along. Your heart will heal, your mind will heal, your hope will be restored and you will solve the mysteries of the struggles of your life as you read along. You should achieve so much as your heart will receive revelation to transform your body, spirit and mind. You can even redirect your life to the creator or be filled by the Holy Spirit in your private space. You should be able to heal yourself from your sick bed using the tools I am about to explain to you. Your marriage can heal and your relationship with your children can heal too. You can get out of an abusive relationship or change your abusive tendencies if you gain the understanding, the perception, the revelation, and conceive a path revealed to you by the Holy Spirit. **"My people are perishing for lack of knowledge."**

The WORD of God

Hindsight

Hindsight second chance is the kind of second chance which Samson asked God to give him strength one more time because he knew what he could do with that power if given a second chance. I took time to reflect on my past life. I remembered my earlier victories and how I had built new foundations and built success stories. For these reasons, I boldly say do not be afraid to testify to your victories and declare your confidence in a matter when confronted with any. The Bible in 1 Samuel 17: 34-35 settles a matter for David when he was confronted with a message of doubt which praised Goliath as a man who had fought all his youth and that David was just a boy. David said to Saul, "Your servant had been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or beat came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it and struck it, rescued the sheep from its mouth, and when it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it, and killed it.

Your servant has killed both the lion and bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them because he has defiled the armies of God." David was catalyzed by hindsight to defeat Goliath. I had my Past image of a superstar propelling me to believe again. These memories helped me to rebuild my faith that the same God who was with me then still lives in me. In my last days of primary school, I was standard in all subjects. I was the best student in Lurambi division K.C.P.E. and had the highest record for almost a decade before a cousin of mine, Mark Makomere broke my record. I recalled how I beat all odds-on campus to record a music album straight from hospitalization and all the great memories and victories of my campus life. From around 2009, I was working at Safaricom P.L.C. with good pay and a career wife. My star had just burst as Ugali sosa hit the airwaves and it was hit after hit; Wrong number, Mulika mwizi, Boda Boda, please call me, Chapati just to name a few. I was on the papers, T.V., magazines, and radio like I lived in studios. I was doing all the big Gigs, be it Safari Park Easter concerts or standard chartered marathon after party at Nyayo stadium.

I was performing and emceeing at weddings. I haven't even mentioned church events. I was the king of road shows with Royal media services championing Safaricom products and Equity bank products. Also, I championed Nacada products with KBC. I prided myself in doing the 2010 constitution sensitization program by the committee of experts aided by the royal media services and I was right at the center of the entertainment. Like Samson, I felt that I could ask for strength one more time from my past.

With the gracious hand of legendary broadcaster Joyce Gituro, I moved the entire country with Radio citizen church programs. One day, Gituro called me for an event in Kawetheyi when the boss himself SK Macharia loved my performance. He gave instructions that I accompany him for his personal and private visits to events; even funerals, especially in central Kenya with Inoro FM.

After all the presenters of Inoro FM were done talking and all the Kikuyu-based artists have performed, SK Macharia would personally introduce me as '*mtu wa ngima sosa*.' He would even explain the song himself and hand me over the microphone to perform after him, and he would dance with me right there on stage. Endorsement from the chairman of the biggest broadcaster in eastern Africa was the epitome of recognition. I was the highlight of mainstream media flying with politicians to political rallies for performances as well as boardroom engagements. My hindsight birthed a new passion to live again. Like Samson of the Bible who asked God to give him strength one more time; so, did I ask God to give me strength one more time!

As I scrolled through my photo album, I was able to relive my youth as well as my childhood. I saw my victories and the things I built with my own hands. I saw who I was in my childhood as well as my youthful days with swag. The photos depicted the potential of my former days as I saw the youngman who in his second year at the university bought a color Samsung T.V. I saw a youngman whose dress code was not ordinary. His African prints, half coats, sleek ties, nice cologne and designer shoes were trademark.

I saw the yung man who had survived three surgical operations and later put together a hospital ministry. I saw the young man who had ventured business and also served the lord in church with great strides. I saw the young man who was able to plan a wedding just a year after campus wanted to marry a girl who was yet to graduate. These memories became my testimony and strengthened my faith to believe in more possibilities.

Foresight

To make you understand the power of foresight, otherwise presented as vision, faith, or sometimes prophecy, David has now progressed beyond the boardroom meetings and discussions of war strategies. He is right on the battlefield with actual aggression and threat. He is as powered with foresight as he was with hindsight. He responds to Goliath's insults and says, "Today the LORD will let me defeat you. I will kill you. I will cut off your head and feed your body to the birds and wild animals. And we will do the same thing to all the other Philistines too. Then the entire world will know there is a God in Israel."

Celebrity motivations

If you are an icon of your trade, there are people around the world who have never known you before, and you may never get to know them, but if you get a chance to inspire them, do so as if your life depends on it. You might be the reason why a dream will be born or resuscitated. I listened to videos of great people around the world. I shed tears watching some of them because of how I resonated with them. When the Kenyan star Eliud Kipchoge put the I.N.E.O.S. challenge before him, I watched him and said "Thank you Eliud; you do not know how much you have helped my dreams to come alive at a time I had given up on my dreams." I was crying literally. I watched all the videos of the Jamaican sensation, Usain Bolt and the storyline behind every one of them. I watched Usain Bolt come back in races as well as his foul starts. I listened to his motivations as well as when he had no motivation and how one incident or statement or happening was enough motivation to get him up and get the job done. Three comeback stories motivated me a lot as I listened to every detail of their lives. I took time to profile these three individuals and told myself I can do it again. Who are the 3 individuals?

Mohamed Ali did not have a problem declaring that he was the greatest, and when the American government at the time stripped him of his title and barred him from the ring, he did not kill his dream. He stood his ground and fought hard, not for himself but for the many oppressed who slept on concrete floors. He was able to make a comeback, regain his title, prove his critics wrong, and beat the entire legal system which was against him in his favor. He cemented his place as the greatest of all time (G.O.A.T.) in boxing.

Michael Jordan had struggled as a teenager and wasn't the obvious first lineup player on the basketball court. He would eventually; single-handedly popularize the game of basketball around the world and made an enduring legacy as well as one of the greatest franchises in sports and entertainment to date. I have heard his philosophies, how winning is very personal to him, and how he had to do what was necessary to win and stay above the competition. After his retirement, the greatest ever, never to happen again, the dream team of the 1992 Olympics catalyzed his return from retirement and he still rocked the basketball court and won with his new team as a player and owner outside of the Chicago bulls. He is the greatest of all time (G.O.A.T.) in basketball.

Tiger woods was taken out of the game by a single scandal. He lost his income and endorsements in that single scandal. Many wrote him off but that wouldn't hold for long; and he began rebuilding his golf career from scratch to the top again.

People close to me had inspirational stories of their lifetrime that built my faith. When I had a chance to interview **Dr. Ezekiel Mutua** about his personal life and career path; His story of triumph amid the storm was a major inspiration to me. His testimonies stood out as an inspiration to those who have come from the peripheries of poverty. His journey of obstacles on the path of academia was humbling. His milestones setting him apart as one who has engaged with and fought with the high and mighty was intriguing. The long and narrow path to heaven was a path for which he bears the scars of morality wearing them as badges of honor and pride. His lonely moments of despair and shameful dismissal by forces scattering his potential did not deter him but strengthened his faith in God. God always shows up for the moral cop! These stories of hope and triumph gave me hope in my situation.

Break down the sources of distress

One way of managing distress is the ability to distinguish your sources of distress. Sometimes one feels stuck when the entire forest is staring at you. The process of distinguishing the sources of stress helps to isolate the intensity that each situation brings and sometimes could help you tell which one is most urgent or which one could wait. My first issue was to manage my unmet life goals and revitalize my failing businesses, which were essentially causing me to experience a midlife crisis. I also needed to restore my ailing marriage then relationship with my dad. I thought that the music career and my church ministry could wait. I thought the music ministry required a level of building up internal peace and healing for my audience and fans.

Rate limiting step

As a graduate of biochemistry, I have become conscious of what we call a rate-limiting step. There is always one step which, for as long as you haven't solved it, it doesn't matter how much effort you put into the other dimensions; you just won't solve anything. On the other hand, whenever you solve that one step, many other dimensions become easy to solve. I will give you a random suggestion; An African proverb suggests that for as long as the bed is making noise, no problem is impossible to solve in such a marriage.

That shake becomes the rate-limiting step. Unknown to many, there Is a science behind that shaking bed. When a couple has sexual intimacy, it releases endorphins and oxytocin hormones, which are bonding hormones as well as feel-good hormones. The shaking has a net effect of reduced stress, reduced anxiety, reduced anger, and a feel-good mood.

This mood helps a couple to graduate from their initial lousy mood and can also use the good relaxed mood to talk and embrace a better tomorrow. Oxytocin enables bonding too. Shaking the bed becomes a rate-limiting step in the process of solving marital disputes. Forgiveness was my rate-limiting step in all of my conflicts. I forgave my spouse and made a call to articulate that, I forgave some individuals I had had a bad past with, and I forgave my parents from within my heart even though I never told them this. I forgave myself for my failures and shortcomings and felt a lot of relief. I asked God to forgive me. This rate-limiting step made it possible for other steps to follow.

Forgiveness!

Forgiveness is the cheapest means to freedom and happy life. Yet, many take the burdensome path of regret, ultimatums, conditional support, anger, bitterness, revenge, and hatred which is more costly psychologically, emotionally, physically, and even financially. I had to learn how to forgive to rise above my storms in life. Unforgiveness is like taking poison and expecting the other person to die. Unforgiveness gives power to the other person. If the person whom you have refused to forgive walks in the room while you are laughing, unforgiveness takes away that laughter. I once organized an event and invited two friends whom I didn't know had beef. When one person walked in, the other walked out and left me with the event without a master of ceremony. Unforgiveness gives too much power to the other person. They determine whether you cry or laugh, stay or leave, be happy or sad, and that is too much power in another person's hands.

God had to forgive us and through that forgiveness, he was able to achieve the change he wanted in us. He didn't try to change us, He forgives us first, then enables us to change internally.

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

You can forgive others whether they apologize or not. Forgive them and be free. You can forgive yourself, so you overcome your mistakes and failures. Many people know how to forgive others or how to be forgiven by others. However, they do not know how to forgive themselves. Strong people have committed suicide because they can't handle their failures.

Tell yourself, I know I screwed up, but I won't beat myself more than I already am just because I failed. I know I am disappointed in myself, but it is what it is, life has to go on. I will give myself a second chance, I will try again. I knew I was wrong all along, but I will try again, this time I will listen to my instincts. You can say Sorry even if they do not accept your apology. Your freedom is important to you.

Forgiveness is very important in life, and even God Himself gave us the power to forgive the sins of others. John 20: 22-23 “And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” Now, this is a great mystery, Jesus mandated His disciples to forgive sins.

That means you have received Him and the Holy Spirit you have the same mandate. James 5:14-16 “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: [15] And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. [16]Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” Forgiveness causes even physical healing. I also encourage accepting forgiveness by forgiving yourself. God has offered to forgive anyone willing to accept His forgiveness, you just need to believe that His only begotten Son paid the price of your sins, and accept Him as your Lord and savior.

Change yourself

You see, you cannot change people. A healthy relationship enhances your life without trying to change the other person. I learned in my experience that nobody can change their spouses, or even parents and friends. They only have the power to change themselves and their world. Changing yourself doesn't mean you make yourself a doormat for others to dump their trash, but it means having control over your emotions and actions. It means you can regulate what you can take and what you cannot take. It means you can do your part and be happy with yourself, making it easier for others to tag along or see their part. Play your part right and be an example.

Change of environment and circumstances

Change of environment could be physical environment or the people in the environment. Sometimes a change of environment may come in handy to help the healing process. It is very difficult to heal when still exposed to the very toxicities which made you sick. It is like trying to be sober by continuing to drink alcohol. It is the reason separation in marriage is important to assist one to heal away from the very causes of trauma. If one cannot change locations completely, then a social support group might help to bring in more positive energy and offer emotional support. This is also a perfect chance to learn from the experience of others who might be handling a similar experience. The other alternative is a strong support system that energizes you to compensate for the emotional drain. Whenever I spent time on my different farms, I always felt much rejuvenated.

Different people are rejuvenated by different factors such as swimming, nature walks, sunbathing, moon watching, walks, jogging, cooking, listening or dancing to music, etc. whichever is yours, just do it! Another change of environment was when I spent time engaging in a project that was dear to my heart like building construction. Reading and writing have always been a major part of my therapeutic processes.

Rules of engagement

In my marital situation, for example, we had a communication breakdown, and every time we attempted to hold reasonable conversations, we ended up more frustrated than we began. This was largely due to a lack rules of engagement. There was a need for some common grounds lest our world views obscure us. Someone can decide that I will engage if the other party is respectful or if they are willing to take responsibility. Another person can set rules that I will only engage if I feel safe and not insecure. Rules of engagement are essential in any conflict management.

In every situation, there is always my version which is a product of my world view then your version which is also a product of your worldview and the truth. That was necessary as a ground rule, that we must allow each other to hold a world view on any issue. That was the only way you would understand why I perceive a certain habit as disrespectful. You would never accept that I am hurting because you have only decided that only your worldview counts. I also led us to set specific rules of engagement. I said that if I raise an issue and all she does is interrupt and defend herself before the sentence is complete, I would feel ignored, I thought the best is to just listen to me without argument and then take time to find out whether I make sense, then choose what to say whether you get it, whether it's fair, unfair, unfounded, too much to ask or it's cool.

My second rule of engagement was that, if she raises her issues, it's not time for me to use that as an excuse to open my ponderous box of similar or related issues where she is guilty too. If it's her motion, then she must be allowed to make the full presentation without being diverted to my parallels. I should raise my issues during my motion or after I have addressed what she raised. The reverse is true. This brought down tensions; for a long while we had no arguments in our discussions on key areas of concern. It worked very well.

Respect

When people feel respected, they are more willing to engage and express themselves than when they feel demeaned. Respect allows someone to feel vulnerable with their weaknesses and have a much better attitude towards you

than when they are not sure that they are respected. When my dad chose my friend Bishop Nicholas Olumasai to help mediate our differences, it was because Bishop was a mutual friend. I had at the first instance, requested Mr. Paul Etemesi to assist in the situation. I had already gone to my father and offered myself as a humble son even though I was yet to offer a formal apology. We were already on talking terms and engaging over family issues.

When I had the first sitting with both of them, I told them there was no way I would be the one to set the agenda. I am the child here. I requested them to talk to dad first and ask my dad what his desire or direction would be under the circumstances. Then I will respond to his direction if I have a concern rather than having my father respond to my line of direction. Dad took this move positively and articulated his issues as well as the direction to which I responded. We narrowed the gap, and in just three sittings, we had solved the major huddles of our misunderstandings.

Much later, an issue arose, and I found it difficult to bring it to my father's attention directly, lest he thinks this confrontational approach was likely to be my way of life. I sought a different mutual friend, Phillip Wesanza, the first man from our community to travel to the United Kingdom to study banking and finance. Phillip and dad are great buddies, just like Phillip and I have a deep friendship. I told Phillip that I had a concern, and I wanted my dad to first of all grant permission that I was allowed to raise my concern. I said that if he didn't grant permission, I will keep my peace because I did not want to ever find myself in contradiction with him.

Dad said, "That should be fine." One beautiful thing about Phillip is that he operates like my dad. He takes written notes and articulates himself in writing. Phillip did four shuttle diplomacies, and on the fifth, I said, tell dad I have heard. The last part is not what I wanted, but I agreed to abide by his will. Respect makes a whole difference. In a marriage situation, a lot of marital issues would be less strenuous if the parties knew that their place was respected. Among the issues that dad sent Phillip to me was that Dad wanted me to solve my misunderstanding with my elder brother. The beauty of that is that I had already reached out to my elder brother and made peace with him. A lot had happened in between, and my elder brother had gone further and showed good leadership when he invited me for lunch in the city and even took me shopping to take to my family. Dad was happy to learn of this development and told Phillip, "I have great sons."

