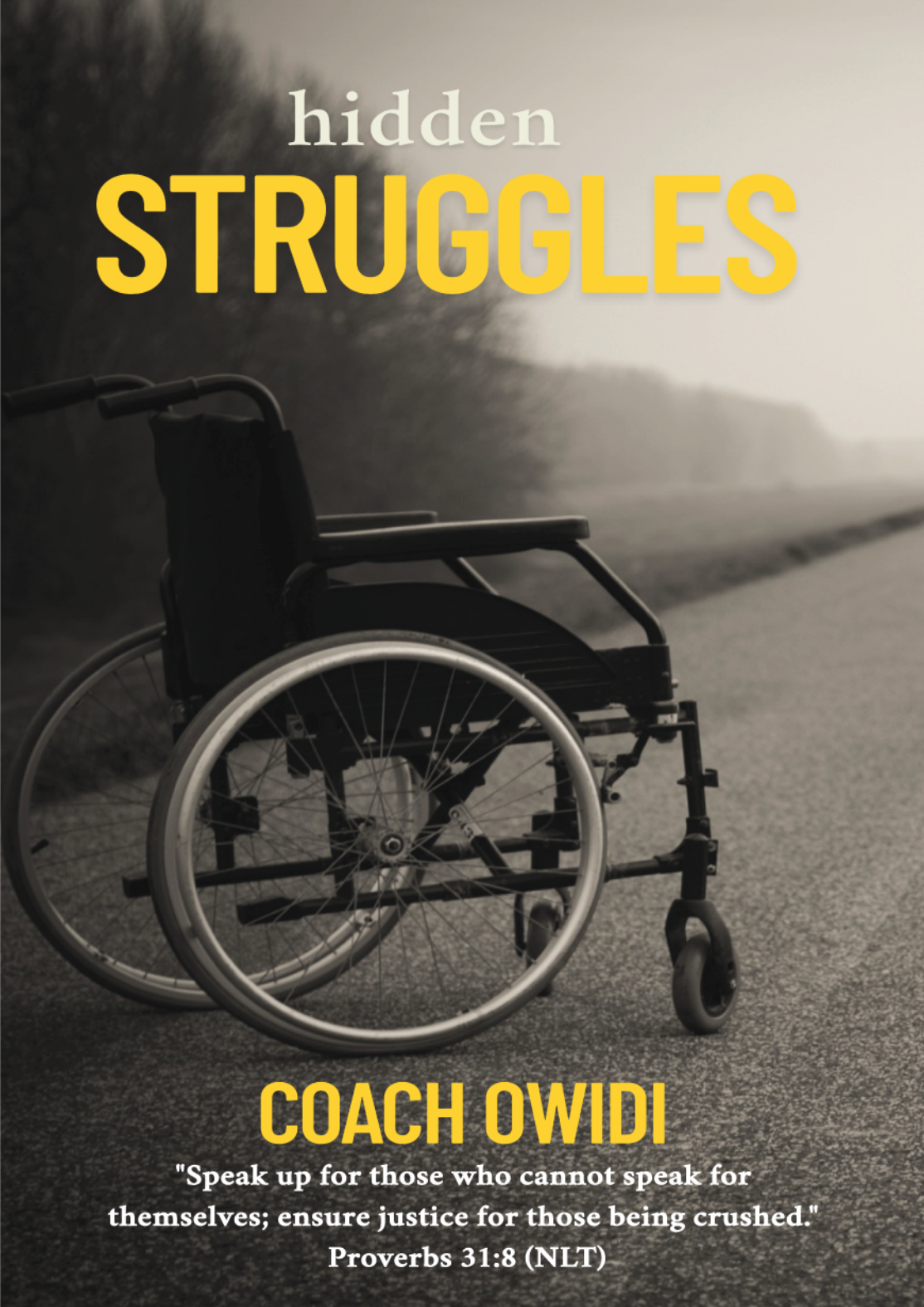


A black wheelchair is positioned on a paved road that stretches into the distance. The background features rolling hills under a hazy, overcast sky. The overall tone is somber and contemplative.

hidden **STRUGGLES**

COACH OWIDI

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for
themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed."

