

**SPEECH BY DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY CHANCELLOR PROF. MARY MURIMI ON
THE OCCASION OF THE 40TH GRADUATION CEREMONY ON JULY 7, 2018**

Adopting higher ground mentality: Be a voice

To the 2018 graduands, parents, Honorable Paul Kihara Kariuki our guest speaker, Daystar Alumni, Members of Daystar US, faculty, staff, members of Daystar Company and members of Daystar University Council, the University Senate, Management Board, and the Graduation Committee...

I salute you this morning and join the 2018 class in welcoming you to the 40th graduation ceremony. To the 2018 graduands, your parents, guardians and significant others congratulations! Although your last 9 months were characterized by uncertainty, fear, and even anger at times, your unwavering endurance has brought you to this final victory.

This celebration that marks our 40th graduation ceremony did not come without a price from you the graduands, from the administrators and the whole of Daystar family. The uncertain times that we have all gone through in the last 9 months have tested our very core. As the news of our struggles circulated in the media, I have reminded our critiques either from within or from without the words of Micah who declared and I quote Micah 7:8, *“do not laugh at me when I am down, because I will rise again”*. I have also found comfort in the confidence that Job demonstrated in the face of his troubles and scoffers when he stated and I quote *“when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold”*. Do not laugh at Daystar during its down time, I declare the star will shine even brighter, and when the testing is over Daystar will come forth as fine as gold.

To our faculty and staff, you are here today because of your faith in this institution. We are aware that Kenya has over 70 registered Universities and when the going became tough you had the choice and opportunity to go elsewhere but you chose to stay. You confirm the words of Dr. Robert Schuller, *“Tough times never last, but tough people do”*. With your unparalleled dedication, Daystar will outlive its challenges.

To our dear parents, do not be alarmed; do not migrate your children. Daystar has not digressed from its vision and mission, but will resume its position of preparing great communicators, innovators, and transformational leaders.

To get here today after a turbulent 9 months, it has taken the intervention and commitment of all of you, our security guards kept their posts even when they did not know whom they were protecting or fighting. Our drivers kept errands going, members of the Senate and Management Board spent hours adjusting and re-adjusting the calendar so that this graduation can take place against all odds. Our dedicated faculty showed up when the classroom doors were opened, our Corporate Affairs office kept Daystar partners engaged positively. The Daystar Company, and Council deliberated on the way forward and provided guidance during this period.

The list is long as it has taken all of us to get here, but Ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to give a **special tribute to Professor James Kombo the acting Vice Chancellor**, whose positive outlook, endurance and unwavering love for this institution kept him going even when it would have been easier to give up. His professional approach to problems, and his pastoral-based people skills became a strength to all who worked close to him. Professor Kombo, without your ability to stand in the gap and keep things looking normal and in the right perspective, this graduation ceremony would have only been a dream, but it is a reality now.

I would also like to thank the office of **Daystar US**, for their commitment to this institution. Because of your compassion and labor of love, some of our students with limited resources would not have had the access to great educational experience offered by Daystar University. Our problems here at home did not make that task easy for you as you tried to explain to our generous donors, issues that you did not understand not being on the ground. Mr. Alan Cooke and your team, thank you for your love and commitment to our students.

Ladies and gentlemen, this graduation ceremony marks a new beginning. What we have gone through is history, and I would like us going forward to focus on our future. Building a stronger and resilient Daystar, calls for all of us to collectively and systematically adopt a higher ground mentality. A higher ground mentality will afford us a clear vision of where we are going, and a

secure standing, which will afford us full control of our situation. Ladies and gentlemen allow me to explain six important concepts that we must adopt to progress to a higher ground mentality:

1. Higher ground mentality dictates that we depart from the insecure feeling of being victims of circumstances, to a more secure status of being faithful custodians of our vision and mission and taking full control of the University situation.
2. Higher ground mentality puts us in a control position helping us to be in control and acting more in the offense and less in the defense as evidenced by our choice in investing more time in pursuing good and less time on avoiding the bad.
3. Higher ground mentality calls for a clear understanding of our problem and associated causes, understanding that the enemy of going forward is denial of our reality.
4. Higher ground mentality calls for active listening. Hearing each other gives us a deep understanding of each other rather than blaming each other. Understanding each other will bring oneness, and an appreciation that we are stronger standing together rather than the simple and contra productive alternative of putting each other down.
5. Once we have developed a culture of listening and therefore hearing each other, we will find the common ground that will unite us, as opposed to focusing on our differences that easily divide us.
6. Developing a common ground will help us build strong and meaningful relationships and trust. More importantly, higher ground mentality will help us separate problems from the individuals. I encourage us to be soft with people and be hard on the problems.

