

The Choice

The 40 day Pilgrimage From Clenched Fists To Open Hands



KIGUNDU NDWIGA

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to Open Hands*

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**Mystery
Books**

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For

Jean-Luc Lezeau:

My incisive, godly mentor in biblical stewardship, you
walk the talk!

In memory of the late Dr. Julius Muchee, my best friend
and confidant, the most selfless person I have ever met.

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Foreword

PASTOR KIGUNDU NDWIGA is the epitome of the saying ‘once a steward always a steward’. During his ten years at the helm of the Stewardship Department at East-Central Africa Division, he was the best regional Stewardship director we ever had! That ministry transformed him, just as it transformed me when we travelled, shared, prayed, and learned together as pilgrims; crisscrossing the countries that comprise East-Central Africa Division! Our mentor-mentee relationship was delightful, refreshing and inspiring!

In his introduction, Pr Kigundu speaks of 40 days of pilgrimage. It is not a coincidence that in the Bible 40 days is the time necessary to acquire a new habit! In his generosity, Kigundu has even added a tithe to the 40 days which become 44!

Therefore, you have an additional four days for devotionals.

The earliest pilgrimage in Europe dates back to the 9th Century, the famous ‘Route of Santiago de Compostela’, or The Way, supposedly where the Apostle James was enshrined in Northern Portugal.

When asked what it was like walking thousands of miles by themselves, pilgrims did not mention their back pains, the many blisters, deplorable accommodation, and shortage of water or any other hardships they had experienced along the way! What they remembered was the solitude, the ample time they had to reflect upon their situation in life: for young adults, it may be what their life goal might be while for the elderly what they had accomplished and if all that was worthwhile. Secondly, they mentioned the different encounters they had with fellow pilgrims, as they walked side by side, for days on end, with total strangers who very soon became friends, sharing the “raison d’etre” of the pilgrimage. In that encounter, the older persons shared from the treasury of their rich life experience while the young got the opportunity to enrich and broaden their minds from the knowledge of the

senior pilgrim they were walking with. In that pilgrimage, ‘iron sharpened iron.’

That pilgrimage was a bit like the experience Moses, Elijah and Jesus had when meeting and getting to know God for 40 days at a personal level.

This book, *The Choice*, will take you on the same journey: a 24/7 encounter with God which, by His grace, will change your heart, your purpose, your giving and the way you look at the world, as you develop and cultivate an eternal perspective whereby you look at this world and all of life through the lenses of eternity! May our Lord open your heart so that as you are influenced by His spirit, you may truly become eternally one of His!

Elder Jean-Luc Lezeau,
*Former Associate Stewardship Director,
General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists*

Introduction

FORTY DAYS IS significant in the Bible. Moses, on a 40-day pilgrimage into the depth of the Person of God, is transformed into a shining reflection of God. The depressed, defeated and suicidal Elijah's 40-day pilgrimage to the mountain of God transforms him into a fearless, invincible prophet who is later taken up to heaven. The 40-day fasting and praying pilgrimage of our Master to decipher and fathom God's agenda for His earthly mission empowered Christ to fulfil that agenda even when assailed by the greatest opposition from the devil and his demonic cohorts.

I believe that the giving of ourselves and all that we have for the glory of God—and like Paul be willing “to spend and be spent” for the establishment of His everlasting Kingdom—is the

greatest privilege and honour heaven has accorded man. It is this privilege that takes us on the greatest pilgrimage ever, that of becoming partners with God. As we go through this pilgrimage as partners with God, we are also transformed slowly but surely into the likeness of His Son. Walking on this path behoves us to make a daily choice. The small book you hold in your hand contains 40 days of little nuggets that I believe will start you on that life-long pilgrimage if you are a beginner, or empower you to continue if you are already walking on the pilgrimage of giving. Just read the nugget for the day and take time to meditate on it. Avoid speed reading! Resolve to commit yourself to this pilgrimage by making the choice at the end of each reading.

Ultimately, may God's grace work so deeply in us that our clenched, selfish fists may be transformed into open hands of generosity as we follow in the footsteps of our all-generous God, who emptied heaven of all so that He could give us Christ as our Saviour and Lord!

May we live with an eternal perspective and with total abandonment to the Saviour so that at the end of our earthly pilgrimage, we will all hear those grand and sweetest words that ever

fell on mortal ears: “Well done, good and faithful servant; enter the joy of your Lord!”

Day 1

In the Image of God

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Gen 1:26-27

THE CHERISHED WORSHIP song 'Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty ... God in Three Persons Blessed Trinity' touches a deep cord in our hearts. The very truth of the Triune God has a profound implication on our salvation; but most touching is the intimate interrelationship, interdependence and unity of purpose among the members of the Godhead. Such deep,

intimate interrelationship denotes the highest level of giving, a deferring to the Other!

This unity of purpose is plainly revealed in the plan of salvation.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.

John 3:16

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

John 14:9

But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:26

A focused unity of purpose, interdependence and interrelationship characterizes the Trinity. This is only possible because members of the Trinity are Other-centred. In other words, giving is the essence of the Godhead.