Proverbs 31:8 (NLT)

The Hidden Struggles among People with Disabilities:

The Unseen, Unheard

The Ignored Pain: The Silent Sufferings

By Coach Charles Owidi



The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
(Proverbs 9:10)

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Introduction

The Pain We Ignore

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed." – Proverbs 31:8 (NLT)

It breaks my heart to say this, but it must be said: Every single day, countless men and women living with disabilities fight silent battles. Not just against their physical limitations, but against the deep, cold silence of a world that often chooses to look away.

They are wounded in ways no one sees, wounds made not just by circumstance, but by the way people treat them: With pity instead of honor.
With distance instead of dignity.
With indifference instead of love.

And I must confess, there are moments when guilt grips my heart. Not because I didn't care, but because I didn't act soon enough.

Because I didn't listen closely enough.

Because I didn't speak loudly enough.

Because I too, at times, let silence become my comfort when I should have stood in courage.

But today is not about shame, it's about awakening.

Because God is calling us, *you and I*, to open our eyes, break our silence, and return to the very heart of the Gospel:

To love the forgotten. To lift the overlooked. To embrace the rejected.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."
— Isaiah 61:1

This is not just the mission of Christ; it is the mission of all who follow Him.

Let us begin again, not in judgment, but in mercy.
Not in guilt, but in grace.

Let us walk beside the Bernards/people with disability of this world, and be the family, the voice, and the arms of Jesus to them.

Preface

This book is more than a memoir, it is a voice. A voice for those who have long been unheard, unseen, and too often ignored.

It began as a personal journey, shaped deeply by my late cousin **Bernard**, whose disability became part of my everyday life as we grew up together. Through him, I witnessed the quiet strength, the daily struggles, and the invisible walls that people with disabilities face. His life — and his passing — left an indelible mark on my heart.

That mark was stirred again when I met **Lydia**, a woman with a disability who reached out to me online, pleading not just for help, but for someone to *see* her, to *hear* her, and to *stand with* her. She became a symbol to me of the many unheard voices waiting for an advocate.

And then came **Mr. Ken Kakhaba**, a dear friend whose words felt like a divine calling—urging me to step up as an ambassador for this often-forgotten community. His conviction reminded me that I wasn't just a bystander in this story—I had lived it, and now, I had a role to play in it.

This book is born from those moments. It is a cry for awareness, a call to compassion, and a challenge to our collective conscience. Whether you live with disability, love someone who does, or simply want to understand, may these pages stir your heart.

To everyone walking through life with pain, seen or unseen—you are not alone. This is your story, too.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I thank **God**, my refuge and strength, for carrying me through every storm. His unfailing love has never let me go, even in my darkest hours.

To my **wife**, my greatest earthly blessing—thank you for your love that goes beyond words. You have stood by me through pain, uncertainty, and moments of deep brokenness. When I faced two traumatic brain tumor surgeries, you became my rock. You bathed me when I could not help myself, held me when I wept, and left our children behind just to care for me when the Kenyan surgery failed. Those moments of raw vulnerability have only brought us closer. Our love is tried, tested, and true—and I thank God for you every day.

To our wonderful sons, **Philip Hawi Omollo**, our firstborn, and **Andrew Chiwo Omollo**, our second—Daddy loves you so much. You are the light of our lives and a constant reminder of God's grace. Everything I do is with the hope of making this world a little better for you.

To my **family**—thank you for your unwavering support, your prayers, and your patience. To my **parents**, whose belief in faith and education laid my foundation, I owe a debt I can never repay.

To my late cousin **Bernard**, thank you for the lessons your life taught me. You opened my eyes to a world most choose not to see. You live on through these words.

To **Lydia**, thank you for your honesty and courage. Your plea reminded me of the urgent need for advocacy and action.

