

DEATH TO F.O.M.O

Ps. Carol Akinu – 2 April 2017

“God’s Story” Series

Sermon Notes



This morning we start a new sermon series “God’s story” – how God’s story changes me. I am privileged but at the same time intimidated to start us off because I believe my dirty linen has been aired countless times in Nairobi, Kigali and especially here in Kampala. In fact looking at the personalities in the bible whose stories were transformed by God, the creative team was convinced that I was a Rahab – I was like, bambi. But, I am not far off because I identify with the Samaritan woman at the well; quite close right? Seeing that y’all know my story already, I need us to pray so that God would speak regardless of how inadequate I feel to be the one sharing this morning.

Question: What is your reaction every time you log into social media? Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, flickr etc?

Often times when I go through social media, fb, twitter, instagram etc, I realise that I am bipolar. Within 1 minute I laugh, I cry, I become envious, jealous, depressed and sad – all in 1 minute. Anyone like me? Yeah, we all have a tendency towards being bipolar. It seems people are having so much fun and my own life is uninteresting.

There was a time, crowds were my thing. I told you I identify with the woman at the well. I was a serial dater, as in, I can’t remember a time in my life that I was really single. I loved parties, get-togethers, random hangout regardless of the day, drinking the night away often blacking-out in the process. I was the life of any party, dancing, mixing cocktails – my family was even looking into making money by patenting one of my cocktail recipes they lovingly named the ‘snake-bite’. If anyone wanted to throw a party, I was a critical part of that planning often becoming an MC, a wedding planner, etc at short notice. At the office, though I was in sales, whenever there was an office do, the Director called me in instead of the HR. Basically, I was a party animal.

So, how did I meet Christ while living this kind of lifestyle? In my serial dating world, God pulled a fast one on me. I was in a serious relationship with a white man – serious because I did visit his family. But I guess visiting his home opened my eyes to the fact that our cultures were conflicting and though I loved the life he gave me, my heart wasn’t at peace. So, when a Ugandan reached out to me, I decided this is the one to settle down with and I dated him without breaking it off with the white guy! Samaritan woman indeed! After about a year, I decided to date the Ugandan exclusively. The twist is that after about 2 years of playing faithful girlfriend, I am confronted with pledge cards for an introduction with his name but the other name wasn’t mine! I thought it was a joke he was playing until it dawned on me, that I wasn’t the only one cheating, he was dating two girls at the same time! This time I had been played at my own game and someone else won!

To cut the long story short, my reaction took 2 days! On the 3rd day I went beserk; my heart was breaking in several pieces and I didn’t know how to deal. Even my breathing overwhelmed me. I realised that I was going to run out of breath and die; or even commit suicide or something drastic that would take my life. I was completely lost and looking towards the end of my life here on earth. A voice inside me confirmed that I’d actually die shortly but what would keep me alive was Jesus.

Without a shadow of a doubt, I knew that the next Sunday I was going to enter a 'Saved' church and receive Christ. I was born and raised Catholic, not a practising one. So, the first advise I received from my ex-boyfriend's mum (see he'd introduced me to his family about a month prior to bringing a new girl, he'd told everyone that we'd broken up!); she advised me to go to a Catholic charismatic Priest to pray for me to get her son back.

Who knows that when you come into close contact with God's Spirit, you'll know it and no one can convince you otherwise. I was convicted that it was only Christ I needed and I went ahead and received salvation the following Sunday.

It took me a while to tell my friends. I knew they'd laugh at me – I was one to mock the believers. I mean I seemed to have a full life, a loving and caring boyfriend, a job that gave me a status and fun-loving friends. So, why was I joining the boring Christians who didn't seem to have control of their lives and had no ambition whatsoever – they seemed happy to live boring mediocre lives, totally out of this world!

I cut off any interactions with my former crowd for a while – almost a month before they organised a drink-up and ordered me to show up. I was there drinking my soda and trying my best to explain why I'd chosen this life.

This morning the title of my sermon is Death to FOMO.

I had tried to find my bearings. I joined a church small group hoping to learn what it meant to be born again, faithfully carrying my Bible even when I didn't know where what was! My opinions of 'Balokole' were confirmed in this small group; I was bored to death and I was judged for not knowing how to read the bible and I felt embarrassed each time I didn't know anything and yet the children in the group knew it. I told God, though I loved walking with him, there was no way I'd last with this thing, let alone invite my friends to join me. I remember crying out to Him as I walked back home and asked Him to teach me Himself what it meant to be born again! A week later, I was invited to Mizizi!

