

AFRIGO

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THE REALITY OF
SINGLE MISSIONARIES
CELIBATE FOR THE GOSPEL
WORKING WHILE WAITING

AFRICAN SINGLE MISSIONARIES
**THEIR STRENGTHS AND
THEIR STRUGGLES**

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THE REALITY OF SINGLE MISSIONARIES

BY SHIRLEY CHIRIMA



At the end of a training, I spoke with Eman, a single woman in her late thirties currently serving among her people in North Africa. She navigates the cultural and religious tensions with ease and has built deep relationships with the women and children. She shared how often she faced the question, “When will you settle down and get married?” as if her remarkable life of sacrifice and impact wasn’t enough. The cultural pressure for her to marry is one great discouragement in all she does. In Africa, marriage is not simply a personal decision; it’s a cultural expectation and a milestone that marks maturity, status, and blessing.

Eman’s story isn’t unique. Across Africa and beyond, single men and women, especially women¹, quietly shape the face of global missions. Yet, their stories often remain on the sidelines with their challenges overlooked, and their contributions under-celebrated.

Singleness in missions refers to individuals serving God cross-culturally or within their home nations who are unmarried by choice, circumstance, or calling. While singleness can be viewed with suspicion or pity in many African cultural contexts, it often becomes a gateway to remarkable flexibility, mobility, and devotion in missions.

Numerous African single missionaries serve faithfully across the continent and beyond. Organizations like CAPRO, WEC, YWAM, and OM have sent many single men and women from Africa to unreached regions. They serve in places where families would struggle to go. They plant churches, translate Scripture, mentor youth, and pioneer new ministries. Their singleness is not a limitation but an asset, an invitation to a deeper dependence on Christ and a wider embrace of spiritual family.

Yet, these missionaries face unique challenges. From financial instability and emotional loneliness to assumptions about their calling or character, many African single missionaries face a blend of cultural and organizational challenges that often go unaddressed. In many communities, singleness is misunderstood or stigmatized, especially for women. Mission structures usually prioritize families, leaving singles with limited support. Many

struggle with invisibility in the field and within leadership circles.

Despite these experiences, single missionaries bring remarkable flexibility, deep community engagement, and spiritual resilience to their work. Their contributions are vital, but they need intentional support and greater recognition to thrive.

The Apostle Paul emphasizes the advantage of singleness in 1 Corinthians 7:32-35. I have found this to be true, though not always easy. It is a gift that allows me to serve in otherwise impossible ways. It can be one of life’s richest seasons of wholehearted obedience, anchored identity, and adventurous faith. As the African missions movement grows, we must pause and reflect on an often-overlooked group within our communities: singles!

Are we, as mission agencies and churches, intentionally creating space for single men and women to participate and truly flourish in ministry? Are we equipping ourselves to support them spiritually, emotionally, and practically? Are we willing to honour their stories, amplify their voices, and allow their insights to shape how we think about missions in Africa and beyond? As we envision a vibrant, inclusive future for African missions, these questions demand thoughtful and urgent attention.

In this issue of AfriGO, a southern African candidly shares her experiences as a single missionary serving in Asia. In our Called segment, Malawian Francis Kuntenga reveals how his choice to be single aids the fulfilment of his missionary calling. In our Perspective article, Emilia Ogigirigi delves into the difficulties single missionaries face due to their unmarried statuses. And in our Training article, we explore how to support single missionaries as they respond to God’s call. Enjoy reading and share with others!

**Their singleness
is not a limitation
but an asset.**

Shirley Chirima has served with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) since 2000 and is part of their Frontier Missions Core Leadership and their South Central Africa Eldership teams. With a strong call to mobilization and training, she facilitates the YWAM God’s Story DTS (Oral Discipleship Training School), equipping missionaries for oral cultures. Shirley invests in emerging leaders and advocates for missions to the world’s most desperate people.

¹According to <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/why-are-women-more-eager-missionaries>, 80 to 85 per cent of single missionaries are women.