Assurance

Assurance for this discussion is to give the confidence to the other party that despite your differences and strained relationship, you still value them, and their place is assured. Their place remains, and their importance in your life remains. It might be important for your spouse to know that as much as you are fighting, you are trying to fight fair because you are fighting with a teammate, and you place them in their high-value moral place as your wife, your husband, or the father of your children.

I am not sharing some of these details because they sound dramatic, but I am breathing my life into this text to prove to someone that it is possible to bridge the gaps created thru conflicts if you abide by these principles. I had not set my eyes on my dad since he smart legally erased evidence of my presence on that piece of land he took back. Unfortunately, my younger brother lost their child. My elder brother Tony took charge and supported my younger brother the best he could. He then called me and said, bro, I have done what I could; you may take over from here if you can. We discussed with my senior what was still needed in terms of logistics, and we facilitated that. We then assigned our mother and sister Isabella Murunga to organize catering services.

When I got home on the burial day, I looked at my father with pity. He was ailing and frail. Walking aided with a walking stick unlike him. I was seeing him after a very long time. I had so much anger inside but I missed my father. I went to him and greeted him, and he hugged me back and made a joke about a statement I had just made during the funeral program. I had said “a toothless man doesn't count his teeth with fingers. He counts with the tongue! “My dad had laughed at that statement and even praised me before the people that his children were well-mannered and wise. The assurance in this context was that, no matter what happens, we are your sons, and we will never let you down. We will hold the family together and uphold our family's dignity, which is the legacy of any parent.

Not so long after that, my dad's younger brother, my uncle Dickson Musotsi Munala, would pass away. A lot of things happened during this funeral. There was the good, the bad, and the ugly all wrapped in one event. On the day the body of my uncle was brought home, I saw my dad broken as I had never seen him before. He was all tears, something our old men do not do. He couldn't even support his weight. He was lost in thought. I walked to him, held his hand tightly, and stood by him. It didn't matter that we had unresolved issues. I could see that it meant a lot to him as it meant to me. My elder brother Anthony Munala came and held him on the other side. Assurance makes it easier to heal. All this time, I had internal battles and unresolved issues.

If only we were willing to give our loved ones the necessary assurance, the world will bend towards reconciliation and restoration.

Indicators

Establishing indicators as to whether you are making progress in your life situation is important. If you are depressed, you need to establish markers of depression such as anxiety, sadness, fear, regrets, suicidal thoughts, low self-esteem, feeling tearful, guilty ridden, intolerant to others, having no motivation or interest in things, and finding it difficult to make decisions. You need to find the markers and indicators that will show your progress either by eliminating bad emotional feelings or by including and enhancing good emotions such as happiness, confidence, etc. You also need to have habits as indicators that will show you whether you are improving in your situation or deteriorating.

Examine your heart

When people are hurting, the default mode is usually to blame someone else for their pains and misfortunes. Everyone must examine their hearts so that they can moderate their genuineness. When you look inward, you can isolate those issues which you need to deal with by yourself and those that you hope the other person would deal with. Most important is to ask critical questions such as; what is my role in all this? What are my responsibilities? What can I do about the situation? Do I have the competence to handle the issue? Do I need help? Who can I talk to? You may also need to ask yourself what you credit the person you have conflicts with. What do you appreciate them for?

The place of a Customized intrinsic support system

The paths of emotional and mental health require that even individuals who may be hurting make it easier to find the internal support needed to heal themselves. A couple which may be hurting due to their married situation can become each other's support system to heal faster if both accept to be that internal and intrinsic support system. It is through realization that the other person equally deserves healing that one can offer them the necessary unconditional support. It is a form of accepting that we all have weaknesses and sometimes keeps each other motivated despite causing each other hurt. Even a couple which is separating or divorcing for good can provide a safe space for that process of separation to be less toxic. An intrinsic support system is like the parabolic duo of a blind man and a lame man. One needed to see while the other needed to walk; making it important to collaborate with each other.

An intrinsic support system is a set of people who have hurt each other, yet need each other through the process of healing and can play a part in supporting the other to heal from the wounds they have been a part of. I have discussed support system widely in a different chapter.

The strategies that helped with my mother

As for my mother, our story of healing was different. We became each other's support system in recovery. My mother was struggling with anxiety; anger, panic attacks, and was depressed following the events that saw her lose hope. My mother used to spend the day well but immediately darkness sets in, she would develop panic attacks. She would leave her good house and go to spend the night with a friend. Mum has always had a big heart for widows. During her better days, she supported a lot of widows and orphans. It is among these widows that she sought refuge. This great sense of insecurity made her more sympathetic to widows and women who felt abandoned or neglected within the community. They would spend most days sharing their experiences and also spent the nights together encouraging each other and praying for each other.

During this time, I was not interested in developing my farm. When I returned home, I was equally seeking my space to heal and so we encouraged one another. After some time, I began showing interest in the farm, and that is when my mother began cheering me up. Her prayer and hope were that I shall gain my hope which I eventually did. She always advised and emphasized her mantra; "never give up"! Mum used to go to the nearest grocery shop for supplies. One morning when I gave her money to go to the shop, I saw her look at her dress went back into the house and changed. That's when I knew that my classic mother was loading back. one sign of depression is neglecting self-care. I kept her busy serving my workers on the farm and those working on my building construction.

When I stopped the construction work, I rented her a shop where she began selling groceries. Within no time she had come alive, coming in the evening and showing me her balance sheet, separating her capital, from her sales and expenses, and displaying to me her profits and the exponential potential of her business. It was very inspiring and fulfilling. Diversification became her strategy and before long she was already in self-help groups, borrowing to expand her business. In church, she served relentlessly. Before we knew it, she was appointed the chairperson to the board of management of the government-sponsored school which she founded when she was still pastoring.

I encouraged my loving and supportive mother, to embrace forgiveness and explained to her how that works for her and that it has nothing to do with the person who offended her. Unforgiveness is like taking poison and hoping that the other person will die in your place. Forgiveness is your gift to yourself. I encouraged her to forgive herself also. To test my confidence, I left home back to the city and stayed three months straight, without visiting my mum. Guess what, she has made great friends with our relatives and neighbors. Most of them became her customers just like it was in earlier years. She grew in leaps and bounds; no longer having the fear of having to stay alone in her homestead. To God be the glory. She has with time elevated the scope of her business, restored her pastoral ministry and is doing well as a chairperson to the school board. She is also involved in community development projects which is a great testimony of restoration. Glory be to God.

The strategies that helped with my Children

Young children always begin to suffer whenever there is a sudden change in family patterns. My two younger children realized that daddy has been keeping a different pattern whether he is going to Malindi or Western Kenya. I didn't think it was a big deal but I sooner realized how hard-hitting it was for them. If my son came from school and found my car missing, he would have a panic attack immediately. My son Aden would find it difficult to do his homework if I drove out of the compound in the evening. He would be disturbed until the moment he will see the mere turn. To my daughter, dressing up or taking a shower was an extreme sport for her. Whenever she saw me going to take a shower, she would stay by the door, and won't leave that bedroom door, until she has seen me fully dressed and I account to her where I am going and whether I am coming back. Within no time, she would have trouble sleeping before she sees me home.

A few days ago, I was setting up a working audio-visual studio on the ground floor of my apartment. When she came from school, she was very anxious and asked me; why exactly are you moving furniture to this place? After I explained, she gave me a very tight hug with a deep breath. What a sigh of relief! This is how deeply my children were affected. I understood the meaning behind the phrase which people take lightly which says, "I had stayed for the sake of the children." I was already reconciled with my wife but I am allowing you in to see the impact of separation, divorce, or even sudden changes in family patterns that can have an impact on a child's life. Could you have experienced these shock waves before in your childhood? Is it possible that these kinds of shocks contribute a fraction of how your mind processes life today? Does it have anything to do with anger, insecurities, indifference, restlessness, and anxiety?

My sons' grades in school started to drop. When I gave him an assignment to write how he feels without fear of reprisals, my son said I had neglected him and that he feels alone because dad was away most of the time. That is when I realized that I had an even bigger problem at hand and I dedicated time to intentionally make my children feel safe and stable emotionally. God has been great! We have come a long way and I thank God that my family is back in its element. The shine is back and we are all happy to be each other's friends again and we are all happy to serve God together and to think and plan like family. The power of a support system it is! We need to therefore remember that, all the things God instructed us to do had everything to do with our support system; they were meant to sustain us, keep us alive, keep us energized, and keep us sustained and enabled. Everything was for our good and I think the church needs to get to that place where we teach what Jesus taught and how Jesus taught.

Giving to church, to the poor and tithing are simply principles like water evaporating so that it comes back to us as rain. When we are told to keep a forest cover, why should we fight about that? Did we fail biology miserably that we do not know that the trees give us the oxygen we breathe and that without the trees, we would be breathing in the very bad air our bodies produce? Disgusting, right? My understanding of how support systems are important underscores the focus and passion which God has attached to them. When you follow the simplicity of the parables of Jesus Christ, it had everything to do with the intention for us to grasp the revelation behind God's principles for life and humanity. To make it a commandment, meant that the principles are so definite that any measure at all needed to be taken to ensure that we are observing the principles of a support system because, without that observance, the human person will have activated a self-destructive mode of life. The values of community and love for self, love for neighbor, service to the community, forgiveness, and restoration is the principle upon which God has predicated the human endeavor.

During my difficult days, I had conversations with my mentors who prayed with me and encouraged me to stay strong. Much as I looked polished on the outside, I was sinking into depression due to strained relationships, lost time and opportunities as well as unmet career and life goals. I had a marriage in limbo, a closed-down church Ministry, a strained father-son relationship, a sick father and a depressed mother, a business empire in recession and fallout with the family of pastors in my city. All these stresses of financial quagmires, marital distress, parental distress, church closure, and fall out with my family of pastors happened concurrently and precipitated depression. The multiplicity of complex sources of negative emotions and thoughts caused me to have prolonged periods of sadness, pain, sorrow, fear, failure, and shame which got compounded into depression.

Depression affects the mental balance of a human person making them unable to function properly. One is not able to focus, be creative, or productive. If depression is not well managed it can lead to suicide or self-destructive behavior. Certain fundamental perspectives played a major role in my recovery through depression. My past victories and encouragement from the word of God played a major role. My vision and past prophesy made me believe there was something to live for. Knowledge of my history and ancestry birthed a new passion in line with my forebearers. I realized who I was and whose I was birthing a new resilience to align with the strength of my forebnearers. Later on, I was able to reconcile the bearing of their vision to my vision and when the purposes of God in me, as I knew it, were in perfect unison with the above; I felt alive again, just like a newborn baby.

The place of Counseling, Mentors, Support groups and appropriate support system

A church can be an appropriate support system for your situation if their teachings and culture encourage the kind of help you need. If you can't find appropriate help in church, then find professional counseling or submit to the assistance of your mentors. Finding a church for our children was a factor that put us to work together. I gave my wife permission to choose any church she was comfortable with but specified the ones I wouldn't be comfortable with for my family. I said that if she didn't find one, then we shall travel to our former church, Deliverance Church -Kahawa Sukari along Thika road in Kenya.

After three weeks, she informed me that she had found the international Christian center (ICC) in Kenya, a ministry of the Assemblies of God, as an option. I didn't want to go to church because, when I went to some churches, they wanted to take full advantage of my celebrity presence and sometimes asked me to greet the church or sing, something I loathed at the time. When I later joined ICC Kitengela, I never stood up when visitors were called upon and the protocol team has never attended to me as a guest. I didn't want to be pushed into deeper waters.

This church was very helpful to our healing. Within the four months my wife attended church, she always came back home happy and with a positive aura. This was very helpful to our warming up toward each other. She later began going to some classes every Saturday; I would later learn it was called wisdom for mothers. Every Saturday she came home with something new to share with me and something to reflect about our marriage. It is this ladies programme which encouraged me to go to church. It seemed to me, a remedy to most of my problems.

1 Peter 3:1-2 (NIV) became alive to me that husbands without a word, (not born again) may be won by the conduct of their wives. That is how I joined ICC Kitengela because it had transformed my wife into the version of woman, I had always desired in her. It was work in progress but the intentionality was sufficient to make me believe that it was a good ground for both of us to grow. I later enrolled for the men's fellowship where I also learnt lessons which continue to inspire me to be a better man, husband and father.

Later my wife would invite me to a couple's dinner, which I attended reluctantly. Just like all my other uninvited attention, I dint like the fact that all the guests, from the speaker to the entertainer were giving me the attention I was running away from. That very evening, the senior pastor seemed interested in talking to me about the couple's ministry, which made me withdraw even more. I kept it in my heart, though! A couple's ministry was the last thing I wanted to be associated with, not when my marriage was under threat. I am sharing this detail to encourage a fellow man that even when you do not feel the rhythm of your marriage, these forums, are a form of support group which will help build capacity to triumph over your trials.

To prove this, we would later go for a couple's retreat of 3 days at the coast organized by the larger ICC fraternity, including ICC Imara Daima and ICC both in Nairobi, Kenya. On the second day, we got to discuss some issues which were holding us back and another burden was lifted off our shoulders. There is always something you can gain from these forums which will build your life or marriage.

After the retreat, we had a long talk with the senior pastors, and after I explained my realities, fears, and concerns, they supported me with ideas to navigate ministry and that is how my drive for ministry was reinvigorated. I am grateful to the ICC family for giving me a chance to serve God and grow in their midst, building up day by day. It is worth noting that both my wife and I decided to study psychology. I began by reading and carrying out research and would share my lessons with her. She got interested and gradually took the step to enroll in studying psychology. She moved up in the course faster than me. It is my knowledge in psychology and self-awareness that enabled me to bear with my difficult moments. We would gradually combine classroom knowledge, therapy sessions, and the influence of the church programs to become beautiful inside out. We gave each other a chance to learn and grow independently but we kept talking and discovering where we could improve and polish until we enjoyed our learning and applying the lessons; even becoming each other's consultants on various topics. We now work together and look forward to building a great empire in days to come but most importantly offer psychosocial support to other families and couples.

Pain through the Brain, Mind, and Spirit

To understand where we are stuck, we need to understand the neuroscience of the mind. "It's like I get into a roller coaster, and sit there while it goes up and down and upside down and sometimes I get thrown out and I hit my head, but I crawl back in again and the moment I'm back in, it just keeps on going and going again...all of this, so I can find things out and then I write about the things I find out so you can find them out from me. All the bruises, all the wounds, all the bumps on the head, all the scars, just so I can take that and I can write all these things, and sometimes I say "God, I don't want to be in this roller coaster anymore." But when I think about it, if I'm not right here, then where the hell would I be? On the sidewalk? I wasn't born to stand on the sidewalk; I was born to fly around crazy in the sky!"

The quote by Joybell is a true representation of how we feel elated one minute and sad the next: as if on an emotional roller coaster. The whirlwind of feelings can leave you feeling confused and emotionally exhausted whereby getting off may seem impossible. The biggest challenge in human endeavor is finding a way to cope with emotions which mostly are caused to us by external factors. We have varied emotions or strong feelings derived from varying circumstances, moods, and relationships with those around us. The brain integrates emotions, emotional behavior, and motivation. It interprets fear, helps distinguish friends from foes, and identifies social rewards and how to attain them.

Pain and emotions have a shared construct which is overlapping in concept and function begging the question to answer, in what way pain is different from any other emotions. There is a complex but bi-directional influence on how the brain mediates the experience of both pain and emotions through different conceptual and neuroanatomical processes.

Pain

Pain has two components, physical and emotional. Physical pain has a sensory component while emotional pain has a psychological component. Physical pain informs the brain of the source of the pain while emotional pain causes distress after the experience. There is an overlap on how the brain experiences both physical and emotional pain as research from the University of Michigan suggests that the brain process social rejection like it does physical injury. The research also introduced a personality trait called resilience which is a heightened threshold of pain. Resilience is vital to how we process pain. The brain's natural painkilling response varies between humans with some releasing more opioids during social rejection and physical injury than others.

