

LOST AND FOUND

As an introduction to this book, I will share my story; but it is primarily the story of Jesus Christ before it is my story. It is the story of Jesus Christ, searching me, finding me, and saving me.

I believe that there are circumstances that ‘starts’ off the journey towards someone getting to finally embrace Jesus Christ. But those circumstances in themselves do not and cannot save us and make us Christians. Again, those life circumstances that ultimately lead us to Jesus are themselves divinely planned and orchestrated by God. At the end of the day, one thing only should lead us to seek Jesus; and that one thing is our sin and many sins.

In the following paragraphs, I will share the circumstances that ultimately led me to hear the Gospel preached, realized that I was a sinner heading to hell, in need of a Savior, and embraced Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. I will not share all my life’s details because some are too embarrassing while others could negatively expose people I deeply love and care about.

I was born and brought up in a family of eleven. I am the tenth born. It is an extended family as my father was a polygamist. He was a devout Muslim who made sure that all his children attended Madrassa (Islamic education centers). Young as I was, I knew my father to be a very hardworking man. He was very intelligent, an extremely good planner. He was a full-time magician and farmer. He was a man of many business deals. He was very aggressive, a perfectionist and at times a very impatient man. He used to hunt snakes and keep them for his magic show business. Many people in the neighborhood feared and hated him. From what I gathered, young as I was, very few loved him.

I grew up to admire and respect my father especially for his intelligence, hard work, magic shows, and of course the adrenaline in hunting and domesticating snakes. Growing up, I always wanted people to know that I was one of his sons. He was a famous and fearless man. As time went by, without realizing it, a part of my father had taken root and grown in me. He was my hero, an idol of some kind.

I used to attend burials, but it never seriously crossed my mind that my father would die. Death to me was something that befell other families, not my family, not my father. To me, death was a vague reality.

Then it became so real to me. My father died. I vividly remember that before his death, my

father called all of us (his children) and we gathered around his death bed. He was critically sick in bed. He had been sick for a week or so and was thus very weak. Lying there on his bed, my father looked particularly helpless. He gazed into the empty space and then turned his eyes towards us. You could tell from his eyes that he knew that time had finally come for him to depart from this side of eternity. He gathered his strength, raised his voice, and instructed our elder brother to take good care of us all. Then he closed his eyes and was no more. The image of this event remained in my mind to date.

My father's death started a series of questions in my mind that were never truly, satisfactorily, and conclusively answered until the day Jesus Christ found me. If my father could die, then death is a reality. No matter what he was or who he was, he was now dead! Not to come back again! This thought staggered me; the fact that one day I will also die and face the grave never to come back again. I was young back then, but these thoughts kept hovering in my mind and heart. I was greatly troubled and disturbed. I became anxious and worried. I grew into adulthood with this and many more questions which brought a sense of emptiness and hopelessness into my life.

I started asking myself some questions about life: What is life? What is the meaning of life? Why was I born? Why am I in this world? Was I born just to live for a few years and then die? What is my destiny when I die? What happens in the grave?

For these questions, I never got clear, satisfactory, conclusive and straightforward answers from the Mosque and Madrassa teachings. I did not get clear, straightforward, and satisfying answers from the Quran. When it comes to life after death, Islam does not give clear and satisfying answers. The Quran is not clear. Islamic teachers are not sure and I was confused.

When I entered high school, those questions became even more pressing. I wrestled with them deeply. I still remember earning straight A's on my very first exam, yet even in that moment of success, I found myself wondering, "What is the meaning of life?" My father died, and one day I will die with all my A's.

I deeply hungered and longed for meaning beyond this earthly life, beyond the grave, beyond death. Is death the end of it all? Deep down my soul, I said "no". Death cannot possibly be the end. But the Quran was not giving clear, straightforward, authoritative, and satisfying answers.

Sometimes I would not sleep for days, even weeks just wrestling with these questions. I always found myself wanting more but not getting the more that I wanted. I was longing for more-although not clearly knowing the more that I longed for.

Day by day, I became anxious, depressed, angry, bitter, and easily irritated. I felt empty and frustrated and preferred being in isolation. I preferred secluded places. I stopped attending entertainment sessions during the weekends; these were times when students were allowed to rest, watch a movie, or listen to music and dance. As the student leader in charge of the school library, I would spend time alone in the library studying but sometimes crying although not knowing exactly why I was crying. During holidays, I would carry home books and lock myself in my room and study. I was searching for meaning in academics.

I stopped attending the communal Friday prayers in the Mosque. And within a short time, I stopped performing the five daily prayers (Swalat) and finally stopped fasting during the month of Ramadhan. But one thing I did not stop; I kept studying an English Quran version searching for answers. I worked even harder in my academics. At some point, I wanted to transfer to the best school in our county so that I would perform even better. I was denied the opportunity, and I thought of quitting school altogether.