To **Mr. Ken Kakhaba**, thank you for calling me into purpose. Your encouragement lit the fire that birthed this book.

To my friends, **mentors, and fellowship family**, your love and encouragement were a lifeline when hope seemed dim.

And finally, to **you**, the reader—thank you for sharing in this journey.

May these pages give you strength, stir your compassion, and inspire you to be a voice for those who are often unheard.

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Chapter 1

The Day I Buried My Cousin Bernard Owuor and Buried a Lie Too

Not many people know this part of my story.
But I lived it.

It was the year 2001. I was still single then, serving as a missionary in Rwanda. Life wasn't easy, but I was full of faith, full of hope.

Then came the call.

My cousin, Bernard Owuor, (KOLUNYU) was gone.

"Bernard wasn't just my cousin—he was my friend, my brother, my unexpected blessing. In a world that often overlooks difference, he reminded me daily that love

doesn't always walk—it sometimes rolls in quietly, yet leaves the loudest echo in your heart. You see, Bernard was disabled. But to me, he was distinctly able to love, to teach, and to transform."

Today, we live in a world that chases the impressive. We're drawn to the loudest voices, the polished résumés, the 'able' and the admired. But God—oh, God does things differently. He hides heaven's treasures in clay jars, in fragile frames, in the overlooked and underestimated.

As Scripture boldly declares,
"God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise" - 1 Corinthians 1:27.

Bernard—*Kolunyu*—was one of those sacred surprises. Society saw a disabled man begging on the streets of Mombasa. But heaven saw a minister of joy. A quiet evangelist of dignity. A heart so rich, it poured out love with no measuring cup.

While the world scrolled past him, judged him, or looked away, Bernard was busy filling the invisible gaps in our hearts—the deep ones we couldn’t name, the ones we masked with busyness or pride.

He may have brought back coins, but what he *gave*—oh, what he gave—was worth more than gold. In his quiet, radiant way, Kolunyu taught us what many pulpits miss: that those we pity may be the very ones God has *anointed* to lead us, to heal us, to remind us of who we’re called to be.

But somehow, right in the middle of all that lack—when hope was thin and joy was a stranger—Bernard showed up.

Disabled. Mocked. Counted out. Poor by the world’s standards. But rich—*overflowing*—in all the things that truly matter.

He wasn't supposed to be the answer. Not in the world's eyes. And yet... he clothed us. Not with fabric, but with dignity. Not with gold, but with joy.

He covered our shame with laughter. He wrapped our bare hearts with belonging.

He was the miracle we didn't know we needed. The sermon we never heard preached. A man the world called "beggar," but heaven knew as "giver."

That's what makes Bernard unforgettable. In a time when we had nothing, *he gave us everything.*

The decent teenage shirt I ever owned?

The Walkman that made me feel seen among my peers?

The sweet scent of that cologne I'll never forget?

All from him.

All from the little he got on the streets of Mombasa.

He didn't just bring me gifts —

He restored something deeper:

Love. Dignity. The sense that I mattered.

How do you forget someone like that?

Even when the world loved him for all the wrong reasons —

When the girls laughed with him only when his pockets jingled,

And disappeared like smoke when they didn't —

He still gave.

He still loved.

He still smiled.

He had every reason to grow cold.

Every reason to shut the door, to match cruelty with silence. But he didn't.

He chose kindness anyway.

He chose generosity anyway.

He chose to lift, even while life tried to crush him.

That's not weakness.

That's not naïveté.

That's power.

That's the kind of strength this world desperately lacks.

While others counted coins, he counted hearts.

While others hoarded, he gave.

And while many only existed – Bernard truly lived.

He was the kind of rich this world doesn't recognize.

And I carry his memory in everything I do. I still

remember the many gifts He brought me, perfume,

shirts—gifts that meant more than money ever could.

