

Unfavorable Odds

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Episode 16: Happily Broken

Guest: Clementine Bihiga
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Clementine: So when I was eight years old everything just changed in a blink of an eye. One day I'm happy. I'm the happiest kid waiting to wake up to go to school. The next day I'm woken up with bombs exploding—

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Clementine: —and people shouting. My mom woke us up and she said “Hurry up. Get up. Let's go. Let's go.” I saw that the street was filled with a lot of people just running all kinds of directions, people shouting, “Run for your life,” and bullets just flying in the crowd. I was just very confused / very frightened not knowing where my life was going to go from that time.

Kim: From the FamilyLife podcast network, this is *Unfavorable Odds*. I'm Kim Anthony.

Unfavorable Odds is all about finding hope and help in those seasons of life when things get pretty difficult. Jesus has promised us that whenever we walk through those dark tough times, He's always going to be with us. We'll never have to do it alone. So on each episode of this podcast, we'll be talking with people who have learned how, in those dark places of life, to draw their strength from Jesus.

Have you ever sat around a campfire and watched the sparks fly up from the flames? Well Job 5 says “Yet a man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.” In other words, it's inevitable, we're going to experience trouble in this life at one time or another. And for some people, that trouble comes time after time after time.

This was the case for Clementine Bihiga. Clementine and I had a conversation, and I thought her story was both compelling and powerful. She spent the first nine years of her life in Rwanda. She escaped the genocide that was taking place there and immigrated to the US. But there were other members of her family who did not survive.

Once in the US, she continued to face problems. She was bullied in school. She experienced a problem pregnancy and even struggled with thoughts of suicide. What you'll hear is a woman who is joyful in spite of what she's been through. And from her story you'll learn that her joy is not a result of what happens in this life but who she belongs to.

How did your family escape?

Clementine: Well, my mother was pregnant at that time. She was about eight months pregnant. So she got into a small sedan that my family had. But myself and my two brothers, we had to *walk* beside the car, and kind of just followed it with a whole bunch of other people in the crowd—just moving towards one direction which at this time, most of the people were going to Congo which was Zaire at that time.

Kim: Okay.

Clementine: Some people made it; some didn't. But fortunately my family did. But when we got to Congo, I wasn't with my parents. I wasn't with my mom.

Kim: What happened?

Clementine: Something had happened, and a bomb had exploded and there was chaos. People had fallen to the ground. Others were screaming and running. You know just body parts and at that time, we kind of lost track of where the car was. But fortunately, myself and my brothers were safe. We kept walking together until we got in Congo.

At that time, I didn't really know whether I was going to see my parents again. I was just an eight-year-old still trying to figure out what in the world is going on and hoping for the best but not really thinking far ahead. Like tomorrow will be this. Tomorrow will be this.

Kim: Right.

Clementine: I was just in survival mode trying to make sense of everything that was happening.

Kim: Who took care of you? Your parents weren't there.

Clementine: No. God really. God never forsakes His people and I—you know growing up in a church, I knew that there was a higher power that was protecting me and I kind of just was there doing what I needed to do to survive. There were some people that would pass by on the side of the road and throw me food with other kids that were there. We were kind of all in an abandoned area and people would just throw us food and we would get it and eat it.

Kim: So all the kids would huddle together?

Clementine: Yes. Yes.

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Clementine: We were pretty much a group of kids that were kind of lost and not knowing where we were going / not knowing where our parents were. I remember there was this adult, she's actually a mother of friends of ours. She happened to come at one point and be with us and take care of us, but then she ended up leaving, too. We kind of just stayed there and waited for the best.

Kim: That had to be a *scary* experience.

Clementine: It was very, very scary. Not knowing where your future is going, not knowing if you're ever going to see your parents, if you're ever going to see your other siblings and most importantly, not knowing what's going on at all.

Kim: Right.

Clementine: That was the scariest moment.

Kim: You didn't even know *why* these things were happening.

Clementine: I didn't know why. All I know is people were saying "Kill him. Kill him." But I wasn't sure, kill who? Why? Later on, I did come to find out that there was a war between the ethnicities and the president had been killed, and so all that caused a big upheaval.

Kim: Okay.

Clementine: And it was the folks, just regular citizens, that were really caught up in it. Like I said, I came to find that out way later. I didn't know what was going on at the age of eight.

Kim: When did you reconnect with your parents? What was the situation surrounding you reconnecting with your parents?

Clementine: There were radios broadcasting whereabouts of children that were lost, and my parents heard about that. They were just kind of driving around.

Kim: Just looking for you.

Clementine: Yes, just looking for us. I remember sitting outside on a rock and feeling so hopeless. I was hot and hungry and dirty—you know, disheveled. I was so hopeless, but then, I looked up down the road and I saw some lights coming towards me. As the lights got closer, I realized it was my parent's white sedan. I was overjoyed! I was like thank you Jesus!

This is the end of the nightmare. I'm going to go back home. We're going to go back home, and everything will go back to normal. Little did I know that that wasn't going to

happen. We actually didn't go home. I haven't been back home since 1994. I haven't been back to Rwanda.

Kim: Wow. Where did you go?

Clementine: So we went to live in refugee camps. Well before we went in refugee camps, we did go into a house where we didn't stay long because we were robbed, and my mom had a gun pointed at her. This was actually the police that was robbing us, thinking we had money because there was a really nice car parked close to our house. So they thought that was our car. So the police came and demanded my mom to give her the keys. She said that's not our car. They thought she was lying so they beat her.

Kim: Oh no.

Clementine: Yes, she had just had a baby at that point. We just decided that wasn't a safe place to be. So we went to stay in refugee camps. Life there was, oh my goodness. You are lucky to wake up and find yourself breathing.

Kim: Really?

Clementine: Yes.

Kim: Describe what that's like.

Clementine: So imagine like a huge empty field where people are just coming with little belongings—maybe like a small mat with a few things to eat—maybe like rice or beans or a couple pods. Children—A lot of the families had a lot of kids, right.

So you just sit up there and there are like hundreds and hundreds of families like that. There is no bathroom at that point. There are no toilets. Our only source of water was Lake Kivu which unfortunately bodies were being thrown in there also because there were so many dead bodies day and night that people will just throw the bodies in the lake. That was our source of water for drinking.

Kim: Now these bodies, did they come from people being murdered or just people dying in the refugee camps?

Clementine: Both. Yes, both. At first, they would put them on the side of the road. But then, at one point, there were just too many so they would have big trucks come and carry them and put them in the back of the truck and they'll go and dump them in the water.

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Clementine: Yes, and so because of that more and more people were dying. Cholera, typhoid, malnutrition, malaria—I mean all these were diseases that people were catching it one day and you're given two days or three days and you're dead.

