



CHAPTER I

My Story – Formative Years

On 1 September 2021... “Sir, you can go; the case against you has been withdrawn. But one day you will stand before God and you will have to give account of your life on Judgment Day.”

These were the words of the state prosecutor at Moorreesburg court.

But, 56 years before this speech... that was where all my tribulations started.

The day that my mother, Elizabeth Benjamin, stood in church pregnant with me. My sister was not even one year old yet and there I was already tossing and turning in my mother's tummy.

In fact, my sister was only three months old when my parents started working on me, because, nine months later, I was born on my sister's birthday.

Siamese twins, exactly a year apart, but not even joined at the hip, back or head.

Two children who would share the same birthday parties for years to come. Until it was abruptly stopped by COVID-19.

Two children, one party, but we could not care less; we were jovial and happy. Through the eyes of children, they mainly just see joy and happiness; at least, that is how it should be.

Still, in our household, there was no money for parties. So our parties consisted of one cake, chips, peanuts and Bashew's cooldrinks. Except on Friday evenings... that is part-time... time when most drank just to drown their sorrows of hardship. And the drinking was serious, as people got seriously drunk.

Drinking would normally run for the whole weekend and, on a Monday, a penniless red-eyed *babalas* would kick in that couldn't stand the test of time, as it was then work time. That was the norm; you parties weekends and worked hard during the week.

Back to the church where my mother was waiting... and she was waiting and waiting.

It is not right for a bride to be waiting for her future husband in church. It must be the other way around.

Wedding ceremony arrangements were made and all that is pitching up... is my father.

Yip, he had abandoned my mother, sister and myself.

I have never seen him with the naked eye... not even in pictures. Family members believed that he packed his bags and ran off to Port Elizabeth, now known as Gqeberha.

Is this how my generational curse started? Or did it start before my father's time? Maybe he also did not know how to be a father?

Born into a dysfunctional family – does that make me also dysfunctional?

Born into pain – did I inherit that pain?

Will I punish others because of what happened to me?

Children are then gifts from God... so how can this child be born with a burden?

Instead of happiness, there was tears... instead of a honeymoon, there was drunkenness and rejection.

Never did I asked my mother of these situations and happenings, about her day at church, about my father or even about our roots.

I never deemed the questions about my father important. Yet it was really this that formed my earliest years and upbringing. This was the reason and the beginning of my generational curses.

Childhood Days

All children are born free; some are more free than others are. And what happens while you are in the womb does affect you. Ask me; I can testify to that.

Most times, it's just that the things happening in your childhood years affect you as a grown-up. Being rejected as a foetus, and suffering pain as an unborn child, even when the mother is suffering pain and trauma – that does affect the baby. And the scars will be carried by the child even up to the seventh generation and beyond.

These are questions I still ask today... seeing how my own life was, or how it ended up.

If only I had asked these questions when I was younger – or maybe even going for psychological help or counselling would have helped instead of struggling with fatherhood, how to be a good father or the 'who's your *pappa*' syndrome.

In the womb, I was already being formed to be like my father. I inherited his poverty and his lack of love for his children. So the question now: who is going to break this generational curse?

I don't want to be like my father. I'm an individual with my own aspirations and goals. I love my children and sometimes it feels like there are evil forces that just want to divide us as a family.

I don't want to be just another statistic of a fatherless boy. I don't want my children to be fatherless or abandoned. I pray for my children to be better people than I am.

Never was I taught how to be a father... how to look after a family... how to nurture and care for my wife and children.

There was no one I could look up to as a role model or mentor on how to be a father. None of us are born to be parents – we get taught how to be parents.

Fatherhood

My biological father was a loser; does that make me also a loser?

I was always looked down on, bullied, harassed, robbed, insulted, belittled and hit on as a stepson being beaten up by a drunk stepfather who was always right, even when he was wrong.

My worst nightmare was when I was eight years old and wanted to stab my stepfather, meaning to kill him. I was chased by monsters; there were skeletons in my cupboard. These monsters wanted me to take a life. But I will never surrender to these monsters.

A child too afraid to close his eyes to sleep, because his roots of evil run deep. My roots run deep and what it dished up on my plate was grief. I will not surrender to fear. I will rise and I refused to be the least. Even though there was a man in my life from the age of six to 17, these were years that I want to forget due to the abuse.

These years in my life were very important formative years, as these years would educate me about family, how to be a man and how to be a father. It would develop me as a male person in the community. Looking back now, even in my pain, God had a plan.

A person who is hurt while young will normally grow up hurting others. I was damaged as a child to such an extent that I even refused to go and pay my last respects at the funeral of

my stepfather. My life just went on as if there was no loss. It was as if nothing had happened.

And the sad part of this is that nothing is going to happen if I don't make amends, If I don't break these generational curses.

How does a secret stay a secret? That is when no one talks about it and then... even then... family secrets become part of our generational curses.

On 1 September 2021, I was discharged from all my non-support payments to my children. This was one of the worst curses that I needed to break.

Awakening

Up until 2015, I was a good father who supported his children, even if there were two failed marriages and then my move to Bloemfontein to go and get married for a third time. This was another part of my journey that was not only an awakening, but also a life-changing experience.

So, at 5am, I packed all my belongings into my car and hit the road. Come to think of it now, this was what my father did when he left us, way back then in Kirstenbosch. I packed all my possessions; that which I could not get into my car, I just left there. Yet the most important to me, which I did not take along, were my children.

I would end up losing a lot, and here I'm not only meaning my children, but also all my possessions. What happened to getting married for a third time is a story on its own. But what I realised was that the scripture in Exodus 22, Verse 20 – 'do not mistreat any widow or orphan' – came to realisation.

So what happened in Bloemfontein will stay in Bloemfontein and, as said before, it's a story on its own. But what I can say

is that I found myself homeless and the scripture, Matthew 6, Verse 33 hit me: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given unto you as well."

My understanding of this verse was threefold:

1. I need find the Kingdom of God;
2. And His righteousness;
3. And my life will be restored again.

I had a spiritual awakening to prioritise myself in seeking God's kingdom; I needed to find it here on Earth. I needed to live a life that reflected God's character and standards, meaning living ethically and with moral integrity. I needed to understand God's rule and reign, in my present and future state of being, allowing His will to lead my life and allowing God to restore my life with regards to food, clothing and shelter.

Happy are those who are grateful for what they have, and not what they wish they had. Happiness is not based on wishes, but rather on choices. The choice to accept who you are and where you are coming from, and the choice to make peace with everyone and everything that has happened in your life.

So, for me to break these curses, I need to go back to where these generational curses started... in Kirstenbosch and then to the ghettos.

I need to break the victim/slave mentality and come up victorious for the sake of my children and my family.