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Depending Upon Elijah

by David Niyonzima

In *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers writes: "It is not wrong to depend upon Elijah as long as God gives him to you, but remember the time will come when he will have to go; when he stands no more to you as your guide and leader because God does not intend he should. You say – I cannot go without Elijah. God says you must." With this in mind, I want to share a lesson I learned recently and which perhaps can be an encouragement to others.



Elijah Calls Elisha by A.M. Willard

As part of my doctoral program, I had to send my passport and support documents to the Korean Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. From them, I would obtain a visa to travel to Seoul, Korea later. I went to one of the most reliable courier companies I knew. They agreed to take my documents, including the money for the visa application process.

A week later I got a phone call from the Embassy; they said that they had received all of my papers except the money and that I needed to send the money as soon as possible. I was shocked that the money had not reached them. I knew of no other way to send the money, since this courier company was the only one that had agreed to send the money along with the other documents. I had neither a friend in Dar es Salaam to rely on nor any other connection by which to send the missing funds.

Two weeks later at a hotel in Gitega, I heard two men speaking Kiswahili. Something jumped in me and quickened me to inquire from the reception if these men were from Tanzania. "Yes, they are," answered the receptionist. I quickly followed them into the restaurant and, with some hesitancy, introduced myself. "I need to apply for a visa at the Korean Embassy in Dar es Salaam. The documents reached them but the visa money was stolen somewhere on the way. Can you help me? I would like to give you the money for the visa, if it is possible for you to take it to the Embassy." They replied that they were from Dar es Salaam but that they were not returning for some time. "Oh, wait a minute," one of them, Macha, said with a sympathetic look on his face, "Our colleague in our Dar office can help." With this answer my heart filled with joy and hope, despite the fact that I was unsure whether I could trust these strangers, drinking their beer and having fun.

With a conviction that I cannot put in words, I took Macha's phone number and we both agreed that we could arrange a time to meet in Bujumbura for me to give him the money in Burundi Francs.

Sure enough, he was at the appointed place and time to receive the money in Burundi currency, which he agreed to convert into Tanzanian currency and send to his colleague in Dar es Salaam to deliver to the Korean Embassy.

A friend of mine, after hearing that I had just handed about \$120 to Macha for the visa fee, communication allowance for the person in Tanzania, bus fare and the cost to return the passport asked me how I knew the whole transaction would be done as agreed, seeing that this man was a complete stranger that I had never met before. I had no answer. But somehow I had peace about the whole thing.

Of course I had questions and concerns: What if he gets the money and simply disappears? Why did I not get his home address? I wonder why I did not have him sign a paper attesting how much money I gave him. And it could certainly not have hurt to have a person be with me as I handed those funds to him. Is this what faith is all about? Maybe this is an angel from God sent to help. Why not? Amazingly, despite the questions, I had no fears concerning what I had just done. It was as if a soft, whispering voice inside me assured: "Do not worry, everything will be fine." But how did I know it was God's voice instead of self-assurance, of careless and unjustified faith?

After another two weeks, on a Sunday morning, the passport was handed back to me. I picked it up in a Bujumbura suburb on my way to church from a young man whose telephone number Macha had given me the evening before. It had happened. I wish you could have seen the joy on my face. I was then able to talk eloquently about this in the Sunday worship at Kamenge Friends, praising God for a miracle and making comments about being led by God to even trust strangers!

The lesson learned is that even though we are used to depending on "reliables" – reliable services, reliable friends and relatives, reliable cars, reliable equipment and technologies – we need, as Christians, to pause and ask ourselves if these are the "Elijahs" that God gives us. As Oswald Chambers points out, Elijah was a great leader, a person whom Elisha needed to depend upon and a reliable one. But there was a time when Elisha, "saw him no more" (2 Kings 2:12). Elijah was gone.

Like the trusted courier in Bujumbura, people we have depended upon may disappoint us. Those we have trusted, those who loved us, helped us, supported us may be no more. What do we do? Even with those we consider reliable, we must hear the Lord's leading to trust them, and gain peace about their assistance. As Christians, we should NOT assume that because these "reliable" ones are also Christians like us, or our own children or parents, or "close" friends, we can depend on them without God's input in us. We must make sure these are in fact the Elijah's that God has given us to depend on. What if they are no more? Do we continue? Yes.

God may decide to give us strangers to depend on, those we have never met, to help us, to give us a word of encouragement or an inspiration in what we need. God might be telling us to do what other people might think is nonsense. We may be involved in something from God about which people ask us questions that we do not know how to answer. Do we have peace in our heart and is God leading us in what we are involved in? If God gives us an "Elijah," we are allowed to depend upon him/her, but Elijah's disappearance must not cause us to stop what we are doing; God will always be with us, even when the reliable ones surprise us with their unreliability.

David Niyonzima is the Executive Director of [Trauma Healing And Reconciliation Services \(THARS\) of Burundi](#) and the pastor of Kamenge Friends Church in Bujumbura, Burundi. He coordinates psychosocial activities and interventions in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, is a part-time instructor at Hope Africa University in Bujumbura and co-authored the book *Unlocking Horns: Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Burundi* with Lon Fendall. David is a 2009 Good News Associates grant recipient. He graduated from George Fox University with a Master's in Counseling in 2002.



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