After finishing high school, I was considered bright and knowledgeable. My mind was sharp and full, but my soul was empty. Despite all I had achieved academically, I was miserable. Peace of mind and heart always seemed out of reach. My soul was restless; fear, stress, and confusion crept in, and even my appetite began to fade. I had spent so long drawing meaning from books, but now that school was behind me, I was left asking the same question again, “*What is the meaning of life?*”

I convinced myself that success and wealth would bring fulfillment. I dreamt of starting a business, making a fortune, and perhaps even earning a spot on the *Forbes* list. Maybe then my soul would be satisfied; or so I thought. I spent countless hours online reading about the world’s richest men, researching business ideas, and searching for ways to get rich quickly. My goal was to become a millionaire before I turned thirty. I told myself I wanted wealth so I could help the poor, believing that would give my life purpose, meaning, and significance.

I devoured motivational books, listened to success tapes, and absorbed every story of self-made millionaires who rose from nothing. Inspired, I started a small business selling second-hand clothes and groceries. It did well, and I was determined to follow in the footsteps of those who had built empires from humble beginnings. Yet beneath all that ambition, the same emptiness lingered.

My high school results came out. I had performed very well and got a place in the oldest and most desirable university in the country, the University of Nairobi. I had scored a straight A in

Chemistry and was called by the University of Nairobi to pursue a bachelor's degree along that line. I loved Chemistry. My dream of becoming rich and successful was slowly unfolding. I would go to campus, get my degree, and establish a pharmaceutical firm. My dream was to establish a business empire. I will do my master's immediately then get my doctorate before clocking thirty years.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with being rich with master's and doctorate but my whole perspective and attitude in life was that material wealth and education would make me happy, fulfilled, and satisfied. I thought life was all about becoming rich and educated. I thought that was the meaning and purpose of life. I was wrong.

I kept on imagining how I would become a young, rich scientist. Drive sleek cars. Use the latest gadgets. Put on the sharpest fashion. Live in a mansion. With a beautiful wife, perfect marriage and wonderful children. I always dreamt of this. Most probably these would give my life joy, meaning, significance, and purpose.

I joined the University of Nairobi, my very first time in Nairobi city. A month in campus and something caught my attention; young men my age would come driving in Mercedes and some in Range Rovers. Some children of prominent government officials would come escorted by bodyguards. They had the best phones and dressed sharply. I admired their lifestyles. These guys were already living the life that I was only dreaming of.

Then something happened; a son of a prominent government official committed suicide leaving behind a note saying that things were going on in his family; some prolonged family fights and because of that he was not happy and therefore did not see the point of life. He complained of frustrations and depression because of these wrangles in the family. I felt shattered to the core! My heart became heavy. Is my dream a mere fantasy? Is it an illusion? Here is a young man my age, already rich, in the best university, committing suicide, leaving behind a note saying that life was not making sense. Am I chasing after the wind?

I felt heavy for weeks and lost interest in my studies. I would go to the washrooms and just cry. Sometimes I would go to the City Park, find a secluded spot, sit down, look into the sky and just weep. What is life? What is the meaning of life? Why am I in this world? What will happen next when I die? My father died. The same fate awaits me, any time.

I was already drinking alcohol when I joined campus although I was not addicted. I would drink when I wanted and stop when I wanted to. I secretly turned to the bottle, and a friend

introduced me to cigarettes and marijuana. Every time that emptiness came, I would secretly grab a bottle or puff a roll. But the more I drank and smoked, the emptier I felt. I became very heavy, always fearful, and in a panic mood.

I lost interest in my studies altogether. I dropped from campus, left Nairobi, and crossed the border to the neighboring country, Tanzania. Being in a foreign country with a foreign culture, the world seemed so strange to me. I became even more fearful of people and life in general and drank and smoked even more. I found that people in Arusha-Tanzania easily spotted and recognized a foreigner. Without the necessary immigration papers, it would cost me years in prison. That was the last place I could imagine finding myself in. I could not imagine being a prisoner in a foreign country. The city was too tough to maneuver. I bowed out and traveled back to my home country.

I arrived in Mombasa-Kenya and lodged at a friend's place who offered to accommodate me for a few weeks. In that estate, almost everyone would leave for work and school during the weekdays. I was always left alone in the house. I felt utterly alone; unloved, ignored, unwanted, and without hope. Shame clung to me for the foolish choices I had made, and I often felt lost and miserable. When everyone else was gone, I would seek out a prostitute, trying to fill the emptiness inside. For a brief moment, the act seemed to quiet my pain, but as soon as it was over, the same void returned, but deeper than before. This became a cycle, repeating several times a week, until the little money I had was gone.

Eventually, I found work at a fast-food restaurant, and later, at a casino. With more money in my pocket, I only fell further into sin. I spent freely on the very things that were destroying me, convincing myself I was in control, when in truth, I was enslaved.