So it's an absolute miracle that I am alive, and my siblings are alive, and my parents are alive.

Kim: You are true overcomers. In your book *Happily Broken* you talk about the last time you swam.

Clementine: Yes. I went to the lake one day to fetch some water to cook. I also had a shirt with me that I needed to go wash. It was like a shirt dress that my mom had gotten me. So before we wore anything, we had to wash it first. Because you just never knew what could have infected it. But the irony of it is I was washing it in the Lake Kivu that was infested.

Kim: Right. That's mind boggling and you were gathering water from this lake with bodies floating around to use to cook. That just blows my mind.

Clementine: To cook and drink and shower—everything.

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Clementine: Everything. Right. Right.

So I go and I put the jerrycan down. Jerrycan is like this big plastic can that we use to fetch water. So while I put it down to get some water, I put my shirt on the side. At this point there are waves coming in and out, in and out. A big wave comes and takes my shirt. I start panicking because I need to get this shirt or else my mom was going to whup my butt, right? [Laughter]

But I didn't know how to swim so I'm wondering what am I going to do? I don't want to go in there and drown. So I needed to figure out a way to go and get the shirt. So I decided to go and swim and get the shirt, right?

So I'm thinking if I go in the water slowly and lay on something that I can kind of use as my anchor and then keep pushing forward until I grab the shirt, I'll be able to make it, right?

Kim: Yes.

Clementine: It makes sense to me at that time. So I go in the water and I find a log, right? I lay on it and I keep pushing and moving forward. As soon as I'm at arm's length of the shirt, I make a small hop to get the shirt. As soon as I grab the shirt, the log turns

and it's a dead body just staring at me. At that time I freeze. I have nowhere to go. I don't have no one to turn to. I can't swim. I can't just get up and walk.

But then, in a split second, it's like a different source of power just came over me. I got up and turned around so fast and I was swimming for my life. I didn't even think about that shirt. This was like a fight or flight moment and I was swimming so fast.

Every time I think about that moment I think about Mike Phelps when he's swimming. [Laughter] I'm thinking if someone would have put me next to Mike Phelps at that time, I would have beat him back to the shore. [Laughter]

As soon as I got to the shore, I forgot how to swim. Even now I still can't swim. I just kind of go in the water and just act like I'm swimming make sure my feet are touching the ground. [Laughter]

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Clementine: But that was the first and last time I swum.

Kim: Clementine, that is really an incredible story. I can't imagine being so young and seeing this dead body in the water and miraculously swimming ashore. It is obvious that God had more in store for you. He had a plan. He was not done with you yet.

Clementine: And the sad thing is as human beings our minds they get used to what you see every day. So at that age, as young as I was, seeing dead bodies every day, that was just the new norm, right? So we'd just walk around and see a dead body and hop over it.

Some kids would be walking around, and they'd see a dead body with a nice jacket or a nice shirt, they'd take off the shirt and put it on. I mean it was just—it was survival.

Kim: Now on your way back home from that incident something else happened to you.

Clementine: Right, so I'm walking back home, and I do have the water, no shirt. I'm still confused. I don't know what just happened. Like I just swum. I'm still like: what in the world? What kind of power came over me?

I go to cross the street, and in the midst of all that confusion, a motorcycle almost hits me. It almost runs me over. With that I get so scared. I see that the motorcyclist is so mad. He gets off the motorcycle and starts running after me.

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Clementine: And so I stay with the water and start running. But I'm thinking "Okay, this is weighing me down. All this water is weighing me down and this guy, if he catches me, he is going to kill me."

Kim: Oh goodness.

Clementine: So I throw the water down and I just run for my life. At this point I'm like what in the world is going on with me today? [Laughter]

Like this is what they say waking up on the wrong side of the bed. I mean I'm running and running as fast as my little feet could take me and I hear his foot steps getting closer and closer and closer and closer. And finally, I feel this guy just grab me from behind and lift me up and my feet are like dangling and he looks at me straight in my face and starts slapping me.

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Clementine: And he's yelling something that I don't even understand, and he beats me and beats me and rips off my clothes and I'm thinking "God, please don't let him rape me" because I had—

Kim: He ripped off your clothes?

Clementine: Yes, he was beating me to the point where like my clothes were ripped off and—

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Clementine: —right. It's like something possessed him. This time I'm like I don't care if you kill me but I'm thinking just don't rape me because that's something that was common in refugee camps and with refugees.

Kim: And you're a little girl. How old are you?

Clementine: Eight.

Kim: Eight. And you already knew what—

Clementine: Yes, I already know what all that is. I already know.

Kim: Were there not other people around you who could stop him?

Clementine: No, no. I don't remember seeing anyone because at that point it was in a very rural area and I had to go through this small narrow road in the bushes to get to where I was going.

Kim: Okay.

Clementine: Right. So that's where the incident happened, and he kept beating me. At one point, I feel like I lost conscious and he drug me to the ground and left. I remember when he drug me, the last thought I had in my mind was "Thank God, he didn't rape me and I'm still alive."

Kim: Oh Clementine.

Clementine: So after a few minutes I wake up and see that I was badly bruised but then I go back and get the water because I knew we needed the water to make dinner. So I go back and get it and walk back to the house.

When I get at the house, my mom looks at me really worried and she asked me what happened? What's going on? I say "Mom, I fell." She looked at me—you know that mother's look that she—

Kim: Yes, momma knows.

Clementine: Yes, she knows more happened, but she didn't even want to get into it just because—I mean there was just so much going on and I don't think she wanted to hear the truth. I honestly think that she thought I had been raped. She thought the worst. Worse than what had actually happened.

It wasn't until years and years later that I told her what happened, and I wasn't raped at that incident. But I was just happy to be alive. And that is actually one of the defining moments in my life where I sat down, and I was like "Hmm, things could be worse."

Kim: Really?

Clementine: Yes, things could be worse because this guy didn't kill me, and he didn't rape me. So from there my perspective of life really changed. At that age, things could be worse.

And even now that's where it all comes from with me being positive and trying to find the good out of the bad. It's because things could be worse.

Kim: Do you think that positive attitude you've had has enabled you to go through such difficult things in your life and come out on the other side still believing in good / still being able to be happy. I mean your book; it's entitled *Happily Broken*. Most people don't associate brokenness with happiness. But you do.

Clementine: I think so. It's so funny you bring this up because the other day I had friends over, and I was telling them how at one point I went to see a therapist because people would tell me you really need to see a therapist. You've gone through so much

and you must be depressed and everything. I was like you know what? Let me just go see one and talk to one and see what they say.

