

BISHOP JOSEPH MAISHA

Report #K10

SURVEY

Our survey of 3964 Kenyans identified Bishop Maisha as having a unique impact. He was tied for second as having the highest number of individuals naming him as being the most significant influence on their lives. And he was rated at the highest level regarding the extent to which he was said to train leaders.

ABSTRACT

Joseph Maisha is a Baptist Bishop in the Coast province of Kenya. He was born in the Western part of Kenya but because of the hardships that his family faced while he was growing up, he moved to the Coast to earn a living. He did his primary and secondary schooling in Kenya but was able to get his higher education in the United States by traveling back and forth until he was done with his studies. He credits an older man from his church who mentored him as the source of his success and reciprocates that care by taking care of the older man today. His personal vision is to develop leaders in Africa, for Africa and believes that he is already on his way to achieving this by being part of the training of Christian leaders in various countries in Africa. He reports that he has planted Ushindi Baptist churches in other parts of the world including Africa, Asia, Europe and North America. He would like to see this vision continue growing even in the Western world.

BACKGROUND

Childhood Home

He was born in a very humble beginning in Western Kenya in Kapsotik Village, Vihiga district. This particular area in Kenya is interesting because, according to the Bishop, the area does not have a lot of people who 'make it in life' or have a bright future because the traditional status in the area is very much based on circumcision; particularly with a tribe called Tiriki. If one is not therefore educated, he or she is not likely to find a well-paying job outside the community. However, the bishops said that the Tiriki value their traditional circumcision practice, and the people, who go through that line are regarded to be very important within that area and that community. He was brought up in that community, but he did not stay there for a long time. He only did his primary schooling in the area and both his parents were still alive at the time. Within his area, he did not have much as his parents were not rich. They brought him up by selling some sugarcane and were also able to educate him through these sales. He left the village and went to Mombasa because his elder sister was staying in Mombasa and did his high school education and he continued from that.

Countries of Residence

Bishop Maisha has lived in the United States for 6 months, then he came back to Kenya and then went back again for six months. While he was there, he undertook some studies. He also did some traveling after that, back and forth from the US for periods of between three to six months. He has also lived in England and some African nations for longer than three months. They were

trying to set up a ministry in Arusha, around Mt Meru University, and he was the brain behind it, so it required him for a while. However, he has spent most of his time in Kenya because his ministry is based here.

Current Family

He has two sons and three daughters. His first born is a daughter who works for Compassion International because she is so compassionate in serving children according to the bishop. When she was growing up, she was very much involved in Sunday school, and eventually, she learned to work with children. Currently, she is based in Malindi. His second born, a son works with him and helps in preaching and some teaching, but the family is looking forward to taking him to a Bible school so that he can be able actually to help in encamping his father's shoes as the gets bishop gets older. As for his other two daughters, one is married, and the other is working.

Educational Background

His background was very humble. He did his high school in Mombasa then had to go to the US for his Christian education. He would go for six months, return to Kenya, and then go for another six months, back and forth until he was done. After completing his studies, the Bishop decided to actualize some partnerships and connections with some of the ministries in the United States for them to work with him in bringing up the ministry. Most of them started working with him until they came up and started an International school of ministry so that they could reach leaders in Africa.

One of the things he discovered in his journey was difficult. According to him, Africa has a big problem with leadership both spiritually and in normal life because you find many churches breaking up because people do not have good leadership. Additionally, he believes that in many churches people do not really know how they can nurture each other and bring up a very strong church that can really make an impact on the community or the vicinity where they are. So training was deemed to be very important for people in Africa, and if they got leaders, then these leaders can also lead and train others. This program has been going on for about five to six years now. Bishop Maisha was given a chance to be in charge of Africa, and his chancellor is in the United States. They have been doing this in different countries in Africa where they bring all the pastors together and train them, and then send them back to their areas to train other people. They have done this in Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda. They are hoping to go to Ethiopia and other places in the future. They do not have a permanently built school in a place; rather, they get the leadership in the area from different churches. They then come together and organize themselves in bringing the key leadership from different denominations to create a center and from where they start training.