It means some people have a stronger and more adaptive or protective ability than others to physical and or emotional pain explaining why some people will break down on the slightest infliction of physical or emotional pain while others won't. To illustrate how resilience works, when victims of torture begin the healing process, Jorge Barudy, a leading neuro-psychiatrist, and former victim of torture in Chile presented to the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT) how children and adolescents are specifically affected by torture. He showed MRI images of the brain clearly showing torture's devastating effects on the hippocampus (the part of the brain associated with thought, emotion, and memory) because of massively elevated levels of the stress hormone, cortisol. The hippocampus allows humans to feel empathy. Victims' ability to feel empathy is affected by torture. The victims also suffer from attention and memory disorders and their self-esteem is damaged, “he said.”

We have established that Physical and emotional pain gets to the brain thru different pathways. However, the brain responds by triggering messengers to cause a survival or coping mechanism to overcome or withstand that pain. The messengers are chemicals that are secreted from various glands according to which messengers were activated. Each messenger is activated according to the signal of pain which the brain received from varying sources and it is intended to cause the brain to trigger another set of messenger/s which will go into the bloodstream to achieve various results; according to the specific messenger/s released into the bloodstream.

Negativity effect

The Negativity effect

The negativity effect, is a cognitive bias, that even when of equal intensity, things of a more negative nature (e.g., unpleasant thoughts, emotions, or social interactions; harmful/traumatic events) have a greater effect on one's psychological state and processes than neutral or positive things. In other words, something very positive will generally have less of an impact on a person's behavior and cognition than something equally emotional but negative. Paul Rozin and Edward Royzman proposed four elements of the negativity bias to explain its manifestation: negative potency, steeper negative gradients, negativity dominance, and negative differentiation. I will simplify all these into a layman's language and state that the human mind has evolved to focus on threats to its survival as a means of self-protection from danger. The brain and the mind have a high sensitivity to all manner of threats; physical, mental, and emotional to assist the body flee from such threats. As a result, any negative thought, harmful thought or feeling, and destructive pattern or danger will be most recognized by the human brain than a positive alternative.

The bias of the mind to recognize the negative signals more than it does the positive ones elevates the interpretation of negative thoughts and emotions. With this awareness, we should therefore realize that the presence of the negative energy in our mind doesn't mean, our mind desires the negative thoughts but is helping us filter through our environment; prompting us to act accordingly to prevent self-destruction. It means that we are more sensitive to anything harmful to us but without training our minds through empowering the spirit, the digital prints in our mind are easy to implement through the brain. It is the spirit which gives the mind a perception and worldview of how to act on the thoughts that are brought to the mind's awareness. Let me give you a sequence.

If you are well-fed and paid your bills, your emotions are in a good place and your mind is settled peacefully with gratitude. That is the default setting of how life should be. If you are unable to pay your bills or hungry, that is out of order and the mind will provoke you to attend to that need using any known means that your environment has taught you since you were born. The mind doesn't discriminate options except through your identity as a function of mental patterns developed over time through your values and examples. If your values do not allow you to steal as should be the case, the mind will still register the fact that you are hungry and that you should be worried about your bills. Anything you have ever known to help you eat or find money will come to your mind. All manner of talk, images, and gossip ever known around you will be elevated by your mind to assist you meet that uncomfortable reality. The mind doesn't discriminate but wonders and sifts through all options to silence the threat of worry, anxiety, and starvation.

That is how you will get persistent ideas on how to solve the problem until you solve them or in the alternative use a higher power to discipline your mind to perceive that need in an alternative fashion. The higher power will be the spirit. It doesn't mean that the mind will stop reminding you of the imminent threat, but your ability to speak to the mind an alternative message of contentment, self-control and patience or endurance will feed the mind with a new interpretation of the very signals first initiated. That is the explanation behind the battle of the spirit and the mind heavily influenced by the negativity effect or negativity bias.

According to Dr. Rick Hanson Ph.D., a psychologist, our brains have been have been hardwired through evolution to focus on the negative than the positive. Traced back to prehistoric days, primitive man had to be able to register threats to avoid danger and increase survival rates. Individuals who were more attuned to danger (negative stimuli) stayed alive longer and passed on their genes to subsequent generations. The negativity effect is the brain's tendency to be impacted more by negative events than positive ones.

Studies have shown that the brain's electrical ability increases when focusing on negative stimuli as compared to positive ones. We remember insults and criticism more than we do praises, dwell on negative and hurtful events more than constructive and positive ones, and mostly make decisions based on avoiding negative results than being inspired by positive possibilities.This is trying to say that negative events and emotions have a home ground advantage to our brains over positive ones calling for us to find a way to double the effort on positive imprints in our memories or back up the power of positivity at any one given time. We need to find a mind hack to override this natural bending towards the negativity effect if we are to thrive on the positive energy but that will come up later in this chapter. Hand in hand with the negativity effect, the body has a way of helping to protect itself from possible harm called fight and flight

Fight and flight

We usually experience fear when we sense we are in danger. When our brains alert our bodies to the presence of danger, our bodies respond automatically and speed our heart rate and breathing to increase oxygen and blood going into muscles, tighten our muscles, and deactivate certain bodily functions not immediately important such as digestion, release adrenaline to give us energy and release cortisol to relieve pain. This can also block rational thinking and also sweat so we don't get too hot.

A group of changes that occur in the body to help a person fight or take flight in stressful or dangerous situations. This is the body's way of helping to protect itself from possible harm. During fight or flight, certain hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, are released into the blood. To be specific, through a combination of nerve and hormonal signals, this system prompts your adrenal glands, located atop your kidneys, to release a surge of hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. Adrenaline increases your heart rate, elevates your blood pressure, and boosts energy supplies. Catecholamine hormones, such as adrenaline (epinephrine) or noradrenaline (norepinephrine), facilitate immediate physical reactions associated with a preparation for violent muscular action and: Acceleration of heart and lung action.

Besides fight and flight, the body could also initiate three other modes namely: flop, friend, or freeze. Fight; involves physical fighting, struggling to save, or fighting verbally such as saying No or issuing counter verbal threats. Flight involves putting distance between you and the danger which may include running or backing away. Freeze means going tense or silent, which is a common reaction to rape and sexual violence. It is not giving consent but a survival response to avoid further hurt or threat to life. Flop is similar to freezing except your muscle become loose and you cannot move.

This reaction is one to reduce the physical pain of what is happening to you or your mind can shut down to protect itself from further pain and damage. A friend is calling a friend or a bystander for help, for example shouting or screaming for help. A friend could also mean befriending the person who is dangerous and negotiating, pleading, or enticing the dangerous person. This is not permission but purely survival.

Conclusion

The brain will easily identify pain and cause the body to respond in a manner to protect itself from danger; the pain being physical or emotional. It is also worth noting that the brain will mostly be sensitive to negative emotions and signals unless humans have a mechanism to override or compensate for that sensitivity. My writing on this topic seeks to sufficiently compensate for the effects of pain on the brain with an alternative set of messengers to those of pain or override the messengers of pain together and saturate the brain with messengers of happiness and love. This is possible and practical if you take a moment to understand my scope of the mind and the relationship between the brain and the mind. Whereas the brain controls functions such as thought, memory, vision, and cognition among other related functions; the mind has superior capabilities which override those of the brain. Such capabilities may include but are not limited to perception, revelation, intuition, validation, reception, and conception of information

Always remember that in this book I am attempting to justify the fact that we have known tools and mechanisms to compensate for the negative messengers within and from the brain or override their effect and birth a net effect of positive messengers. The trusted instrument capable of compensating for the negative messengers effectively is the mind. The mind has unfettered and unlimited capabilities such that it can effectively override all the negative effects emanating from the brain. When I say override, I mean that, whereas the brain may receive negative messengers, the mind is capable of influencing the brain to release equivalent and reciprocal positive messengers or the mind can cause the brain to receive more positive messengers even when there are negative messengers in the same system so that the net effect will be a release of positive messengers into the bloodstream and the entire organ and muscular system of the body.

Pain explained in neuroscience

It might be intriguing for the biochemist in me to start having fun digging into neuroscience and endocrinology. Neuroscience is the study of how the nervous system develops, its structure, and what it does with a focus on the brain and its impact on behavior and cognitive functions while endocrinology is the study of hormones and glands.

A hormone is a chemical messenger that travels from one endocrine gland or organ in your body to another part of your body through your blood. However, I choose to end my depth in the definition of these two fundamental components associated with the brain for purposes of our study of pain and its interaction with the brain and the outcome thereof. Hormones also act as neurotransmitters/chemical messengers.

Physical or emotional pain is interpreted thru the same mechanism by the brain where the chemical messengers interpret a feeling or sensation; send the message to the brain causing the brain to react by releasing a set of appropriate chemicals to the bloodstream to act as signals of response. Neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and dopamine, are used as chemical messengers to send signals across the brain network. Brain regions receive these signals, which results in us recognizing objects and situations, then assigning them an emotional value to guide our behavior and making split-second risk/reward assessments. Overall, the brain seems geared towards maintaining a positive frame of mind. Being in a good mood makes us more likely to seek new experiences, be creative, plan, procreate, and adapt to changing conditions. Being in the right frame of mind makes one to: Be creative, focused, and productive.

There is one particular system in the brain associated with pain called the limbic system. This system is domiciled in the part of the brain called the cerebrum which is the largest part of the brain. The limbic system is the major brain network underpinning mood. It's a network of regions that work together to process and make sense of the world. The limbic system also regulates biological functions in line with our mood, such as accelerated heart rate and sweating triggered by feeling flustered.

Researchers have increasingly been looking towards newer networks to understand how the brain controls mood. Two particular networks that stand out across numerous studies are the **autobiographic memory network** and **the cognitive control network**. The autobiographic memory network processes information related to ourselves, including recalling personal memories and self-reflection. It comprises brain areas inside the prefrontal cortex, which sits in the front of the brain; and parietal regions, which sit behind the frontal lobe and are important for mental imagery.The cognitive control network links up regions that coordinate our attention and concentration so that we can complete tasks. It recruits a circuit of the front part of the cingulate cortex and dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, which are specialized for cold, unemotional, rational thought.

These two networks are thought to have a strained relationship. The autobiographic memory network switches on when someone is preoccupied with thoughts concerning themselves.

This causes the task-oriented cognitive control network to switch off, thereby reducing our ability to complete whatever task we're supposed to be doing. Conversely, the autobiographic memory network is suppressed when the cognitive control network is required to gather the attention needed for a task at hand. This is in line with the notion that we "lose ourselves" when we are absorbed in doing something. When the two networks don't work properly, they can result in what psychiatrists refer to as mood disorders.

This is a good place to master because you will soon understand why depression causes one to manifest the symptoms they do such as lack of focus at work and inability to be productive in their personal lives, projects, and business. Depression also manifests thru a lack of self-love due to the inability to self-reflect and a lack of proper memory, a memory that should assist one to be consistent with their identity as mastered by their memory. It is the reason anyone in depression doesn't care about their personal appearance and personal grooming. The autobiographic memory network isn't properly activated to allow you to think about yourself. You lose your sense of value, dignity, and appearance. You do not pursue thoughts and actions which will enhance your wellness as a person due to this system being shut down or being in a mixed signaling state. In the alternative, a depressed person is unable to focus on tasks and will most often be lost in deep thoughts worrying and feeling pity for self while trying to relieve the moments of what happened and how badly it affected them. The sense of memory and self though is more geared towards the bad memories and the bad emotions of trauma, danger, mistreatment, injustice, or hardship making it practically impossible to concentrate on any task other than more worry, fear, and anxiety.

In the alternative, depressed people could also show an excessive and obsessive attachment to work. I will shortly explain how that works but the cognitive control network which enables one to focus on tasks can cause someone to also overindulge in a task if it is physically involved. Someone can start working in the morning and work all day without stopping and without a track of time. Physical activity causes muscle contractions which in the process release some of the feel-good hormones such as endorphins and oxytocin. These hormones have a net effect of a good mood causing the brain to interpret that you should continue the supply of these hormones to counter the effects of the otherwise negative emotions. When I was depressed, I used to work on the farm from morning till it was dark into the night. If I was not working on the farm, I would be on my construction site working till late into the night. To a significant extent, I forgot about personal care. I look at some of my videos done around that time and laugh at myself because I look like someone I can't recognize.

All these were part of the healing process because when you accomplish something, thru hard work, you somehow begin to cause a chemical balance in the brain and could easily strike that code that reduced the imbalance or caused a complete equilibrium to realize yourself and come to your senses. When my father was depressed, he used to work on the farm from morning till dark. I always found him watering his vegetables until very late into the night. If he was not working then, he would be lost in thought. He always mentioned suicidal thoughts during the height of his depression. There was just too much he was handling at the same time.

When my mother was depressed, she used to work on the farm and would forget about herself completely till it was late into the night. She forgot about personal care and the need to dress up and show up like she always did before. Severally I found my mother speaking to herself; you would think someone was walking alongside her. Depression is bad and can take away someone's dignity completely with life. I had to make the necessary sacrifice to stay by her side until I was certain that she had her complete confidence back. The cognitive control network, largely responsible for memory, could easily be manipulated to yield the desired result for a depressed person. I am not stating this authoritatively but suggestively from a personal correlation of facts. If this network is what triggers thoughts about self and takes us down memory lane, then we can borrow the power of the positive memories which exist in our memory bank.

When I was in depression, I took a lot of time thinking thru positive memories of my past and I have told the story of how I overcame depression. I was preoccupied with my photos since childhood and all the great memories of my past. This long journey of the great me, began to awaken a new realization of what was possible because I had achieved these levels of greatness before. The biblical story of the prodigal son says after the young man was hired to take care of the swine, he desired to be fed with the pods the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said to himself, how many of my father's servants have more than enough to eat yet I perish in hunger? I will rise and go to my father and ask for forgiveness. It is these memories of what is good and possible that begin to feed into your subconscious mind, the memories of good images and good experiences of the past.

In his depressed state, he hired himself as a citizen of that country to take care of the swine. This was nothing close to his identity but he did not care about his appearance. The cognitive control network enables us to think about ourselves, yet it matters what exactly we think about ourselves. Are we lost in deep thought worrying about the bad, the ugly, and the hopelessness or are we allowing good memories to sip thru? The cognitive control network allows for memory; so why not sip thru the positive ones?

It causes us to be lost in deep thought about ourselves, so why not leak in the positive thoughts about ourselves like the prodigal son? The prodigal son visualized himself as a member of his former self as being a servant in his father's house was more worthy than his hungry self with pigs. The prodigal son sneaked in thoughts of forgiveness and forgave himself and recited some affirmations of forgiveness. He said, I will tell my father, I have sinned against you and God. I am not worthy to be called your son, instead treat me like one of your servants. It is these positive affirmations that made it possible for there to be a respectable balance between his cognitive control networks.

Remember, these two networks are thought to have a strained relationship. The autobiographic memory network switches on when someone is preoccupied with thoughts concerning themselves. This causes the task-oriented cognitive control network to switch off, thereby reducing our ability to complete whatever task we're supposed to be doing. When there is what I am calling a respectable balance, it means the individual can voluntarily switch on or off either of the networks. When the prodigal son, switched on the cognitive control networks, he was able to take up his task of traveling the distance to his native home, back into his father's hands, and completed the task. Without that critical respectable balance between the two opposing brain networks, one is unable to initiate a task, leave alone focus on a task.

Conversely, people who overly indulge in the cognitive control networks such as workaholics and people who spend more time reading and doing research, run the risk of downplaying the see-saw swing and oscillation to and from both switches. They tend to gradually slow down on self-care, and slowly abandon caring for their needs and wellbeing. This happens purely when someone in a position of stressful work environment focuses on the job too much. It inhibits the swing and switches between the two sides of the network. The stress is interpreted by the brain as a negative emotion thus increasing the magnitude of imbalance bending towards the autobiographic memory network which processes information related to ourselves, including recalling personal memories and self-reflection. Our rationale and conscience can easily fail. Our sense of interpreting the world around us properly gets compromised. Have you ever realized, why during exam time, students appear to be lost in a world only known to them and fairly removed from their usual selves? These are the reasons, why the school or any work environment should make it possible for workers, students, lecturers, and leaders to have some vacation time or playtime. This should allow the setting in of the control networks to kick in and enhance personal reflection and self-care enhancement.

