

Wakabura Joseph: The Tree Stump Will Bud Again

Written by admin

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Wakabura Joseph has come a long way from a humble farm worker to a celebrated musician. In this interview with Woman of Faith, the singer of the popular song “Githuki ni Githunduku” (The tree stump has budded) recounts his journey.



“At least there is hope for a tree. If it is cut down it will sprout again and its new shoots will not f

Tell us about your background.

I was born in Gatundu at a village called Mbici. I am the fifth born of seven children brought up single handed by my mother in very difficult circumstances. She depended on manual jobs and renting land to plant foodstuffs for our upkeep. Consequently, I could not continue with school after attending Gatei Primary School up to standard eight. Thereafter when I was about sixteen, I got a job as a farm hand where I used to look after cows and pick tea. It was a difficult job because I used to wake up very early in the morning and cut napier grass for the cows, draw water from the well and proceed to tea picking. Sometimes people would get delayed at the tea buying center until after midnight and I would be very tired and hungry. After one and a half years, I left the job and for the next seven years went on to hotel employment peeling potatoes, a business selling mitura (Kikuyu sausage) another selling ripe bananas, and then selling shoes.

When did you start your music career?

I started composing songs when I was in standard six. I wrote them in a notebook. I got a chance to record them after I saved some money from the shoe business. An acquaintance

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took me to a place in Nairobi where I could record my first album – “Ndigacoka kurira” (I will never cry again). The quality of the tape recording was very poor and the radio stations I sent it to declined to play it. I was not able to sell the cassette to people either.

I went back to mum who sold her cow to enable re-recording of the album. Elijah Miller, also a musician, directed me to another studio and sang with me. This time the recording was good and it was accepted by some radio stations who gave it quite a lot of airplay. With this I was able to sell it. I bought a small radio cassette player and used to move from place to place playing and selling my cassettes to people. It was quite successful and I got encouraged to continue in the music business.

Since then, I have recorded six other albums with “Githuki ni Githunduku” (the tree stump has budded) being the latest and most popular. I recorded it in September 2009 and we currently sell an average of 500 CDs per day. The song is also in “Skiza” in Safaricom where it is currently one of the most downloaded gospel tunes. The other albums include “Uumiririai”, “Mwaka witu”, “Ndungikinyanira”, “Nduri wa ndekereria” and “Steadman”.

What other business activities are you engaged in apart from singing?

I own a studio where I do my recording and also record for other musicians. I operate a music shop where we sell both my music and that of other gospel musicians. I also have two vehicles which go round promoting and selling my music. In fact, these account for the majority of the sales. Currently, the music business is all I want to be in.

What problems do you face in the music industry?

Mostly piracy. There are people who want to unfairly profit from other people’s sweat.

How has your music impacted on your family?

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I must say it has greatly improved the financial status of my family. For my wife and I, we are comfortable and I cannot compare myself anymore with the farm hand I used to be. I bought some land for my mother and employed two of my brothers in my business. I have seen the Glory of God.

Which church do you go to?

Redeemed Church, Kiambu.

How has being a committed Christian impacted on your life?

I got saved in 2001 and I believe this saved me from the desperation that often faces many young men in the situation I was in. Most slide into drugs and drinking, thereby totally ruining their lives. I also believe that if you serve God faithfully and pray earnestly, He will bless you in return, and God came through for me,

What is your favourite Bible Story?

The story of David's anointing. When the Prophet Samuel asked his father Jesse to bring out his sons so that he could identify the one God wanted to be King, Jesse did not for a moment

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think it could be David who was a young boy and out in the fields herding his flock. He thought only the other older and stronger looking sons more deserving of the honor. However it is David that God had chosen. He brought Him from very far just like He did for me. And, David was also a singer.

Which is your favorite Bible Verse?

Currently, it is 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"* Job 14:7 (NIV). God can uplift even those who look hopeless to others.

What advice do you have for people in general on how to live their lives?

It is best to trust God no matter what your circumstances. People with problems should know that God knows everyone by name. He knows what you will eat today and what you will eat tomorrow. One should never lose hope. Maybe tomorrow will be different from today. You never know what God has in store for you just round the corner.

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