Personal Testimony and Calling

At one time it had been declared from his Muslim brothers that the Bishop should burn in a house and die with the people in it. However, God performed a miracle because the house never burned up and he survived that. At another time, he was in difficulty because people came and surrounded him and declared that he was dead. But immediately as they did that, they started fighting among themselves. They had guns and the police came and took them away. All these attacks set out to destroy the ministry. He has seen all that which has been very difficult. From the beginning, nothing was very easy in that journey because people defected, left or stole things

from the ministry including loudspeakers. But through it all he, he stood firm because God called him. The Bishop says that He had to go by what God has called him for and never looked behind. He used to work in Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) and says had a really good job. However, when he became very busy, he left his managerial job and jumped into the boat of ministry, which proved to be so difficult for him. Most of the people never supported him: not even his friends and relatives. He said that he stood very firm because he knew God had a purpose and a role in his life. So he has something that he can talk to about to anyone he comes in contact with. According to him, some people give up on the way; some people would like to say others serving God is a waste of time, but they need to see the other side of the coin and he thinks he has insights to share with others.

Influences

The Bishop was influenced by an old man named Elijah Wanje from Malindi, who had a Baptist background was a moderator in his denomination. At the time he was a moderator, he loved the young Maisha. According to Bishop Maisha, the moderator took a lot of his life to pour into the bishop's life. Mr. Wanje really took him as his own son and most of the time he was advising, nurturing and helping him to grow spiritually. He advised the bishop as a young man a lot until God brought him to a better place in life. When Mr. Wanje grew older, Bishop Maisha started taking care of him and organized a church for him at home in his village, and he still goes to him, and Mr. Wanje still calls him. Bishop Maisha also helps him in other areas because now that the former moderator is a senior citizen. Bishop Maisha remembers that God used the former moderator, and if He did not use him, he would not be what he is today. The bishop was also influenced by a female leader who was a teacher. When the bishop came into ministry, she took a lot of interest in his life for many years. Through her, his family came to sit and work together in resolving a lot of issues. She provided support spiritually and claims his family became wise until they came up where they are today.

CURRENT MINISTRY OR VOCATION

Work/Ministry & Mission/Vision

His personal mission is to see Africa producing leaders and missionaries so that these missionaries can also go to other countries of the world. He remembers learning much when he went to India to start a ministry, and he took African people from Kenya to go with him. They established churches in India, and it was very interesting. Also, his fellow friends from the United States that they work with also became partners, and they started going to other countries. He was seeing what they were doing is what he can do with his African people. Therefore, his zeal and his interest is geared to finding ways of how they can produce their own missionaries from Africa and how they can get these leaders who can even go and challenge the western world that they can also come up as Christians to produce what Jesus needs from each and everyone.

He has planted seven churches in India, one in Texas, USA and one in Germany. They all fall under Ushindi Baptist Church. He also has fellowships in England and is currently trying to look into some other places where he has been. He says that he has been in 'very difficult places like Paris' but he found that he could easily maneuver through colleges to see if he can also do

something in that area. He maintains that what he can do within his ministry or his calling is to develop what is in him with the perspective of Africa and uses that as his platform.

Organization

Ushindi Baptist Church is in fellowship with the Baptist churches, but it is a registered entity. They have started to spread churches within Kenya and Uganda. In Uganda, they have reached Kampala and areas around it. The resources that they get mainly are within the church that they have established. The bishop says that these are holistic ministries that really help to bring up what they are doing. For example, they now have schools from nursery up to high school as well as a professional college, which can develop professionals who will help in the church. They are looking to move much further up the educational ladder and offer higher education. His external partners are the ones who help mainly with this ministry. The church also has orphanage homes that cater for the community and less fortunate families. It builds them homes on these compounds to develop them to want something. He has friends oversee that help with some scholarships to get the brightest students to the university. Some of those helped by these scholarships have finished and come back, and they work together to help the cause. Within the church ministry itself, he has organized the church in such a way that they can also mobilize their resources within themselves and supports the ministry to grow. They have about 22 full-time pastors who work within the coastal areas to help him bring up the church. Countrywide, the church has about 100 pastors who are also working to see the ministry grow.