Who knows that there are some selfish prayers that we pray and yet God orchestrated them. It reminds me of Samson and his desire for the Philistine woman whom his parents didn't want and yet, that's what God wanted so that God would strike the Philistines through Samson! We think we're praying for ourselves, yet God through His Spirit guides our desires!

God connected me with a group of friends through Mizizi, in each class I was in awe how much there was to learn. I started serving in the worship team, set up team, ushering whenever there was a need, facilitating Mizizi etc. People have told me that I am an extremist – I was an extremist before salvation and now I am an extremist with salvation. BUT, if you know the bondage and have experienced the schemes of the devil, there's no grey area. You're either in bed with him or totally out! I was there, done that and gotten a t. shirt! I was liberated from my bondage and I am not going back!

I grew so much that as I was being commissioned to go for internship Pastor Njoroge commented that the spirit of acceleration was on me.

After a year in salvation, I resigned my job with Victoria Motors and went to Nairobi. While there, God worked in me, painfully peeling away piece by piece of what I'd piled up along the years of dancing with the devil. Before the internship ended, I knew I'd not be returning to my job but I

also didn't know what I was going to do. I was invited back for the Pastoral training but I'd struggled so much and I didn't want to go back – the pain of ministry was too much to handle. I had started a preschool before internship and I'd decided I'd grow it to its full potential than return to full time ministry but a week after I was supposed to be in Nairobi, God asked me one question; "what would happen if I took away the school?" I never got to answer that question. I'd never packed faster for any journey like that night. The next evening I was enroute Nairobi.

And a week later, I was sent to Kigali to start Mizizi and God grew that community so fast that within 6 months there were 5 LGs ready to start Sunday worship services. Each person registered into a ministry to serve! I left 8 months after internship with a fully functional church plant!

You may ask how, within a year, I took on full-time ministry, resigning my job and going to Nairobi for the training; I remember I was still such a novice regarding things Christian and I told God as I went for the interviews that He'd make me fall flat on my face so that I'd never ever listen to anyone who mentions to me full time ministry. Which kind of ministry leader was I going to make when I didn't even have any scriptures by my fingertips? After the interviews, we were told that we'd get the results in 2 weeks but that very afternoon I was told I was in – but GOD.

See, something changed one night during the time of my conversion. I had a terrible nightmare in which I was being chased by demons in a dark tunnel – I could see a light at the end of the tunnel but the demons were on my heels. I woke up in a sweat, scared and totally spooked out! My first thought was that my enemies were bewitching me and therefore this was the manifestation of the witchcraft! I didn't know how to pray but flipped through my bible till I stopped on a random page. As I read, nothing made sense and I didn't find relief. But then a song came to me; all of us know that though we may have been unchurched, there are those days when you just wanted some uplifting music – when life is too much to handle, so you get a gospel CD. This was a song by Hillsong 'My heart will trust in You',

*I'll walk closer now on the higher way; Through the darkest night will you hold my hand;
Jesus guide my way; O you mourn with me and you dance with me; For my heart of hearts
is bound to you. Though I walk through valleys low, I'll fear no evil, By the waters still my
soul, My heart will trust in You. O You counsel me and You comfort me; When I cannot see,
You light my path*

But I didn't know the words – only the title and the tune. That tune calmed me. The next morning I googled the song and it was based on Psalm 23:

*1The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. 2He makes me lie down in green pastures, he
leads me beside quiet waters, 3he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake. 4Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for
you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5You prepare a table before
me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely
your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house
of the LORD forever.*

God was assuring me that He'd take care of me. I didn't even know that I was actually surrendering my life and control to God by praying this Psalm.

We may think we've arrived and are too smart but at the end of the day, we are just sheep, the sheep of His pasture who need to be guided. The only way my story and God's story became our story is when I totally surrendered and let Him guide me.

I loved my friends and family, but they were my biggest hindrance to my growth. I had to die to FOMO and making the decision to align myself to God's will. And so, though I loved my friends, in the 2 years of full time church ministry, God changed my tastes drastically;

1. During the 1 year of salvation, a gentleman came around and yes, if it was before my salvation, he was ideal! In fact I did entertain him for about 10 months until it became apparent that I had to choose between him and God because he was against me joining full time ministry. I sacrificed him. I was convicted that since serial dating had landed me where I was, I was to be single for at least 2 years. But, God reminded me of the many dates I'd gone through and caused me to detest the random coffees.
2. Then there was my dressing. In Kigali one of my friends wondered if life had become so bad financially that I'd decided to join church ministry and cut down on my budget. She couldn't relate with my long skirts, long sleeved blouses and no makeup! But it was the happiest I had ever been.
3. One time at a celebration I decided to have a glass of red wine. The next morning I woke up with one of the most horrible hangovers I'd ever experienced in my life! Now I fear any alcoholic drink.