CALLED: FRANCIS KUNTENGA



CELIBATE FOR THE GOSPEL

Francis in blue
shirt and jeans

AS TOLD TO SOLOMON OWUSU-ANSAH

Most Christians are excited about a handsome young man who decides to become a missionary, until he is still single at age forty-three. The questions start subtly in his late twenties, become direct in his thirties and aggressive in his forties: “Are you normal? Maybe you are ‘dead’? We have remedies to help you” – these are questions Francis received from his tribesmen. Although a heartbreak influenced his choice to remain celibate for the gospel, he now considers this a great opportunity for mission work.

I am a Malawian missionary and for the past 20 years, I’ve been working under SIM among the Yao people group in Mozambique. My ministry involves trauma healing and counselling, agriculture, evangelism and discipleship. On a typical day, I run the Foundations for Farming ministry project and then go for visitation and discipleship. On Mondays, I do property maintenance which includes carpentry and joinery. We have church service on Wednesdays and Tuesdays are my rest days. My life is pretty fun!

Across the world, many churches encourage those called into ministry to marry. In Africa, the pressure is even greater, and sometimes, our social expectations influence our theology. But biblically, we have examples of how powerful a single life devoted to God’s work can be – Jesus Christ himself and Apostle Paul.

Remaining single has opened doors for me to share the gospel in war zones like the DRC and northern Nigeria; places I couldn’t have taken a wife or family. I have freedom to interact with people, including the opposite sex, without being questioned by a spouse – a big issue in southern Africa.

Singleness in missions isn’t without challenges. Loneliness is the biggest one. It can lead to stress, depression and eventual burnout. My interactions with women are sometimes viewed suspiciously, which can affect how I’m received in some communities. But I learn to lean on God and seek counsel and encouragement from other missionaries.

One thing I’m most grateful for is my support system. My church, together with my mission agency, makes sure that I get my stipends on time. They encourage me to take vacations and rest. During a particularly rough season of burnout, they hired a psychologist to help me navigate it. When I watch the Sunday service online, I hear my name mentioned in prayers at my home church. Church members also check up on me and some have plans of visiting me this year. These encourage me to do so much as a single missionary.

Lust and sexual temptation are real challenges for single missionaries. I have managed to keep myself from falling by cultivating a deep relationship with God through prayer and studying the Scriptures, setting priorities with my mission values, boundaries with the opposite sex, and surrounding myself with trusted people who hold me accountable. I don’t overlook my emotional and physical needs; I find spiritual ways to meet them. The Church needs to recognize that some, like me, are called to serve God more effectively in our singleness and that should be celebrated, not questioned.

To singles considering full-time missions, count the cost. Prepare for the hard days because they will come. You’ll be tempted to give up, but trust in Jesus and surround yourself with a supportive church or organization. Singleness can take you on some real mission adventures and I believe heaven rejoices when we fully give ourselves to that calling.

PLEASE PRAY

- In Mozambique, work permits cost almost \$1,000 yearly; a huge amount for an African missionary. Pray that the Lord will open doors to cater for this.
- I live about 96km away from the town. Pray for security and well-being for me.
- Pray that as we share the gospel through our initiatives, more souls will come to know Jesus Christ.

SINGLENES IN MISSIONS

THE BLESSINGS AND THE BURDENS

BY EMILIA OGIGIRIGI

In recent decades, evangelical Christians have been fighting to protect the sanctity of marriage and family in a world seeking to undermine both. One unfortunate consequence has been an elevation of marriage and the family from being God's good gifts to becoming the goal of the Christian life, creating unnecessary difficulties for the single missionary. Singles include the never-married, the widowed, and the divorced. When it comes to missionary work, married couples are often the ideal candidates.

A married pastor once volunteered to take me to several villages to mobilize other pastors for missions. In one place, the pastor was away and my guide suggested I speak to his wife. When she realized I was unmarried, she swept me up and down with her eyes and asked me to go get married first because without a husband, I had no ministry. Only heaven knows the damage those words did. I lost every desire to mingle with others and wanted to quit the field but I couldn't face my leaders with the real reason.

Biblical foundations

In the Old Testament, Israel's relationship with God was based on his covenant with Abraham and his descendants. Marriage was therefore vital as the context for the birth of these descendants. Singleness was considered abnormal, as the realm of eunuchs, prostitutes, and slaves. Unfortunately, this remains the stance of many church leaders. While in a church service once, the pastor spoke so derogatorily of the never-married state that I regretted visiting.