Impact/Success/Assessment

The Bishop's ministry has hit the 30-year mark. When he started the ministry, within the area of Likoni, there was a lot of resistance. The place is much more of a Muslim community than any other faith community, and it was a very difficult time for him to penetrate the area. According to Bishop Maisha, thirty years ago, there was no meaningful Christian church that could preach salvation in that area. Some of the churches that are there now started much later. An example is JCC, which started ten years later. It was a very difficult place, so he had to get involved very much in this ministry to reach Muslims. Right now, he claims that he has 1100 born again former Muslims, of which some are pastors and others are serving in other aspects within the church. He remarks that the most interesting part from that journey is that he had to attract a lot of friends in different places in the world to think about what he was doing. Some of the ministries that he has worked with are International Bible School and Global Community Collaboration-GCC. GCC works with 14 countries in the world where they get key leaders from these countries. The Bishop says that these leaders have made a difference within their communities and their nations. They come together to discuss successful ways of reaching the most difficult people, i.e. professionals and business people on their level and establish a church ministry through them. This particular ministry has been very helpful to him for the past five years. They have their headquarters in Texas, which is led by a president. They have been working together, and they go to these 14 different countries in the world to meet and exchange ideas and also see how the Christians are relating and also discuss the challenges that are facing different Christians of different backgrounds. He is involved in this ministry, and he mainly takes care of the continent of Africa, because he believes that Africa is dear to him.

Top Cox ministry, based in the United States is another ministry that has given him a lot of 'help and hand.' This is a ministry where people who go to different countries and take care of the less

fortunate families, establish hospitals, homes, and schools. The bishop stated that they also give them some Christian background knowledge and then develop them to become great citizens in those countries. He has worked with these people for about 10 to 12 years and maintains that they have been doing well together, going to these other countries as well and helping and also making sure that he is at the frontlines. There is also another ministry that works with him that brings doctors, some nurses and some Christian missionaries to make sure they can give free medical services to villages and homes and then use that vehicle to preach to people. They get business people and professionals together in some hotels or places, and he brings people from abroad for example England and the US. These professionals, lawyers, magistrates or very senior staff, challenge others and invite them to become born again. For example, in 2012, he brought a Chief of Police from the US, and he made a very big challenge to the police in Kenya. He claims to have even offered a chance to get some Kenyan policemen to go to the US and train at a university there. This was to be done through exchange programs so that the Kenyan police force could learn from other countries about how to face their challenges relating to their duties. The Kenyan Police Force would also enrich forces in United States for example by sharing what they too have learned through their experiences in serving Kenya. The church is working on something similar but there are rules and regulations in place as they consider partnering with the US in the police exchange program. The Bishop described the Chief of Police from the United States as ‘a humble man who has made deep and powerful connections in the service of his nation and God.’

