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Transcript of an Audio-Recorded Conversation in Post-Conflict Rwanda

Participants:

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- **Munganyinka Daima Lydia** **Relation:** Congregant

Facilitator:

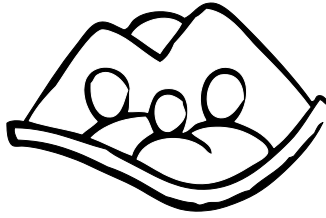
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(Pastor Ruhagarabahung Eric and Munganyinka Daima Lydia)

Story Number: SFH0082

Lydia: My name is Munganyinka Daima Lydia and I am here today with my pastor, Pastor Eric. He is here as my elder and my pastor. I have a question for him but before that I think he should also first introduce himself.

Pastor Eric: Thank you. I will also introduce myself. My name is Eric Ruhagarabahunga. I am a pastor in Zion Temple. I am here with a spiritual child of mine or a child I counsel and offer advice in the life she lives. It is for that reason we are here. Thank you.

Lydia: Pastor, there is a story I want to ask so you can share it with me -- especially because you are a good person, a parent who helps me a lot with my life and advises me. So today I want to ask you – you know what happened in Rwanda you know what happened. There was a genocide that hurt many, orphaned several. So I want to ask you, where were you during the genocide? That is the first question. The second is that your name has made me happy, Ruhagarabahunga – I would like to know what it means because it seems to have a lot of history. Also as a pastor, I would like you to tell me how teaching the good news can help children to rebuild the youth, their hearts and their future.

Pastor Eric: I think before I can answer you I heard that you asked me three different question. I would like you to repeat so that I can answer all of them in the order that you asked with clear definition.

Lydia: The first question I asked was – when there was genocide in Rwanda where were you? Did you flee the country and how did you survive it all? That is the first question.

Pastor Eric: Continue.

Lydia: I also asked you that your name Ruhagarabahunga is a good name that has caught my attention because it is a Rwandan name has deep meaning. I would like you to explain its

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meaning or why your parents named it to you.

Lydia: The third and most important question that I want to ask today is the role does evangelism in rebuilding or restoring Rwandans in post genocide. That's all, thank you very much.

Pastor Eric: Thank you to those here with in this place of discussion for the question am about to answer and the conversation am about to share with Lydia or Lydie. The first question she asked me – where was I during the genocide in Rwanda and the “a” or “b” to it was “what challenges did I face during the genocide?” In Rwanda, the bad history started when the country got what was then called independence. It looked as intangible or unreal because independence is supposed to bring about a better life among people but at the time it caused some people to be elevated while others were persecuted and some fled the country. It caused the country to have problems and when a country gets problems there is widespread suffering in different ways. When I first noticed that things were going wrong, or they were going wrong long before, I noticed that Rwandese were living a very scary and difficult life where some were being elevated while others were being lowered. This country went through some difficult times when the every province or prefecture, as it was called in the past, had its own identity – each prefecture had its own number plates and if you got pulled over with a plate from a different area, you would be held for a long time by the police or the gendarme as it was called back then. I want to show you how things slowly matured and escalated to lead to genocide in those hard times. There was something that had been called “iringaniza” (translated “equating” or a form of affirmative action that actually favored a majority ethnic group) in which children from Gisenyi and Ruhengeri would study while others did not. This was hard because one ethnic group would get access to education while the others would be limited. Eventually in 1990, the RPF launched the war to liberate the children of Rwanda. At the time I was in Rwanda in 1990. In my whole, I hated injustice. I watched Rwandans face injustice and go through many difficult situations. In 1990 they started arrest those who called “spies”, many of my family members disappeared in this process and were jailed. There then followed some kind of “theater”, (government troops) fired in Kigali and blamed it on the RPF or “inyenzi” as they were called back then and this led to the arrest of Tutsis. These arrests caused me a lot of sadness because in my heart I hate to see people suffering. After about three years, their emerged things called parties. At this point I made up my mind to join the army of the RPF. You asked me where I was during the genocide in Rwanda – I was in the army.

Lydia: Okay.

