

*"I will exalt you, Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me. Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me. You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit. Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken." Lord, when you favored me, you made my royal mountain stand firm; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed. To you, Lord, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy: "What is gained if I am silenced, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness? Hear, Lord, and be merciful to me; Lord, be my help." You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise you forever."*

Psalm 30

Born in Gemena, Equateur, DRC, statistics were not in Fidele's favor. One in ten children in Gemena die before they reach their fifth birthday, and of those that survive, 10% are malnourished and 40% have delayed development. Fidele's mother died when he was nine years old, and his father when he was eleven. He remembers that his mother was absolutely beautiful, and is sad that he doesn't have a picture to remember her. After the death of his father, he would sing this Lingala song:

*"Kitoko na nzoto na ngai ezali mpamba  
Kitoko na nzoto na ngai ekobebisama na mokolo ya suka  
Nzoto ekobebisama na mokolo ya suka  
Papa na ngai akotika ngai  
Nzoto ekobebisama na mokolo ya suka  
Mama na ngai akotika ngai  
Ndeko na ngai akotika ngai  
Nakotikala na ndako na ngai moko  
Papa na ngai akotika ngai"*

(translation)

*"The beauty of the flesh is nothing  
The our bodies in this world will be destroyed in the end  
My body will return to the earth in the end  
My Dad will leave me*

*My body will return to the earth in the end  
My mom will leave me  
My body will return to the earth in the end  
My brother and sister will leave me  
I will be left in the house all alone*

Fidele would sing this song and wish that he were dead too, so he could be with his family. He would rather die than be without his parents in the world.

But survival instincts kicked in, and he started to sell diesel fuel to pay school fees for him and his four brothers. All five boys were invited to live in his uncle's house after his Father's death. His uncle was kind, but had 10 kids under his roof, and couldn't afford to pay for all of their needs. Fidele and his brothers often went hungry, and they didn't always go to school because they couldn't pay.

After living with his uncle for one year, his uncle died too. Any support he had been receiving from his family ended there. His uncle had outside debts, and any assets he had were immediately claimed by distant family members. Fidele and his four brothers were now truly on their own. For three years, Fidele tried his best to care for his family on his own. He says that no trouble that he meets now can compare with the struggle he experienced those three years. Working full time as a pre-adolescent kid, going to school full time and trying to support his 4 kid brothers to do the same. They would often go hungry and without enough clothes. Fidele knew that above everything else, he must make sure his brothers went to school; even if it meant skipping meals. These were dark and difficult times.

But then a door was opened. A person that Fidele worked with to sell fuel knew of someone in Gemena that needed help taking care of her home. This woman agreed to give Fidele a room to stay in and food to eat in exchange for his work around the house. Fidele gladly accepted.

The woman who took him in loved him because he was honest, hardworking, and loving to her. But she was a fickle mother figure, and would throw tantrums and leave Fidele to sleep out on the street when she was angry with him.

After two years of living with his new mom, an old friend of his father's, Papa Langwa, realized that Fidele was struggling to get by and decided to take him into his own family. Papa Langwa was a successful engineer and an influential leader in the community. He saw much potential in Fidele and agreed to take him under his wing, teaching him all he knew about construction, from design to building, plumbing and electricity. Fidele was an excellent student, eager to learn, and soon he was surpassing his other adult co-workers. In school, he was always among the top three in his class. Fidele continued as an apprentice in Papa Langwa's work, and it was through this relationship that he met visitors who would come from America to work in development and ministry in Gemena. Fidele learned English quickly, and was able to share his story with all his new American friends. A group of seven of them were so touched by Fidele's life story and example that they decided they would put their resources together to help Fidele come to the United States to study, in order that he might return to Gemena as a leader who was given full opportunity to learn civil engineering and develop his capacity for leadership.

Hope is found in persistence in the face of impossible odds, but it also lies in the love and dedication of those Congolese families that took Fidele and his brothers in when they were barely holding on. And it is found in those seven Americans who knew, that humble as their own circumstances were, they could do something to give opportunity and a better future to Fidele, and be part of God's plan to bring justice and change to Gemena.

Fidele waits for his visa now, his days ahead overflowing with hope and anticipation. Pray for him and all the future leaders of Gemena, to have unprecedented opportunities opened to them.