

“He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases” Matthew 8:27.

“...weeping may endure for a night,

but joy comes in the morning” □ Psalms 30:5

I was brought up in a polygamous family in Uganda. My dad was a Muganda while my mum was a Msoga. Dad had three wives with my mother being the first. After a few years of marriage and a couple of children, my dad sponsored mum for a course in Home Economics. Her younger sister came into the home to look after the children. By the time mum came back, her sister was pregnant and consequently became a second wife to her husband. Later, dad also married another wife. My mother had sixteen pregnancies but only nine of us grew up – 4 girls and 5 boys. We experienced a lot of problems emanating mostly from the hatred among the wives and vowed never to be part of a polygamous household.

I attended school and sat and passed the Cambridge School Certificate (the equivalent of Form

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4). Thereafter I attended a commercial college and trained to be a secretary. I then got a job with one of the Ministries in Kampala but left after I got another job in a textile mill in Jinja. The reason I left Kampala (like quite a few of my friends) was not because of better job prospects. This was the time of Amin. He would go around Ministries looking for beautiful young girls to please him. If you were identified he would send his men for you, and if you did not please him, there were high chances you would never be seen again. I had a close friend who had run away immediately to another town after she knew Amin had spotted her.

I was employed as a receptionist at the cotton mill. At this time I was twenty one years old.

Flattered by a man's loving attentions

One day a man came into the building and after staring at me for a few moments came to my desk and said, "You are going to be my wife." I told him, "If that is the way men propose then I won't get married." This man who later became my husband was one of the senior managers at the plant. He was very persistent in wooing me and I was flattered. I introduced him to the brother I was living with who became his ally in trying to convince me to marry him. One day my brother and I were invited to his home. We were treated really well.

Much later I came to learn that he had his wife in the house even as he entertained us. In fact the wife already had eight children. She had given birth to the eighth one just two weeks before. She had been ordered to stay in the bedroom and not to make any noise. However we did not know this at the time. My brother really pushed me into the marriage by asking me to leave his home and get married to this man who I had only known for a short period. He did not understand my hesitation in marrying such a good catch. After visiting my parents and paying some dowry we started living together as man and wife.

Realization that I was in a polygamous marriage

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Marriage was not easy. My husband turned out not very pleasant to live with and there was little communication between us. One day, about a year and a half later when my first born daughter was eight months old, we went to the market with my husband. As I was putting the shopping into the boot of the car, someone pushed me from behind while shutting the boot cover by great force. My fast instincts saved me from great harm. As I steadied myself, I saw a woman breathing in and out heavily with anger. She was with three small kids my husband had brought in our house a few times claiming they belonged to his best friend whose vehicle had broken down and asked him to pick them from school for him. The children called me 'auntie.'

Everything my heart had suspected fell into place. I got a clear revelation of the many lies I had naively believed. It came home to me that I was in a polygamous relationship and I did not know what to do.

Immediately after the incident, my husband kept a close watch on me. We would go everywhere together. I became the one to do the shopping for the first wife and her children which we would take together to her house. She was very bitter with me for taking her husband away. To make it worse, she was a stay at home mother who had eight children at only thirty years old. She looked at me as the source of all her problems.

Husband marries third wife

Soon after I got my second child, my husband left my house and would only come occasionally. I thought the rest of his time he was with his first wife. However, one time in town I met him with a young girl who he introduced to me as his sister. I was puzzled because I had not met her

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before. I later came to know that the girl was actually his third wife.

When the first wife learnt about it, she was overjoyed and made friends with her. I now became the pariah of his family with everybody including my husband against me. He suddenly became very violent towards me. He would hit me very badly, often in the face in a bid to deform me. Whenever he visited me, I would resist him and he would use his belt to beat me and then force himself on me. He would bring pornographic films and like some devil possessed person force me to act out the scenes. Once my elder sister went to his office and he told her that whenever he saw me he saw an animal which was ready to attack him and that is why he beat me.

My mental problems

I became quite depressed at this time and became like a mad person. He took me to his first wife for advice and she suggested he takes me to a witchdoctor .This did not help and I progressively got worse and was talking a 'heavenly language'. I was admitted in hospital for some time but upon coming home I went crazy again. I now had four children.

I lost my job and became desperate

Things became worse for me after the factory I worked in decided that they would henceforth not allow a husband and wife to work there together. I was forced to stop working. My husband came for the two eldest children and took them to the first wife. I remained with the two young ones and he would lock us in the house, only coming occasionally to bring food. Left alone, I recovered somewhat and decided to go back to my parents. I had to break down the main door.

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After spending eight months at home the kids got measles and desperate since I did not have any money, I asked for my husbands help. He asked me to go back since the evil spirits that had been tormenting me were gone. On reaching my house, my husband took me to the bedroom. There he was burning some witchcraft concoctions. The minute I gazed at those things, I went berserk. I immediately asked him, "My husband, what have you done to me?" He did not answer and hurriedly asked me to get out. He pushed me into his car and drove me to my brother's place where he left me. I became quite crazy after this and started hallucinating. I started seeing fire raining down on me. I would take off my clothes and run off naked haphazardly. Soon I would bump into something and I would cry out with the pain of the fire burning me. These episodes became part of my life even though there were days when I was slightly better. During one such time I got a sympathiser and had a baby boy with him.