The sports in school and the creative arts such as music and drama are great to enhance the learning process of the student.

It helps the student bring their brain to balance, to be creative, innovative, and more productive. Furthermore, sporting exercise helps muscle contraction to trigger hormones in the blood that lead to secretion of the feel-good hormones and enhance the peace, good mood, and relaxation of the individual.

Happy emotions hormones

The feel-good hormones include dopamine, serotonin, endorphins, and oxytocin. These are hormones that give an individual an experience of happiness and pleasure.

Dopamine supports feelings of reward and motivation while serotonin helps maintain emotions in balance. Oxytocin is the love hormone that gives you a rush of pleasure from affection and connection. Oxytocin provokes a feeling of contentment, calmness, and security which are commonly associated with bonding and mating. Couples that mates and have orgasm are more likely to feel calm and content because orgasm produces large amounts of oxytocin. Some people in conflict are also likely to be found involved in sexual intercourse because the brain has already registered sex as a source of huge amounts of oxytocin that would help the brain to provoke a sense of contentment and calmness after sex.

However, if the sense of conflict progress to depression, this may change drastically. Chronic stress can interfere with your body's hormonal levels and result in low libido, even erectile dysfunction. Arteries can narrow to restrict blood flow in response to stress. Stress can also distract you by taking your mind off sexual desire and cause low libido. It is common that most men, who are under duress, also have low sexual drive.

Negative emotions hormones

Adrenaline glands usually flood the bloodstream with hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. Cortisol is primarily the stress hormone and is mostly associated with anger. Both cortisol and adrenaline are associated with fear. It increases the blood sugar levels in the bloodstream and enhances the brain to use glucose. It also increases the availability of substances that repair body tissue. Cortisol also curbs functions that would be non-essential or harmful in a fight or flight situation. Testosterone and thyroid hormones are linked to mood. Low quantities in both men and women cause irritable mood. They are produced in the testes of men and the ovaries of women.

Anxiety

Anxiety is caused by an imbalance in two key hormones; serotonin and cortisol. The imbalance of these two critical messengers disrupts the brain chemistry and the nervous system which regulate our moods, stress levels, and emotions. Serotonin is thought to enhance the production of dopamine and hampers the production of cortisol. Too much serotonin causes shivering, heavy sweating, confusion, restlessness, high blood pressure, muscle twitches, and diarrhea. Severe symptoms include high fever, seizures, fainting, and abnormal heartbeat. Serotonin syndrome can be fatal if it's severe and not caught early and treated quickly. Research also shows that a family history of depression developing depression is not fully understood, twin and family studies suggest that the heritability of depression is roughly 37 percent. Many smaller studies had identified genetic components that may be associated with depression. However, further, more conclusive research is required to fully assess the exact role genetics has in depression.

Positive mindset

Spiritually speaking, having a positive mindset means upholding the right attitude and frame of mind such that you will not lose your positive virtue over negative things which might happen around you. You need to equip yourself with praise, thanksgiving, and forgiveness, and still glorify God despite how you might feel internally. It is the ability to make peace and be at peace even when the world around you is collapsing because God has your best interest in all circumstances.

Stephen was the first martyr in the bible. While he was being stoned to death, he looked up to heaven and sustained his connection and devotion to God. He did not allow this unfortunate martyrdom to mess up with his spiritual positive mindset. Instead, he forgave those who were stoning him and then prayed to God not to remember this against them for they do not know what they are doing. Stephen was rewarded with an assurance of eternal life as heaven opened and he saw the son of God standing on the right hand of the father. It is interesting to note that the son of God was standing unlike most inferences which depict him as seated at the right hand of the father but that is discussion for a different context.

A positive mindset is the very mindset that Job had as recorded in the bible. The job went thru untold suffering with huge losses of building properties, animals, and even children. In all these incidences, Job maintained a positive mindset praising the name of God. He said that the lord gives and the lord takes, blessed be the name of the lord.

When he was challenged by his wife over this continued attitude of looking up to God with a positive mindset, he questioned his wife as to why he should only celebrate God when all was going well for him and not when things can't hold together. Job must have learned the power of a positive mind from a source higher and more enlightened than most of us.

Jesus demonstrated to us what the power of positive energy is by elevating the importance of focus as a means to elevate a positive mindset to the surface in moments of adversity. During his last moments leading to his divine death on the cross, Jesus went thru various forms of pain and suffering from many sources, but he did not give any of them focus and preeminence. Rather, he fought off every possible distraction and maintained his focus on the will of God the Father and fulfilling his divine mission without allowing the oppressive pain and shame which was written all over him throughout this whole period starting with his arrest leading to his crucifixion.

When Simon Peter took his sword and cut off a soldier's ear, Jesus asked Peter to take back his sword and restore that ear and showed by example the need to stay focused on allowing the will of God to be established. While on the cross, Jesus wasn't having it easy! He questioned God why he had forsaken him. Despite all that frustration; he didn't hold back from giving his tormentors. He also committed his spirit to God in the end, thus acknowledging the supremacy of God even in the most disturbing of circumstances that have a definitive ending. Before Jesus finally died, he was mocked by a thief who was equally crucified and dying anyway. Jesus did not pay attention to the negativity and mockery which was coming from him but retained his focus on the heavenly mandate. Jesus only paid attention when the other thief who acknowledged his position as the son of God.

The thief asked Jesus to remember him when he gets to his kingdom; a request which Jesus granted with a promise to be with him in paradise that very day. Jesus' response to one thief and silence to another demonstrates to us that even in failure, pain, shame, and moments of weakness, we can rise to refresh our identity. Our identity in God means that we can keep ourselves motivated despite hardships if we allow our mind to focus on those things that define us and build us and not those that destroy us even if we are going thru the process of destruction. Our mindset is our most valuable power to deliver ourselves from a potentially destructive environment.

The rule of thumb in life is to experience life through a positive mindset and not a negative mindset. Whenever a negative mindset creeps into our lives, the darkness can only be eliminated through the light of a positive mindset. With an attitude and understanding whose default setting bends towards a positive mindset, the light will always clear the darkness.

This balance between the happy hormones and stress hormones defines the rule of thumb at a physical, mental, and emotional level. Our spirituality assists and supports the return to a positive mindset. Ten Commandments teachings of Jesus and the fruit of the Holy Spirit all boil down to this rule of thumb; to experience life through a positive mindset. Mental health, therefore, becomes the center block for life within the family. The glory of God represents the character of God. All the attributes of God as love, peace, a healer, and all other attributes are characteristics that are extended to man as a way of aiding him to function in the realm of a positive mindset. The holiness of God is the perfection of his positive mindset. Even the prayers we make to him, sometimes are imperfect, but the Holy Spirit helps us to pray on our behalf so that the prayers are offered only in a fashion consistent with his perfection of holiness according to Romans 8: 18-27. The prayers are offered as incense according to the revelation of Psalms 141:2 and the evidence of revelations 8: 4.

Overcoming Transference and countertransference

Transference

According to a medically reviewed by Timothy J. Legg, Ph.D., PsyD — By Kimberly Holland on May 28, 2019, Transference occurs when a person redirects some of their feelings or desires for another person to an entirely different person. One example of transference is when you observe characteristics of your father in a new boss, your lecturer, your mentor, or your pastor. This is common among men because we have a bigger father crisis than a mother crisis in the world. In such a case one can attribute fatherly feelings to this new boss or pastor without knowing it. They can be good or bad feelings. Transference can also happen in a healthcare setting. For example, transference in therapy happens when a patient attaches anger, hostility, love, adoration, or a host of other possible feelings to their therapist or doctor. Therapists know this can happen. They actively try to monitor for it. Sometimes, as part of their therapy process, some therapists even actively encourage someone to try to understand a person's unconscious mental processes. This can help them comprehend the patient's actions, behaviors, and feelings.

For instance, the therapist may see an unconscious reaction to intimacy in their patient's inability to form strong bonds with significant others. Transference can help the therapist understand why that fear of intimacy exists. They can then work toward resolving it. This may help the patient develop healthy, long-lasting relationships.

There is a reason I have brought up the subject of transference. Depending on an individual's emotional needs and desires as a child or teenager they might project these desires towards a boss, a pastor, a teacher, a neighbor, a relative, a father of a friend, or a mother of a friend. Sometimes, a young man could get fascinated by an older woman and direct to them, their desire to be loved by a mother while young women may end up projecting their desire for a father figure by becoming romantically inclined towards the older men. The older woman in this case might easily connect with this youthful lustful love if they never got to enjoy their youth and got married too early into a toxic marriage. Their desire for a romantic relationship can be easily awakened by falling in love with a younger man to meet this desire which has been hidden in their subconscious mind. This explains why some young men who have grown up as orphans or with absent motherly love, easily get entangled with older women while some of the young women are entangled with much older men. It is also the reason a woman will naturally want to be married to a man older than him for the simple reason that her father, first love was older.

I have a female friend who confessed to being extremely jealous of her father who is a pastor. The constant mention of other people calling him daddy irritates her to the core. Most likely this pastor did not give attention to her daughter as a child and or as a teenager. He most likely was more committed to the church and the needs of his congregants than he was to his family. This lady could easily experience transference and be attracted to an older man for the much fatherly love she missed as a child and teenager and possibly continues to crave. The love and attention of an older man could strike the chords of unmet love needs and become so strong to be sexualized towards older men. The efforts of a younger man will not be appreciated as love enough for such a lady if she dates an age mate.

A friend also mentioned having lusted for a male teacher of a certain complexion when she was only a class six little pupil. She would wish God gave her that adult man at that age. Putting all facts together, the male adult had the complexion of her father while the young kid never had the love of her father as a little girl and further lost the love completely when her parents divorced. She was taken away for good by her mother when she was in lower primary. Sometimes men and women project the desire for a father or mother figure to their pastors, lecturers, mentor, therapists, or bosses. The deep desire for a father or mother figure becomes so strong that they do not know what to do with the feelings of transference. The pastor, teacher, lecturer, boss, or mentor in question needs to realize quickly when transference is at play. There is positive transference, negative transference, and sexualized transference.

Positive transference enables the equipped person, pastor, leader, therapist, or boss, to realize the areas of need of the other person and can find a structured way to support the individual actualize their needs. Sometimes, these feelings of transference can be expressed thru sexualized tendencies when the person cannot accurately interpret their emotions. The younger or lesser person can easily interpret their emotional gap feelings for romantic feelings of attraction and express these feelings romantically. This explains a lot of the romantic affairs within the context of pastors and congregants, politicians and their subjects then bosses and their juniors. A spouse, who has bad memories and hates the mention of their father or mother can easily redirect their anger, disappointment, or disapproval of their father or mother to you as their spouse if you trigger the feelings of their father or if they have moments where they experience the long-lost love or need for affection. They might express that frustration and disdain to their spouse without knowing it. This is negative transference.

Countertransference

Therapists, bosses, mentors, lecturers, pastors, and bosses can also do what we call countertransference. Whenever a pastor is offering guidance to a member of his or her church, the person could mention an experience that triggers the emotions of an active conflict in the life of the pastor or an emotional need in the life of the pastor which was not met as a child or teenager. Some of the conflicts could be current or live. Pastors have marital conflicts too. Picture a male pastor whose children have abandoned church and do not honor their father, listening to a young lady who is desperate for the recognition and love of a father. If this desire to have good children is lived in the life of the pastor, he may counter-transfer his emotional need to his female congregant who equally projects her passion to meet the love of a father thru the pastor as a father figure. Before you know it, these two will be feeling deeply in love with each other and the feelings will be real with none of them able to explain how and why they feel that way.

This is how bosses, pastors, and lecturers get into messy affairs. Only therapists are equipped with skills on how to handle transference. They even encourage it to detect the nature and source of the behavior or emotions. If not careful one could also project the internal conflicts within their personal lives and together to their dependents, and get into a messy situation.

These are the messy situations that have been identified among pastors and bosses who are going thru conflict in their personal or family life. These conflicts could experience a countertransference and create a messy affair with someone who in the first place wanted to be assisted to overcome their emotional need.

Tips for Healing Yourself

The Power in Hobbies

Farming proved to be very therapeutic to me. I started by farming onions and tomatoes in Loitoktok, a place called Kimana. I then ventured into farming pineapples in Malindi after being introduced by my fellow minister and my sister-in-law- Mrs. Mercella Andanje. I then took the challenge further to my farm in Kakamega, and all these efforts became rewarding. Most importantly is the fact that farming became a source of pleasure and emotionally therapeutic that I kept doing it. My other passion for indigenous crops; preserving and conserving our traditional species of food crops came alive on a larger scale. It became the fulcrum of my farming activities as they have proven to be rich in nutrients and responsible for a long and healthy life. It is at this point that I began growing millet, sim sim, and sorghum. I have grown plenty the traditional vegetables such as managu, Sutsa, miroo, cassavas, nduma, sakaa, Lovokoi, murere, Kunde, tsimbande, peas, and ground nuts.

I have cherished growing traditional fruits such as tsinduli and passion fruits. I have also done modern fruits such as bananas, pineapples, mangoes, oranges, lemons, paw paws, and avocados. I intend to mainstream farming but also preserve our identity in crops, especially food crops. I have also mainstreamed my passion for sustaining and conserving our indigenous trees and shrubs, especially those with medicinal value.

I was able to make progress with some of my building construction projects. I also managed to advance the construction of my building project to a significant stage. This gave me a sense of accomplishment and resulted in happiness. I also learned how to build and the mason in me came alive. I now enjoy building construction. Maybe I would have made a great architect.

Crying

Researchers have established that Crying releases oxytocin and endogenous opioids also known as endorphins. These are feel-good hormones intended to compensate for the sense of pain, be it physical or emotional. The endorphins make your body go into some form of numbness to obstruct the feeling of pain. It is the reason; your body will naturally initiate a cry upon getting hurt or injured. Crying will keep you healthy at the moment. During crying, tears help clear and detoxify the blood by removing toxins and stress hormones such as cortisol. Crying heals emotions, copes with negative feelings and memories, and promotes healthy circulation within the brain. Those who can cry can cleanse and balance their brain's chemical function which is another way to increase brain power.

Crying is not that bad after all as it can reduce pain and promote a sense of well-being. Crying also activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which lowers your blood pressure and heart rate thus helping you to relax.

Smiling and laughter

When positive thoughts are generated, when you're feeling happy, or optimistic, cortisol decreases and the brain produces serotonin, creating a feeling of well-being. When serotonin levels are normal, one feels happy, calmer, less anxious, more focused, and more emotionally stable (Scaccia, 2017). Positive emotions impact the brain's prefrontal cortex - located in the front of the brain. When the prefrontal cortex is activated, there is an increase in activity and zeal. this zeal is what makes it possible to focus and also be creative and productive.

Alex Korb, Ph.D., a neuroscientist, coach, and bestselling author says the four ways to boost serotonin activity are sunlight, massage, exercise, and remembering happy events. Laughter has many therapeutic benefits. It can help reduce cortisol and increase serotonin, which helps regulate mood. It may also improve social relationships. When you smile, your brain releases tiny molecules called neuropeptides to help fight off stress. Then other neurotransmitters like dopamine, serotonin, and endorphins come into play too. Endorphins act as a mild pain reliever, whereas serotonin is an antidepressant. The team found that dominant smiles increased levels of cortisol and heart rates. Reward and affiliation smiles, in contrast, tended to buffer the effects of stress. Smiling increases mood-enhancing hormones while decreasing stress-enhancing hormones, including cortisol, and adrenaline. It also reduces overall blood pressure. And because you typically smile when you're happy, the muscles used trigger your brain to produce more endorphins—the chemical that relieves pain and stress

Also, when you smile, your brain releases dopamine, endorphins, and serotonin. These neurotransmitters are associated with lowering your anxiety and increasing feelings of happiness. Serotonin is often the chemical that anti-depressant medications attempt to regulate. The researchers found that smiling frequently may make people feel worse if they're sort of faking it — grinning even though they feel down. When people force themselves to smile because they hope to feel better or they do it just to hide their negative emotions, this strategy may backfire. It can reduce stress, help heart health, lower blood pressure, and boost your immune system by decreasing cortisol in the body. A simple smile, genuine or even forced, prompts the brain to produce endorphins and serotonin, causing positive emotions. Smiling and laughing are great stress relievers, which may be why research has found a bit of laughter might help improve our memories.