Not because they were expensive, but because **he thought of us.**

But when the gifts ran out, so did the kindness of many

around him. Suddenly, the same hands that received from

him stopped shaking his. The smiles faded. The welcome

vanished.

When I think of Bernard, I don't first see his disability.

I see **hope**—the kind only a child can carry in their heart.

He wasn't just my cousin.

To me, he was like **Father Christmas.**

Whenever he left to travel, usually to Mombasa to beg, I didn't understand what that really meant, but now I know.

All I knew was this: *he was going to bring us something.*

Maybe a shirt. Maybe a snack. Maybe just stories.

But always – **something that made us feel seen.**

I remember when Bernard travelled, we'd wait. Eyes fixed on the gate like it was a doorway to magic. Every footstep past the fence made our hearts skip. Could it be him?

And when he finally arrived, we'd run to meet him, laughing, shouting his name, hoping he had something in his little bag.

And he always did.

Not because he had much.

But because **he thought of us**, always.

He gave from his nothing like it was everything.

And looking back now, I see it clearly:

He was begging, yes.

But it often felt like **he begged not just for himself, but for us too.**

To clothe us. To feed us.

To give us dignity when the world gave us none.

Special Thanks to Bernard

There are moments in life when help doesn't just come — it arrives like a lifeline, like God reaching down through human hands. Bernard, you were that for us.

Growing up, life was marked by deep struggle. My father did his best to make ends meet, but the weight was heavy and the resources few. We lived in the shadow of lack — basic needs out of reach, and hope often feeling like a far-off dream.

I carry vivid memories of my mother, a town girl who knew nothing of rural life, bending her back in strangers' fields, digging for hours just to put a little food on our table. And still, every morning at 3 a.m., she was on her knees — pleading, weeping, praying to a God she refused

to stop believing in. Her faith was relentless. Her pain was real.

We lost my younger brother Eston to measles—not because it was an incurable disease, but because we couldn’t afford the simple care he needed. My mother held him as his life slipped away, knowing she had no choice, no help, and no way to save him. That moment etched a sorrow in her soul she never spoke about, but we all carried it.

Eventually, she made a courageous decision. She said “enough is enough” and left everything behind—heading to town in search of my father, in search of stability, in search of something better for her children.

That’s where you came in, Bernard.

You didn’t just offer help—you restored dignity. You didn’t just see a struggling family; you saw potential, purpose, and worth. The support you gave didn’t simply meet needs—it changed lives. Your kindness broke cycles.

Your generosity lifted a woman from despair. You became an answer to those 3 a.m. prayers whispered in desperation.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you. Your impact will echo for generations. You reminded us that even in the darkest valleys, God sends angels. And in our story — **you were one of them.**

Back to Bernard's story, when none could, Bernard did

Bernard, the name that brings memories, arousing my tears even as I write.....

Bernard showed up.

Not with grand speeches, but with shoes, shirts, snacks, and a love that asked for nothing in return.

Even when people mocked him, even when girlfriends used him for his little money, he didn't harden.

He kept giving.

He kept loving.

To us, he wasn't disabled.

He was our hero in dusty shoes.

And I've never forgotten that..

"The Day They Beat Bernard: Punished for Surviving"

Q, The question to ask, is it a Crime to survive?

Bernard's Beating and Our Silence"

I still remember that day like a nightmare that never really ends.

Bernard – our Bernard – was crying.

Wailing so painfully loud, trees and birds echoed along in silence, the noise was too loud to ignore..

And the reason for his pain wasn't his legs.

It was the *beating*.

Two of our uncles, men we were told to respect, were hitting him.

Grown men.

With big voices and city shoes.

Men who drove home in nice cars from the big city, carrying the pride of having "made it."

But not once do I remember them ever bringing us anything.

Not a sweet.

Not a smile.

Yet there they were... beating the only man who had ever made us feel loved. Bernard, who went all the way to Mombasa to beg, not for himself alone, but for *us*.

He was the only one who brought joy to our little compound. He gave us snacks, shoes, shirts, even my first Walkman.

