

HUMBLLED BY A PROSPECTING STUDENT

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Interviewees with members of staff

The 8th day of November 2011 began normally at the Nairobi Great Commission School –chilly and cloudy. We knew we would have to contend with a long day. Interview for prospecting students has been anything but entertaining. On this particular day we would interview eleven individuals endorsed by their respective churches to pursue training at the school.

The process is well defined; register at the gate, have their papers scrutinized to ascertain their validity, sit for written interview in which their level of comprehension, proficiency in the English language, listening skills and scriptural understanding is tested. Then they would appear before a panel for oral interviews.

The Principal, the registrar and I formed the panel for oral interviews. This would be the final stage, where we would ask the students to explain why they want to come to school, what they intend to do with the training, what arrangements they have made for the upkeep of their families in their absence etc. The first candidate came, the second, the third... and then the eighth.

When Alexander Atema, the eighth interviewee came in, the atmosphere in the room changed completely. It became obvious that perhaps a greater leader had arrived. Chinua Achebe of Nigeria observes in his book, *Things Fall apart*, that, 'A chick that will grow into a cock is spotted the same day it is hatched.' At the interview we can tell one who will be a great student from one who will be a problem. Our great students have been great leaders out there.

This is what happened; unlike all others, Alexander moved in with confidence and yet with deep respect. He spoke with the humility of an African lamb. He shook our hands firmly with warmth when he came in, maintained effective eye contact and was as sincere as he was fluent in explaining issues.

I fought my tears trying to hold them back, sometimes in vain, owing to his eloquence, the experiences he had to endure in his fragile and yet formative years; and the authentic way in which he responded to the question, "Why do you want to come to this school?"

With a friend of his, they changed their base from the city center to Eastleigh where they met missionary Charles Coulston in person. Charles talked to them and enrolled them at Made In the Streets, a ministry that rehabilitates street children in the city of Nairobi.



But Alexander does not attribute his rehabilitation to Dr. Charles Coulston. He attributes it to God. He said, "God showed me love through his people, I cannot shy away from being equipped to serve Him. It is my prayer that God will use me as his instrument of love to the kids and families on the streets of our cities." He defined his mission.

"I will glean the most from this school. I am on fire for God." He said with absolute devotion.

Asked how he learned about NGCS, he said, "Charles announced that there is a Church of Christ School that trains preachers and that he would want for some of us to go to that school. Most of us laughed it off. Nobody wants to be a preacher. To former street kids, preaching is not the most desired responsibility. But for me, preaching is my calling."

Alexander currently leads in songs, bible study and ushering at the church in Kamulu. He has since learned the trade of working with computers. He repairs computers for the Word Bible School Office, a sister organization to Made In the Streets. That is how he wants to program his life after NGCS. As an evangelist, Alexander will be tent-making as a computer technician. Alexander is all one would hope for in a boy.

As a Kenyan, I want to thank Dr. Charles and Darlene, the missionaries who have been our translation of 'Mama Teresa' in our churches. They have not been too loud about what they are doing. You don't hear them brag of the baptisms they are making each Sunday or of the congregations they are planting to impress their sponsoring congregations back at home. But quietly, they are remolding lives of children. Lives that have known nothing but corruption and rejection. Restoring the image of God into the lives that have been abused and scarred. Putting hope where hopelessness abound. Seeing value where others, without the inner eyes that Charles and Darlene have, see worthlessness.

NGCS takes in students who are 21 years and above only. Alexander is merely 18. His fate rested now with the principal. I held my breath and Tom looked like he was praying over all this. We have a policy, God what do we do? And then the principal spoke. "Alexander, you are mature. We will overlook your chronological age and zero in on your spiritual and experiential age. Congratulations, we will admit you."

Alexander Atema is a chick that will grow into a cock. He will be a great student. He will be a great leader. Pray for him and for all who will join the Nairobi Great Commission School in 2012.

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