Facial expressions do more than express emotions, they also provide feedback to the brain, which influences our emotions. A new global collaboration led by researchers at Stanford University has shown that even fake or posed smiles can make people feel happier. The study is published in Nature Human Behavior.The act of smiling triggers brain chemicals related to positivity, even when the smile isn't genuine, a recent study says. Just mimicking facial muscular activity, like holding a pencil in your mouth, is enough to generate more positive emotions

Laughter

Researchers investigating the interaction between the brain, behavior, and the immune system found in 2006 that simply anticipating a mirthful laughter experience boosted health-protecting hormones. Laughing swaps, the cortisol in our bloodstream with highly sought-after chemicals in the brain: dopamine, oxytocin, and endorphins. Dopamine can enhance learning, motivation, and attention. Laughter Reduces stress hormones: Cortisol is our primary stress hormone that circulates throughout the body when you're feeling stressed. Genuine laughter can decrease cortisol levels by increasing your intake of oxygen and stimulating circulation throughout the body. Laughter reduces the level of stress hormones like cortisol, epinephrine (adrenaline), dopamine, and growth hormone. It also increases the level of health-enhancing hormones, like endorphins. The researchers found that the social laughter condition led to a significant increase in endorphin release in the thalamus, caudate nucleus, and anterior insula regions of the brain. These are brain regions that play a role in arousal and emotional awareness.

Listening to Music and dancing

Humans love music because it makes us feel good, but have you ever wondered why? Most of us loved music for as long as we can recall. Music stimulates oxytocin production. Oxytocin is a hormone responsible for positive and happy feelings. It is also responsible for the feeling of love and bonding. Research also shows that when one listens to music, it releases dopamine to the brain. Dopamine is a happy chemical that is responsible for reward and motivation. Music boosts self-esteem. When we listen to or dance to music, our bodies release dopamine, which is usually released during pleasurable acts such as sex or eating. Dopamine gives us a sense of well-being and reward associated with motivation and attention. Motivation and attention are the combinations for a self-esteem boost. Music stimulates oxytocin, a hormone related to happiness. It has been established that singing for about half an hour significantly increases your oxytocin levels thus feeling elated and energetic after a singing session. Oxytocin is the love and bonding hormone, making music a powerful tool for social connection and bonding. Music also helps reduce cortisol levels. Cortisol is essential but high levels cause stress as it is the main stress hormone.

We can therefore say that music reduces stress because it reduces the levels of stress hormone, cortisol. Music also induces relaxation, evokes emotions, especially good memories and reduces agitation. Music improves the quality of restful sleep when you listen to soft music before bedtime causing a fresh mind and refreshed body the following morning.

Robert Waldinger from Harvard University, took over 75 years to look into the lives of 724 volunteers as well as their partners and other family members making a total of 2000 people studied. After analyzing the results, it was true that there is a correlation between a strong relationship, good health, and happiness. A few other factors were established to enhance a positive mind such as **Exercise. The r**esearch concluded that; the people we surround ourselves with and our acceptance in society have a positive effect on our physical and mental being. Doing the things, you love to do and having the freedom to make those choices makes an individual happy. Other instruments of happiness include being accepted in society and having healthy relationships. Happiness is the feeling of contentment with your situation without comparing yourself unfavorably with others. Happiness is the ability to maintain a positive attitude despite the many changes which might occur in your life. One gets to be happy when they allow themselves to maintain a positive attitude in the pursuit of their goals. One can enhance their happiness by keeping fit and enhancing a healthy lifestyle while minimizing the likelihood of diseases/sicknesses.

Exercise

Physical activity contributes to the production of happy hormones called endorphins which keep our mood happy. Exercise not only keeps us fit and healthy but also protects us from disease and degeneration. It stimulates the production of various hormones, including **Growth hormones** that are crucial to repairing and growth, **Testosterone**, which helps to refresh and reinvigorate the body and aids muscle growth, and **Insulin** and thyroid hormones which help to regulate blood glucose levels and aid metabolism.

Additionally, exercise can assist the brain in producing hormones associated with happiness, such as **Dopamine**, the hormone responsible for making us feel good. If we can achieve our body shape or weight goals, this hormone will be produced in greater quantities: **Serotonin**, which can help reduce the symptoms of depression, and **Endorphins**, which are directly related to happiness, meaning they can help to reduce physical pain or symptoms of injury in our muscles due to its chemical properties being similar to morphine, which is used for pain relief.

Setting simple goals and accomplishing them is a booster of dopamine; complete simple tasks that make you feel good or set a goal you can easily achieve. The simple fact of even approaching a reward will stimulate these neurotransmitters. **Fulfilling activities that leave a smile on your face such as v**isiting new places or getting a relaxing massage can be fun and leave a smile on our faces. Visiting a loved one such as a family member or a friend can leave a smile on your face and can provide welcome relief from the stress and problems that may accumulate in our daily lives. Furthermore, keeping a smile on your face when encountering difficult circumstances can aid the body's production of serotonin and endorphins, both of which are directly associated with happiness.

Busking in the sun is beneficial to everyone. **Light exposure to sunlight especially in the morning hours or in the evening aids** the skin's production of vitamin D. This vitamin not only helps to keep our bones and immune system at full strength but also indirectly stimulates the production of serotonin, a hormone capable of reducing the symptoms associated with depression.

Foods

A study by the world journal of Psychiatry identified folate, iron, omega-3 fatty acids, magnesium, potassium, selenium, thiamine, vitamin A, Vitamin B6, Vitamin B12, Vitamin C, and Zinc as nutrients that can treat and prevent depressive disorders. Leafy greens, peppers, and cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli and cauliflower boast many of these nutrients and received high scores from this study. From animal protein, seafood such as oysters and mussels and organ meat also received high scores. Another source of elements that are involved in the proteins and chemical balance in the bloodstream or within the brain and body organs are organ meat; such as the liver, heart, kidneys, brain, testicles, tongue, and intestines just to name but a few. For example, Beef liver is a rich source of copper, retinol (preformed vitamin A), some iron, and B vitamins.

The liver may help prevent anemia, support fertility, aid in detoxification, and prevent certain nutrient deficiencies. Beef hearts are loaded with nutrients to keep your body healthy, including iron, protein, selenium, and zinc. It is pretty low in fat compared to other cuts of beef, with approximately 4 grams of fat per 3-ounce serving. Chicken liver is higher in minerals like selenium and iron, but as a whole doesn't reach the same level of super food as beef liver. The gizzard is an excellent source of iron and zinc because our chickens grew up happy and healthy on pasture. The nutrients in organ meats (and all meat) are more bioavailable than in vegetables. Too much, however, increases the risk of fibrosis and scarring of the liver and lungs, which are irreversible.

Beyond that, many everyday foods can help stimulate neurotransmitters. A study by the World Journal of Psychiatry identified folate, iron, omega-3 fatty acids, magnesium, potassium, selenium, thiamine, vitamin A, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, vitamin C, and zinc as nutrients that can treat and prevent depressive disorders. Leafy greens, peppers, and cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, etc.) boast many of these nutrients and received high scores from the study. For animal protein, seafood such as oysters and mussels and organ meat also received high sores.

The truth is, many of the food suggestions are the same options that make up the core of healthy eating. In other words, you don't need a fancy diet or supplemental magic pills to stimulate dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, and endorphins. For starters, eat whole foods and avoid processed foods. Whole foods and gut bacteria go together, but processed foods full of additives can become problematic. Load up your plate with fruits and vegetables, two food groups that contain fiber. When it comes to animal protein, focus on lean poultry and seafood and limit the intake of fatty meats high in saturated fat. High-protein foods contain tryptophan, an amino acid that your body converts to serotonin. It’s common for people to experience problems or imbalances with brain chemicals. As many as one in four adults have a diagnosable mental health disorder.

Tryptophan is an essential amino acid that the body is unable to produce by itself. **One can also focus on eating foods that are high in tryptophan.** Tryptophan can be sourced from milk, butter, egg yolks, meat, fish, turkey, peanuts, almonds, dried dates, bananas, cottage cheese, and other high-protein foods. The body can use this substance to aid in the production of serotonin and in the neurological processes that help us feel happy. Moreover, tryptophan works alongside folic acid and iron to assist the body in producing red blood cells. You can also eat your favorite food or favorite snack. If you love ice cream or dark chocolate, you can eat it specifically to quench your craving. This quenching of the craving activates the reward system and eventually leads to happy hormones being released into your bloodstream.

How to create social and pleasure connections

Playing with pets also reduces stress levels. When pets show us attention and a need to play with us, we automatically acquire a sense of meaning and feel needed. This is because our relationship with cats, dogs, or other pets that show us affection can increase the body's production of hormones associated with happiness, including serotonin and oxytocin (a hormone linked to love and relationships).

Hugging or kissing a loved one can be used to display love, kindness, and protection. We generally perform these actions with people we love which, in turn, lead to the body producing several different hormones: **Endorphins** – the happiness hormones – that are associated with feeling enchantment, **Dopamine**, which is produced when we feel satisfied, resulting in feeling happy, excited and stimulated, **Oxytocin**, which is linked to relationships and helps us to build bonds with other human beings.

Meditation is a form of spiritual relief that can be beneficial after a day full of emotional situations that can leave us feeling down. Meditating, by breathing in slowly and deeply before releasing that air just as gently, can help you gradually rid your mind of any negativity you may have accumulated that day. Just being alone with your thoughts for a few moments can help you to gain an awareness and acceptance of certain trying situations, leaving you with a more positive perspective. Meditating for at least 30 minutes has also been shown to decrease the production of cortisol; a hormone produced during stressful times, and replaces it with endorphins which are responsible for feelings of relief. Endorphins also produce a happy and refreshed feeling, slowing the aging process and strengthening the body's immune system while simultaneously adjusting brain waves to ensure a calm mind for a better night's sleep.

Compliment someone

You may not see this as building trust, but communicating with others — even strangers — in social settings can reward you with positive feelings. Being kind also can boost serotonin and dopamine. When you compliment someone else's dress or shoes, they most likely will show you appreciation, which is an emotional human need. Some might say thank you and that is gratitude which the mind knows how to interpret and cause the brain to trigger the sense of receiving the gratitude or appreciation extended to you.

Helping the needy

Helping the needy connects you to them and makes your soul bond with their story and their need and value. Your involvement in other people's lives causes your mind to stimulate your brain to trigger the necessary hormones which enhance your bonding capabilities with the causes you have identified or the people you have chosen to help and increase the production of Oxytocin in your system. This brings a completely happy feeling, a relaxed mind and body, and a sense of love within you. If you were self-hating and self-isolating, your attitude will change because your body is now conditioned and enabled to love and bond with the world thru the production of oxytocin.

Some simple activities like exercising, cooking, and listening to music can also help boost the production of your feel-good hormones.

Rest, sleep, and pleasure

There is a lot of information concerning the subject of rest, play, and sleep. No matter what you know or what you have experienced; we should all agree that sleep is a form of rest and is refreshing, resting is refreshing, and playing too is refreshing. To be refreshed means to have a new or fresh energy, new focus, new desire or drive, or excitement. We seek to be refreshed or get to feel refreshed best when we are transitioning from fatigue, exhaustion, stress, being weary, bored, or sleepy. Life is generally stressful with so much to be done in a day and limited resources to enable us to meet our obligations. As a result, life is stressful enough before we get to mention the disappointments and painful experiences, we go thru most of the time. The hurt can emanate from office, from friends and relatives, from the ever-depressive media reports, from within the church, and right within our households. Pleasure, play, and social connection are deeply nourishing and restorative and can be a solution to stress.

There are known effects of not having rest, sleep, or play but there are more insightful psychological and medical reasons which are attached to play, rest and sleep. I have chosen to include a religious perspective on the aspect of rest and sleep. Whether it is medical or psychological, we need to have a basic understanding of the nervous system and what role it plays to the extent that rest or active states within the nervous system become consequential to our well-being or lack thereof. The nervous system helps all the parts of the body to communicate and coordinate with each other. It reacts and responds to changes both inside and outside the body causing both electrical and chemical messengers to send and receive messages from and to various body parts. For purposes of this discussion, I will call this the “normal state” functional nervous system. Do not use this term in your scientific exams because it’s my creation to draw two important parallels.

The sympathetic nervous system is a network of nerves that aid the body to activate what we call a "fight and flight" response. This is the type of response that happens when you are stressed, in danger, or physically active. This system activates when we have what I would therefore call the "abnormal state" or "threat" when the electrical and chemical messengers are sent through the body to respond to stressful situations or danger. This system runs parallel to the "normal" nervous system.

However, there is another parallel system to the nervous system called the Parasympathetic nervous system which activates during quiet and during sleep

called the "rest and digest" response. The main purpose of this system is to conserve energy to be used later to regulate bodily functions like digestion and urination. The parasympathetic nervous system releases acetylcholine hormone when relaxed to slow down the heart rate and blood pressure.

Whereas the "fight and flight" increases heart rate, increases blood pressure, the "rest and digest" slows down our heart rates, lowers blood pressure, and promotes digestion and urination. It causes the body to relax and save the energy emanating from digestion. It also causes the body to experience recovery and that is why during the process of recovery from sickness or injury, it is recommended that you rest and sleep to fasten recovery. It is a true scientific fact. Spending time while in the parasympathetic state encourages our health and has more energy reserves for our productivity. When you feel safe, this system takes charge of regulating your body organs and blocks the effects of the responses due to stress. These changes are great for both your mental and physical health. A lack of enough sleep can cause you to be lacking in alertness, distorted sleeping patterns, poor memory, and restlessness leading to being aggressive in your relationships thus calling for work-life balance. A lack of enough sleep makes one feel lost and unable to participate n daily activities with a normal feeling of excitement. One is also likely to cause road accidents or industrial accidents.

From a medical perspective, some of the most serious potential problems associated with sleep deprivation include High blood pressure, diabetes, heart attack, heart failure, and stroke. Other health problems include obesity, depression, reduced immune system function, and low sex drive. Just depriving yourself of sleep exposes you to a lot of potential health problems.

Chronic sleep deprivation can make you appear older than you are with premature wrinkles. This can be explained by referring to the fact that a lack of sleep increases the amount of stress hormone cortisol. Cortisol breaks down collagen, a protein that is responsible for keeping your skin smooth. This also explains why someone would age faster or appear wrinkled or emaciated when they are undergoing too much stress. Stressful situations birth "fight and flight" causing stress hormones to speed up the heart rate to allow more blood into the bloodstream and also constrict the blood vessels to allow blood to move faster within the blood vessels causing high blood pressure. A continuous state of stress and anxiety or fear will result in developing blood pressure. Stress hormones make sugar levels rise to supply enough glucose in the blood vessels. This is the sole reason why diabetics struggle with emotional shocks.

Rest and sleep aid in lowering blood sugar levels. Resting and relaxation also reduce the amount of pain and aches such as headaches. Relaxation causes the body to release endorphins which are natural painkillers. Endorphins are also released a lot during sexual intercourse and sports or exercise. The endorphins act as painkillers and that is why sexually active people only get to realize the pain in their back or any other body part after the act but feel no pain during the act of intercourse.