To us, he wasn't a cripple.

He was a *provider*.

Our *Father Christmas* with twisted legs and a shining heart.

But that day, those uncles stripped him of every dignity –
Not with words of correction, but with fists of shame.

As they hit him, we heard their voices booming:

“You are a disgrace!”

“You’re embarrassing the family, begging on the streets
like a dog!”

But what they called shame, we called survival.

What they called disgrace, we had called love.

I watched through the cracked wooden slats of our
house – too small, too afraid to stop them.

And inside me, something broke.

I remember wishing I were big.

I wish I had strong arms and a louder voice so I could
protect him. So I could shout, **“You have no idea what
this man has done for us!”**

But I was just a boy.

Watching a giant with no legs being brought down by men with no heart. Our Naaman—the mighty soldier in our eyes—was crying.

Not because of weakness. But because the people who should have loved him most treated him like he didn't belong.

I am not saying begging is right.

That's not the point.

But we must stop pretending that people with disabilities don't carry burdens we could never understand. Even in the Bible, they were there—blind, lame, cast outside the city gates. Yet *Jesus* always stopped for them. He never shamed them. He restored them.

And while the world saw them as broken, Heaven saw them as vessels of glory.

That's a story for another day—but it starts here.

With a boy watching his hero get beaten.

With a prayer that one day, I'd grow strong enough to fight for the Bernard's of this world.

And maybe...

Just maybe... **become the kind of man he was to me.**

Bernard transformation:

Never Look Down

Never look down on those who seem disabled.

You don't know what God is making of their story. Because I lived with one of God's greatest miracles Bernard. And I saw the transformation with my own eyes.

Bernard was born with what the world calls a disability. His legs couldn't carry him far, but his heart carried many. He was older than me by close to 20 years, but when he came to Nairobi, it was my turn to provide.

I was already working and living in Dandora. He came and stayed with me. We didn't have much—just small meals, tight space, but overflowing joy.

After a long day at work, I'd come home to find him waiting. We'd cook whatever little I had, share a plate, share laughter, and talk into the night. No shame, no pride—just family.

But God wasn't finished with him.

Bernard had a skill—fixing radios and those old hunchback TVs we used to watch with static lines and wire hangers for antennas. And slowly, with what he had and where he was, he built something from the ground up. He moved to Kibera slums not to hide, but to start over.

He opened a small repair shop.

In one of the most populated slums in Nairobi, God gave him space to shine.

From **dust...** to **dignity**.

From **shame...** to **significance**.

His tiny house in Kibera slums was full of joy, sometimes louder than the big homes we envied. People came not for what he had, but for who he was.

Scripture says in **1 Samuel 16:7**,

“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

And in **Proverbs 17:1**,

“Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.”

Bernard lived that truth.

And his life still speaks.

So the next time you see someone who walks differently, speaks slowly, or struggles in ways you don't understand — remember: **God sees the whole picture.**

And the ones the world overlooks, Heaven is already preparing to lift. Bernard was not just my cousin. He was a warrior, a provider, a repairman of both radios and broken hearts.

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hidden STRUGGLES

They live among us—but too often, we fail to truly see them.