The New Testament, however, speaks about chaste singleness as something inherently good. In Matthew 22:29, Jesus reveals that earthly marriage will become redundant in heaven. Earthly marriage points to the union between Christ and the Church,

while earthly singleness reflects the wonderful heavenly relationships that we, as individuals, will have with one another. So, both godly marriage and godly singleness are good because they point us towards different aspects of the heavenly reality that awaits us. This truth liberated me! Godly singleness also reveals that what matters is not just creating biological heirs, but spiritual heirs who are reborn.

Opportunities and challenges

Singleness can be a unique opportunity for spiritual growth, fruitfulness, and service to God and others without distraction. Single missionaries have greater freedom to travel, relocate, and control their finances and decisions. They can take risks to pursue new opportunities and territories for the Lord, but life for them can be challenging.

Single missionaries face societal stigma while married couples receive recognition, respect, and validation. Single missionaries may feel lonely, isolated, and disconnected, while couples can provide emotional support and companionship for each other.

**We can all
make life easier
for single
missionaries.**

Some churches prioritize marriage and family, leaving single people feeling marginalized, excluded or frustrated.

Many single missionaries choose to remain single for the sake of the Kingdom (Matt. 19:12). Some would like to marry but that is yet to happen. Some fear the challenge of supporting a family financially. Others may have experienced childhood sexual abuse and cannot bear the physical or psychological intimacy that marriage entails.

Some churches and mission agencies view singleness as a "problem" to be solved, rather than a valid and valuable state in life. They lack adequate support or resources for the unique needs of single missionaries because they assume they will eventually get married. Some place unrealistic pressures on single missionaries, such as expecting them to be readily available to serve all the time.

Supporting singles

As the Church seeks to fulfil the Great Commission, it is imperative that we recognize, empower, and unleash the potential of single people in missions. Acknowledge and appreciate their contributions and strengths. Understand their challenges and advocate for their needs and concerns. Include them in leadership and decision-making. Love your single Christian friends by making your family outward looking and including them in it. We can all make life easier for single missionaries as they serve in challenging and hard-to-reach areas. Read more here: <https://bit.ly/3FC94Jl>.



Emilia Ogigirigi is a Nigerian single missionary and the International Director of Agape Missions and Evangelistic Network. She started her missionary work with Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) in 1986. She previously served as training director for the Agape School of Missions and the director for Francophone Africa. She presently resides in the Republic of Benin and is involved in training, church planting and mentoring young women.



THE HARDSHIPS OF SINGLENESSE AS WORSHIP

BY KATE AZUMAH

Thirty-four-year-old Rotondwa* quit her job as an engineer to become a missionary in Asia. She's been on the field for over seven years and when people meet her for the first time, they are shocked that this southern African is the same person they heard over the phone – because she speaks the local language so fluently!

Rotondwa serves among slum dwellers and spends time visiting homes, building relationships and sharing Bible stories. She organizes English and Bible classes for children, oversees a football ministry for boys, and runs a women's group in order to make disciples for Jesus. She sees women following Jesus despite the cost of persecution. She is happy when the children in her Bible class demonstrate Christlike character and when those she reaches experience God's healing.

Rotondwa's current life belies her experience when she first arrived here: "I cried, and wanted to leave immediately. I was black, and people stared. One child screamed and ran away when she saw me. The spiritual atmosphere was different, with idol worship at every corner. I kept counting the days to my departure."

While Rotondwa may have shed off her cultural alienation over time, she struggles with one abiding difficulty – her singleness.

Single by circumstance

"My mother always said, 'Books before boys because boys bring babies' and so, the one time I was asked out while in the university, I declined. Since then, I have not been pursued by any man who shared my values. But it was during my time in school that I first understood the gospel and decided to give my life for it. I joined a Western ministry that had missionaries serving here."

Among her team of 18 internationals, Rotondwa is the only African. There are five married couples, two single men, and six single ladies.

"Recently, I started seeing the beauty of singleness in the freedom I have to pursue Jesus and what he has for me without restrictions. But I was called to missions and not to singleness. People say you're supposed to be satisfied in Jesus but it's very different to come home to no one. Your team may love you but it's not the same as having someone who is there just for you, to encourage you and care about your interests."