The miracle of my healing

After some time, God used one of my sisters to take me to a church of saved people to pray for me. However before they could pray I became so violent that it was difficult to hold me. They tried to hold me by force but I bit them and they let me go.

I ran up a hill leading to a military barracks and straight into the barbed wire fence. By this time I had already taken off my clothes. I saw bullets looking like small fires rushing towards me. I shouted, "No bullet is going to get me. I am looking for Jesus!" I tried looking for the direction of the church where they were praying for my deliverance in vain. I could not make out where it was. Instead I went into a home where I asked for water. I was looking filthy and no one wanted to be close to a mad person.

Many people came out to see the spectacle of a mad person. I wanted to grab one of them and force them to lead me to the church but whoever I approached ran away very fast. Nobody wanted to be touched by a mad person lest they catch the madness from me. Suddenly I felt as

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if an earthquake was coming from my feet and I somersaulted while making loud noises. I then felt like there were voices coming from the heart of the earth to my head and I stood on my feet and ran. A big dog charged at me and I shouted, "You dog you will not bite me. I am looking for Jesus." I ran ahead and jumped high onto the branch of a guava tree. I swung with it over the fence and landed on the other side. It turned out to be the compound of another church. People started gathering here also. Word had spread of the whereabouts of the mad woman. I had started dancing, thanking Jesus for not locking me out like the five foolish virgins. (It is good to teach children about God. It is not easily forgotten and the spirit reminds one of it during times of need).

The pastor did not want my lips to touch his cup...

Six men came out of the church and led me in. I asked for water but because the pastor did not want his cup to touch my mouth, he poured the water from high up and I gulped it down. I also requested for some to be poured on my head.

One of the ladies came out from inside the church and dressed me. I was taken into the church where they prayed for me for about two hours. I then heard something coming out of me like clothing being taken out over the head. As it came out my head became clear and I was cured of the madness. I am now sober and sound both physically and spiritually

My step sister becomes my co-wife.

However, that was not the end of my problems. When he was about two years old, my youngest son died. When my husband heard of it, he came looking for me. He told me that his wife could not get married to someone else or any child born out of her union with another man survive. He asked me to go back to him to look after my children there but I refused. He then got me arrested on charges of stealing his 2 children and Ushs. 600,000. After three weeks I was

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released. However, during my incarceration he took in as fourth wife my step sister, (who was daughter to my aunt – my mother's co wife) so that she could take care of my children whom he took away from me. After two years my husband came looking for me again. During this time I had got a job as a secretary in a good school. He said my sister was mistreating my children and I should go back. I learnt later that the children were really suffering and especially one of my boys who looked like his father. Obviously she had discovered that what she had thought of as the coveted position of a wife to a rich man was not a bed of roses. I took the matter to my pastor and we prayed. He convinced me to go back because of the children.

Final Break For My Marriage

Soon after, I lost my job. My husband then decided I should go and live next to his mother in the rural home. He bought me some cows and goats to tend.

It was difficult living with my mother in law. When my husband brought in shopping for me, she wanted to be the one to keep it and share it out as my husband's mother. She also thought I was not worthy. In me she saw a thief and a harlot. She used one of her sons to spy on me and claimed I was sleeping with the workers. Unfortunately my husband sided with his mother and brother and would beat me up in front of them and my children. By this time I had another daughter who he claimed was not his. He went away with our two sons and I was sent away with my small daughter.

I was lucky and got another job with a school almost immediately. I rented a house and was able to take care of our needs. After 10 years, I lost this job also but by this time my first born daughters were already living abroad, both having graduated from Makerere University. They took up the education of their small sister and also took their brothers through the University. Now all my children have graduated and they are independent.

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My training work as a pastor

After losing the job with the school, I was offered a job by one of the people whose firm was contracted to train us to use computers. However after only two weeks of working for him, his friend, who was heading a Bible school told me that he thought I would make a good pastor. I was taken into the school to train as a pastor and specialized in helping teenagers. I was then sent to Malawi for a year after which I was ordained. However unlike the youthful graduates, I was not posted. I went back to my mother to reflect on what to do. God directed me to a mission with a home which cared for elderly people. We also went from home to home evangelizing. Soon after we decided to open a place of worship and started a Pentecostal church. That is where I preach now. Many of the congregation are quite old, some more than eighty years old, but you should see them dance for the Lord! They are amazing. I am sixty years old myself but I feel very strong and beautiful, even more than during my young days. This is because I have forgiven those who wronged me and moved forward with the Lord. I have also forgiven myself for the mistakes I made. My soul is very joyful.

My advice to abused women

I would advise those women who have suffered abuse to have a heart of forgiveness. When you bottle up a lot of anger you become sick. You are constantly having headaches and you can develop mental problems like I did.

The character of Hannah really inspires me. She was in a polygamous union like me and she had to bear the brunt of her co-wife's cruel taunting.

Hannah was so passionate in her prayer that Eli the priest thought she was drunk. She was delivered by God from her situation (even though quite different) just as I was. Her son – the fruit of her faith, became one of the greatest prophets.

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I am praying that my new life bears much fruit for the Lord. This makes my favourite verse in the Bible to be John 15:16 which says,

“You did not choose, I appointed you to bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

I have entrusted God with the rest of my life. AMEN.

(*Name has been changed to ensure privacy)

Do you or someone you know suffer from mental illness? Do not despair. Read “Banishing Mental Illness” in our “Health and Wellness” section.

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