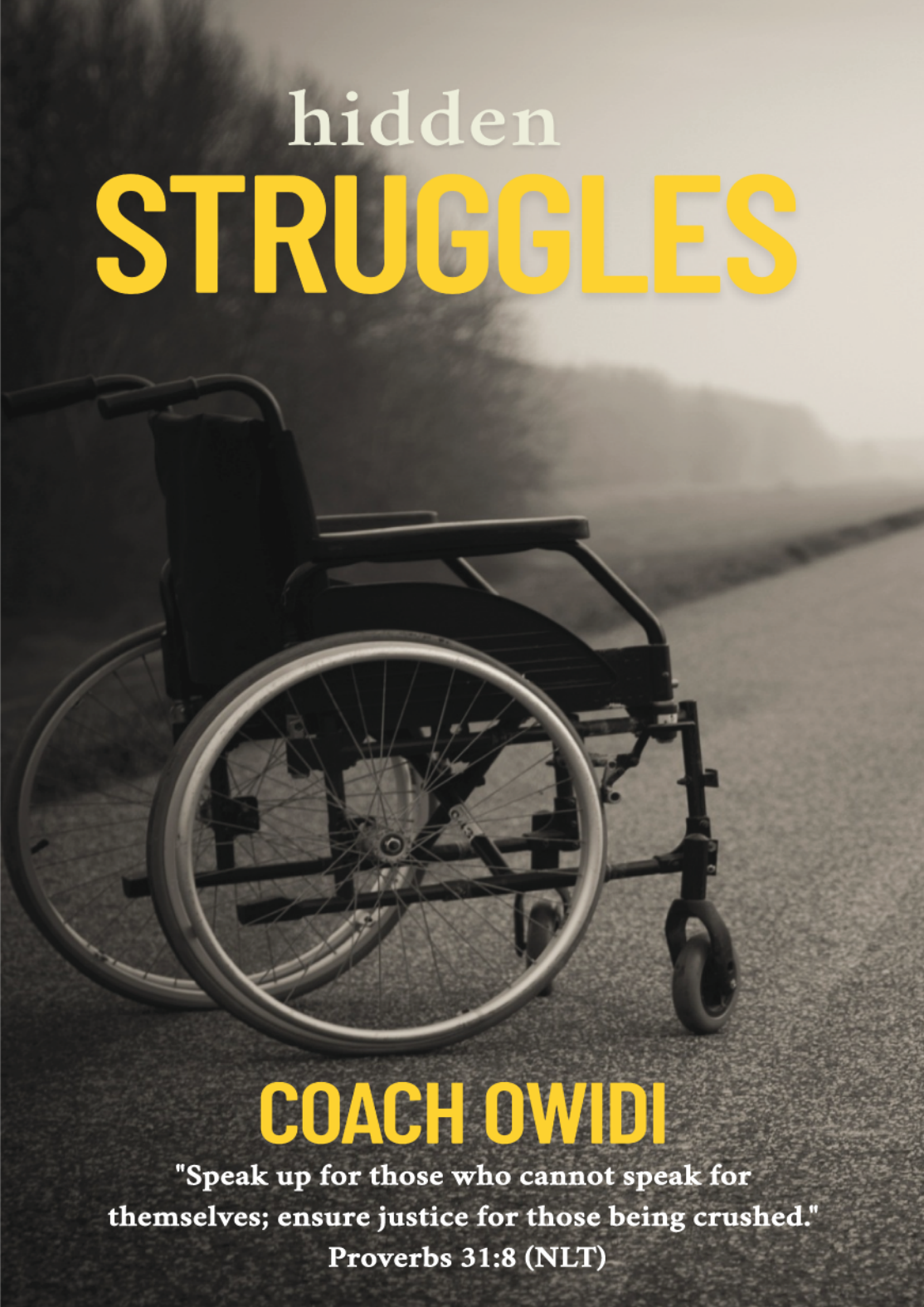
The Hidden Struggles of the Disabled shines a light on the quiet, painful battles faced by people with disabilities—battles not just with their bodies, but with a world that meets them with pity, distance, and silence. This powerful, personal journey awakens our hearts to the dignity, strength, and humanity so often overlooked. More than a memoir, it's a call to compassion, justice, and Christlike love. If you've ever wondered what it means to truly care, this book invites you to listen, stand, and walk alongside the forgotten.



Coach Owidi, a certified mental health coach and christian mentor, has served in the ministry for 25 years, teaching, counselling and guiding others through life's trials. He blends biblical truths with practical coaching to help singles, couples and divorcees find healing, hope and purpose.



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A black wheelchair is positioned on a paved road that stretches into the distance. The background features rolling hills under a hazy, overcast sky. The overall tone is somber and contemplative.

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