As much as Rotondwa would like to be married, her options are limited. Here, being black is regarded as unattractive and she has even been advised to use lightening creams to enhance her chances of getting a husband. Her family back home assures her: "It doesn't

matter the person's culture. We'll take anybody." But they don't know that the natives prefer women from the affluent West; for what does "poor Africa" have to offer? The unbelievers in her family, and some Christians, tell her to have a baby because she's not getting younger.

"My mother, who can barely send a photo via WhatsApp, asked me to try online dating. For my dad, I see his concern. He wonders who will look out for me when he's no longer around. Among our team, whenever a new single guy is arriving, everyone starts anticipating that he may be the one. And when he doesn't choose you, there's that subtle sense of rejection, even if you weren't expecting anything. People do not also understand what it's like to be single. They think you can be available for anything because you have nothing to do. Every day on the field, people ask when I'm getting married."

Rotondwa's support system

"When I had my professional job, I was able to support others. After becoming a missionary, I could now barely afford my own life, but as more Western people discovered what I was doing, they supported me. Westerners have a different mindset about giving to missions, and a little funding from the West can translate into much

compared to what someone back home may sacrifice to give. I believe being generous myself also opened the door for God's provision. When I received any support, I alternated between giving it out and keeping the next one for myself. I experienced many miracles that way."

Rotondwa's team meets twice a week to fellowship and to share what each person is doing. The ministry organizes Zoom meetings for single missionaries but what Rotondwa finds more helpful are her sessions with her American member care lady, once a single missionary herself.

"I know that this is someone who is for me. Her whole mission is 'How can I help you, pray for you, challenge you?' She knows about the things I'm doing and asks about them."

"When I'm back home and I request it, my church gives me time in the service to share about my work, but there's no 'How can we pray for you or support you as a community?' Maybe this whole missions thing is new to them or I don't ask hard enough."

Challenges and consolations

Rotondwa's friends back home support her in missions, but work, marriage, and varying time zones limit their

interactions. "When I'm home, we act like everything is normal, but relationships change. My friends do not understand what it's like to be in my situation, but meeting a Nigerian missionary here was God's grace. With our shared experiences, we were able to encourage each other."

One thing that helps Rotondwa with loneliness is when people include her in their lives. "Like tonight, I had dinner with a married couple and their son. They once brought him to live with me for a week while they were on an outreach. When people invite us in, we feel seen."

"Last week, I was laughing with some older local women and sharing stories of God's redemption for bad marriages. One of the women said to me, 'I have been the age of a child, your age, and now I'm 50. I want to encourage you because I know

it can be difficult. I understand your body's natural desire for sex at this age, but you are doing well.' What an encouraging moment! You hit your 30s and wonder where those feelings suddenly came from. People think single women are strong and no one asks if you're struggling with sexual sin. Being aware that it happens is helpful.

**Jesus is worthy
of everything,
including the
hardships of my
singleness.**

I started tracking my cycle so I avoid tempting situations. In addition to God's help, we need people who will do what that woman did for me."

Helping and hurting singles

"In my team, people ask when they don't see you, but other single people could die without others knowing. So, ask about single people often and pray for them."

"People outside can also matchmake for us; not the random joining of any two single people, but knowing their values, interests, character, etc. and determining that they are right fits. It's better if people first tell the guy about the lady before they proceed."

"One unhelpful thing is when people tell me to change who I am just so I can be married – 'wear make-up, change your hair, change your dress' – but I cannot always maintain all that just to attract someone who's drawn to what I'm not. It makes me feel inadequate and that being single is my fault."

Marriage ... when it comes

"It's horrid to see older single missionaries with no one to care for them according to how nature works. Husband and kids are there for married women but my biggest fear is facing a crisis or dying alone."

"I may appear independent and strong because I need that disposition to get things done. When I get married, I look forward to not needing to be this strong person who does the work of two people. I'm ready to stop fighting with the local mechanic when I take my motorbike for servicing. I look forward to coming home to someone who will share my burdens, ask questions, pray with me and encourage me."

"When we talk about worship, people often think about singing and praying. When single people choose, for the sake of God's Kingdom, to remain in a place where singleness is hard, that's worship too. Jesus is worthy of everything, including the hardships of my singleness. I wouldn't choose this for myself, but for his glory, I will stay – no matter the cost."