I divulged to the therapist and I said, “I don’t really think I’m depressed or unhappy because every day when I wake up, I am legit excited to be awake.” In my mind every time I wake up and I’m like this is a new day of big possibilities, and every day I feel like something awesome is going to happen to me. Or someone that’s close to me. And if it doesn’t happen that day, I’m like there’s tomorrow. [Laughter]

Kim: Tomorrow. Maybe tomorrow. Oh my goodness.

Clementine: She did tell me. She said “You do have anxiety. You have positive anxiety.”

Kim: Positive anxiety?

Clementine: Why do you have to put a negative to anxiety? You know what I’m saying? Like it doesn’t make any sense.

Kim: I need to look that one up because I don’t know what positive anxiety is.

Clementine: Yes, and I’m like are you diagnosing me with anxiety only that it’s positive? I think that maybe she says that because she felt that if nothing grand happens to me that day, then I get sad. But I don’t.

Because the following day that I wake up is like a fish. A fish has a memory of like three seconds. I’m like a fish. Every morning I wake up like “Whoa!”

Kim: Today might be the day!

Clementine: Today is the—Not even might—Is the day.

Kim: There you go. Today is the day. Your positivity is contagious. It really is.

Clementine: Well, thank you. Thank you.

Kim: Now take me back to the time in Africa. You’ve gone through these very difficult experiences. You are in the camp. What happened next?

Clementine: So what happens next is at that time my father was in Kenya. He went to Kenya to try to see if he can get us out of the refugee camps. Fortunately, my family and other refugee families were able to get settled in Kenya. So a lot of us were sent in Kenya.

A big airplane came and took us, and we went and lived in refugee settlements. These were like the ghettos of South Africa. The ghettos there where a lot of refugees were there and we kind of fueled refugee communities and started doing our own thing.

We set up like dancing communities where I was one of the dancers. My sister and I were dancers. We would travel the nation to perform for like heads of state that would come from different countries. We were so fortunate.

They would pay our dance team and our directors would buy bags of food like rice and beans and sugar and flour. They'd divide it among the dancers, and we would be able to take it home and feed our families. So a lot of us survived that way.

Our parents would find odd jobs here and there and try to survive. My family was very fortunate because we did have some folks here in the US and occasionally, they would send us money here and there. Because I have eight brothers and sisters. It was a big family that my parents had to feed.

When we were lucky, we would eat bread once a week and that would be on a Sunday before church and each one would get like one slice and that was like heaven. So in my mind I was thinking I'm dancing, and I loved dancing.

So I was having fun doing it and feeding my family at the same time. Hey, that's not so bad! So I started feeling like I was a contributing member to the family, and I was taking care of people and that just brought so much joy to me.

Kim: Now you were living in a safer place, but you still had family members who were still in danger.

Clementine: Yes. So we were living in a safer place, yes. But we were still the target of—I wouldn't say racism because we were all black, but just being different. We were immigrants in a different African nation. The police would come and harass us.

Kim: Again?

Clementine: Yes, the police would come and harass us and thinking that we have money coming from foreign countries like the west. Sometimes they would come and take our parents and take them to jail.

Kim: For no reason at all?

Clementine: For no reason.

Kim: So a lot of corruption?

Clementine: Oh yes. There was a lot of corruption.

I remember one time they took my dad in jail and we didn't know if we were ever going to see him again, but they brought him back after like three days. Yes, no crime. Nothing. They just take you. You don't have anything. They bring you back.

Kim: Okay.

Clementine: Yes. But even though we were in a safer environment, back in Rwanda things were still not stable and I had family that was in danger.

Kim: Tell me about your aunt and what happened with her.

Clementine: Yes, so in 1997, we received news that my aunt didn't have family. Most of my family had been killed. This is something that we were kind of just used to. Anytime you'd get a letter and say so and so was killed.

But that particular incident really stuck with me because I loved this aunt. She was my mom's younger sister. She looked like my mother.

She was such a happy woman, a go getter, and she had just given birth. Her baby was less than a week old. So they were sleeping. They had just celebrated having the baby and my uncle—so her brother had received a scholarship to go to study in France. So this was huge, huge for the family. So he had gone there to say bye to them also. So it was such a happy, a happy night.

In the middle of the night when they were sleeping, they heard some knocks on the door and when my aunt's husband went to open, they shot him right there, not really knowing who he was or why. They shot him.

That time my aunt stayed in the bedroom but my uncle—so my aunt's brother and my cousin were in the living room area. So my uncle stood right in front of my cousin to shield him from getting shot. So the people shot my uncle and the bullet went through him and killed him and went through my cousin behind him and they both fell on the ground.

But my cousin did not die. But he did act like he was dead so that the people could leave. So they stayed there and decided they had killed everyone. At that time my aunt had gone under the bed with the baby. So they thought they had killed everyone.

So they left and then, when they were about 20 feet from the house, my aunt thought they were gone. So she got out from under the bed with the baby and she turned on the light. She started crying and screaming for help. So those people heard her, and they turned around and saw there was a light in the house. They came back and they had to finish what they had started.

This whole time my cousin is in pain. He has a bullet in his shoulder. He's hearing everything and watching but he can not move. So he watches the men come back in. They put the baby on the floor, and they step on the baby. They cut up my aunt, and my cousin was watching everything.

So they leave and the next morning my cousin finally wakes up and calls for help. People come in and they're looking around and they're like who is calling for help? What happened here? They're all stunned. What had took was the night before because they were there celebrating also. So my cousin calls from somewhere. He's like "They killed everyone but I'm still alive. Please help."

So the neighbors come and take my cousin to the hospital. He eventually goes to live with my grandmother who passed away about three years ago. But he had his bullets in his body the whole time. One of my biggest prayers / my biggest wishes was for him to come to the US one day so they could take out the bullet and just try to live a normal life, as normal as it could get for him.

So my prayers were answered. He eventually was able to come to the US through the visa lottery. He's here but they couldn't take out the bullet. The bullet is still in his body, but it's embedded in his body. It would cause more damage to take it out so he's going to live with that bullet forever. A reminder of that night in 1997.

Kim: Wow. When I hear you describe that, it breaks my heart to know that there are people out there who are so evil who would do something like that to any person and then an innocent baby—

Clementine: An innocent baby.

Kim: —who could do nothing to harm anyone.

Clementine: Right, right.

Kim: As you describe that, as you remember even finding out that information, where was God in the middle of that?

Clementine: I was so angry. I was so angry hearing that. I was a teenager in Kenya and I just kept saying "You know what, life is not fair. Why?" And little did I know that hundreds of families were facing the same reality. This got my siblings and I to always challenge my parents on our faith.