Without sleep, you can't form or maintain the pathways in your brain that let you learn and create new memories, and it's harder to concentrate and respond quickly. Sleep is important to several brain functions, including how nerve cells (neurons) communicate with each other. Sleep deprivation leaves your brain exhausted, so it can't perform its duties as well. You may also find it more difficult to concentrate or learn new things. The signals your body sends may also be delayed, decreasing your coordination and increasing your risk for accidents.
Some of the most serious potential problems associated with chronic sleep deprivation are high blood pressure, diabetes, heart attack, heart failure, or stroke. Other potential problems include obesity, depression, reduced immune system function, and lower sex drive.

Nevertheless, it is quite evident that sleep is essential for many vital functions including development, energy conservation, brain waste clearance, modulation of immune responses, cognition, performance, vigilance, disease, and psychological state.Although happiness means different things to different people, our life experiences and other extrinsic factors such as social status, education, career popularity, health, responsibilities, and achievements all have a role to play in making our life complete. Some of these may combine to help you achieve your goals, while others may require no small amount of dedication to enable you to succeed. Nevertheless, every person is capable of making a success of their life in one way or another, which will give them the best chance of feeling happy and content thereafter.

Previous studies have shown that sleep deprivation can cause an irritable mood, and impair cognitive ability and work performance. It also makes it difficult to suppress negative stimuli and affects emotional abilities. (Raymond, 1988) Neuroimaging studies also show that sleep deprivation reduces visual processing ability and could impair our memory (Anderson and Platten, 2011; Ning et al, 2014).

Leisure

Rest is not something that many people have exhaustively explained how well or best to rest. We only know and appreciate its importance. We do appreciate the importance of rest because people are exhausted from work every single day leading to burnout. Most people are also juggling between more than one job and occupation making burnout an even greater possibility. Our ability to focus and be productive is predicated upon our ability to rest. Our physical and mental well-being depends on rest to tame stress, modulate our moods, enhance our decision-making processes, revamp our immune systems, and enhance creativity and work productivity. How to rest well and how much rest is good remains the elephant in the room. An organizational psychologist, chief talent scientist at manpower group, and professor at the University of College London and Columbia University; Dr. Thomas Chamorro Premuzic and Sunny Lee, an associate professor of organizational behavior and head of diversity at the UCL School of Management; have made some suggestions on how we can maximize the power of rest to fully restore ourselves by learning scientific tips on mechanisms of resting well.

They suggest that resting is easier said than done and therefore needs habitual implementation of rest time and routines. "Whereas most people think resting slows us down, building a downtime into our routines can help us recharge our batteries and improve our focus and concentration." They say! Experts suggest that routinizing and rewarding activity is the easiest way to develop a habit. It is for this reason that resting should become a routine scheduled for and possibly reward yourself for observing a downtime. Finding the right amount of rest in a rational and pragmatic format will settle your body into a routine that serves you best. Too much rest will decrease your productivity while very little rest will make you fatigued. Only a rational and pragmatic fashion of determining how much rest you need will serve you best.

It is valuable to prioritize your needs accordingly to meet your physical, social, and emotional rest needs. I agree with Dr. Thomas Chamorro and Sunny Lee in the argument that all rest have restorative properties and you need to find the one that serves you well in varying seasons. For example, people who are physically exhausted from work might want passive rest yet those who are mentally exhausted might do a nature walk as a way to restore their emotional and mental energy. People who work among other humans such as teachers, health workers, and community workers will want to withdraw into solitude as their form of rest but the engineers who spent all day on computers and machines might appreciate social gatherings as their form of downtime. It is for this reason that Dr. Thomas Chamorro and Sunny Lee say, resting requires deep self-knowledge rather than following what others do to rest.

"Spend some time understanding your specific needs and design your rest activities based on where you find the biggest deficit of rest needs." They say.
We should make time for deep rest if we have to do deep work. We should not be in between work and rest but take time and rest literally concentrating on one form of rest and extracting the restorative power in that mode of rest." Experiencing interrupted rest is not effective and could create more burdens rather than recovery for the same reason." They say. Taking vacations for several days or a few weeks is known to help people recover from job demands and replenish their resources. There are studies suggesting that longer vacations increase longevity. Everyone ought to plan their annual leave days within their company policy while giving importance to their rest needs accordingly. Apply the rest that best serves you.

The spiritual perspective of rest
The spiritual dimension of rest is quite straightforward. After God created the rest of creation for six days, he rested on the seventh day, Genesis 2: 2. The original Hebrew translation of the shabat is to stop or to cease. Verse three is what gives me context. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy for a reason; because he rested from all his work of creation. He had finished the project. I have read journals attempting to discuss the whole conceptualization of God's rest and I feel sad when the majority of them argue by positing an anti-thesis which is self-contradictory. If God rested and declared the Sabbath holy and worthy of resting from his works, then we must learn to internalize such simple things as God's principles of rest applying to him first. It is completely uncalled for to start by positing an antithesis of how God is all mighty, all-powerful, never sleeps nor slumbers, or bringing up how he doesn't grow weary or faint. That is not up for a trial!

The only logical conclusion is that God rested as a "principle" and there must have been a logical reason and a pearl of wisdom behind his rest and declaration of the seventh day as holy and dedicated to rest. The entire thread of this book is predicated on the fact that there was Godly wisdom in every instruction and advice that if followed, or obeyed, serves the best interest of the man even when we cannot explicitly explain the wisdom. If God rested and asked us to do the same then the wisdom is consistent with the fact that all instructions were in man's best interest to make him complete and attuned to his mission, purpose, and being. Many of the dissertations which begin by arguing the almighty and all-powerful nature of God are simply missing the basic level that rest is a Godly principle and must have served the same purpose for God as it serves man. This paradigm of thinking is equivalent to perceiving eating food as being guided by the human threshold of filling your stomach rather than how much the body needs.

It essentially perceives the drinking of water as being determined by the full capacity of the stomach as opposed to the few glasses of water you may need at intervals. It is like driving based on the threshold of the horsepower of your car as opposed to the recommended speed limits on the road and the signage thereof. Bringing into the equation this never sleep nor slumber discourse is equivalent to saying that humans should work to their optimal potential until they are knocked out and stay awake until they dose off rather than sleep because it is sleeping time.

The stubbornness to put up an antithesis that argues that God is all mighty and doesn't need sleep nor rest is responsible for the arrogance of mankind disobeying the responsibility of rest and eventually destabilizing the systematic human thresholds put in place by the architect of life and the universe. With all the understanding of his might and splendor, God rested. Can you pause for a moment and let that sink in? Psalms 121: 4 says, God never sleeps nor slumbers. Revelations 4: 6-8 mentions the 4 living creatures full of eyes. The 24 elders worship day and night saying holy holy holy. Isaiah 40:28 says God is all mighty; he doesn't faint nor grow weary. With all these competencies, God rested and stopped working. Let that sink that God rested. Accept that God rested. It doesn't matter whether he needed it or not. He rested as a necessary principle. It doesn't matter whether he was powerful enough to continue working if he wanted to, but he rested as a principle. This principle is the basis of my argument that If God, with all the competencies, rested; then his instruction that we need to rest and keep the seventh-day holy need to be observed with all reverence.

I have made two arguments before, one being that the kingdom of God is established and sustained by our praises and worship of God. If we do not praise him then the stones will do so. All creation praises God and worships him. He preserved the Israelites and delivered them in the end from Egyptian captivity saying "Let my people go that they may worship Me." the Sabbath was to be made holy according to Exodus 20: 8-11. No one was expected to do any work except to stay holy and connected to the worship of God. The body, mind, and spirit were meant to reset to default, as the Sabbath was observed with no work but worship and reverence to God. The result or consequence of all this was meant to put the mind, soul, and spirit of the man in perfect union with his creator which was good for the man and good for the kingdom of God. We realize that when we are working, our brain triggers the release of stress hormones which make our brain and body need relief in the end. Not observing sufficient rest leads to burnout and fatigue causing the brain to lose the chemical balance to function properly.

If we persist to work without rest or sleep, the body is likely to shut down for self-preservation but while we last, our sound judgment, mood, self-care and self-love, the focus of the mind, and goodwill are traded for all potential risks that could destroy us and others. All that is bad for the spirit man as it is for the physical man and is bad for everyone including God. Rest and worship God.The New Testament observance of the Sabbath has mixed signals in the yard doing both good and bad to the human person. It is an argument between Jesus and the teachers of the law; arguments prosecuted in philosophical fashions that objectivity is mostly lost because not all minds have the philosophical aptitude. The modern Christian, therefore, gets lost in the philosophical arguments and lacks the logical pragmatism of how to live within a work-life balance and also rest.

In Mark 2:27, Jesus simply clarified that the Sabbath is meant to serve the welfare of man and not make man a slave of the Sabbath. The purpose of the Sabbath was meant to be understood as to offer us rest and a chance to worship outside of our daily secular responsibilities which were and remain important. In luke1 4:5, Jesus asked the Pharisees whether they will leave their donkey or child in a pit because it is a Sabbath day. The modern Christians usually pushes their donkeys into the pit on Sabbath days specifically to use this philosophical analogy as an excuse to overwork during the Sabbath missing the arguments of Jesus. It is a fact that some modern Christians practice their acts of worship in an overworking mode and that they are busybodies without quality lives or production. How do you account for church programs which run parallel with secular jobs such that a church has programs every single day of the week, keeps mothers and wives in church way past the evening into the night for such meetings, and expects these parents and spouses to get home, help their children with homework, know how their children are doing, put the children to bed, be wives and husbands and still rise early the following morning to be productive at the workplace? The weekends which would be their downtime of rest are the time they are heavily engaged with church activities.

How can such a person live a quality and balanced life? How is that a representation of how God meant for our lives to be? I can only respond to that by saying what I said in the beginning, that God was so mighty, all-powerful, all-knowing, never sleeping nor slumbering but rested on the seventh day. If you can't rest, you are surpassing the wisdom of God and it is only a matter of time before you start seeking a nonexistent devil to blame for an unhappy life and out-of-balance. I don't know how exactly God will answer your prayers in this context when you are in total disobedience of his principles of rest.

The modern observance of the Sabbath is both misunderstood and misapplied to the extent that Christians do worship but, in the process, do not rest their minds and bodies leading to more burnout and counter effects in their personal, professional, and family lives. The result of the Sabbath was meant to enhance both worship of God and the rest of the body, mind, and spirit. The modern Christian person has been unable to find the balance between work, worship, and rest; one always suffers.

I know that some church leaders may question what I intend to achieve with my arguments but I just have to bring up the arguments and let you be the judge of how you want to live your life. Most church leaders to a large extent are so motivated and devoted to the work of the church ministry and service to the people that they hardly find time to rest their body, soul, and spirit. Some of them hardly find time for their children and spouses and when they finally find the time to be at home with their families, they are too tired to be present and focused and energetic for the needs of their families. If cracks and gaps should show in their marriages and rebellion witnessed among their children, they are likely to blame it on satanic attacks. A lot of these scenarios simply need rest and nothing more.

In Exodus 18, Moses was devoted to leading the Israelites but also given to settling the disputes among them. Moses had forgotten that he had a wife and two sons. Jethro had to remind him of that responsibility and give him his family. Unfortunately, most of us do not have a Jethro who would call us to order and remind us of the need to take care of our wives and children. It is no wonder, that the children of Moses are not heard that much in the bible's history. Moses never had the time to raise and groom them. Jethro also noticed that Moses was adjudicating in a courthouse all day. He was running a secular courthouse and then led the people in spiritual matters all day long without rest. He warned Moses that he would die if he did not delegate such authority and that the people will wear out. Moses followed Jethro's advice and appointed leaders who only escalated difficult cases to Moses. in verse 23, Jethro said, that is how God wants it done.

11

SELF AWARENESS

Studies have shown that simply talking about our problems and sharing our negative emotions with someone we trust can be profoundly healing, reduce stress, strengthen our immune system, and reduce physical and emotional distress (Penn Baker, Kiecolt-Glaser, & Glaser, 1988). In the 21st century world where technology has made it just but a village, one needs to know how to relate with others whether in the spheres of race, religion, leadership, or philanthropy among others. The divide between the global North and South can easily be minimized if leaders embraced the self in them and gave constructive criticism to the leader. The objective self-awareness theory defined by psychologists Shelley Duval and Robert Wiklund holds that leaders may have skills acquired from studies but little about knowing themselves. King David, had a mastery of who he was and this is made profound when King Saul questions his capacity and experience to fight a more seasoned soldier in the name of Goliath.

Young David tells King Saul that he had the aptitude to face Goliath and much more that while tending the flock of his father Jesse in the field, a bear came to devour one of the flocks and he tore it up with bare hands and rescued the sheep. When it turned to him, the young herder who later became King, seized it by its hair, struck and killed it. Self-awareness is the ability to connect with one's inner self. It is the understanding of one's individual's very intimate thoughts, worth, fears, values, skills, and capabilities. It can also be said to be the ability to focus on yourself and how your actions, thoughts or emotions do or fail to align with your internal standards. It is a conscious knowledge of one's character and feelings. Psychologists Shelley Duval and Robert Wick Lund proposed this definition: "Self-awareness is the ability to focus on yourself and how your actions, thoughts, or emotions do or don't align with your internal standards. If you're highly self-aware, you can objectively evaluate yourself, manage your emotions, align your behavior with your values, and understand correctly how others perceive you." Put simply, those who are highly self-aware

can interpret their actions, feelings, and thoughts objectively. It's a rare skill, as many of us spiral into emotion-driven interpretations of our circumstances.

Developing self-awareness is important because it allows leaders to assess their growth and effectiveness and change course when necessary. For example, a car owner will conveniently drive a car with not-so-effective systems because he or she is aware of the state of that car. It is worth noting that the very owner of the car could easily push the car into a mechanical breakdown if he wasn't aware that the car had certain limitations. If the wipers are not working perfectly, the driver will deliberately not take a trip in rainy weather yet he or she could as well take the trip in dry weather. If the headlights are faulty, the driver knows he or she cannot take a night drive but if need be, can make a daytime ride as long as the indicators are working to show the directions he or is about to turn. The driver will note that if the car has issues with the cooling system, then it's a no-go zone. The car must be fixed else the entire car engine will be damaged. The extensive definition of self-awareness culminates in answering one fundamental question; "Who am I?"

To answer this simple yet critical question, I have methodically answered the very question and would wish this for both my friends as well as my enemies because some of them might just convert into friends after reading the book. My approach is based on the fact that self-awareness is the beginning of a path toward a balanced life and gives us a real and practical chance to create a happy, fulfilling, and purposeful life. It helps us to understand the relationship between ourselves and others. It underscores the fact that you can only be happy with others when you are happy with yourself and you can only be in union with others when you are in union with yourself. A conflict in self always manifests when you are with others and most often than not, you have little or no control over how the internal conflict manifests itself while with others.

Our feelings, emotions, and attitudes are purely a product of what happens in our environment and how all that affects us as well as those who interact with us. Self-awareness is the perfect gift we have in this life because no one is perfect yet most of us do not know our imperfections and so do not know how to moderate them while expanding on our strengths. We do not know nor own our weaknesses yet if we knew our imperfections well, we would trade carefully where it matters the most and safely exit what would otherwise have been dangerous zones as our actions would get us out safely without hurting or endangering ourselves or others around us. We have strengths and potentialities which we do not exploit because we are not aware of them and in the process lose on opportunities that should otherwise have been our best chances at success in career or social and business circles. We have hurt people whom we

shouldn't have hurt if only we knew ourselves better and yet we have judged harshly loved ones who needed our support because we knew nothing about them.

We have burnt our fingers not because we put our hand in the fire but because we didn't know that our fingers had petrol on them; petrol which would attract fire from a distance. We do not even know our values or our fears, and worse even, we do not know our needs and so we do not get to address them. How about our potential? Isn't it the reason we have burnout most of the time we are pushing ourselves outside of our potential and thus running on borrowed energy. Most of us are majoring in our minors and minoring in our majors. We do jobs that are not fulfilling, are in dating or marriage relationships that are not meeting our emotional needs and we do not know why we keep attracting the same man in different bodies. A majority of my clients and mentees do not know where they are in their life journey and as a matter of fact, struggle to articulate their life plans as well as short-term and long-term goals.