Pastor Eric: At the time I was in army in the Republican Guard Unit or what they called at the time PPU—I was one of those who protected the president at the time. (With regard to your question) on the problem I faced during the genocide, well I was busy helping to liberate the country. I have told you already I hate injustice and suffering so I joined the army in 1994, the genocide happened as I was in the army trying to liberate the country. The other thing that I can

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tell you is that in 1998 I continued to feel like there was a lot of suffering by orphans, widows, victims – because of this, God came to me and I became saved. In 1998 I felt that I should serve God instead of remaining in the army. Being in the army was not my strength but I undertook the duty God had given me and told Him while I do my job I will do His as well. In 2002 I left the army. At the time, I continued to work for God full time. God gave me the duty to be a man of prayer, praying for my country and other countries and the world. I went to Uganda where I had been invited to pray for families and their freedom in 2003. When I returned from Uganda, I also felt concerned about Burundi, which was going through war. Having been through it, I knew the hurt that war brings. One is able to share what they have experienced and one cannot share what they don't have – but they can share what they have. So after praying hard for my country, I went to Burundi and prayed for them as well. We called on God a lot and eventually the war started subsiding and eventually stopped altogether. Eventually we would even get invited by the Burundian government to go and spread the word of God. It did not stop at that, because of my concern for human suffering, I set off and went to Ethiopia once again to pray for the people there. That country is a country that God talked about a lot but it keeps meeting problems. After that I came back to Rwanda and continued to pray. When I come back I was sad about street children. Because we knew that our country had gone through the genocide we felt responsible. My advice to you is when a country has gone through war and suffering, you should not live a life that is independent. Instead you look to the future. The other thing is that the problems or challenges we face prepare us for who we become in the future not for the past. And when we go through those pictures, they allow us to go from one place to another. For this reason we should give up and live in the past. At this point we created a street children's choir called, "Amizero" who we helped. We were able to take them to America to show people that even though there was genocide in Rwanda, there is hope. We went to many different states from the North, South, East, West – there is no place we didn't get to. In 2008 we went to Canada, once again touring with these children who are survivors. The reason I tell you not to live in the past is that, for instance, the children we went with to America and Canada, all of them got sponsors to support them through their entire education from primary school to university – they were young children. What does this mean? People told these children things like, "What will happen after the genocide?" "Will you survive or will you continue to face these problems?" But these children today are in school, they have reached a critical point. So in my opinion, the challenges exist and nothing can stop them from existing but how do you defeat the challenges? Challenges are defeated by strengthening your heart and moving from one point to another. For me I defeated problems by struggling to uplift other people and having mercy and concern for the suffering of others. When you have concern for others, you get a solution, when you have commitment to others, you get solution. When you have commitment, you achieve big milestones. I survived all this through this as I have explained.

The second question you asked me was that, you think my name is really good Kinyarwanda name – what does it mean and why were you named this name? This name is Ruhagararabahunga means- Well, during the days of the kings, there was a war and some people fled but some remained steadfast. It symbolizes that even though many flee their country

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because of war, famine and poverty, some remain standing despite the challenges. When you meet challenges the solution is not to flee because when you flee you find the same challenges where you go. So we stayed and stood when others fled and this helped us to achieve something. That is what the name means. The other question you asked was, “why did your parents name you this? I was born in 1971 when Kayibanda was president. It was easy to find people in a certain ethnicity getting jobs. I am born in Kigali, no one knew my family or cared for us – but they called me that name because despite the problems, we stood firm so that we could continue into the future. In our ethnicity, the Tutsi, we did not have a way of survival even though my father had studied and graduated at a school in Burundi. At the time, it was only powerful people who could study abroad but because of his ethnicity he could not get much and so we lived a difficult life -- so that is how I was named that name because of the life we were going through at the time.

I should now answer the third questions -- the importance of evangelism in healing Rwandans after genocide. When we look at evangelism, we see of the missionaries coming to Rwanda to spread the good news but eventually we found that they had hidden motives. They spread the word of God but behind the scenes they had political intentions, they wanted to set up parties. They also told us that the kingdom of God belonged to the poor. This led us to believe that every person who believes in God needs to be poor. But the Bible says that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the thirsty and hungry – for the word of God and desire for Him – not physical hunger. The Bible also tells us that in Heaven, the roads are made of Gold – which means they work and they are wealthy. Just a road paved with gold? Drawing you back, I went to America and visited almost the whole country and found not a single dirt road. This is a symbol of a wealthy nation. This means that when they told us the kingdom of God belonged to the poor, we went on with that life but those who brought us that gospel when you go to their homes and countries, they have beach homes – they are extremely wealthy. They taught us what they did not practice. There is a famous saying that goes “Do as I say not as I do”. This a bad saying because for instance one could tell another to move to a grass thatched home but do they live in a grass thatched home? When you look at their house it is worth millions and billions but they are telling you to stay in a grass thatched house because it is good. This is the reason why evangelism was bad then.