Training/Leadership Development

The church does training but they have only reached the diploma level (which is roughly equivalent to the associate degree in the United States). According to the bishop, the programs have been going on for 8-10 years now and on average they get forty graduates from different countries and the rest from Kenya. The biggest number of graduates in a year has been 100 graduates. He has worked with Wayland University in Texas, and they have been helping him to bring up some young people to get some scholarships. They also train them with distance learning towards some degree level, and some of them have already graduated in leadership development, and 12-14 of them have gone as far as getting their masters degree. Some are in the church helping him to set up a school of ministry so that they may help him improve what he is trying to do. He says that he ‘has discovered’ that young people are ready to lead; but if they are not given a direction they can mislead. According to him, the only way to give them a direction is to put them in the Word of God, give them knowledge and show them the future. In that way, one can discover their gifts from somewhere and from there you develop them to become productive. The Bishop said that ‘most’ young people would love to start ministries very quickly and succeed very quickly because they like to feel like older people are wasting time, have been there for too long and what they are doing is the ‘old thing.’ The young people feel like the church is something so that is easy where they can easily just go, stand up and move. The Bishop has been challenging them through his experience of having started a church when he was 28 years old and is now reaching his sixties. He tells them that the journey that he took from that time was not simple. He has seen that most of the young people or the young preachers want everything big and now. When they see someone like him, living in Nyali, having a house, a car, and able to take a plane, they assume that it came easily. They don’t know the journey is very difficult. His challenge to them is to be patient and be mentored as he was mentored. The person who mentored him was not very highly educated, but he had an element of a father in him, and

that made him listen to this man. He saw what was in him to be something, which can develop him 'into something' that he was not and thus 'referred everything' to him. But even though his mentor is old now, he carries those memories and owes him a great deal of gratitude. In the same way, he also tries to tell young people also to think of the people who mentored you and to look for mentors if they do not have any. Success does not happen right away even if God has heard you or He has called you. These are the areas where he has seen challenges in the ministry when it comes to some people.

Partnerships/Links

Some of the partners that Bishop Maisha works with mainly come and help in what his church is doing in evangelism, missions work and training leaders. In the other areas of trying to develop the leaders and produce some knowledgeable people who can now be trained, the partners have also poured a lot into them by sending missionaries to help them to train. The partners have also sent some materials that are used for these kinds of trainings.

Regarding finances, many of the partners really have helped to come up with some of these structures where they have built schools, the orphanage homes and also sponsored some of the children by offering scholarships for some of them, so that the children can continue learning. Knees on Hills Ministry, from the United States, has been very active in this effort. Also, Tom Cox World Ministries has also helped in bringing some missionaries every year to come and help in this ministry. The Bishop also has links with South Africans, where they partner every year, and they work together as well according to the Bishop's assessment. In Africa, he is the executive in 46 countries of the Baptist circle. Before this, he was the president of Eastern Africa Baptist circle churches, but he served his term and is currently in the executive team which oversees all the Baptist churches in Africa. His area of operation is within these 46 countries in Africa.

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

According to the Bishop, one of his weaknesses is that he does a lot of work 'all over' and when he plants churches they have many needs that he cannot meet. The main need that he sees is a person who is called to ministry but he has a family without food. He finds these needs overwhelming as he tries to help a person who wants education. The bishop said that he could not do much beyond showing such a person the Christian life, teaching, preaching and bringing him to a congregation. According to the bishop, if such a person comes from the village, he or she gives in pennies that do not really help. Financial support is a significant challenge for the Bishop especially because many of the people coming to a new church want to see speakers, keyboards, and other equipment as a sign that the church is alive. He does what he can, but the financial need is too big for him to meet it alone.

To try and bridge this gap he is currently mobilizing his children who are working and other professionals to come up with ways to put together some resources. They have also been considering tapping resources from other believers so that we can help these kinds of churches. He has some people from overseas who have shown an interest and want to help in only building churches; so they come over with building materials and carpenters. However, they will only build a church where there is proof of legal land ownership as would be evidenced by a title deed. This has been another challenge that they are facing especially in getting titles deeds.