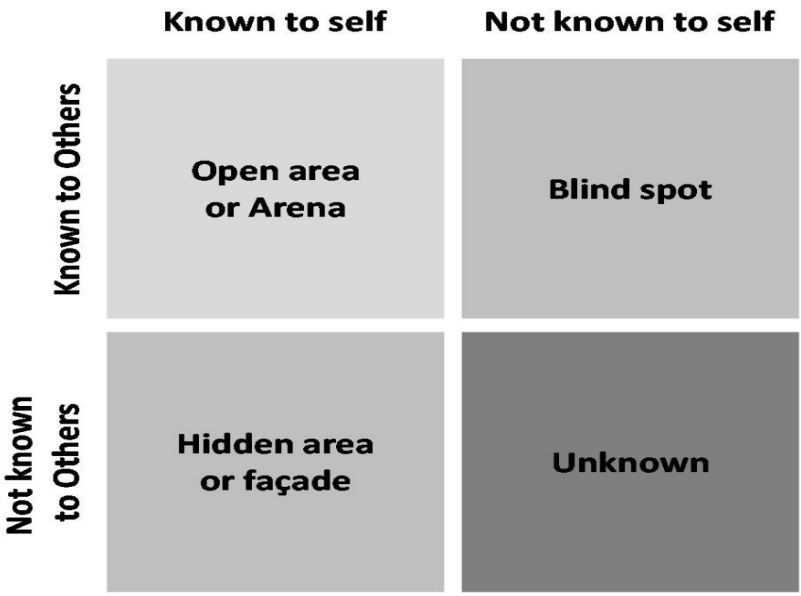
Most people do not know the resources they need to accomplish their goals and life purpose. Because the purpose isn't as articulate, they also do not know the competencies they need to take the life trip. At the tail end of your reading, you will be in a good position to achieve a lot of things and I am happy to enumerate a few.
You will know where you need to focus on your life to improve the quality of your life and more importantly you will have gathered a lot of information about yourself. You will also be better equipped to relate with others as you take your personal needs and interests into account. You may also be able to understand other people around you better and give them a befitting response to their actions, words, and emotions compared to how it has been before reading this book. At the end of this study, you will have the power to influence your outcomes, make better decisions and also understand things from more than one perspective. You should be able to build better relationships and decrease your stress but most importantly, you will be able to regulate your emotions.

Johari's Window

A Guide to your self-awareness

As part of my studies, I have employed a widely accepted concept of self-awareness in psychology known as Johari's window. It is a simple and useful tool for understanding and training self-awareness, personal development, improving communications, interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, team development, and intergroup relationships. It was developed by American psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in the 1950s, calling it 'Johari' after combining their first names, Joe and Harry.

It is also referred to as a 'disclosure/feedback model of self-awareness', an 'information processing tool' that represents information - feelings, experience, views, attitudes, skills, intentions, motivation, etc - within or about a person - with their team, from four perspectives. It can also be used to represent the same information for a team with another team's answers. It is also a great tool for married couples as well as a family setup whether the children are younger or older as long as they can understand the basic concepts. To get a picture of my true self using this tool, Johari's Window, I engaged with some of my friends, and mentors to get authentic feedback.



The Johari Window Model

Quadrants'

Each contains and represents the information - feelings, attitudes motivation, etc. - in terms of whether the information is known or unknown by the person, and whether the information is known or unknown by others in the team.

The four regions, areas, quadrants, or perspectives are as follows, showing the quadrant numbers.

1. Open area, open self, free area, free self, or 'the arena': what is known by the person about him/herself and is also known by others.

2. Blind area, blind self, or 'blind spot‘: what is unknown by the person about him/herself but which others know.
3. Hidden area, hidden self, avoided area, and avoided self or 'façade': what the person knows about him/herself that others do not know.
4. Unknown area or unknown self: what is unknown by the person about him/herself and is also unknown by others.

The Johari Window

The objective of this exercise is that there should be more known than unknown. To achieve this:

i. One can solicit feedback (ASK) to enrich the blind areas and with this, you get to know more about yourself based on how others give you feedback.
ii. If you have more exposure and more adventure, then you will know more things about yourself that other people do not know. TELL
iii. Self-discovery, Shared discovery, and observations by others will help you know what you didn't know and what others didn't know about you.

Much of what’s in the blind area, (blind means others know but you don’t), the Hidden (Known by the individual but unknown to others) as well as the unknown (Unknown to you and unknown to others), is the playground of human limitation. This is where the devil resides and this is where all faults and failures live. You can imagine taking up a challenge you are well-equipped to handle because you didn’t know your limitations concerning it. Imagine stepping into an environment that thrives on nothing but what to you is your weakness.

Imagine being assigned a role whereby you do not know whether your purpose, passions, talents, and attributes will favor the assignment and those around you are completely unable to comment on that question. The above is the mother of all frustrations and challenges in our human endeavor. Johari's window is not an entirely new phenomenon if the word of God is anything to go by and I would like to quickly look at a few biblical examples to prove this tool as a beautiful gift that has been applied in the bible only that the applicants didn't give it the name of Johari' there is surely nothing new under the sun.

What I know and others know too, (Open area)

In the book of Luke 7:18-23, John the Baptist sends his disciples to Jesus. They are to ask him whether he is the Messiah or if they should wait for another. There are arguments in the theological space on why John the Baptist would ask this rhetorical question, yet he had earlier baptized Jesus. It must be understood that John is in prison and there were a lot of imposters. News praising the arrival of a prophet is captured in verse 16. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." In context, John is receiving the news while in prison and wants to confirm whether the fellow whose news resembles the news of the Messiah as he has always known.

Jesus had a stronger insight than our ordinary perception and understood why John was making this confirmation. He didn't give an ordinary answer of confirmation but instead spoke to the heartbeat of John with the affirmative response which when looked at outwardly, seems like putting him more to the task but in actual sense is the most possible accurate answer. Jesus made a direct reference to a prophecy, something that John the Baptist would use to settle his mind and have peace that his being in prison was not in vain but that, the Messiah had come and that he John, could as well rest in eternal peace knowing that he was true to his calling, to hold brief before the arrival and take over by the messiah.

Isaiah 35:5 *"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped."*
Isaiah 61:1-3 *"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. To proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn."*

Mathew 11:4-6,12 *"Jesus told them, Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen – the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hears, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor. And tell him, God blesses those who do not turn away because of me … verse12- And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people are attacking it."*

What I know but others don't know (Hidden)
In the book of 2nd Kings 6:17, Prophet Elisha accompanied by his right-hand man, Gehazi is surrounded by a mighty army for capture. Gehazi panics because he doesn't know how his master intends to survive this capture. Elisha knows that they are safe and with much more backup than the young man, Gehazi could comprehend. Elisha told him that they were surrounded by much more than their army of enemies. He prayed and said, Oh lord. I pray, open his eyes that he may see. And when the lord opened his eyes, they were surrounded by mountains full of horses and chariots of fire around Elisha. In Mathew 16: 13-20 Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say I am? "The disciples respond by saying, some say you are Elijah, others say, Jeremiah, others say John the Baptist while others say one of the prophets. Jesus goes further and asks but what do you say I am? Simon Peter answered to say, "You are the Messiah" Jesus commended him and promised to build the church in his name as flesh and blood did not reveal this to

him except the spirit of God. He also warned the disciples not to tell anyone about his messianic identity.

Except for Simon Peter, the others did not have this revelation, and because he warned them not to tell anyone else, it means the other people also did not know that he was the Messiah. While Jesus was crucified on the cross, there were a lot of people who didn't know or even recognize his lordship. Jesus knew his lordship up to the last minute. It is the reason He questioned why God had forsaken Him, and even forgave the very people who crucified Him. On the other side, the masses and the soldiers did not believe who He was until after the total darkness and the earthquakes and the curtains that separated the Holy of Holies were torn, then they all confessed, surely, He was the son of God.

There were also two thieves on His side at the cross. One thief didn't know nor acknowledge Jesus as the son of God. He mocked Jesus telling Him to save Himself and the rest of them too, but the other thief knew who Jesus was. Jesus knew He was the son of God and would assure one of the thieves a place in paradise, something He wouldn't do if He didn't know who he was.

What others know about me but I do not know (Blind area)

A case study of Dr. Ezekiel Mutua MBS, the Chief Executive Officer at the Music Copyright Society of Kenya, is one where in his own words; Mr. Anthony Munyau, who was a teacher, used to come for a drink at his father's house. It is this man who told Ezekiel's father to take the young Mutua to school. He said that "the boy was very bright, would make a good leader in the future, and deserved a chance in school, tomorrow." Being a teacher, his word was to be trusted and from the perspective of Mr. Munyau, Dr. Ezekiel Mutua began the journey of learning, a decision inspired by someone else, a decision which would greatly shape his future.

In the book of John 2: 1-11, Jesus and Mother Mary are at a wedding and the hosts soon run out of wine. Jesus was yet to perform any single miracle anywhere and in his first response to Mary He said.

a) Woman, what has this got to do with me?
b) My time has not yet come.

Mary knows that despite Jesus never having performed any miracle, He had the power to, and was born for such moments as this. No one else knows that. Mary sets Jesus up wisely but brutally so. She calls some men, then sets Jesus up to deal with the crisis to prove who He was. Mary challenged Jesus like a mentor and mother would to terrain not traveled yet, but possible according to the knowledge and belief of his mother.

Despite Jesus declining the challenge, Mary concludes the discussion with an order, one statement of an iron lady; "Do whatever he tells you." Jesus is shocked at her simple statement and is left to figure out what to tell these men if anything. Mary, the mother of Jesus walks away and is out of the show completely. Jesus remains in the show to scratch his head and decide whether He will wait for His so-called "My time has not yet come" or whether He will show up and deliver based on His untested but sure potential. Mary has the last laugh as Jesus avoids shame and gives instructions for barrels to be filled with water and he performs a miracle without doing anything dramatic.

Jesus doesn't need to do anything but simply conceive in His mind what the outcome should be once you petition Him, and, *kaboom!*... Wine it is! Jesus would even dare these men and ask them to take the wine to the tester who astonishingly certified that it was better than the former. Other people who are your mentors and who have your best interest may be able to affirm you and pull out the potential in you into action. This is simply because your identity is not only about how you perceive yourself but also how other people perceive you, including what you do not know or believe yet about yourself.

What I don't know and other people also do not know

In the book of Mathew 24:36, Jesus is teaching His disciples how they will know the end of time. He tells them that neither He, Jesus nor the angels in heaven, know the day nor hour except God and that they could only read the signs. Jesus admits to this truth the fact that He doesn't know it either. "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows." The following are my responses to my awareness and as you read mine, I encourage you to get answers for your responses.

You can repeat your responses in your mind. That is the best way to make use of this information to transform your life. The evaluation includes my values, my strengths, my weaknesses (my known weaknesses as well as those brought to my attention by others), my fears and needs, my potential, my life goals and plans, my purpose, my choices, and how I can get there. These are what we call self-awareness and so I invite you to pay attention to yourself and evaluate every one of these.

What are my values?

My values are Kindness, Trustworthiness, Honesty, Respect, Generosity, Reliability, and Spontaneity.

What are my strengths?

-What I know

My strengths are: focus, resilience, courage, hard work confidence. I get a task to its logical conclusion and push my ideas to fruition. I am courageous to face anything and anyone at all, a go-getter, and when I have conceived my opportunities. I am a visionary who sees the whole world in 3D and my role in it for the nations. I am confident in anything I do. If I doubt it, I won't start till I have worked from the top down in my mind. I put in the time and resources to get work done.

I am empathetic, feeling the pains of others, sometimes thinking the burdens of the world are better off on my shoulders because I have more emotional and mental muscle to bear through various versions of emotions and stress. I am a leader and a mobilizer who can rally masses to a course and get it done with precision and promptly. I am a leader who can get the job done without seeking rewards or even recognition for it. I am also eloquent and articulate and can make a case for or against a matter. I am a solver of problems and offer life solutions as a passion.

My mentor, **Professor Charles Kimani Njoroge;** a professor of food processing and post-harvest technology articulates my strengths by saying. "Anderson to me, though he studied science is a talented artist. He is a person with tremendous talent in music and arts in general. I have known him as a person who can practically be a source of encouragement for talented Christian artists who may not have the wherewithal to actualize their talents. Probably a recording studio as a business and a ministry would be of help. He encourages the youth to identify and work towards achieving their potential. Anderson is a person who can raise all-round children and mentor others to pursue their talents in any field without feeling condemned or without being restricted to the conventional careers as we know them. He is God-loving and committed to the things of God. I also see him as a person who is not afraid to fail and therefore can try things that otherwise one would be afraid of doing.

In my view, his science background helps him to be articulate, focused, and organized like in following steps methodically to achieve certain goals. He is a good man and a good pastor who cares a great deal for the welfare of others. I have witnessed him support my wife's love for music. My Mentor Dr. Peterson Wang'ombe says "A major strength is Anderson's ability to hold on; rarely gives up on projects even when they fail. He is likely to encourage himself, just change a little, try again, or venture into a different thing that would lead to the same general direction."

My peer frm Kenyatta University Christian Union, George Wafula said, “In a nutshell, I would say, Anderson is a daring (risk-taking) guy. He is resilient and overly motivated regardless of the circumstances. He is always willing to pay the price for his passions. His shift from mainstream degree course of Biochemistry, a brief stint in the corporate world, later in church ministry and in overall holding onto music tells it all. He is also keep studying the ever-changing times, strategizing, up skill and rebrand and launch accordingly without changing his main identity. He exudes confidence and courage since his days while in pursuit of his degree course, he kept an eye in sharpening his talent/passion and taking along others. He didn't allow challenges to hold him back. Unbowed!

However, he never shies off from acknowledging his failures/challenges and seeks out for a willing shoulder to cry on as he strategizes to rise up again. He turns lemons into lemonade.

What are my weaknesses?
My weaknesses are better split between what others have observed against what I know if Johari’s window is a tool to be applied.

What others know as my weaknesses

I am overconfident
In Dr. Wang'ombe's review, he says as follows: "You know over the years I have realized that there are very few things that are black and white (right and wrong). The context is what determines that and who is saying it. So at that time, a confident youth, even overconfident was good. I was happier cooling the fires than having to try to light one, only when overconfidence hinders learning that it becomes a problem. For Anderson that was not the case because he respected authority. So rather than see that as a problem, I saw it as an area to develop, nurture, streamline, etc.”

I am impatient.
“In the second phase of the internship, I had hoped that he could grow to become a worship pastor now that he had understood the culture of the people of Kahawa Sukari. But he didn't stay long enough for that to happen" Dr. Wang’ombe said.

I am overzealous
Mrs. Juddie Mmosi says;” Anderson can be over zealous which could result in burnout if unchecked; however, this could be beneficial if it is well guided” My best friend Eric points out the need to constantly work on moderating the force of my personality so that I can accommodate others.

We once quarreled with my big sister Emma, and in the heat of the moment, she told me that I meddled in the affairs of other people without their express permission and pushed everyone around me to perceive life through my eyes. She also said I judge others for not measuring up to my expectation. We once had a sibling quarrel with my kid brother Allan who, when my father intervened to bring an understanding accused me of being always right and never wrong, even when I am wrong.

David Njuguna who was my high school head prefect said, “In my assessment of the negative side of Anderson, he came out as a person who would easily **domineer** in discussions or **overrule** what others suggested. He seemed to be overly convicted that his way or view was the best. On a few occasions, he took offense when his view was not embraced and he would feel quite unhappy. Additionally, Anderson tended to be too **confrontational**. When he felt that he was not satisfied with the way a matter was handled, he did not hesitate to confront and didn’t seem to bother if it would cause acrimony. Furthermore, he was **overly ambitious**. He would go to extremes to emerge first or the best."

