

Nelius Wanjeri: Blind But Not In The Dark

Written by admin

Wednesday, 29 June 2011 11:58 - Last Updated Wednesday, 07 March 2012 12:46

NELIUS WANJERI - BLIND BUT NOT IN THE DARK

“If the blind put their hands in God’s, they find their way more surely than those that see but have no faith or purpose” □ □ □ □ □ Hellen Keller.



Nelius Wanjeri: at home September 2009

In 1988, as a twelve year old girl and a pupil in Standard six at St Martin Complex Academy, Nelius Wanjeri was washing her hair in readiness for a wedding where she was a maid the following day. She bent to wash her hair fully sighted but by the time she had finished and lifted her head, she could not see.

When her parents took her to hospital, the doctor said that the left eye had burst and the right

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one had retina detachment due to what he said was “intracranial pressure”. Wanjeri was hospitalized and had an operation to reduce the pressure, but this unfortunately did not save her sight. Even after several other operations, her left eye could not see at all. When the detachment was corrected, her right eye could see a distance of about four inches but gradually, this sight was also lost by the end of two years rendering her totally blind.

Thus began for Nelius a journey into a different world. She had to change schools and in 1999 joined Thika School of the Blind. Nelius says this was a torturous journey and she took a long time to adjust. She had to be taught how to use a white cane to navigate the various paths to the classrooms, dormitories and toilets and to learn how to use Braille. Most of her classmates had lived with their blindness for long and had come to terms with it. Some were also partially sighted. She says most of them were impatient with her.

Nelius went up to Standard eight. Even though she passed her exams, she lost her chance to continue since she was quite sickly at this time. She had an overactive thyroid and had to attend hospital quite often. She was also felt very discouraged about life in general and at the time felt that she had enough troubles and could not cope with more school. She says she often asked of God “Why me?”

After recovery from the thyroid condition, and discussions with her parents, she decided to go to a Theological college where after two years she attained a diploma. She says she pursued this learning not primarily so that she could be a pastor but to try to get the strength to cope and to understand more about God and his purpose in her life. Nelius had accepted Christ as her personal Saviour while in Standard two. “I only accepted my condition about 2 years ago, in 2007” Nelius says, “It was a difficult journey, praying every day for all these years for God to totally heal my eyes.”

One of the purposes Nelius discovered is becoming a gospel singer which provides her with a living. She also does counseling from time to time. “This usually involves my friends with various marital issues” she jokes with a cheeky smile, “often, the biggest disability for women is the men in their lives!” but she is quick to add that she hopes to get married one day to an understanding man.

Nelius is able to do most house chores. She often cooks and keeps house for her parents who she lives with. She has an older sister and brother who are both married and leading independent lives. She says her mother is her greatest friend and confidant. Her mother usually

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travels with her as a guide to singing assignments and to attend to other issues such as shopping. Her father has also been very supportive.



Nelius and her parents

According to Nelius's parents, she has been a great blessing to them. They have struggled a lot financially since their former house in Nyahururu was totally destroyed a few years ago in a case of suspected arson to get them to leave the settlement scheme. They came to Nairobi with only some burnt iron sheets which they used to construct a simple house in plot the father had fortunately bought earlier at Munyaka, which is near Githurai in Nairobi. They had lost all their personal belongings in the fire including the father's capital for his work as a clothes dealer. But God is great because their daughter is putting up a nice house for them

Nowadays, Nelius advises people to accept the challenges in their lives and get on with life without giving up. She says that people should realize that "disability is not inability" and that everybody is disabled in a way except that some disabilities are more apparent. Her favourite verse is Jeremiah 29:11. ***"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord., "Plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."***

She also identifies a lot with Job whose story gives her the courage to face life.

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Nelius is full of praise for many people especially fellow musicians, for standing by her and for helping her financially in the production of her music.

To date she has three CDs; “Kieha na maithori,” “Tutasonga mbele”; and “Master Key “which are doing relatively well in the market.

(Editors Note: Sadly Nelius died a few months after this article was published. Read the article “Farewell to Nelius Wanjeri”

Also read a short story by her mother “A mother’s experience with blindness))

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