Rotondwa wants the African Church to know that single missionaries exist. "Care for us as you would your own daughters. It's un-African to leave one of our own out alone and in the cold."



Rotondwa ministers to women and children in Asia

Representative photo by Mehmet Turgut Kirkgoz

HOW TO THRIVE AS A SINGLE MISSIONARY

BY JOAN WANJIRU MWANGI

Life as a single African woman in the mission field is not for the faint-hearted. If I had been told the realities, perhaps I would have hesitated to obey the call. The list is endless – being called to take up tasks during rest days or late hours because you're single, not considered in conversations because you don't bear the title of "Mrs.", asked to involuntarily babysit because it's assumed you have no tasks at home, advised to consider getting a baby since you will need help in old age, etc. As I think about my mission field experience, here are the things that I have found to be helpful.

Clarity of calling

Over the years, my missionary call has become clearer, helping me to serve with contentment regardless of the challenges. One of my affirming verses has been Jeremiah 1:5; "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Peace with my singleness

I would like to have been married "yesterday" but God makes everything beautiful in his time (Eccl. 3:11). Resting in God's timeline keeps me at peace even when careless words are thrown at me or I'm questioned about being unmarried. I now answer that in God's timing it will happen.

Seeking help

I have learned to seek professional help especially when issues disturb my mental and emotional health. This didn't happen automatically, but as age caught up and my circle of available friends changed, I realized that if I'm to thrive, professional help is necessary. I'm grateful for an understanding therapist who has also been a missionary before and now points me to Christ always.

Sharing community

My personality and living outside my home country for a long time tend

to make me do things independently. But in obedience to God's command in Hebrews 10:24-25, I recognize the importance of balancing my independence with the need for fellowship. Apart from Sunday services, I plug into communities of prayer and the Word regularly which serve as a strategic support system.

Routines and habits

Previously, I had a group of friends I did activities with but we split and each went her way. It was really difficult for me to do alone what we did together. But I said to myself: "I have to learn to live." I once paid for a day's trip to a National Park and went for a buffet meal although I struggled to get out of the house initially. I try not to postpone anything I would like to do even if I have to do it alone. Sunday afternoons tend to be loneliest for singles. To counter that, I plan ahead what to do – binge read, watch movies or visit people. Although I'm stationed in one area, I make the effort to travel outside the city just to experience some freshness. I love being caged in a public bus for

hours to process the unprocessed and to experience compulsory rest.

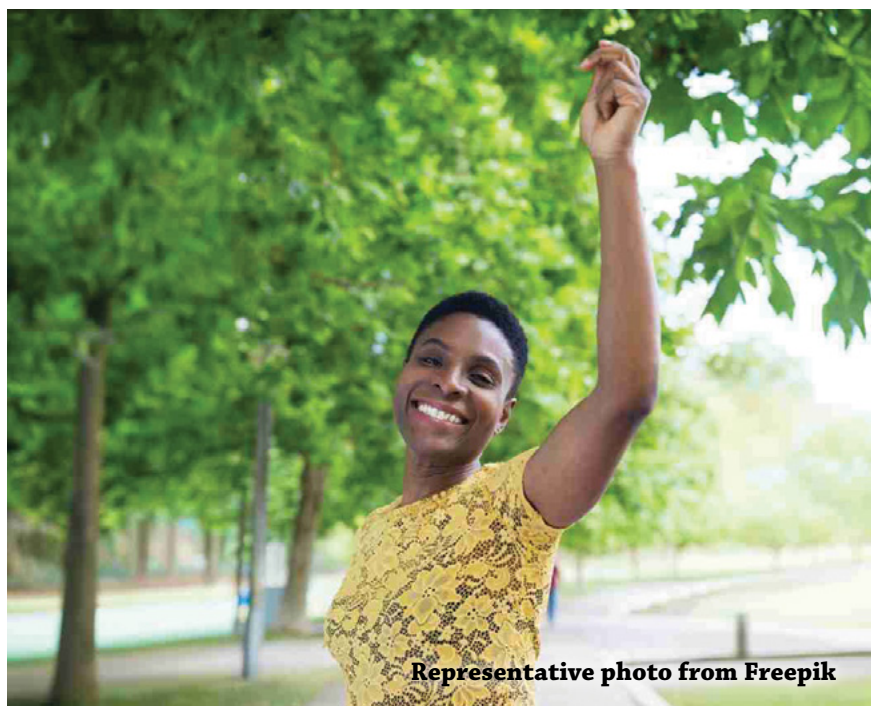
Assertiveness

In the past, I struggled to say "no" but now, I've learned to say, "I'm sorry I can't make it" without appearing rude. One of my pastors taught me a statement I jokingly use; "Work will not be eaten by rats. You will still find it tomorrow." In my former organization, I asked to be included as a Bible expositor during a conference. I'm grateful I took up the challenge as it paved the way for more ladies to take up similar responsibilities.