Dr. Shila Simiyu, a close campus friend says,” Since Anderson is usually very focused on achieving goals and tasks, he may easily overlook other aspects that may be important, and which may also contribute to his success.

What I know

My major weakness is impatience; I can sometimes be impatient with myself and with people too. If I need your attention on a matter and you say or do nothing after a few attempts, I will move forward within no time. Should your opinion come at a belated stage, I may hardly have space for it. I realize that this impatience was also a factor in my church ministry because I was very impatient with God's people. I was only useful to fast learners and those who only ask how high when I say "jump". The fast learners and those who could endure my high expectations gained a lot more. It is true that they moved fast and stabilized in their lives very fast but I also broke a few fibers of their muscle which was not necessary. I also lost the chance to develop good people who process information differently than me.

I do not take kindly waste of time and resources, worse when you stand in the way of my growth or the growth of something I am a part of. Stepping aside is the most respect I can give than to be a part of stagnation or a waste of time and resources. Otherwise, I can punish others when I find them standing in the way of growth.

I sometimes also find it difficult to understand that not everyone is wired with my pace and energy. I can discourage teammates with high expectations and perfectionist tendencies. I also find it difficult to turn midair after takeoff. I hardly change my mind on the matter especially if the matter was conceived by me. I would still execute it anyway. If the facts available have changed the projection, I will not abort the mission to go back and strategize afresh; I will adjust the end result and remain in the air to land at the new destination. I don't waste my mileage.

The fact that for once in my lifetime I postponed an event means I have grown. When the facts available to me demanded, I postponed the launch of this book after official arrangements. I also postponed my political candidature in the 2022 elections when the facts available to me informed me otherwise. Both these postponements would never have happened in my world before now.

What are my fears?
I fear failing though recent experiences have taught me that it is okay to fail and learn from it. I have learned that the fear of failure is a form of bondage because if you do not accept failure as part of the package of life, then you will be anxious and fearful when you shouldn't. You will frustrate yourself and others just because of your fear of failure. I fear instilling fear and self-doubt in others due to my overconfident nature. I fear causing others to feel replaced and will easily back out of an important assignment when I realize that I am burying the hopes of others. Sometimes I fear attention, especially when it rubs on other people that struggle with their self-esteem and insecurities as I could easily get them discouraged or threatened even when I have not done anything at all.

What are my needs?
I need family support and moral support from my support systems. At the family level, I need objective criticism and feedback that means well and the emotional intelligence to tell whether the criticism and feedback are driven by personal fears and insecurities or driven by the desire to be helpful. I also need further training in the areas I have chosen to operate in. I need qualified personnel to work with me to actualize my dreams as they find their purpose and fulfill their passions by working with me. My needs are best articulated by my mentor, Rev. Dr. Peterson Wang'ombe.

"I thought that Anderson was ambitious and therefore difficult to settle in one place for long. The word restless (wanting to try many things) might be a better description. Over time, he would thrive best if he was his boss. That way there would be nobody setting limits for him.

The caution he would need is discernment so that he can choose where to concentrate his energies in a few selected areas and do them well; perhaps also a group of mentors or a board of advisors.

What's my potential?
I have the potential to be a leader. I have the potential to be an ambassador or champion of family, parenting, or men and their wellness. I have the potential to be a teacher or lecturer of my trades such as Psychology, Christian and African culture, or Music which are both appendages of communication. I have the potential to be a pastor, or bible teacher. I also have the potential to be a life coach, motivator, or therapist, especially a Family therapist and or a Music therapist. I have the potential to be a writer, author, or editor. I also have the potential to be a farmer or indigenous knowledge enthusiast; particularly African indigenous forest species and herbal medicine. I also have the potential to be a political analyst or political strategist or politician.

Where am I in life?
I have found my purpose, it's that simple. I have realized that I do better by offering help and support to others through various tools. It's helping others to heal spiritually, mentally, and emotionally and to find their purpose whether it is using methods of psychology or the word of God or just using my human experience and wisdom. As the minister I am, I would spare neither depth nor breadth to offer spiritual support to anyone at all in any condition under any circumstances who need supernatural intervention. It is helping the captives find freedom through the word of God. The gifts of God through the Holy Spirit are abundantly gifted to me and I shall not waste them for to whom much is given, much is expected. It is the acceptance of my heritage of healers using the foundations of Christ. I have aligned myself to be academically and professionally competent in all of my pursuits. I want to offer solutions to societal needs.

What are my life plans?
To be a resource to humanity; I intend to provide a resource center for Academic knowledge, Christian knowledge, and Indigenous knowledge. I also intend to create a resource center where I provide access to counseling services for mental and emotional healing, motivation, and empowerment. The resource center will have materials of all disciplines, herbal and indigenous medicine, nutrition, physical fitness, and other therapeutic skills such as massage, aroma therapy, color therapy, music therapy, and testing labs.

Finally, a resource center for creative arts facilities such as music studios, fashion studios, and film production studios as outlet media facilities to advance the dissemination of these creative talents and information.

What are my goals?

As the celebrity musician that I am, I would like to advance further and occupy more spaces of influence so I can contribute to the shaping of future philosophy and policy in our communities and nation; such as politics, business, and media. I will use my platforms for mass communication, to empower the whole family and the nation with Godly values and foster healing.

What are my choices?

At the philosophical level, my choices are between the profits of money and the profits of souls. I choose souls over money but the best scenario is money for the souls. My choices are to have the necessary infrastructure which can build and sustain these dreams with the help of my family and friends to create a vibrant ecosystem around the goals.

What's my life purpose?

To contribute to the transformation of life experience into a quality life at the individual, family, community, and the larger national and continental level for a better society that is morally sound, healthy, intellectually equipped, social-economically empowered, and spiritually strong.

LESS UNKNOWN AREA

With more knowledge in the other quadrants, we should effectively minimize the unknown box.

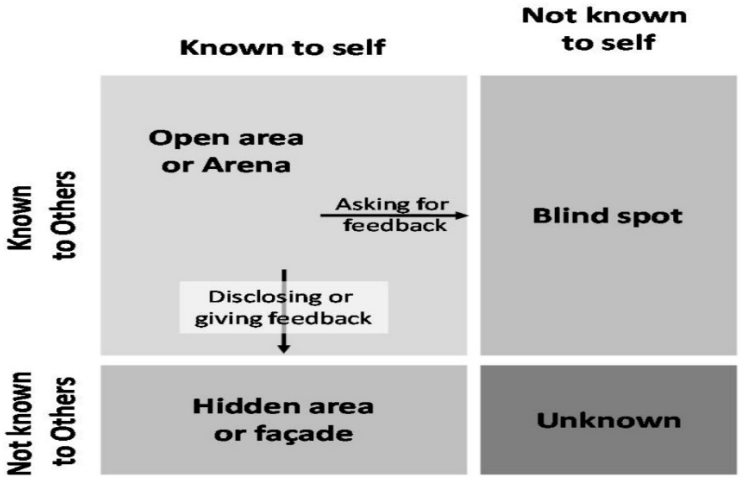


Figure 2

How do we get there?

By starting with the resources at hand and being willing to start small while aiming at the ultimate goal. Incorporate other competencies and personnel to make the process faster. Exploit existing products for monetization to create a sustainable program and organization. I need a working physical and or virtual office and a structured social media presence to make these concepts visible and monetized. People follow solutions and will follow my solutions too. I also need to apply self-awareness Jesus style; In the book of Luke chapter 2: 45-52, the young Jesus has grown in stature, in favorer of men, and with God having full confidence in his own identity and is not shy to articulate it even to the teachers of the law. They all acknowledge that he is well-grounded and knowledgeable. Jesus was obedient to his parents but at the same time did not hesitate to mention, he knew he was in his father's. The house of prayer!

He obeyed his parents and followed through with His parents leading but when He thought it right to make His own choices, He made such choices. Jesus was not afraid to walk the uncomfortable journey of his other identity outside and beyond his biological parents. This lesson becomes a guiding principle going forward with my parents. It took me too long to realize I have my own identity and life to live outside of that of my parents. It is the reason I have been hurt. I have accepted that my life shall not be completely defined by them or their expectations. I also have desires to accomplish certain things for my parents but if what I wish for my father or mother doesn't materialize, I will not be sad about it. I will let go, forgive myself for not realizing it, and move on with my life with my head in its place because God knows, I tried.

I appreciate that my father has a second family and have embraced supporting him specifically as he has defined things or made choices. He has his vision which may not necessarily include my perspectives. I will also live my life and run my family with filtered influence from both my parents. My mother's battles shall remain her battles and not mine and those of my father shall remain his. I will walk the journey of life supporting them as they may need my support but with absolute freedom as a man with his own family to run my family purely on my terms. Concerning my household, I have also resolved that I will bring to life my full identity and potential. I will pursue my individuality and destiny to the fullest extent possible without allowing criticism or disapproval to hurt my feelings. I will understand that my ability to dare and risk it all is not sexually transferable and that my partner’s cautions and perspectives are valid from a point of genuineness; that I should make the choices of how to proceed having listened to all material facts. I should not be emotionally hurt and interpret her worldview as an enemy of my progress.

I have fallen into ditches I shouldn't have fallen if I had listened to my wife. It is also true that I have saved myself time and money by paying attention to my wife's perspectives. I have also been in successful missions despite disapproval and criticism of what I was trying to do. The main task is getting a balance between which objective voice I am to open up to and which ones I need to allow her to express herself just because the chance to validate that expression and listening is important.

This will only become practical if the advice I have given to other couples applies in my case. How can two walk together unless they agree? If you make a choice that you won't go on a certain journey that seems muddy, you should be kind enough to alight the car and give me a chance to drive worrying about the mud or snow only. Do not remain in the car when it is abundantly clear that you desire to abandon the trip. Sustaining your voice through the trip amounts to sabotage! If you are not inspired to pray for my success, you can pray for my safe arrival to my destination and to return to you safely no matter the success or failure. If you choose to stay in the car while I am headed to the destination, try not to hold the steering wheel to force it to return home. Just sit and read a book or listen to music or better remain at home as Sarah remained at home while Abraham figured out how to settle these tough matters with God. They both came back home to Sarah.

Failure in a venture is the path of all innovators and trailblazers. As long as I have secured my family territory, I will do what I have to do to succeed at my life goals according to the measure of the grace working in me. The measure of grace working in me is that of Joshua and Caleb which says, the land is exceedingly good. We are more than able to conquer the land if we believe and obey God. Will I fail sometimes? Yes! Do I deserve to be crucified and buried alive for failing? Absolutely not! These are the tears of many men. To try something which would fail is treated as the greatest evil of our times. I am content that I have given my spouse much room, support, and empowerment to thrive in every single thing she has ever desired to do; in business, supporting her family, and furthering her studies. I have given her a blank cheque expecting her to succeed. If she fails, I would still encourage her to try again and not to give up. I have never and will never discourage her on account of a venture that didn't go right.

My wife once tried the chicken business and did not succeed in the venture. She tried farming with a group of her friends but it did not succeed either. She tried the shoe business and later closed the shop. I always wished her well, prayed for her success, and supported all her ventures tagging along with some of her ideas and ongoing ventures. Some succeeded and some failed. Her success is my success and my pride. I cover her failures.

On the contrary, a man is not allowed to fail. Making a financial mistake is sabotaging the family and becoming a tool of oppression. Spare the boy child Yawa! I once invested my salary in producing a song for a music competition. I had paid rent and bought food in the house. It was also my salary and not family savings. Wueh! I went through World War III because a man is not allowed to fail. Nokia, Mumias Sugar, Pan paper, Nakumatt, Tuskeys, and Uchumi chain supermarkets can close down. Kenya Bus can collapse; Kenya Airways can have 34 billion in losses but a man cannot fail in a business and still keep his peace at home? Come on, what kind of entitlement is this? Why the high level of blame, hostility, withholding of love and affection and verbal abuse, and hurtful pronouncements to my prospects coated with tears of victimhood! Really? Was that even a life?

It didn't matter whether I fail once or more than once. Music is a large part of who I am and it took me five attempts through ten years; from 1999, 2002, 2005, 2006 2008 up to 2009 to break through the music ministry and industry. It goes without saying that, I failed again and again until I made it. This journey of resilience amid setbacks, betrayals, ill health, and financial constraints is documented in the second volume.

Being Versatile and multitalented

Whenever people listen to me mention what I do, and I say, a musician or a pastor or a life coach, before I keep quiet, I can already see some of them desperate to say, “Focus on one thing and make it great.” Unfortunately, I am more balanced, happier, and motivated to produce more when I multitask. I get bored too easily and become a low-energy element when I am doing only one thing. No matter how great it may appear, I do not get the satisfaction. Since this life is for the living, I will not silence any of the voices speaking inside of me. I will keep pushing until one of them bursts into the global impact I want, then I will give it more emphasis.

One of the most influential persons in the world Dwayne Johnson, popularly known as the Rock, began as a comedian, a wrestler, and a movie star and is now a creator and entrepreneur of major TV series. Wrestling seemed to be his biggest act but it must not surprise you that despite being the biggest star in Hollywood, The Rock was a "no show" for WrestleMania 39 when Hollywood hosted the showcase of immortals. He was too busy with his productions. One path always emerges in the finality of things. King David of the bible was a skilled herdsman, a skilled musician, a great dancer, a skilled soldier, and a leader of his nation as king. John Cena is a musician of the rap genre, a wrestler with WWE, a TV host, a book author, and above all a movie star in Hollywood.

Steve Harvey started as a comedian, a cooperate Emcee, a TV host, a relationship advisor, and a creator of entertainment content. Bishop TD Jakes is a movie star, entrepreneur, TV host, motivational speaker, creator of family content, book author, and pastor. Dr. Myles Munroe was a pastor, book author, businessman, educator, and motivator. This list goes on to include the likes of Mohamed Ali, Oprah Winfrey, and Barack Obama. These are my icons and they are multifaceted and versatile. The greater of my gifts will speak for itself when the time is right.

For now, I will give all of them an equal chance until one gets ahead of the rest, then the rest can become hobbies. I trust with God in my corner, I am well affirmed.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Anderson Ambindi Murunga aka 'Leopardking' is a celebrated Kenyan artist beyond the national and African borders for over 20 Years. Some of his hit songs that include, Ugali Sosa, Wrong Number, Bodaboda, and Yesu ni Beste just to pick a few from his billboard have reigned across the gospel music space. The 2009 ordained minister of the gospel has had an expansive international presence ranging from speaking at conferences, marriage camps; family workshops and seminars, revival meetings, evangelistic crusades, and prophetic encounters. He blends his call in the two ministries with being a motivational speaker, Boy child advocate, life coach, and mentor. He has established the Leopard Institute of Coaching and Mentorship. He is also a seasoned Cooperate Emcee. Leopardking is currently enrolled for a Master's degree in clinical psychology at Daystar University and holds a Bachelor's degree in Biochemistry from Kenyatta University.

His experience within the customer management department in a leading telecom firm in Kenya, and a short stint at the microfinance unit with a leading Christian microfinance institution, enabled him to acquire skills in people management. As an entrepreneur, he understands the marketplace dynamics in real-time assisting his clients to cope with marketplace pressures and work-life balance. Leopard is a certified Criminologist and a member of the Professional Criminologists Association of Kenya (PCAK) and also a trained and certified professional mediator.

Mr. Ambindi is married to Susan Vutare Ambindi for 18 years, with whom they have three children. Andes Agumba Boswell Murunga is age 17, and in form 4 at Lukenya Boys high school where he leads the school Choir, is a Sunday service and also a dining hall prefect, Aden Andanje Munala, age 13 is in form two at Merishaw School where he is the Junior Soccer team, Captain, while Shirley Muhonja Zaina Ambindi is age 9, and in grade 4 at the Nova Pioneer - Athi River campus, where she is a member of the baking club, skating and basketball club. Anderson is a class Representative at Merishaw School and the Chairman of the PTA at Nova Pioneer Athi Campus at the time of publishing this book.