Kim: Really?

Clementine: Oh yes. We would all sit down around the table. We grew up Catholic. My dad would say "Bring your rosaries. We're going to pray." A lot of us wouldn't even want

to do it. But out of respect we would come and do it. But we would ask him why? Why do all these things happen? Where is God?

And my dad answer would say: Do you know Jesus? Do you know what Jesus went through? Do you know that Jesus was perfect, and He went through that? Are you perfect? No. Was your aunt perfect? Was your uncle perfect? Did they suffer? Yes. Did Jesus suffer? Yes. It's going to happen because there is still sin in this world. I'm like "Jesus, we are all sinners."

But we challenged my dad on faith. We still do sometimes. We still do and now we are older. We read a lot. My family is a very growth-oriented family. We like getting in debates about many things including Christianity and faith. So sometimes we sit down and we're like "Man, why does that happen?"

Kim: Now do you *question* your faith? Do you question what Jesus did on the cross for you as an adult? Or do you just wonder the why's as you just mentioned?

Clementine: No, no. I wonder the why's sometimes but then I've also come to terms with accepting that I'm just human and I have limited knowledge and some things I will never know why. *But*, like I told you, the best is yet to come. I just know that the best is yet to come *period*.

Whether I'm confused, whether I wake up with the biggest migraine, or my kids are driving me nuts, the best is yet to come. And I'll be here waiting for it and it's going to happen.

So I never question my faith as to: Did Jesus die on the cross for me? No, I can't question that. Does Jesus love me more than anyone or anything ever? Yes. Is He always going to take care of me and my children no matter whether I understand or not? Yes. So let's move on; the best is yet to come.

Kim: Amen. Amen.

Now your family eventually moved to the U.S. What was the process like for you to get here?

Clementine: A lot of folks want to come to the US. I'll tell you that and it's really like a lottery to come to the U.S. There are steps that you have to go through in order for you to get that visa saying you're going to the U.S. For my family it was a five-year process.

Kim: Five years.

Clementine: Yes.

Kim: Is that the norm?

Clementine: No, our process was actually shorter. There are folks that probably started applying to come to the US the same time we applied and they're still back in Kenya.

Kim: Still waiting.

Clementine: Yes, still waiting because everybody wants to come here. That's what I tell people in the U.S. Like you've got it so good! You just don't know. [Laughter]

So it was a five-year process, mainly, because my family would apply, and they'd get denied saying "You know what, there's no room." Or "There are other families that are worse off that need to go," and it's true because my family was one of the luckiest.

I mean like I have all my siblings. They all have their limbs. None of them are like chronically ill or injured or anything like that. But we had folks that had lost their limbs and they needed to come to the U.S to be taken care of.

So at one point I was mad about that but then I was it could be worse. Seriously, things could be worse. But every year we would get denied until the fifth year we were told if you come back to apply, we are sending you back to Africa—I mean to Rwanda. So we were kind of like okay we're just going to chill here. We're good.

Kim: You don't want to go back there.

Clementine: We don't want to go back. We don't know how the situation is. It's not safe. So we're just going to hang out and do the best we could with what we have.

But then, like two weeks later we got a letter in the mail saying that we were going to come to the U.S in like two weeks. We were all like: What? What just happened? I feel like a ninja just went in in the computer and just arranged some things and an automatic letter was sent out to us. So that's when the real preparations to come to the U.S. started.

Kim: Okay.

Clementine: So we have to attend classes to teach us how to behave once we got to the U.S.

Kim: Okay.

Clementine: This is the U.S. This is the western world and we are from the dark continent—

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Clementine: —of Africa and uncivilized and so—

Kim: Is that what the perspective was?

Clementine: Yes, yes! Because you know what, you've got to understand, even me when I was in Africa and was told I was coming to the U.S, I felt like I wasn't good enough and I needed these classes. You just don't know what to expect.

Kim: Right.

Clementine: But in the way the U.S. is portrayed on TV, everything is clean. There is no hunger. It's like paradise. Money grows on trees and people don't get sick. I mean it's paradise. Kids are always playing in the park / swinging. They eat all these great looking colored foods while we're eating like greens and fufu. [Laughter] As an eight-year-old you just don't know what to expect.

Kim: Right, I can understand that.

Clementine: So we're going to class and we had all these books that had like drawings of kids in the U.S. and the life in the U.S. and I did not see any black kids in there. I was like wow. So we're going to be like the only black folks in that country, right? [Laughter]

So at that time, I'm thinking about my future life in the U.S. I'm very idealistic and I like thinking big and doing big. In my mind I'm like: Oh my gosh, I'm going to go and I'm going to have all white friends and I'm going to play with their long soft silky hair.

Because we would have missionaries come back home. We thought they were like coming straight from heaven because all the pictures of Jesus and the angels—everything—they were all white, right?

So we were like these people are closer to God than we are so going to the U.S. is going to get me closer to the white people. So I'm only going to have the white friends and I'm going to marry a white man. We're going to have beautiful mixed kids. So I'd look at like Mariah Carey and all the mixed— [Laughter]

You know that's everything I was thinking about. Then I get here—I get to the airport—and I'm like wait a minute. [Laughter] Especially the airport in New York.

Kim: Lots of different cultures.

Clementine: Yes, different cultures and it's not so clean like I thought. I tell you the airport back home was cleaner, right? I'm looking like all these cultures, all these black folks and so I'm thinking "Oh, they're all refugees. They all came from back home." [Laughter]

But then someone would talk to me and I'm like Wow! Their English is pretty good! [Laughter] Better than my English. Like which immigration class did they go to come here speaking like this.

So the perception definitely changed as soon as I got here and got to really see the reality of life in the U.S. especially as an immigrant. We do have our own challenges.

Kim: Yes, right. So tell me what it was like going to school in the U.S. How was it different from what you had experienced?

Clementine: It was very different. The biggest difference I saw was the way students treated their teachers. I was so disgusted. I felt like the students I went to school with did not have any respect for their teachers. Back home teachers are like—I mean they are the ones that hold the knowledge, right?

So we respect them just like we respect our pastors and our priests. And the beauty of it is they are teaching you, but they also know your parents and they have a relationship with your parents. So you're not going to go to school and act crazy, right?

But then here, I remember one time, I'm never going to forget this incident. I was in grade school and my teacher was writing something on the board. It was math class. These kids took some paper and rolled it up and started throwing it at him.

I remember I looked at that and I ducked under the table and I was like what did I just see? What if he thinks it's me and tells my parents? I was amazed and stunned at how little respect the teachers get. To the point where I didn't even want to go to school. Like I didn't even want to be part of it.