So after the genocide, how is evangelism today? After the genocide we carried the message that there is still hope today. It is in the book of Job 14:7 – “At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail.” Today the gospel in Rwanda sends the message that there is life in the future. The message today encourages people to work so that they have brighter futures. Often many pastors and priests take us to prayer but don't remind us to work. I will give you an example. In the Bible I think verse 18 verses 13, it says -- Even Paul went to work – he would make tents and sell them so that the church would continue to survive. In times when there is doubt, the Bible reminds us to pray – pray but also work hard. This is the good gospel. The importance of the evangelism is to remind us to work because if you don't work, you don't have hope and you don't have a future. In the book of

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Proverbs 8, it says God gave to us before he even created the world. The Bible tells us the God was an expert work, we need expert workers. The importance of evangelism in healing Rwandan hearts is to encourage them to work. The gospel also teaches love. Love even those who have wronged you. In Mathew 4 I think, it says love your neighbor because when you love them you increase the wounds in hearts and causes what happened in the past to happen again. Secondly, it tells people who committed atrocities to repent in order to be forgiven. Bad gospel does not encourage people to seek forgiveness. Telling someone to forgive another when that person has not repented is useless. You need to confess and admit to your wrong. "I killed, I stole, I looted" because if you seek forgiveness from someone who wronged you, even God forgives you. I don't know if you understand what am saying properly – as a child I saw that one time you came to me when you were sad and needed Gods intervention. Your heart was wounded, you lost relatives, but today you are not the way you ought to have been. They say the kingdom gets stronger because it has many people or hands. Even the country's are like that. If you don't have people you are always down. I can give you an example of Canada; it is a country with a lot of land that remains unoccupied. They need people but they don't have people. Even us we lost people but what is the hope? It is that we shall meet them again. We need to get saved and receive King Jesus. Once you have received him, you get peace and tranquility in your heart. Then even things like reconciliation and love enable you to move from one point to another. That is the importance of evangelism. Evangelism helps us gain forgiveness, and when we have forgiveness we gain love in us. The Bible says that God is love. That is the importance of evangelism. It helps you to confess and it helps you to love. Also the importance of evangelism is that it pushes people to work. Am going to conclude but you can ask me some more questions. In conclusion, avoid to doing wrong because every time you do wrong, you find it ahead of you. Every time you do well, people will fight you and people will hate you—but always do good. In my entire life, there is not a single day when I put it in my mind to do wrong to anyone. Every time I see someone facing injustice, even if you are in Gacaca but you are being accused falsely, I will make an effort to ensure you get justice. Every time you seek justice for someone who is being persecuted, God will elevate you. Every time you help someone who is suffering, God will elevate – because you suffered to so it is normal for you to feel sad but you will get to a better place. There is nothing more I can tell you, in life if you face sadness that doesn't mean you should go to bed and sleep but you should instead wake up and make a step from one point to another. So the only advice I have for you is that always do good with in your life. In your life, always wish for other people to develop. Never be jealous and think of someone like, how did they achieve that? My advice to is don't get close to people gathered to gossip. In the Rwandan culture we were heroes but because but because of things changing today and mixing with the rest of the world you find that people are no longer heroes. Be a hero. A hero accepts to sacrifice their life to protect the life of others. My other advice to you is -- do not sleep. When people sleep they don't succeed. For example in Japan, they work 18 hours and they only have about 4 hours to do other things but today they have made a lot of progress. When you get to America, you find that they work in shifts. A normal person is expected to work 8 hours but for them to progress and have a brighter future, they will work 16 hours. As a child I pastor to, I request you not to sleep. Always fight for work because when you work you achieve.

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Lydia: The question I want to ask you—As is the culture of Rwanda, I have personal commitment to do my best for a brighter future and am glad that I got saved and accepted Jesus in my life. I see him often in my life as he guides me. One thing about our culture is that it says the heroes are men, I feel that I have heroism in me to achieve a lot if I work hard and I can help many from my heart but I ask myself can a girl be a hero in this country Rwanda?

