

CHAPTER 6 Melody Mbondiah

My Strength Comes From Within

This is a story of renewed strength after hitting rock bottom; how I bounced back despite a rocky marriage, delayed career progress, and a relationship with my faith. It will illustrate details of how I felt when I had lost my hair, but also how it grew back just like Samson in the Bible. Hair signifies your dignity. It is meant to protect you from the elements and a harsh environment. That is why you need it: on your head, on your skin, on your eyelids and all the sensitive areas of your body including inside your nose. In some cultures and religions, hair symbolizes the inner beauty of an individual and needs to be secured. Ask yourself some of the facts about hair and its use. You will find they are connected to covering, protecting etc. That is why I have written this chapter. My hair has been cut several times, but it also has grown beautifully. Life is indeed a journey but what has been significant to me is that I have not walked alone. I have traveled far and wide only to come back and learn that self-discovery is an immense tool in any individual's life, especially when questioning your true purpose.

I have often wondered what the benefit of a righteous life is; when life presents setbacks that challenge your faith to the point you see no physical breakthrough. I want to thank all pastors and Christians who have been a source of support and comfort in my times of struggle and indeed confusion as to my purpose in the Christian walk. I recognize that when one is called, the struggles are not little but huge. A wise man said when your purpose is large, the darts thrown at you seem like giants. He goes further to say that darts thrown at you only serve as opportunities for growth. If you stand on the word of God and confess who you really are in Christ, no devil in hell can stop your destiny.

I have written this story to encourage people from all walks of life to seek their purpose, to remember that everyone matters to God. Yes EVERYONE! If you ever mistreated someone or belittled them due to the struggles or difficulties they experienced, be assured that God has an appointed time for everyone and His will is that all people come to

salvation to the Glory of His Name. One important fact of life is that everyone has a purpose and no one should stop it from fulfilment except God; hence humans must serve God by serving others. I encourage you to see your breakthrough which is imminent, because that purpose must be established as long as you search deep within yourself.

I want to encourage you that if you are in a seemingly dire situation and you find yourself cornered, rest assured that everything must happen to give Glory to God; even seemingly painful and disastrous times. A story is told of a man who had a terrible condition and people came to ask the Lord whose fault it was that the man was in that state. Jesus answered and said, "Neither this man nor his parents have faulted, but that the glory of God must be made manifest." This scripture encouraged me to know that unfortunate events had nothing to do with me, particularly where I knew for sure that I was clean of all the devil's accusations. This story will enable especially those who have strived to keep their walk righteous but experience affliction, for the bible says: *Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.*

The Story

What was I thinking? Things never work out for me anywhere...if only my mother was alive I would have someone to confide in and draw strength from. But this, as cliché as it sounds, was the "story of my life". I had tried so hard in my adult life to make life better than it was growing up. My dad was a doting father who I love to pieces and my stepmother too – a patient woman. I had made a vow to myself...when I finished my A' levels, I would travel to a faraway country for University and live the life I always wanted by getting married to the most kind, God-fearing man the earth could give. Yet here I was in the UK, working towards my 2nd degree and growing strong in the Lord, but hey, that story of my life episode again.

When I met my ex-husband, I really didn't think marriage was on the cards any sooner. He proposed after three months of dating and I was excited and happily agreed. What I didn't know was that I would encounter several challenges in my marriage. Firstly, living in England meant my father could not be available to accept and be fully engaged in the traditional marriage ceremony "bride price" – hence he delegated some extended family members. That was just the tip of the iceberg as

what followed was simply doom. I proceeded to marry what I perceived was the man of my dreams. But alas, God was not in it. To start with, the man's immigration status was not confirmed, hence I suffered for this as he often insulted me, blaming me for "slowing his papers". This man was impatient and soon his true colors began to show. After the birth of our son, things quickly went bizak with infidelity, emotional, and financial abuse. I was so distraught I felt empty inside. The number of times I just wanted to die grew countless. My ex-husband got so frustrated, he blamed my family and myself for the chaos. Through it all, we had domestic disputes that were irreconcilable. This is when my career was attacked, being a Social Worker prospect. I could not explain what was going on, let alone the loud cry of agony in my heart! Indeed something in me said, "One day you'll write about this and someone will be healed." So here it is – that promise of hope being fulfilled.