Bishop Maisha sees the many children that he has spiritually fathered in his successful ministry as strength. He is proud of all of them, whether they have decided to join his ministry or not. In a search that he did in Mombasa alone, he found 600 (six hundred) of his spiritual children in ministry. He is the one who baptized them, preached to them and brought them up, and they also went elsewhere, and they are now giving birth also to others as leaders. He went back to the Western Province in Kenya where he was born and did some work there, and now he has what he describes as almost 240 (two hundred and forty) very serious leaders working for the kingdom. He is very proud of this accomplishment because it did not come served on a silver platter; he credits this to his commitment and passion. He is fervently praying for strong partnerships where the church should start thinking mainly in terms of making strong leaders: that is leaders that can be able to be ready to face challenges and train others to face the same. According to the Bishop, such leaders should have a very clear testimony, which can be emulated by other people as well so that they can form a very strong platform that can develop at least some great people from Africa. Additionally, the bishop reiterates that they can now through their networks also send such leaders to other areas to show that God can also work with humble people to do something.

Reading and Writing

He has not done formal writing in terms of being published, but he would love to write about the experience and challenges of developing a successful ministry. He sees a lot in the journey of writing because of his testimony. Billy Graham is the bishop's favorite author because, like Billy Graham, he has a vision of reaching souls for Christ as his priority. He also loves Billy Graham's technique of teaching people to develop them and also develops others and grows. In his mind, if you have been developing leaders to do something, they must have 'that life in them.' They can be people who can make a difference wherever they go. This is what he has seen in Graham for many years as he was growing and started feeling that this is the man he needed to emulate in what God was doing in his life. Billy Graham's books have really related to him and he has been reading them because they challenge him on what his vision should look like. Currently, he is constructing an office with a large library to try and get the key great people/authors in Africa who God has used in the different fields and also people from other places as well. He plans to have days where he can visit the library and read now that he wants to get into the writing world and to put his ideas together.

Electronic Media

The bishop uses email as well as Facebook. His ministry has also been trying to develop a media station, and he has applied to the government through Communications Corporation of Kenya to get their TV station. The Bishop's ministry is already building a studio down in the coastal area for a television station, and they are more than 'halfway done with the construction.' (This was in July 2013.)

The Bishop thinks that through the media his ministry can also easily communicate very well what is going on in the region and also have some leaders educate people on this media platform. The station will be entirely Christian, 'not anything else' and 'will be a very big tool for evangelism.' The Bishop's ministry has also opened a website where they send their messages and inform the congregation on what the Bishop is doing. He said that the ministry has not done as much as they would like to be doing so this is the time now they are looking forward to try

and come up with these new ideas. One of the problems he had before was that he wanted to build 'a good church' structure and make everything to be stable from the ground built on a strong base. Now that he has done this, it is easier to look forward to opportunities of seeing what the church can do regarding publicity. He thinks there is still quite a lot to be done and by going strongly to the media in a Christian way the ministry can have very good relations with people from other places of the world. Such partners can be of help to the ministry in teaching good doctrine that helps his people and provide materials that can be disseminated through the media.

Finances & Other Resources

SKIPPED

Political Arena

SKIPPED

Future

His dream at the moment for the ministry is to start in each Kenyan city or within the 47 Kenyan counties a school of ministry that can develop leaders who serve God, within the whole nation. It is a 'big dream' that he is praying for and trusting God to accomplish.

Towards the end of July 2013, he had started discussing with some of his spiritual children, especially the ones lecturing in different universities, the need to write books and put something down for people to read. He says that he has 'some good advice' but he does not know how to communicate it well, and he wants to communicate it through some writings or books. In Nairobi, the Bishop's ministry is already trying to organize and register a magazine, which talks about the things that God is doing. The Bishop wishes to produce it for other people to read and see. His ministry wants it to be one that can easily be read and having some key leaders in the country writing for the people in the nation. Because of the multitude of people they have or they know, the ministry can also send it to their partners to read and their people in the country and their members to send to friends.