Pastor Eric: Yes it is possible. You find that this is culture but culture goes with time. Today we see Rwandan girls as soldiers, some of them are officers and others are superior officers. This draws us back to a past saying that goes, “If a girl eats a goat, she grows a beard” – This was a lie and it was greed. A girl can be a hero. I can give you examples, there are many girls who defended Rwanda from way back, like Ndabarasa, Ndabaga. A good example is Ndabaga who attacked and defended. Another example, we see queens and princesses giving ideas which developed the country. God did not separate us so much. You have everything a boy has and so even a girl can be a hero. You have a brain. When you soldiers go for courses or training, girls know how to use guns, they used to know how to use bows. So this means women are heroes in fact when we look closely, it is possible for a girl to be a more heroic than a boy because a girl has a lot of love in her and she has a lot of love in her. This can cause her to be a hero. Love can make you be anything because the bible says, love is patient – and we know that females are more loving. Let us not dwell in the past. Let us build on our culture. Let’s take what is good and drop what is not right. Today when we look at many countries especially those in Asia, they all depend on culture. Culture can make someone you can never be. Many countries in the world that abandoned their culture are now falling. You have asked me that can a woman be a hero. Yes she can be a hero. Today leadership all over the world we see women becoming presidents, in Europe we find women prime ministers, this means that women and girls can be heroes. All I asked of you to become a hero is – do not sleep. Always desire to work, always desire to uplift other people and always have love. You will be a hero. Thank you.

Lydia: Thank you so much. I am thankful for the blessing of having you answer my questions.

Facilitator: Thank you very much pastor. You have had a discussion with Lydia about the many things you have been through good and bad. Among them, there are difficult things you had to do to build your future – and now you are living a life that you satisfied with ever since you got saved. Pastor my question is where do draw the strength to love and help others without putting yourself first? Do you have family members who have that same heroism? To this day there are very few people who have your ideals and have done what you have done. So where do you get this heroism from. When you look at Lydia, does she possess some of these qualities that will help her in her future?

Pastor Eric: Thank you. The question you have asked me is good. I get these attributes from my father. My father was the kind person who was there for everyone. In all my life there was never a time when there were fewer people than 20. My father got married to my mother 1968 and they had five children – I am the third. During the genocide we lost one child and four

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survived. In that whole time there was never a time when there were fewer than 20 people. To this day after my father died in the 1990s, I saw that my mother continued this. At any one time the fewest people at home were fifteen before and after the war. So loving people is something I got from my parents who welcomed and helped people. Sometimes my father would bring home abandoned children who would grow up with us and become part of our family and take up our ways. I remember one of the elder children we grew up with – we got into our twenties before we could know that my father had picked him off the road as an abandoned child. This was his character and my mother welcomed it. My father also used to bring home women who were abused by their husbands and help them. I learned this from my parents. The other question you asked me is that -- as Lydia's guide what similar attributes do I see in her? When I first met Lydia, she came to me when she needed refuge in Christ. I noticed she was a teary person. She cried over people who were sad and when she talks about them you see that she will always help them. After I prayed for her the tears reduced. So when I met her I saw these same attributes in her. She has pity for the sad, pity for the orphans and widows and she has pity for survivors of the genocide. Therefore I saw these attributes in her and that is the reason why I always prepare her and show her the way of God and how she can overcome challenges. I also tell her to live well with others.

Facilitator: Thank you very much Pastor. I will now get back to Lydia. The pastor has told us that he saw in you the abilities and potential to do the things he has done. Even though you are not able to do them as well as he did, he saw in you the ability to love others. Do you see this quality in you?

Lydia: I have the quality in me. I have it in plenty. I have the ability to love people and to love God because when I look into my past, I notice that God loves me because I have been blessed with people who care for me. For instance pastor here, you have heard the powerful words he has shared with me. These words are very powerful because even very few parents share them with their children. So you can tell that God loves me by looking at the people he has put in my life like this pastor. I also love people a lot.

I love my relatives and I love Rwandans very much. When I look at the many orphans in this country and the youth, I find that people don't even have someone to go to for advice. That is why very often I rush to meet elders so that I can get ideas from them so that I can use those ideas and thoughts for my future and to share with other youths who don't have people in their lives to advise them. For this reason therefore, I tell you that I love people and I love my country. Using the advise pastor has given me, I intend to do everything I can to build my country. The wise advise he has given me will help me to achieve great things through the love of God, I believe that He will use me for great things. I have faith and I tell you that I have that heroism in me. It may not be visible externally, but in my heart I have it and I am prepared to do heroic things if God continues to stand with me. Thank you.

Facilitator: Thank you very much.