Working in social services, I witnessed statutory involvements daily on service users' lives and found it traumatic supporting families in distress while mine was crumbling. I had seen this too many times in my work for that awful dreaded moment when due to domestic disputes, families lose children. My faith deteriorated. I took time off my course, and my marriage ended. Having been a zealous youth in the things of God, I felt cheated. Why was this happening to me? Where was God? How come my life turned to be so miserable? I was just tired of it all, miles apart...too distant to ever be connected. I confessed to myself that I had failed and this was the last straw. I never wanted to be divorced and have a divided home, but this seemed to be "the story of my life". I remembered those days I spent toiling in the house of God, keeping myself for my future husband. Why hadn't I gone clubbing and enjoyed myself? What justice was there for me? I remembered the story in the book of Psalms, "Why do the wicked prosper?" Evil is out there. It does not want to see the best of you as mentioned in Ephesians 6. Unfortunately, anyone or anything surrounding you can be used by the devil, including marriage, friends and family, colleagues, etc., to attack you. Where I was and where I wanted to be were miles apart and I got past the point of depression to just existing in a life of uncertainty. I cannot begin to explain how sad, depressed, demotivated, and angry I was. I broke down on my knees and prayed for sanity. What was this? Questions raced in my head and I had nothing left inside of me. I felt ripped apart and those around me mentioned how I was edgy and snapped at them. Rational things became irrational.

But thank God for Jesus. I purposefully decided to choose what I wanted in my life – the life I wanted, the future I was purposed, and within the twinkle of an eye, my spirit focused on positivity. In my mind, I flushed out and rejected all the negatives in my life. I decided if this was not my marriage, then it too must be flushed out of my life. I made a deal with God and in that moment of chaos, I cried, “Lord, if this is not my portion.” It’s amazing what followed in that moment of time. I witnessed my ex-husband declare and admit that his intentions were amiss. That night he left and never came back again.

My journey to self-discovery was equipped by love, pain, experience, and knowing who I am in God. The whole episode existed to strengthen my faith to equip me and above all, it was a journey...the one I walked, suffered, and conquered! The lesson was quite simple, but to actually grasp its sanity was more than I was ready to experience. But how can we find ourselves when WE DON'T EXPERIENCE? To experience hardship is to seek the face of God because he is the Creator. Tomorrow is created by lessons learnt in the past and discovered today. I have learnt that emotions can never be trusted. When we act based on feelings, the solutions are temporary and dissatisfactory. However, when we act on moral basis and stand for what is right, God takes His place in our situations. No one has the right to lay hands on your visions and disrupt them, whatever the reasons. The truth of the matter is you were designed for greatness and any challenge you encounter will serve to your elevation. You will always look back and see God carrying you despite those who plot against you. Those who plot against you will mince every word spoken against you.

I found strength to overcome. I had renewed faith, business ideas came flowing in, and joy in my son. I began from the beginning, who I was in Christ and the legacy I wanted to live behind. I began to refocus my life and grow through what God had said I am. It’s amazing that through difficult challenges in life, individuals can find strength in whom it originally came from – the Creator of the universe. I did not do anything new but draw closer to myself and God because not the best friends, Pastors, family, or holidays could do it. The person I was inside was coming out again, healing, and that journey to self-discovery was slowly created. God was trying to work something in me but the enemy had put barriers to the way I thought my life had mapped up. Today I

am a happy International best-selling book author, declaring that God's word says, "His promises are yes and Amen."

I truly hope that any person who has blows in life thrown at them, recognize these as stepping stones. Create your journey and don't be bitter – move forward. In my home language, there is a proverb which states that while growing up, every child falls somewhere, somehow. But if the child does not rise again after the fall, it becomes a concern for the parents. God has put so much in us to be victorious. That means there is something out there to battle with and be victorious over. Today, decide. Make up your mind, whatever the circumstance: background limitations, financial challenges, emotional bruising, or psychological mind-set. Let it all go and start your journey afresh. My journey has taught me that it is not the beginning of a matter that's important, but how it ends! Indeed no matter how many times my hair is cut, like Samson, my strength does not go but rather comes back more immensely and I shall continue to conquer in Jesus' mighty name.



UNITED KINGDOM

Melody Mbondiah is a certified Life Coach who resides in the UK. She has experience in the Financial Industry in South Africa as well as a BA in Social Work qualification in the UK with several years' experience in the social care sector. As well, she successfully completed a Bcom Business Management Degree (Hrs). She currently runs her Coaching business "Goshen Business Solutions" through eliminating limiting beliefs while also working with the youth in her local Birmingham community. Mel has

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