Also to see how elders are treated here in America. Back home elders—they are like the wisest in the community and we do everything for them. Because they've done their share in caring for us, right?

Kim: Right.

Clementine: But here I learned about nursing homes here in America. I get that the culture here in America is very different. So that was something that was definitely a culture shock for me. Also, going to high school and experiencing some bullying. That was hard for me.

Back home I was the popular kid in school, and I did very well in school. My parents were well known, and this was all before the genocide. And even after I went to Kenya, I was an exemplary kid in school, so I was always like the prefect—meaning like the head of the class and things like that.

So coming here I thought if I just behaved the same, I would be just fine. Like I don't need to come here and be the prefect, but I would make friends and just live a normal

life. Oh no, it was totally different. Just the fact that I had an accent was a trigger for people to say mean things about me. The fact that I was from Africa or I had a different name was just calling for all this bullying. That unfortunately, 95% of it came from my fellow African Americans and not the white Americans.

Kim: That's so sad.

Clementine: It's very sad.

Kim: It's sad wherever it comes from but to expect that people who look like you and who may go through similar discrimination elsewhere would not accept you and embrace you.

Clementine: Right. The more I went through that and the more I learned about it and I kind of put two and two together and I was like this is just like a form of self-hate.

Kim: That's interesting.

Clementine: Also to add to that. I was here. I came here in the U.S. as a refugee because of another form of self-hate back home.

Kim: Explain self-hate for me. How do you define that in this context?

Clementine: The way I define it in this context is we are both black and we all know that we immigrated from Africa. Some of us came because we wanted to. Some came because we needed to. Some came out of force, right?

Kim: Right.

Clementine: But we all come from the same place. I am the true connection to your roots. I literally just got off the boat. Like you should be wanting to get close to me to learn more about you.

Kim: More about the culture, yes.

Clementine: —about the culture so that you can have some kind of reference. I'm right here and I want to be accepted. But you don't like me because I'm from where you're from. That's self-hate. That is the simplest way of self-hate—not wanting to know where you come from.

Kim: And rejecting those who do.

Clementine: Who do, right. Right. But then I saw that, and then I would hear in other conversations some African Americans saying they robbed me of my history and this and this.

Oh, do you have any African friends. No, I just can't. No they're African. They smell weird. They eat weird. Oh, so if somebody robbed you of something and you have the opportunity to get it back or at least some of it, wouldn't you want to get it? Do you know what I'm saying?

Kim: Yes.

Clementine: Wouldn't you want it? I feel like it's all about a mind shift. Stop playing the victim and go get what you know you deserve.

Kim: That's good.

Clementine: But we are differentiating ourselves so much even though we are the same people. I believe it doesn't matter what color you are, we are all really human and we all desire one thing.

But when even like a smaller segment of people who are from the same place are not going to get along because of something as petty as you have an accent, or you eat different food. How do we expect the whole world to get together?

Kim: Well tell me this: How do you help people to understand what you said? How do you help them to realize that you know what—I mean if we think about it, we all descend from two people. So wherever your immediate ancestors came from, we all come from two people?

So as you're trying to help people to accept each other more, accept each other's differences, embrace and learn from each other, I imagine there could be someone listening to this interview right now who may have someone different in their workplace or in their school and they don't quite know what to do about that, and maybe they're *scared* of the unknown.

Clementine: That's real.

Kim: Yes, what would you say to that person?

Clementine: That's real and if you are scared to go to someone because they are different, they're also scared to come to you.

Kim: That's a good point.

Clementine: Yes, because I've been there. I have been there where I would be sitting, and I look at someone and I'm like they're so different from me, but I've been rejected before because of who I am, where I came from, how I sound, how I look.

So I'm just not going to open up a can of worms and go and be rejected. I have had people tell me the same thing. They don't want to come to me because they don't know how to approach me. They think I might be offended. Especially in this environment where you have to be politically correct about every single thing.

Kim: Yes, what if I say something wrong? What if I say something offensive?

Clementine: Exactly. Right, right. So we are all looking for ways to connect because that's in our human nature. We are social beings.

Kim: Yes, we are made for relationships.

Clementine: Exactly. People are yearning for that. If you feel that way, the other person is feeling the same way. So just get up and make the first step and go talk to them. That could be your next best friend / your life time best friend that you never thought you had anything in common. But they are going to make your life so rich and they might change your life forever.

Because a lot of people that I have in my life that have made a huge impact in my life are people that are totally different from me. Like we had nothing in common in the beginning except for love. We just want to love on each other period.

Kim: Yes, that's powerful. It really is.

Clementine: Love connects all of us and we all want and yearn and seek that love.

Kim: So true. Well, you made it through high school. Then you went on to college and you describe that there was a difference there. Something happened.

Clementine: Yes, so in high school, like I said, with all the bullying, I was very, very quiet—like such an introvert. I would go home from school and I'd be my usual self: active in my Rwanda community. I'd still be doing the dancing—very lively. As soon as I go to school, I'd shut it all down. It was like living a double life.

Kim: Yes.

Clementine: It was hard! Because when I was at school, I wasn't Clementine. I wasn't who I was. After four years, people had this perception of me that I'm mean. I'm always angry. I'm rude. I don't talk to anybody. Because I had to protect myself.

Kim: Right.

Clementine: I remember sometimes I wouldn't even want to go be with anyone. So during lunch, I would go and lock myself in a bathroom stall and just act like I'm using

the bathroom. I would just sit there for the whole lunch period until the bell rung and then I'd go back in class.

Kim: So what you're describing, it sounds like fear stole your identity.

Clementine: Yes. Yes. Because I was afraid to be who I was and little did I know that being who I was, was going to free me from so much. I felt like I had a huge weight on my shoulder every time I walked in the class. So when I graduated, I wasn't even able to walk.

Kim: Graduating from high school?

Clementine: From high school, yes. I wasn't even able to walk because I was so embarrassed and ashamed, and I didn't want to be part of it. I wasn't happy. What was I celebrating? A high school diploma where I was miserable every single day of my life.

But my dad still made me go watch [Laughter] the whole ceremony. I remember when they called my name, no one answered and there was silence and they called my name three times—silence and I watched where I would have been if I had been myself in high school and not let fear rule over me.

Like this was a moment where I was supposed to celebrate. I had gone through so much and I had survived, and I was graduating from high school, but I was MIA when I was actually supposed to be celebrating because of the choices I had made. Because of letting fear block me from being who I was, from living fully. This is something that happens to us in life.

Kim: It does.