A plea

As the number of single women missionaries increases, let us serve as a safe haven where single people feel comfortable to run to anytime without being judged or given unsolicited advice. Let us support with prayer, counsel, space and comfort, as in this world, there will be many tribulations but we must be of good cheer.

Joan is a Kenyan missionary who has served in Tanzania for 14 years.



Representative photo from Freepik

CARE FOR SINGLE MISSIONARIES

BY MONICA MIAKO, FOUNDER, GREAT COMMISSION SUPPORT

Single missionaries have made great contributions to the spread of the gospel throughout the years. From Jesus and the Apostle Paul to the likes of Mary Slessor, Gladys Aylward and many more in our day, the cause of God's glory among the nations has significantly been advanced through the ministry of single people. With this in mind, we ought to consider how to care for singles today, which is really an integration of the Great Commandment – love.

There are various categories of singles; namely, the never or not-yet-married, the divorced, separated, widowed or single parent, who could either be male or female. This becomes helpful for the sending agency or church to establish the right approach to care for each group and their unique needs. Many privileges come with serving as a single missionary, including devotion to the Lord, freedom and flexibility, and being involved in his service fully without distractions.

The need for care

Care for singles in most African sending churches and agencies is in its initial developmental stages. The married seem to get more recognition and respect, opportunities to serve and conferences, leaving singles feeling left out. Consequently, some lies that single people go with to the field have been perpetuated by our cultures and the Church – that singlehood is a form of 'disability' or 'incompleteness'. Missionary life may look like a good place to get away from all that pressure but unfortunately, adjusting to a new environment only reveals what lies underneath the surface.

Various challenges are unique to singles in the mission field including loneliness, travelling and living alone, unmet expectations, and real or imagined fears. Where there is communal living, singles are expected to give up choice housing and take on more responsibilities since they do not have kids. In seeking to foster relationships, conflicts and suspicions may arise with the married. There's also the expectation to live meagrely with budgeted financial



Representative photo by senivpetro, Freepik

support, misunderstanding from extended family, and the dread of entering retirement alone. Such are real issues facing singles. The Word of God can be a source of solace and strength to thrive. Weeding out false beliefs with God's truth and being grounded in the Father's love will liberate singles for a life of joy and contentment.

Care in practice

The challenges singles face should never outweigh the blessings of serving God in the field. In providing care, singles should be affirmed and helped to appreciate the season they are in and to thrive in it. Self-care practices that benefit both the mental and physical wellbeing of singles are encouraged. One should continue to grow and develop or learn new skills and hobbies at a personal level which will also be useful

for the future when one leaves the field.

Visiting singles in the field to fellowship, listen, and debrief them, and helping them plan for their breaks and where to stay are key ways of caring for single missionaries. Encourage them to have support groups to share experiences, inspiration and to stay motivated and focused. This develops into a community for accountability and prayer support. Offer specialized training, coaching, and support to help them navigate their unique challenges and avoid burdening them with unrealistic expectations and pressures. Care providers should act as advocates for singles within their organizations and churches.

Indeed, the gift of singleness as Apostle Paul calls it, if properly stewarded, has the potential to tremendously draw us nearer to the completion of the Great Commission.

GO! NEWS OF AFRICA'S MOBILIZING CHURCH

BOOK REVIEW: HAPPILY WHENEVER AFTER BY BOOKIE ADEKANYE

Bookie's book is dedicated to: "All the beautiful daughters of God around the world who continue to hold firm to their identity in Christ, undefined and undeterred by society's labels, stigmas, limitations, and stereotypes. You are God's rising star. His glorious light will shine through you."