The Choice: I today choose to embrace the very spirit of giving that characterizes the Trinity.

Day 2

Hearing the Voice of a Giving God

He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

John 10:3-4

A ZIMBABWEAN SHEPHERD is herding his sheep when he hears a pitiful meowing sound coming from the bushes. He discovers a lonely, abandoned lion cub in the bushes. When evening comes, he takes the lion cub home. The lion grows up with the sheep and is socialized as one.

One day the young lion is drinking water with the sheep at a pool, when he hears the most dreadful roar coming from a ferocious beast

emerging from the deep forest. He runs for cover with the sheep to the sheep pen.

As he drinks water a few days later, he sees the ferocious beast in the water. He runs for his dear life, but is surprised the sheep don't follow. Puzzled, he checks out the beast in the water and realizes that it's his reflection. He hears a deafening roar from the ferocious beast coming from the forest. He looks at his reflection and then at the other beast and makes a connection. The beast comes near and roars, but when he tries, he bleats like a sheep seven times. At the eighth attempt he lets out a deafening roar. As he roars, he realizes he is not a sheep but a lion! When the other lion beckons, he follows. Deep calls out to deep!

The Choice: I choose to listen to the voice of the Great Shepherd and follow Him in the path of self-giving.

Day 3

Making God Smile

But Noah was a pleasure to the Lord. He was the only truly righteous man living on the earth at that time. He tried always to conduct his affairs according to God's will.

Genesis 6:8-9 (TLB)

IN THE DAYS before the flood, God regretted why He had created mankind, a people who had become very “creative” in inventing new ways of committing evil. Nevertheless, there was Noah, who put a smile on God’s face. Through him, God started the human race all over again.

There are five acts of worship in the life of Noah that made God smile:

1. Noah loved God more than anything else. *Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.* Genesis 6:9
2. Noah trusted God completely. *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.* Hebrews 11:7
3. Noah obeyed God wholeheartedly. *Noah did everything just as God commanded him.* Genesis 6:22
4. Noah praised and thanked God continually. *Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.* Genesis 8:20
5. Noah used his abilities to please God. *Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.'* Genesis 9:1

The Choice: In a materialistic world where Mammon is worshipped by many, I choose to bring a smile to God's face as I worship Him with my giving.

Day 4

Kingdom Giving

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

Act 2: 44-45

THE CHILDREN OF Israel knew something significant was going to happen when Moses came from Mt. Sinai with a face shining with the glory of God. The words of Exodus 25:8, “*Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them,*” were life- changing. The Almighty God was going to come and live with them. That gripping vision was as exciting as it was scary. When it was time to give for the sanctuary, the response was overwhelming.

Routine needs to evoke insignificant generosity, but great visions evoke significant generosity. In his powerful book, *Courageous Leadership*, Bill Hybels asserts:

People will not give generously unless they know that their hard-earned money will be used to fund authentic ministry that impacts real people. People do not give to organizations or to other people; they give to visions, generally, the grander the vision, the greater the giving! (p.113)

... so when you are raising resources for the church... cast exciting, stretching, God-honoring visions. Paint brilliant pictures in people's minds, then pray like crazy and be prepared because people will give more than you think. (p.115)

The Choice: Grippled by the urgency of the vision of the imminent establishment of the coming kingdom, I choose to become a Kingdom Giver.

Day 5

Calvary Giving

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

John 12:24

BECAUSE GOD IS love, He wanted a family to share all He has. So He created Adam and Eve in His Image as seeds to reproduce and build His family. Unfortunately, Satan messed up that plan.

God's plans are never thwarted. He put plan B in motion to accomplish this purpose. He had a Seed—His only Son Jesus Christ. He had a choice—He could have kept His only unique Son by His side. Had He done so, though, He would have remained with that one Son. But no, God

decided to give His one Son as a seed to fall into the ground and die on the cross.

The good news is that because Jesus, like a kernel of wheat, fell into the ground and died, He produced many seeds. Before the cross, Jesus was referred to as the only Son, but after the cross He became the First-born. That's why He told Mary to tell the disciples after His resurrection that, "I am going to My Father and your Father."

The Choice: Realizing that all that I am and have are seeds and that if I try to preserve myself I will lose it all, I am choosing to follow Christ and cast my seeds to the ground today by embracing Calvary giving.

Day 6

Giving for My Family

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Eph 2:19-20

WE WERE FORMED for God's family. The plan of salvation is all about God building a family that will love, honour and reign with Him forever. When we accept Jesus as the Saviour, God becomes our Father, we become His children and the other believers become our brothers and sisters. The church becomes our spiritual family. The truth is that our spiritual family is even more important than our physical family because it will last forever!

Being included in God's family is the highest honour and the greatest privilege that we can ever receive. Whenever we feel insignificant, despised or self-doubting, we need to remind ourselves to whom we belong—the family of God, the church. This comforting truth carries with it a serious obligation. In our physical earthly families, each member of the family has certain obligations and responsibilities that contribute to the upkeep of the family. Consequently, we also have the serious obligation of ensuring that we have done our level best to contribute to the welfare of our spiritual family—the church.

