

MEMORIES ALIVE: A SUMMARY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF PAUL KOGI MBURU

Born to a poor but esteeming family, my life has been full of twists and turns getting through to where I am. Like every other rural-born and raised boy, my early life remained naïve, innocent and mostly religious.

Upon entry into high school, the adult feeling crept in. Influences from other students who became my friends could not be evaded. I was to realize, almost too late, that most of them came from wealthy backgrounds. Ultimately, this hindered me from getting into a public university and I had to linger out from university for six more years. It is during this period that the greatest catastrophe set in. One evening, a “trusted” friend led me into a blazing night club. Asking me to put aside my stress and “prove my manhood” he gave me a measure of alcohol carefully mixed with soft drinks. In the morning, I was a drunkard. For the next decade, I remained a dedicated drunkard, smoker and drug dealer.

This can be summed up as the darkest, wasted and most dangerous period of my lifetime. Right from an individual capacity, I became wild and then an outlaw. My mind was focused on doing evil stuff, caring less about their effects. I wanted to prove to the world that I was an independent being able to chose my own path of life and decide on my destiny. And anyone who would stand on my way was an enemy. I got linked-up with bad characters, some of whom were seasoned and wanted criminals. One of them for instance, I visited on a Tuesday and on Friday, he was shot dead after a foiled bank robbery in the city center. I lost one of my closest high school buddies after he was knocked over by a vehicle in the City. While drunk.

Within the family circles, I was an enemy to every member and consequently became the black-sheep of the family. Everyone became contemptuous of me and none welcomed me in their homes. But I never cared. I got arrested one night for being drunk and violent in the City streets, was arraigned in courts and sent to the remand for several days. The family had to pay hefty amounts for me to get freedom. When I came out, I simply told someone ‘I am the Devil’s Disciple. One day, I will do some harm to somebody.’ No lessons learnt.

Proceeding to Uganda for my A-levels, the habit became more prevalent since the society there is more liberal, with less restriction on alcohol consumption. It was two years of drunken sprees through party making and hooliganism. Coming back, I joined the United States International University for my degree course. This put a climax to my life in drugs and substance abuse since most of my companions were involved in the habit and were able to purchase them as they wished. I indeed became acquainted with foreign students who asked if I could supply them with the hard drugs, primarily cannabis. Seeing the opportunity to make dollars, I became a supplier. Not only a supplier but a consumer of the same. Whew! I was entirely hopeless as I had now become fully dependant on the chains of death. Insanity crept in. Suicide knocked the doors of my mind. “HOPELESS!” I once exclaimed aloud.

Sometime in 2006, as I was joining 3rd year on campus, I began taking a deep inventory of my life. I started pondering about who I really am, the journey of my life, the point I was at and the future ahead. This kept nagging me and the conviction to change my lifestyle kept growing deeper. It was a “change or perish” signpost all around me. During this time, I visited a certain

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old man. He gave me some wise counsel about life realities from a moral perspective. One thing he mentioned remained pitched in my mind. It regarded mentorship, and how young people in the current generation lack true, life changing mentors. He used the example of the very successful celebrities whom many youths look up to as mentors, but who badly fail the moral test. How true this is! At the same time, the conviction about God, His Love and power to transform became louder in my heart every day. But where could I find Him?

On 10th August 2006, something happened. On this particular Thursday night, I sipped alcohol for the last time and puffed the last cigarette. A few days after, having met different men and women, and by help from God who gave me unconditional personal support, my heart was all set for the change. It did not all come at once; some of the habits were deeply rooted and could not just fly away. Apart from the drugs themselves, spill-over effects included criminal activities, promiscuous and dangerous sexual adventures, music, internet and television addiction as well as the pimped fashioned dressing. The very last hurdle was actually to shave off my long plaited hair which I cherished. But change did come. And I found the God I had been thirsting for through the Message of a very simple man who lived in our generation, sent to restore mankind back to the full Bible truths, teachings and doctrines. His name is Brother William Marrion Branham. I got baptized in the only provided Bible of immersion in much water in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ on 20th August 2006 at 9am.

I cleared college in 2008 with honors. Though qualified to work in International organizations such as the United Nations my heart always felt inclined to work in the community. Looking around and observing the '**Mentorship Void**' which the old man spoke about, it only felt responsible and dutiful to reach out and mentor young people struggling with such predicaments. I travelled to Berlin, Germany and Istanbul, Turkey in 2010, and witnessed how the same habit is wrecking people, young and old even in first world countries. Drug and Alcohol Abuse without doubt knows no boundaries; politically, economically or socially. My main emphasis is on 'influences' and how this can build or ruin a young person's life. I love to share my experiences and challenges, and how the youth in their prime and innocent age, can avoid getting snared in the slow painful highway of death. I am currently a Real Life Resource Person with Nacada Authority and a goodwill ambassador of the mentorship initiative.

My Mentorship Salvo is...

Sometimes it takes a Battalion to Conquer a Territory;

Sometimes it takes Education to Empower a Society;

Sometimes it takes Religion to Inspire a Community;

Yet..All the Time, it takes a Single Man to Change his World and Destiny.