Suffice it to say, everything I knew and did, God gave me a 180 degrees to the opposite direction. It was hard to recognise the person I'd become and my old friends and family couldn't relate anymore so they simply avoided me. It was okay with me because I couldn't relate with them quite in the same way as before either.

God just buried FOMO for me. I didn't care what anyone thought or spoke about me – and there were many voices.

I'll tell you one thing, for God to do a great work in you, you'll need to stop being concerned about other people's opinions. Their opinions and keeping up with the Jones' will not take you anywhere, but far, very far from God and Your purpose.

Unfortunately, we want the blessings without going through what it takes. We want the triumph without going through the trial and the testing. You will only know the details of something if you go through it. We just want to pop into church on Sunday and miss out on God's character throughout the week but hope to grow close to God. Spiritual growth doesn't come cheap; it comes at a price!

Reading the bible has never been easier. The 1-year bible has daily readings that take about 10 minutes a day to read; this is out of 24 hours/1440 minutes a day – only 10 minutes. And then, there's the audio version that you can listen to as you go to work. But, we would rather be a part of everything happening around us, be part of a crowd and return again on Sunday for the Pastor to give an inspiring Word for the week! Nedda, only God can grow You for He says that on the last days He'll teach His people Himself and so, every waking moment, he wants to share with you.

In Genesis 15, God made a covenant with Abraham. The Word of the LORD came to him in a vision. God showed him his legacy, a father to nations and yet he was childless! Abraham believed the LORD and it was credited to Him as righteousness. My friend, how will you ever hear from God if you're always found running with the crowds, pleasing man and not sitting and listening to God's direction and vision for your life?

Maybe God is saying, he/she isn't the one? That, that relationship doesn't glorify Him. There's no grey area with God – no shades of grey. Is it the TV program that's keeping you away from spending time with God? Maybe your dressing attracts too much unnecessary attention?

Besides your own transformation and assignment, there's a cherry on top. The bonus for me has been that my family is being transformed as well. My redemption was God's plan for my family's redemption – you see, I am the 2nd born in my family and to be honest, more of a mother to my siblings. While away from Christ, I did lead them far from God but as I serve God, I'll tell you that my family is drawing ever so close to God. Several have done Mizizi and many are giving their lives to Christ and I am grateful to God.

God has kept His part of the covenant as in Psalm 23– I have experienced the shadow of the valley of death; but because He's been with me, I have overcome every kind of evil. The fearless things I am able to do, it's because I trust that as He promised, He will always be with me even when I am stuck between a rock and a hard place. *[Kigali pictures]* In Kigali, ministry was hard and painful, I cried a lot; but seeing where that church is, witnessing the spiritual growth of the individuals, I am humbled! Till this moment, I can't explain exactly how a novice like me, fresh into salvation would plant a community and envision them to start a church! God has used me to do incredible things beyond my wildest dreams. And now embarking on Mavuno Kabalagala, I don't know where the resources will come from, but because He said go, I am like, "Let's do this!"

Let us look at the things that are unseen for they are eternal. Your friends, your family, your feelings, your job will not be here forever. Let's not focus on the now, being near-sighted, people pleasing etc. At the time of my break-up, I lost my balance and as I grasped at something, anything, Christ came in! And I am becoming the original each day. And through it, He's also writing my legacy because *when you surrender to God, He moves mountains through you!*

What is your story? Will you let Him write your story? For me, I knew that I was blind, but now I see; that I was on my way to the grave, but now I am alive. Just like the woman at the well; because I met Jesus, I'll keep calling others to Him.

How does God's story change your story? You may be held in addiction, gripped in fear, uncertain about your purpose, held in promiscuity, refusing to let go of the status your job has granted you; but remember God's grace is greater than any addiction, greater than any sin. The Spirit of God is able to change you forever. When you surrender fully, the Holy Spirit starts to make you hate the things you used to love because God redeems the things we love, for His glory.

Song: I will stand

Today declare Death to FOMO! Make a decision to walk with God, aligned to His Spirit. Give Him the rights to make necessary changes, even the painful ones. Surrender your life to God and He'll grow you. You are as close to God as you want to be because Psalm 145:18 says that the LORD is near to all who call on Him, in truth.

Ministry time:

- Salvation –
- Rededication through Psalm 23

This week make a conscious decision to spend more time with God, praying, reading the bible and just listening to Him in silence. Retreat if you can.