For a book that addresses the sensitive and sometimes heavy topic of singleness for Christian women whose "elusive Prince Charming is making them wait for ever", it is anything but a depressing read. Bookie, a Christian single woman in her 40s,

shares her insights and experiences with humour without trivializing their seriousness. She engages the topic with an understanding of the African

context and under chapter headings such as "Why am I still Single?", "Singleness and Wholeness", "Sexual Purity – A Myth?", "Money Matters", "Singlehood and Motherhood?" among others.

Throughout the book, I came to develop a deep respect for Bookie's commitment to honouring God's Word and her encouragement to other single

women to do the same in the face of struggles and temptations to conform to the "pattern of this world".

Each chapter ends with a section for reflection and exercises, and a take-away Bible verse.

An added reading joy was the many stories she shared of her own and other people's real-life experiences which will comfort any single woman with the knowledge that "I am not alone" and inspire confidence, contentment and hope in the face of a difficult situation. As three reviewers stated on the back cover, they found *Happily Whenever After* to be "witty, original and authentic", one that will "heal many hearts" and "truly one of the best books on singleness I have read." I'm certain you'll enjoy it too! It is available here: <https://bit.ly/3SiqcGO>.

– Review by Kate Azumah



ONEWAY AFRICA PRAYERCAST VIRTUAL LAUNCH

On April 1, 2025, the African Church stepped into a historic moment of mission mobilization with the virtual launch of Prayercast Africa – an intercessory prayer resource developed by OneWay Africa. Designed to awaken and engage the Church in prayer for the unreached, the launch marked the beginning of a bold vision to mobilize at least 7 million believers – one per cent of Africa's over 700 million Christians – for consistent, informed and unified prayer.

The event drew over 160 participants including leaders of denominations, churches, and mission movements. Goodwill messages from zonal representatives reinforced the shared burden and ownership of this continental prayer assignment.

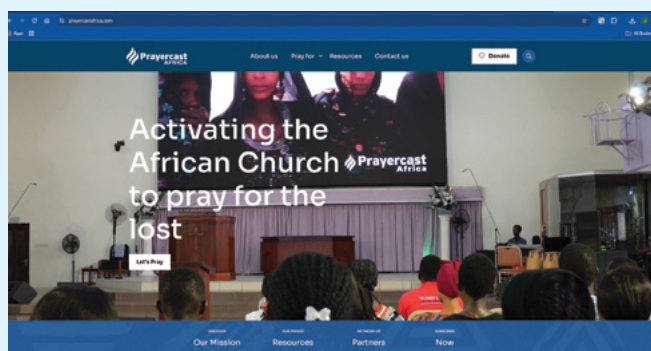
Dr. Stephen Mbongo (Kenya) and Rev. Samuel Olatunbi (Nigeria) affirmed Africa's emerging role as a sending and praying continent positioned to carry the gospel to the remaining unreached.

Central to the launch was the unveiling of the Prayercast Africa video library, a growing collection of 5-minute prayer videos that provide ground-level insight into the

realities of nations and unreached people groups. Produced by Reach People Media, the media arm of OneWay Africa, these videos are freely available to stream and download at www.prayercastafrica.com.

Rev. Ray Mensah, Executive Director of OneWay Africa, urged all participants to use and share the Prayercast Africa videos to awaken intercession across the Body of Christ.

– Report by Jacob Nyador



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WORKING **WHILE WAITING**

BY JACOB MUGENDI

In 2018, Kenyan lady Noreen Kombo embarked on a faith trip to Ghana for a missions training with OneWay Africa and came back changed. Previously, she had participated in various ministry activities, but on this trip, her calling to missions was confirmed by Dr. Ray Mensah, who remains her key mentor. That was another milestone in her long journey of learning, trusting, and serving God while waiting. Noreen shares that though it has never been easy, she has always seen the Lord at work, answering her prayers and giving her resilience and contentment.

Returning to Kenya with a burning desire for missions, Noreen realized that her church, and most local churches, had no structures for her to serve as a missionary. However, this did not stop her. Currently, she is an associate pastor at Nairobi Chapel Syokimau, volunteers as a Bible teacher and missions team leader with Wonder Workers ministry and works with the Lausanne Movement to support herself while she waits to join YWAM in Herrnhut, Germany.