It was during this time working in the casino that I witnessed firsthand how unsatisfied, miserable, hopeless, and joyless rich tycoons can be. I soon discovered that wealth does not guarantee happiness. Many of the rich people I encountered were empty and joyless; often depressed, fearful, insecure, and burdened by stress. They tried to fill their void through drinking, smoking, gambling, and generous parties, yet their misery always resurfaced. Bitterness and anger seemed to follow them everywhere. They were easily provoked and quick to lash out. I still remember one Indian tycoon who nearly slapped me simply for speaking too loudly while I was dealing a poker game.

During my time at the casino, I had quit Islam altogether and was living a morally loose and carefree life. Despite my immoral and 'irreligious' life, something deep within kept reminding me

that my lifestyle was offensive to God. My will had become so weak, and my conscience was very much loaded and burdened with guilty feelings. I felt condemned. Guilt was eating and gnawing my heart away making me restless and fearful. Thoughts of God punishing sinners in hell started running in my mind. I wanted to make peace with God, but I didn't know how to do it. Should I go back to the Quran and search? Should I go back to the Mosque? I did not want to go back. I was there and did not get any satisfying and fulfilling answers to my many questions. But where should I go?

Islam is a religion of works. It is all about trying hard to do good deeds. Perhaps your good deeds can take you to heaven; Perhaps not. You cannot be sure. You cannot even be sure that your bad deeds will take you to hell. If your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds, you may go to heaven, but even that you cannot be sure. Talking of good deeds, I knew I didn't stand a chance as a Muslim. I had lived a reckless life. And even if I go back to Islam and try my level best to be a devout Muslim, there was no assurance of going to heaven. I desperately needed assurance. Islam does not offer any assurance. But even if Islam offered assurance of heaven through one's good deeds, I found it very difficult and impossible for me to do all the good deeds. Every time I tried to do good deeds and be a nice man, I failed miserably. In Islam, there is an implied suggestion that the only way you can get the assurance of going to heaven is through fighting for the Islamic faith as a Jihadist. And the only way you can be assured of going to hell is if you become a Christian. I was confused.

I was not stable emotionally. I was a deeply troubled young man. I quit the casino job and briefly got into drug peddling. During that time, I convinced my elder brother to start high school. We built the structures, took in students and the school was up and running. We had Christian students at the school. These Christian students were invited by a neighboring school to participate in a students' weekend rally. As the school head, I had to accompany the students. I spent time outside as they continued with their singing and fellowship in the hall. At this time, I knew and believed that there is a God who created the heavens and the earth and everything in it but was not sure which religion/faith to follow, though I was not a Muslim anymore.

When it came time for the preaching, I went in and took my seat, curious to hear what the preacher would say. He spoke on many things; most of which I can no longer recall. But there was one verse he mentioned that stood out to me. He quoted it spontaneously, almost in passing, as though it wasn't part of his prepared message. In fact, it seemed he briefly stepped away from his

main point just to share that one Scripture.

This single verse, I will never forget; Hebrew 9:27 “Just as a man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” This text cut straight to my heart. It came with such penetrating power that some balls of tears immediately formed in my eyes. In passing, he briefly spoke about God’s holiness and the sinfulness of man. He made some remarks on hell and the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. I was deeply moved and sharply cut in my heart by what he said. I was like a sponge, drinking all that he said. I desperately wanted him to expound more on these things. I desperately wanted to hear more about these things. I guess he discovered that he was veering off and the students were no longer attentive, so he immediately went back to his discourse.

Of course, I knew he was teaching and preaching from the Bible. So, I went home, got myself a copy of the Bible, and began to read and study it. I remember reading and studying the entire Bible consistently from Genesis to Revelation, book after book, chapter after chapter, and verse after verse. I read the entire Bible in around six months. Many times, I would read an entire book in one sitting. Even though I could not understand everything, all my questions were truly answered; ALL OF THEM. I found the Bible to be generally clear, plain, straightforward, and consistent. I have to admit that I came across passages that were difficult to understand. However, generally, I found the central message of the Bible to be plain and clear. All my questions were sufficiently and satisfactorily answered. The Bible came to me with such penetrating power, authority, liveliness, and with a cutting edge in my heart that drove me to tears during some of my reading sessions. With help from other books, I came to a true understanding of who God is, who I am, and who Jesus Christ is and what He has done to save all those who would come to Him by faith. And that is how my journey with my Savior and Lord Jesus Christ began, and to date, the journey continues.

My dear friend; what I want to share with you in this book is the Gospel that I came to know and believe. That is the heart of this book. My prayer is that after you are done reading this book, you will know what the Gospel is and by God’s grace believe the claims of the Gospel. I became a Christian when I knew and believed the claims of the Gospel. My conversion to Christianity was through the Gospel. In part one, I will share with you the claims of the Gospel. Then the commands of the Gospel in part two and finally the Gospel warnings in part three.