

Sankara, Compaore, Friendship and Trust in the Life of the African christian- Part I

When President Thomas Sankara's bodyguards asked for permission to arrest his best friend, Blaise Compaore, after intelligence exposed his plan to oust the President through a coup, Sankara's response baffled them. Thomas Sankara replied that he will never in his life betray friendship and that if Blaise Compaore wanted to oust him in a coup, he could go ahead and do so. The Ghanaian secret service further learned of the plot by Blaise Compaore to not only oust, but to kill Sankara. When JJ Rawlings was informed, he contacted President Thomas Sankara and offered assistance to arrest Blaise and his accomplices. Thomas Sankara's response did not change; Blaise Compaore was his friend, if he wanted to kill him and take over power, he could go ahead. He was at the mercy of friendship.

There had never been a bloody coup in Burkina Faso since the country gained independence from France in 1960. The worst case scenario, in the view of Sankara, perhaps, would be a respectful, dignified and peaceful take-over of power, an affair conducted with as much courtesy to the outgoing president as could be offered. Had Thomas Sankara known that he and 12 of his comrades were to be killed, would he still have valued friendship over and above 13 lives of visionaries and great men of courage?

The friendship between Blaise Compaore and Thomas Sankara ran very deep and went back to the times they reportedly grew up together. After Blaise lost his father at an early age, Thomas Sankara's father played the role of a father in his life. Both men were so close that they ate from the same plate, traveled together and confided in one another. In Thomas Sankara's

heart, Blaise was a brother and not a friend. He considered him in the league of those the Bible states in Proverbs 8:24b that “there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.”

For Sankara, friendship meant loyalty and dedication and that was all he had in him to give to someone he called a friend, nay, a brother. No one could persuade him otherwise. It would be the biggest betrayal of friendship to arrest a man he confided in, who knew him and his family thoroughly, the one person he could count on to be there for his family and the nation of Burkina Faso if anything should happen to him. If there was going to be betrayal in that relationship, it would not come from Sankara; he placed that much value on relationships and trust on his friend. He believed the best intention of his friend, as the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13:7, that “love believes the best of every person” and hopes for the best always.

Sankara’s stance on friendship and trust reminds one of Christ’s response to Judas Iscariot who betrayed him to death. At the last Supper, when Christ announced to His stunned audience that one of the 12 among them would betray him, confounded follower after another inquired to know who it was. Christ’s response in Matthew 26:22 was “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.” The Bible further records that Jesus would go on to say to Judas, “What you are about to do, do quickly” (John 13:27). Jesus had supernatural intelligence on the plans of Judas – the one appointed to the trusted position of a treasurer in the group – to betray Him, yet He did nothing. First, Jesus actually allowed his would-be betrayer into the circle of his close allies and loved him as he loved the other 11 apostles. He believed the best of Judas and hoped for the best out of him even when he had information about his plans to lead him to death.

Thomas Sankara might have emulated Christ when he chose to ignore credible information that pointed to his friend’s

bloody motives, choosing to focus on trust, building loyalty and on his reformation work in Burkina Faso, willing to accept death in the line of duty from the hands of his ally.

These days, however, not many African Christians are willing to place their trust in the most trust-worthy person. Ultra-capitalism and the concomitant decimation of values, family attachments and social relationships have further eroded the trust edge of individuals even within the church. Parents teach their children to not trust a soul, but their own immediate family only. People proudly proclaim, as if in wisdom, that they do not trust anyone. Some go as far as saying that they do not have friends, saying it as if it was wise to hold such stance.

But what does the Bible say about friendships. Is it necessary to have friends? Should one trust people or anybody at all? In Ecclesiastes 4:10 the Bible declares "woe to him who is alone." Woe is only declared in the Bible under very serious circumstances and situations and being friendless and without a strong social support system happens to be one of such. The Bible has several instances of stories of friendships and trust that have aided men to the fulfillment of destiny. As a matter of fact, Jesus Christ Himself began His ministry by bringing people He would function with, in the form of the twelve apostles. At the risk of being betrayed by one, He forged close relationships with 12 men without whom He could not accomplish His calling as the Savior of the world. If Jesus, who is God Himself, could not single-handedly fulfill destiny, but had to depend on strong friendships to do so, what is the human being who has closed his heart to people going to achieve in a lifetime without building strong friendships?

Another instance of where friendships, trust and loyalty catapulted men to greatness is in the story of King David, the greatest King of Israel. In 2 Samuel 23: 8-38, the Bible identifies 37 men, often referred to as David's Mighty Men or

the Gibborim in Hebrew, who stood by David in all his battles as the anointed ruler of Israel. Of them, three men stood out, including Jashobeam, Shammah and Eleazar who reportedly fought to defend David until his hand clung to the sword.

In the case of Christ, likewise, three men stood out among his disciples, and these were Peter, James and John. It was these three that climbed on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and witnessed him being declared God's beloved son, confirmed by the presence of Moses and Elijah. Jesus would warn the three to not tell what they saw and heard to the rest of the nine while they descended the mountain. At the cross, however, as Jesus was about to breathe his last, it was into the care of John the disciple that he handed over Mary, His beloved mother. Likewise, Jonathan, Saul's son, was like a brother to David and at some point, when Saul had planned to kill David, his very life depended on Jonathan's espionage activities on Saul his father.

The examples of Christ and David show that while friendship is foundational to success, it comes in stages. The African Christian should be open to friendships and seek to establish friendships as led by the Holy Spirit. However, friendships should be in grades. There should be those who are close but cannot climb the "Mount of Transfiguration" with you. The Mount of Transfiguration is a place of the full revelation of purpose and destiny. Not everyone can handle that knowledge and information about you so better to protect them from such. There should also be friends, a very small circle who should know that much about you, and bear witness regarding your calling in deepest ways. Then there should be that one person – a spouse, most likely/preferably – who you can safely leave with your most loved possessions, even your very continued existence, and be at peace that it can be taken care of as you would have, were you to be there.

It is not by power, not by might but by my Spirit says the Lord (Zechariah 4:6). The African Christian should prayerfully

open up to know who his God-ordained friends are and invest in nurturing such relationships according to stages. The Principles of I Corinthians 13:4-7 should be the guiding light in the way friendship is approached. Through the wise counsel of spending time with people, knowing other people who know them and who can attest to their integrity and praying for revelation (al) knowledge and guidance, the child of God will be led aright.

To be continued.

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