

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR ROBI GIDEON FROM U.S.A.

Rev. Gideon Robi was born in Kenya, in Nakuru County, a place called Bondeni. He was a member and a pastor of Africa inland Church before he went to the USA in 1995. He is married to one wife and blessed with two sons who are 24 and 18 years, who were born in America, because they left Kenya only nine months after their wedding. Robi is born and brought up in Kikuyu culture.

He left for the USA in 1995 and joined Beulah Heights University where he did his undergraduate degree in theology, and later joined Lutherise Seminary for master's degree in Divinity and graduated in 1999. His expectations were very high about work, money and general life, only to find that it was opposite. He never expected a poor person, only to find someone with a placard written 'I work for food'. The challenge also was for housing. On arriving to the US, they were accommodated in a different hostel with his wife, before they secured their apartment.

Robi said that in the USA he thought that he will be taken with the esteem of the pastor as in Kenya only to find the opposite. He had to work in a restaurant and gas station for money. He pointed out that his first job was to cook chicken in a hotel. Mobility was another challenge because one has to move quickly to beat the time because time keeping is paramount. While in the USA, he had to do another driving test so as to be given an American driving license, because the Kenyan one couldn't work there. He borrowed a vehicle from a friend and luckily passed the test. Because of convenience, a vehicle in the US is a necessity rather than luxury.

Robi pointed out that language barrier was a challenge because, in Kenya he studied British English, which has different words meaning different with the American ones. Accent and pronunciation of words was also a problem. He said that men are slow in adopting the American accent than women. He couldn't easily understand the American's accent but now he is okay. American youths have a lot of independence unlike Kenyans who are still under their parents even after 18 years. Students in the US are education loans which are repaid when they get employment.

Robi said that no time wasting in the US because they have a 24-hour economy, so everybody is busy and that is why they do cashless transactions in their business and money operations. In Kenya we use notes and coins and so there must be someone to attend to you. I wish we will get there. According to Robi, education system is to meet a career life of a child but not general as we do in Kenya. In Kenya we thank God that we are moving in this direction slowly. We are in grade four of competence based curriculum.

On the side of food, Robi said that the most eaten food is chicken and hamburger, unlike Kenya, our staple food is Ugali. Culturally, Robi said that the blacks are discriminated by the whites, but each one must look for a way of dealing with this. Everybody fights for his or her space and right. Another thing he said was about

women verse men. Women in America are overprotected and empowered than men. Women are given top positions in government and other sectors. Openness and accountability is a virtual one cannot escape; they are in the stream of blood. Do the right thing at the right place at the right time.

He being in BHU, he said that his life changed a lot from the learning he got from BHU. He learnt a lot on ethos, ethics, and mannerism, which makes him cope well with the people and challenges in the USA. Having studied theology and being a pastor he was shocked to see pastor who are polygamous and Christians engaging in sex before marriage. This is an abomination to Kenyans and is punishable by the church administration, leading to excommunication. He benefited a lot from BHU, because he is sound in doctrine and he is able to curry his children ministry well. While in BHU, Robi acquired a green card which gave him a permanent stay in the US. His credentials from the BHU enabled him to register the school he is leading, and also to mobilize funds to do the children ministry.

Being brought up in Kenya, Robi had to adjust as he planned to visit Kenya. He came as a Kenyan but not Americans. He said that he cannot forget his native language even if he stays a hundred years. This wasn't a big problem to him but maybe to those he was to meet. He had to adjust on food, environment and other few things which were not a big challenge to him. He knew that family and friends would like handouts. If not given, they would term him proud and arrogant.

I wish to admit that I learnt a lot from Robi and his interview has complemented well with our course 'interpersonal Cultural Communication'. Thanks prof. and Robi.