The Choice: Rejoicing over my new identity in Christ and my new family—the church—I choose to commit myself and my resources to the welfare of my new family!

Day 7

Giving: My Expression of Love

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

IN HIS RIVETING sermon, the preacher emphasized that salvation is a loving initiative from God, extended towards a hostile sinful world. He went to great lengths in explaining what Agape love was—an unchanging, unconditional, unearned and undeserved love that was extended to us while we were still enemies, sinful and ungodly. He contrasted Agape love to conditional Eros and Philo. He finished by expounding on the greatest proof of that love on the part of God as highlighted in Romans 8:32:

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all... how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

For the afternoon program, the preacher declared he was going to preach from between the lines of John 3:16! He said, “For the people so loved God, that they gave_____.” He challenged us to fill in the blanks.

We love because He first loved. Love awakens love. We give because He first gave. Generous giving evokes the cord of giving in our hearts.

The Choice: Contemplating on God’s greatest gift to mankind—Jesus Christ—while acknowledging humbly that by giving us Jesus, God emptied “His pockets,” I choose to give_____ as a responding echo of my expression of love to my loving God and Saviour.

Day 8

The Ever Giving Fountain

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.'

John 7:37-38

ACCORDING TO THE philosopher, Blaise Pascal, man was created with a God-shaped vacuum that can only be filled by God Himself. It's only Jesus who can quench the deepest thirst of the human soul.

No water from any other fountain can quench it. Jeremiah is quite emphatic when he declares in Jeremiah 2:13 that:

For my people have done two evil things: They have forsaken me, the Fountain of Life-giving Water; and they have built for themselves broken cisterns that can't hold water! (TLB)

Jesus underscored the same truth when talking to the Samaritan woman in John 4:13-14.

Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Drinking deeply of the water of life brings Jesus, the fountain of living water, into our lives. Jesus, the flowing fountain, cannot be confined within. That water will look for avenues to flow out and bring life to others.

The Choice: Drinking deeply from the well of salvation, I resolve that my giving will be an outflow of the overflow of the inflow of the Christ-life within my soul.

Day 9

Living for His Glory

Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.

Matthew 25:14

THE MASTER ENTRUSTED his servants with his property. Many times we seem to forget the undeniable fact that everything we are and possess is not really ours, but His. We belong totally to God, both through creation and redemption by the precious blood of His Son. All the profits from our labours belong to Him. Paradoxically, the capital is also His! Not only does 10% of our income belong to God, but also the 90%. He has a say over how the 90% is spent.

The talents are entrusted to servants. The Greek word for servants, *doulos*, can also be

translated as slaves. Slaves existed solely to do the will of their master. They carried out the instructions of the master to the letter, without questioning the wisdom of the master. We are slaves of righteousness after God has redeemed us from the slavery of sin, in Christ. Our sole reason for existence is to please our Heavenly Master without questioning His wisdom and instructions.

The Choice: Cognizant of the fact that I exist only for His glory, I resolve that the management of the resources and my giving will be an acknowledgement of His total (complete) ownership over me and all my possessions.

Day 10

Settling Accounts

After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

Matthew 25:19

DELAY! HOW WE hate it. How we become impatient and irritable with delays. Delay has a way of revealing what is really hidden within us. The parable of the 10 virgins reveals how we respond to delay. Delay has a way of making us careless and insensible to the demands of the Lord upon each of us.

Because of the delay, many of us have become like the wicked steward in Matthew 24:48-50:

But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins

to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on the day when he does not expect him and at an hour when he is not aware of.

Ready or not, our Master will come soon. When He comes He will inevitably settle our accounts with Him. At that time, we will find out whether being a faithful steward pays or not.

The Choice: Keeping in mind the words of Jesus in Revelation 22:12: *Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to every one according to what he has done,*” I choose to give generously, knowing my reward is sure.

About the Author

Dr. Kigundu Ndwiga, currently a chaplain at Kenyatta University, whose ministry for the last ten years has been to encourage people to excel in the grace of giving, is a former Stewardship Director of East-Central Africa Division. He served as pastor of New Life SDA Church in Nairobi, Executive Secretary of Central Kenya Conference, and Communication Director of East African Union before his election to the Stewardship Department of what was then the Harare based Eastern Africa Division, in 2000. Kigundu, a specialist in Ministerial Leadership, is passionate about teaching Discipleship, Family Life, and Spiritual Leadership. He is married to his best friend and confidante, Mary. God has blessed them with twins—Wangari and Njuhi.

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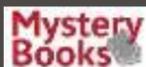
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The Choice is a Christian book that focuses on the challenges Christians go through in their attempt to live like Christ. Love for money, self-centredness, unfaithfulness, idolatry and increased appetite for worldly pleasures are some of the issues discussed fully in this book. The author unfolds 44 nuggets for 44 days that will enable the reader to conquer the aforementioned challenges. He welcomes you to take a 44-day pilgrimage journey to heaven.



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