He has also been praying to the Lord having 'discovered' that there are zealous young people that God has gifted with knowledge but who get lost along the way. They have come from the trench or root that their parents brought them in and risen to the church level. However, some lead a life where they end up in a life of leisure and wastefulness because they did not achieve what they wanted such as in getting jobs and so on. Towards this goal, the Bishop has registered an organization as a vehicle to accomplish those goals. He wants to work with young university graduates. The government has already given him a legal document to show that the ministry the organization is a legal entity. He wants to network with all the county governors and commissioners in serving these people. The organization will have a desk in each area where the graduates will bring their curriculum vitae and papers. The organization will be challenging respective Kenyan County Governor to give jobs to these young men and women. He has started from Coast where he has already registered 100 graduates and in each country there are representatives who are graduates. Once they get their jobs and improve their life, they can be used as a vehicle to reach others who are in similar circumstances. He wants these young people to be developed on know how to write proposals and doing needs assessment within their

localities or communities. The Bishop will then network these young graduates with his network of global leaders who will come and help them to develop something for their communities. He wants to use what he calls 'domain engagement' where you have an engineer, doctor, and other professional come together as 'one brain.' The Bishop says that this is powerful when facing the county governor because the one brain will be professionals asking for jobs that they can be entrusted with it.

This will be a countrywide project, and many people will be reached for Christ as they come on board and work on this project. Even Muslims, who apply for jobs, can be reached because they will learn that Christ has done this for them. The Muslims, can through this project have opportunity to pray, fellowship with others and appreciate God. Because young people are knowledgeable, 'ready to go' and they really 'want to do things' they can be an instrument to establish the kingdom. The Bishop believes that God can get them young people to be productive with their lives instead of having them lost. Aware that there is a level where people get discouraged that with degree but without a job, the bishop has created a platform of hope for them.

Question for Pastors Only

Currently, the Bishop is working with different churches and is a national chairman on the "on peace and reconciliation." He brings denominations together and sees how they can work together to bring peace to people, and from that forum he can reach many people. As a national chairman, he has an office in every county and is helping various church denominations work and speak the language of peace. Even in denominations 'that do not know Christ' the Bishop sees his message of peace as a vehicle that provides engagement on issues of Christ. As the Bishop's ministry does their seminars, there is a chance for those attending to say whatever they want to say but when the facilitators sum it up, they sum up with something to do with Christ because Christ is the center of all these things.

As a Bishop, he is expected to talk about Christ when he is leading the seminars. This is changing the perspective of people because some of the Sheikhs can come and discuss things and he is not afraid to listen to them whatever their beliefs are but he can also tell them whatever he believes. He does not approach the conversation as a war between Islam and Christianity but as a good way to relate to one another and get to know each other well. He says that he can see how they reason differently and the impediments they have in receiving Christ. He also gives them time to share on what it means to be a Muslim and why they do the things they do as he gets to share what Christianity means to him. And because the engagement is not a fight, it becomes a discussion. The Bishop said that 'whenever he shared,' most of the men present end up seeing something special about Jesus and the work that he is doing through the Bishop's life. He also has opportunities to do crusades in stadiums, and he can call on pastors and people to work together to bring people to Christ. After the peace sessions, he guides the participants on how to care for this flock through with teachings, seminars, and fellowships.

The Bishop asks that people think about others like him. He challenges them to think and meditate on their mission and vision and what they should do. He thinks they should come up with something like a certain forum of people who are involved in making leaders on a 'high level' and then come up with some of the people that can be of some help in thinking together

about this. They can help him also to develop what he is trying to develop because there are other areas that he needs other people also to assist. This is the area that he has been praying and thinking over and over in his prayer life. The Bishop stated that he is not saying that he knows everything, or that he can do things alone. He also said that he cannot hold the view that things cannot be made better because if he involves people who know how to make things better, together they can help people. He acknowledged that sometimes one may have good things, but you don't know how to put them together and that sometimes he may do them, but they don't result to what he wants to accomplish. He believes that if one creates an enabling environment, that environment can also create more good things such that people will be surprised by what Christ can do.

Report Preparation Information

Peninah Kimiri and David Ngaruiya prepared this report.

Bishop Maisha was interviewed on Friday, August 9th, 2013.