Clementine: We all want to pursue things. I want to be this. I want to be this. But you're afraid of being rejected. You're afraid of what people will think of you. Your go getter attitude, all of a sudden, just vanishes and you don't know who you are. You look at yourself in the mirror. You're like: Who is this?

And you just let fear keep you from living fully / from living a life of intention, and when it's time to finally shine, you're not there because you were never really you. So I made a decision that when I go to college, I was going to change. I was going to change the way I live my life. I was going to be unapologetically Clementine. [Laughter]

Kim: I love that.

Clementine: And that I was.

Kim: Unapologetically. [Laughter]

Clementine: I remember going in my college orientation and people would ask where I'm from. I would proudly get up and say "My name is Clementine Igilibambe. I know it's a mouthful." [Laughter]

"I'm from Rwanda and yes, I have an accent but I'm sure you can understand what I'm saying." Because I had some instances in high school where I would say something, and people would say "Repeat. I don't know what you just said. Your accent is too thick." I would know that they understand. They just—

Kim: —were being mean.

Clementine: —were being mean. So I was just myself. I started the Afrika club and started teaching people different dances for my country. I would host conferences and get the Rwanda community to cook food and bring it on campus. We would invite speakers to come and talk about Africa and its beauty and its challenges.

I mean it was beautiful and the whole campus was engaged. I was on like a first name basis with the president of the university, Dan Curran. He was such an awesome leader and just allowed me to be who I am—him and the whole administration.

Not too long I was featured in magazines. I would be published in different countries to recruit international students to come to the U.S. and study at the university. Because I let myself be the person that God created me to be—with me being a masterpiece.

Kim: Yes.

Clementine: Everyone being a masterpiece and having their own strength to contribute to the world and add value to people's lives. I let that finally happen and here I was, having the best time of my life in college.

When I graduated college, I was so sad. I didn't want to leave. [Laughter] I didn't want to leave because it was just a positive experience. I was not stressed. I was not trying to be who I wasn't. A lot of the students that I went to high school with would come in college and look at me and say, "Is this the same Clementine?" I'm like "Actually, this is not. This is the real deal." [Laughter]

Kim: It's real. I love that.

Clementine: This is the real Clementine.

Kim: And look at what they missed out. When we do not live out our authentic identities, we miss out on the joy that you just described. But the people around us also miss out on everything that we have to offer.

Clementine: Exactly. Which is why it is very important, it's so crucial to help people feel welcome even though you don't know where they are from. You don't know what they've gone through. You don't how their life perspective could change your life.

That's when I really found my passion for public speaking and motivational speaking in college. I started getting invitations from teachers and different professors to go in their classes and talk about my survival story and my perspective and inclusion and things like that. Then they would tell their friends at different colleges and so I'd get invited. Then I started speaking at conferences and then national conferences.

I just found that that was my calling. It's not like I had gone through *a lot* of—I had a huge life behind me that I was sharing. I was only like 19 years old.

Kim: But you had experienced a *lifetime* of pain in a sense—

Clementine: I did experience a lot of pain.

Kim: —when you think about it. Oh my goodness.

Clementine: If I hadn't of experienced any of that, would I have these opportunities to go and share my story and add value to people's lives? No.

So when I was in college, I was like you know what, this life is an adventure. Whatever comes my way, I might fall down and struggle because that's just life. But I'm always going to find what lesson is life teaching me and how can I use it to empower others and to add value in other's lives?

Instead of me thinking of myself as a victim forever from what I've gone through, how can I be a victor and come out and show others how to do that?

Kim: Yes.

Clementine: So every challenge that comes my way even now, I'm always like tomorrow will be a better day with better possibilities. I'm going to share what I've learned from this challenge and life goes on.

Those are the principles I also try to instill in my children. My eight-year-old—sometimes we talk about this and one time I was taking him to Chinese class. He takes Chinese classes on Tuesday and Thursdays. That morning he wasn't getting dressed as fast as he could and so I told him—I said “Christon,” and I'm looking at my watch—I'm saying, “I don't think we're going to make it on time today.” He's like “Mommy, why are you being so negative? [Laughter] You have to be optimistic mommy. You have to be optimistic. So in my head I'm like “Whoa, he's curing me with my own medicine.”

Kim: There you go. So you've done a great job of teaching him.

Clementine: I try. I try. You do your best and forget the rest. [Laughter]

Kim: Well it's wonderful how your life is a prime example of how God can take our pain and walk us into our purpose, right? There's a connection between pain and purpose, isn't there?

Clementine: Yes! There's always beauty at the end of it. He allows us to grow. It's kind of like when you are starting to run. You haven't been running for a long time and you start running or like lifting weights and your muscles are so much pain and you start thinking, is it even worth it? Like I went to work out yesterday and now I can't walk. Is it even worth it?

That's the same thing with pain that we go through physically / mentally—just different adversities that we go through. We are going through it and we're like is it even worth it? But going through that, just like your muscle, you're exercising it and you get stronger and stronger. Then all of a sudden, it's easier to just run. It's easier to lift that weight. Then you can get others and train them: Hey, run but you'll be okay.

So I equate that to just the kind of adversity that we go through. It's part of life. Are we going to be bitter that we are in pain? Or are we going to get better? It's really our choice. Even if sometimes you don't know why you are going through it, just have faith. Something good will come out of it.

Kim: Well you had a phenomenal college experience—

Clementine: I did.

Kim: —and you went on to become a speaker—national speaker—sharing your story, inspiring people, but that wasn't the end of the difficult parts of life for you.

Clementine: No and I thought it was girl. I was living my life and I got married and I enrolled in a graduate degree. I was going to get my master's degree. I mean the sky was the limit. That morning I wake up and I'm like something awesome is about to happen. Something awesome was happening.

So I had my first son and wanted a girl so bad! I always had a soft spot for girls because I wanted to have a girl who can get what I didn't get when I was a child because I was running.

There are a lot of things I don't know how to do now because I didn't really have a proper childhood. I don't know how to ride a bike. I don't know how to swim. I don't know how to do a lot of the things that my friends would ask "Remember that TV show?" I'm like "No."

Kim: No, I was fighting for my life at that time.

Clementine: Exactly. Exactly. So people kind of look at me like she's weird. She doesn't know how to do any of that. Like what was she doing?

But I wanted a little girl that I could teach all that stuff: play with Barbie's, go to get our nails done together, and things like that. So I prayed and prayed for a girl. I remember doing all this research on how to conceive a girl. I was all in it, girl. I was all in it. Low and behold I conceive a girl and when I found out that it was a girl that was like the happiest moment of my life.

I was like "God, thank you so much." I started going shopping for clothes. I remember I used to go to work and I would wear pink every single day. [Laughter] I'd put on pink lipstick / put on nice pink dresses.