Single and serving

Currently approaching mid-40s, Noreen is single – a status she is very content with – but this was not always so. Initially, she was under immense pressure from church, family and society to marry in her late 20s and early 30s. This troubled her to the point of depression. Today, she has learned to wait upon the Lord with joy. “Whether I have a husband and children or not, the most important part of my life is being faithful in my service and this is what will last for eternity. My focus is to finish well and to hear God say ‘well done my good and faithful servant’.”

Support-raising

Every missionary has to climb this mountain, but for Noreen, being single added to the challenge. It took longer to build trust as some pastors did not fully trust single people. The need is also not very obvious because some people think that without a family, you don’t need much support. Faced with



these challenges, Noreen equipped herself by doing trainings with different organizations. These were however inadequate. Often, it was difficult to apply in her Kenyan context a training designed from a Western perspective.

A game-changer has been meeting a coach during a YWAM training who offered to walk with her in support-raising. She is already getting long-term commitments and pledges from partners and this has encouraged her to do more. She understands that support-raising is a long-term activity and the partners you meet today may not support immediately.

How then does she reconcile the slow pace of support-raising and the urgent need for resources to continue serving? “Tent-making.” Noreen realized that she could supplement her support by using her skills. As a gifted administrator and with the flexibility of remote work, she was contracted to work with a Discipleship Making Movement in Thailand and after two years, transitioned to work with the Lausanne Movement as a virtual assistant. This eased the financial strain that also came with supporting her immediate family.

Stewardship

A highlight of her missionary calling is the excitement of sharing the vision to get funding for God’s work. However, she says that many people may not understand what being “called” means. You need to make it clear. Write the vision and prepare audio-visual materials for communicating it to churches and potential supporters.

A weaknesses she sees with missionaries is inadequate training on how to account for the support received. In many cases, missionaries send a general newsletter that may not resonate with everyone. Some missionaries overlook support from local people who give little and instead, prefer foreigners who can give large gifts. To overcome this, missionaries need to build lasting relationships with the local church by making the church aware of what they do. This should not be once a year or only when the missionary needs money. Someone may not give money, but they will pray for you. That also matters.

Please pray that Noreen will continue to follow God’s guidance, remain focused in her calling and finish well.



PEOPLE GROUP:

GARRE OF SOMALIA, KENYA AND ETHIOPIA

The Garre people trace their heritage through their forefather Samaale, who is considered to be the ancestor of most of the pastoralist clans in northern Somalia. Further back, they are descended from a cousin of the prophet Muhammed. The history of the Garre includes participation in Somali dynasties and kingdoms, which contributes to their belief that to be Muslim and Garre are inseparable identities, and, when asked, they state that they have “always been” Muslim.

The Garre are widely dispersed around the Horn of Africa, with three main linguistic groups. Those along the Kenya-Ethiopia border speak the Oromo language. Those in southern Ethiopia speak a dialect of Garre, while the “original bearers” of the language are settled in South Central Somalia. Some Garre are located on islands off the southern coast of Somalia as well. In north-eastern Kenya, the history of the Garre is a complicated one, with clan conflicts and immigration issues

woven into this complex region of tribes.

Most Garre are nomadic, herding camels, goats and sheep. They live in transportable shelters made of bent young tree branches covered in animal skins or woven mats, and several related families travel together and stay in circular groupings to keep their animals safe at night. They move around based on the availability of grazing land and water, though recent years of drought have made life hard for them.

The Kenyan government has been attempting to force settlement, but most Garre are uninterested in changing their traditions. Some of them have established themselves in towns and permanent villages, and more youth are becoming settled, although this means they are coming under the influence of established Madrasas and imams. There have been efforts by Al-Shabaab to recruit in various areas where the Garre live.

AT A GLANCE

- Garre men can have up to four wives, but their divorce rate is high.
- In the past, their diet was almost exclusively dairy products, though that is changing.
- Among the Garre near Garissa, Kenya, some have become Christians.

PLEASE PRAY FOR

- Missionaries to reach out to the Garre, who are very difficult to reach not only spiritually, but geographically because of their nomadic lifestyles.
- Christians among the Garre to have a burden to reach their own people, and for God's protection for those Christians.
- Christ movements among the proudly Muslim Garre.

Sources: Wikipedia and Joshua Project.



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