It is my prayer and hope that we will adopt a higher ground mentality hence creating in us a culture of listening, inclusion, and respect that breeds a shared vision and transparency in the decision-making process going forward. As we go forward, I ask all of us to be patient and give space and time for Daystar family to heal, to develop trust again, and to feel secure. I request senior administrators to provide a venue for sharing to foster the healing process.

To our 2018 graduates I noticed with interest your graduating theme to be transformational leaders in Africa. In addition to your hard work, endurance and determination, Daystar

University with a curriculum that includes hands-on experience and community service has prepared you to enter the workforce with skills that position you to be successful in whatever discipline you are in. More importantly, your ability to think outside the box that leads to innovations and your passion and commitment to serve the less fortunate that leads to the works of compassion is what sets you apart.

For the last three to four years, you have been challenged and developed intellectually, to think strategically and equipped to stand for the truth. **Despite the unsettling situations we have gone through the last 9 months, Daystar takes the title of a Christian University seriously, with a total of 4 chaplains and chapel service on weekly basis, various Bible studies and prayer meetings, we make every effort to equip you with the truth, and allow proper Christian formation in each one of you.**

Today, Daystar has released almost 700 well prepared and skilled professionals to the workforce. Imagine with me if you may about the impact we can make if each one of you would stand for the truth and become a voice for the voiceless. I encourage you to be a voice of truth and a voice for the silenced and vulnerable citizens of your beloved country. The biblical truth taught outside the classroom, the ethical discussions that go on in our lecture halls have given you not only a glimpse of what is right and what is wrong, but also the process of making the right choices. **You are equipped not just to tell the truth but to defend it.** King Solomon admonishes you **to buy the truth but not to sell it.** Falling into the trap of corruption is where we sell and kill the truth and silence the weak. **Instead of selling the truth, spread it by being a voice for the voiceless.**

My dear graduands, the first people to welcome you to the real world will be the voiceless. You will find them in every street, gates and doorways hoping for a handout. Although they are many, we have learned to ignore them and to walk just past them as if they were not there. You are their only hope! **Do not throw your change at their plates to clear your conscience, but instead, look them in the eye, listen to their stories and hear them out, then be a voice for them.**

Their right to be heard has been taken from them, and when they speak, people hear noises. Be their voice and transformation will follow. I encourage you to distinguish between being noisy and being a voice going forward.

To be a voice you have to listen to the marginalized people, try to be in their shoes, then articulate their needs at the right time and at the right place. Once you have acquired the art of listening, then silence the noises in your own lives. Personal noises start with **me first, me second, and me third** and that progresses to this is **mine, I deserve it, I worked for it, I am therefore entitled** and before long, your life is noisy and consumed with self. Unfortunately that noise will take away your **VOICE**. On the contrary, if you get rid of noise in your own life, you will know what truly matters to you by knowing how you can help others by being their **voice**.

That is why the Bible says that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Being a voice comes in different forms and only you will determine the form you will need to adopt. For some of the voiceless people, they need a father or a mother figure. Others are either physically or psychologically or emotionally blind----be their eyes. Others are already in the jaws of the predators, rescue them. Whatever, you become, **be a voice**. Fortunately you are joining a great team of Alumni that have modelled the way. **For example, Mrs. Mary Mambo** has become a strong voice for the residents of Mukuru slum in Nairobi. Mary Mambo and her husband are currently running a 250 capacity school for slum children and within it she has a rescue center that has a capacity to keep 21 girls, and a 24 hour medical clinic for the community. Mary and her husband are a voice for the voiceless.

At the international level and in our neighborhood, I would like to highlight the **VOICE** of Mr. **John Daau** from the Republic of South Sudan. John was one of the 40,000 lost boys of Sudan, who later found a donor to attend Daystar. John went back home and founded Good Shepherded Academy. By 2016, John had reached 671 children with education, 140 adults with literacy education, and trained 400 teachers to be servant leaders. John is a voice for the voiceless.

Our alumni are also making a difference in innovations and technology. Our guest speaker for the graduation dinner Dr. Bright Gameli Mawudor and our own Alumni is a leader in Cyber Security. Dr. Bright, the founder of the Cyber Security collective was among the TOP 40-under-40 entrepreneurs in Kenya in 2016. Whatever your discipline is, I challenge you to be a Voice for the voiceless. True success and happiness is attained when we utilize our talents, abilities, and skills in a way that is both personally fulfilling, and more importantly, has a positive impact on others.

As you become a voice remember what your God requires of you in Micah 6: 8 —**to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.** I pray that as you change status from Daystar students to Daystar Alumni, you will be a courageous voice for the voiceless, for the Lord your God will be with you and He will not be delayed! Class of 2018, be a **voice!**