I mean this was like the best pregnancy ever until at seven months pregnant. I was asleep and I woke up in the morning and usually my baby Clarette—that was her name—she would kick at night all the time. She was very, very active and I kept saying "Yes, this is my daughter. Never resting."

Then that night, I don't remember feeling her moving that night because I slept really, really well. I'm like something is wrong. I touch my tummy and I'm moving her around, but I don't hear anything—I don't feel any kicks or anything. I go in the fridge and get a cold drink of water—nothing. I remember reading things like drink orange juice and things like that. I try everything and no movement.

So that day I had a meeting and I was supposed to go into a meeting with my manager to see one of our clients. I called her and I said "Listen, I'm just going to go to the hospital real quick and get my baby checked because I haven't felt her move and just want to make sure everything's okay. So go ahead and go to the meeting and I'll meet you there in about an hour or so." She says "Okay, that's fine."

So she goes to the meeting and I go to the hospital and little did I know that I'll be there for the next three days. This was just two weeks before the baby shower. I walk in there and a nurse comes and looks for the heartbeat. Gets the ultrasound and looks for the heartbeat and just walks out without saying anything. I'm like this is not good.

At this time my husband was working in downtown Boston. So I'm like: Why did she just leave? Then another nurse comes in, does the ultrasound and they say "You know what, we'll go get a doctor. Just stay here." I'm thinking "You know what, this is not good."

Kim: Yes.

Clementine: So the doctor finally comes and lays me down and does another quick ultrasound. He said, "I'm sorry. There is no heartbeat." I said "Oh yes there is. There's a

heartbeat. I'm not going to accept that. I need a second opinion," but slowly by slowly I knew that my baby was gone. Another doctor came and said, "There's no heartbeat."

So at that time I was just like: Wow! Really God? Really? Like my life was going so well and You're just going to drop this on me? What am I supposed to do with this one? What do you want from me? What have I done to you? So I get angry and then I'm so confused.

At that time I called my husband and said "Clarette is gone. Something is wrong." So he hops on a train and comes. In about two hours he is there, and he doesn't believe it. He's like "No, our baby is alive."

The top of my stomach started moving and beating. The nurse that was with me at that time saw it and she ran out of the room and went quickly to get an ultrasound and get the doctor. My husband is there rejoicing like "I knew it. I knew there's nothing wrong with it. I knew she's there." They come and do the ultrasound and they're like "No that's not the baby. It's just some organ." So our hearts just sunk again.

So at this time I'm in Massachusetts and I'm calling family from all over and they start making their way down and I'm screaming to the doctors "Take this baby away. I don't want any part of it. I don't want to see the baby."

They said, "No ma'am, you're still young so you have to deliver the baby." I say "No! I'm not going to deliver the baby. Knock me out and take this baby out. Or do a c section. I don't care." They're like "No we can't because the first baby you had was natural and everything was fine. We anticipate that you're going to have other children."

I say "No." No they weren't able to do that, so I went through labor. Going through labor / painful labor and knowing that you're not going to have a live baby to hold, it's so painful. Oh my goodness, it's tough. Harder than anything I have ever gone through in my life. I really didn't know how I was going to survive it. I didn't. But in my optimism that I've always had things could get worse. I didn't know how worse they could get.

Kim: You're like yes, I think I found it.

Clementine: Right, I finally got that. I kept thinking it can't be worse, but this is it. So I delivered the baby the following day and I had my eyes closed. I didn't want to see the baby. They took the baby out and I just kind of laid there. My husband said I want to hold the baby. At that time my sister was there, and my brothers, and my brother in law. They had come to see me after I delivered the baby.

So they finally brought in the baby and started passing Clarette around. So I finally had the strength to open my eyes and I would look at the faces of everyone who was holding the baby to see what their reaction was. Every time someone would pass the baby to someone I would see tears of like joy but pain at the same time and like relief.

All of a sudden, I was like I want to experience that. I want to experience what they're experiencing.

My husband held the baby and he looked like a weight was taken off his shoulder. But with me, I had everything on my shoulder. I had confusion. I had pain. I had anger. Just all this garbage on me. I started feeling envious for everyone who was holding the baby. I said "You know what, let me hold the baby. I'll hold the baby." My husband asked me "Are you sure?" I said "Yes, I'll hold the baby."

So he brought me the baby and I held her in my lap. I remember looking at the most beautiful / most peaceful perfect baby girl I'm ever going to see in my life. She was so peaceful. So *tiny*. Tiny but so peaceful and I cried but then I also felt like I was at peace. I feel like if I hadn't held my baby, I would have never had peace in my life and experienced it. She was beautiful. Just like an angel. Unblemished / innocent / perfect.

I was still confused as to why it happened, and I wanted answers. I wanted answers from God, from my nurse, from my doctor, from my husband, from anybody. Just somebody tell me, but they didn't have answers for me.

Kim: Was it after that that you begin to become depressed and wrestle with your own life?

Clementine: Yes, yes. Because I've always seen myself as a pretty strong person and for once I was weak and I had no one to turn to. I had no one to motivate. I was in need and people in my community and in my circles had always seen me as that person who had it together and that's the worst place you can be when you have nothing together. People would come to me and not even know what to say to me. Like what do we say to her? She's been the one that's been lifting us up. What do we say to her?

So that's when I really started being depressed and felt like I had no one to go to. I was misunderstood and wanted to kill myself. I remember one time I thought really hard. I try to rationalize everything I do so that it makes sense to me and it makes sense for whoever I explain it to.

I had to rationalize why I was going to kill myself and make a great argument for myself. So one day I woke up and I said "You know what, Clarette is in heaven. My son is here. If I kill myself, hopefully I'll go to heaven and take care of her. My husband can take care of our son. So each of our children have somebody to take care of them. That was how I rationalized killing myself.

I went ahead with the plans. I got in a car and drove down to a Starbucks which had a—it was by the highway and there was the big highway was right in front of me. It was the wall that held the highway and I was just going to step on the gas and drive straight into it and it was going to be nice and quick.

So I went and parked there and looked at the wall and reasoned with myself again why I was going to do it. But then as I was reasoning with myself, I had a flashback of everything I had gone through since I was eight.

I thought about my family members that did not make it. I thought about my parents who did everything they could for their children and just sacrificed so that we could get a better chance in life. They would go to sleep hungry. I remember my mother when she was pregnant, she was so malnourished. Because of that, when my brother was born, he had rickets because he was so malnourished. My parents had been advised to chop his legs off because he was never going to be able to walk.

Kim: Oh my goodness.

Clementine: All he needed was a glass of milk every day for a week here in America and he's now one of the most handsome men I know. I just thought of all of that.

So who am I to end my *life* right now because God took my daughter? So many families that had—Parents who had like eight, nine, ten children, every single one of their children died and they're still moving. Who am I to say I'm just going to kill myself because God took my daughter? What's going to happen to my son without a mother? What's going to happen to my husband?

I found out that I was just being selfish in that moment and I shouldn't take my own life because I did not give myself my life and I was here for a purpose. So I drove back home.

Did I have all the answers? No. I still needed to have a talk with God. But if I was going to have a talk with God, I was going to be alive. I had to be alive. [Laughter]

So that night after everyone went to bed, I sat down and just contemplated everything and after just being tired of everything that was going on, I went to bed. And in the morning, I woke up and I was determined to get answers from God.

I took the Bible. I held it on my chest when no one was home and I just started screaming and crying to God asking "What? What do you want from me? I'm so broken and You made me. You created me. I'm broken and I need to be mended and You're the only one that can do it right now. What do you want from me? Use me, I'm yours."

The following day I woke up and started writing my book *Happily Broken*. I did not know I could write a book—let alone in English which is my fifth language. [Laughter] But in four weeks, that book was on Amazon. I have had so much great feedback from my story and what would have happened if I would have killed myself?

I've had people call me and tell me they have started living authentically and started their own businesses and they're thriving now because they read my story. People who

had started writing books, but they just stopped, and I encouraged them. When I talk to people, I'm not trying to encourage them, I'm just talking to them.

Kim: You're just being who you are.

Clementine: Just having a conversation. "Clementine, I finally published my book because of you / because of your words." And this is something that is so effortless for me. I attribute this to a gift that God gave me. I mean this gift would have gone to waste if I would have ended my life that day.

So sometimes we just don't know how we're going to get through things or why things are happening. But this is just God preparing us for our next mission or our next journey and just how to advance His kingdom and bring value to people's lives and add value to people's lives. Which is why I love, love motivational speaking. I love leadership training and I truly believe we are all here for a purpose.

We all have talents that we were given. God doesn't waste time. He did not waste time creating any one of us. We are all here for a purpose. Our only business is to find out what that purpose is. And if I can help someone find that or maybe not find it but just give them the hope that they need to keep pushing and just keep searching, then I will do that. That's why I'm alive.

Kim: Because He wasn't through with you yet.

Clementine: He was not through with me and He's not.

Kim: And He's not.

Clementine: No.

Kim: Speak to that person who is hearing your story and is in a position where they too are contemplating taking their own life. What would you say to them?

Clementine: Don't do it. Because you know what, so many people will lose out if you go. Because your story has not ended. Maybe your story has just begun. This is the beginning of something amazing. This right now—This moment where you feel like you've lost it all and you have nothing, this is the beginning because you're starting from nothing and you can not go any lower. The only way is up. So take that chance of that period where you feel like you have nothing and it's your time to exit. This is the beginning of you coming out and really starting all over.

Kim: That's good.

Clementine: And you know what? You didn't not give yourself that life. Whoever gave you that life knows when they'll take it back and until then, you are not done. You are

here for a purpose and the world needs you. The world needs you and we are going to lose out on you. Please stay.

Kim: In God's Word it says that we were formed in our mother's womb. So God before we were even born, He had a plan for us.

Clementine: Yes. We were thought of.

Kim: Yes! And He thinks of us every day. We can't fathom that because we're finite beings. But God does have a plan and even when we go through those difficulties like some of the ones you've experienced / things that I've experienced, He uses those things, as you said, to inspire others. Because we give hope to other people that: Oh if she can overcome this, then you know what, maybe I can overcome what I'm going through as well.

Clementine: Oh yes, I still see that every single day especially working in the healthcare field that I work in. I go to see members who they're never going to be able to eat / to taste anything.

I just have to gravitate to food because I like food. I have a member who is very young, in his 60's, and for the rest of his life he's going to eat through a feeding tube. He's never going to be able to chew or taste anything. That's the only thing that's wrong with him. He doesn't have any other chronic medical conditions. He's probably going to live a very long life, but he'll never taste food.

I'm sitting here and I think I've got it bad. I can't go on a diet because I cannot resist having that cookie, and here he is saying "Clementine, I cannot even sit with my family to have dinner. They're eating and I'm pouring Ensure in my tube." You know what I'm saying? I'm thinking and I think I've got it bad, really? And this guy is not complaining. He's like the happiest guy ever.

You just look at life. This is life. This is life. God puts different people in our lives to teach us and inspire us so that we can also in turn go and inspire others.

Kim: As we think about all that you've gone through, is there any particular Bible verse that stands out to you—something that you've held onto through the years?

Clementine: Be still and know that I'm God. That verse has taken me a lot of places. It's healed some wounds. Because I know I don't have it all. I don't have all the answers. I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. I pray for my children every day. I don't know what's going to happen to them tomorrow.

After I lost Clarette, I really found out that I have no control over anything. But I need to be still because I know that He's God. And He loves me more than I'll ever know. He loves my children more than I'll ever know. So He will take care of them wherever they

are right now. And whatever happens to them, He'll take care of it, so I need to be still. This is just with anyone that's listening and struggling. Be still and know that He's God.

Kim: As I was listening to Clementine's story, the question I kept asking myself is: How can she have gone through so much and still be able to be so joyful and full of hope? Honestly, part of me was wondering if living in denial was her coping mechanism.

Because I'm thinking there have been times where I've gone through a lot less adversity and I have acted like it was the end of the world, crying out to God saying "Lord, how can you expect me to endure this?" Yes, I'm admitting that I've had my moments of weaknesses. Okay, maybe seasons of weaknesses.

So with this in mind, I was looking for her to share her secret. I wanted to know. And then, I realized that it was all about perspective. Instead of dwelling on her problems, Clementine chooses to see her obstacles as opportunities. Opportunities to learn. And when you couple that with her faith in a sovereign God who has a purpose for all things, then you get that hope that she was talking about. That causes her to believe that everything is going to be alright.

From what perspective are you viewing your difficult circumstances? Will you let them overcome you? Or will you choose to see things from a different perspective that will allow you to also progress to that place of hope? Romans 5:3-5 says "But we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

Thanks for listening. If you'd like more information about Clementine Bihiga, or her book, check out the show notes on the *Unfavorable Odds* page at FamilyLife.com/podcasts.

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And if I can ask you a big favor. Will you help us spread the word about this podcast? Maybe think about one or two people you think might enjoy or benefit from listening.

I'm Kim Anthony. Season three of *Unfavorable Odds* is coming this spring. We'll see you then.

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