



COMFORT IN CRISIS

Derin and Michelle's trust in God sustained them when he was involved in a horrific accident.

By Derin and Michelle Madojutimi

DERIN'S TESTIMONY

GROWING UP, I WAS PART of a family of seven; three boys and two girls, plus my parents. I was born into this glorious Gospel. In Sunday school and at home, I was told that Jesus loves and cares for little children, and that gladdened my heart. I was taught that Heaven is for those who will seek forgiveness of sin and receive salvation, and Hell is for those who do not ask for forgiveness. Furthermore, I was made to know that Jesus would one day come and take me to where He is, but that I must always be obedient, so I would be able to follow Him when He comes.

Though I wanted to be ready to go with Jesus when the Trumpet sounded, that alone did not save me. During my third year in high school, I was living at a boarding house where I faced all kinds of challenges from my peers. I made some wrong decisions, and even became involved in fighting, though I rationalized that it was just to defend myself. When I returned home during holidays, I pretended to be that good son my family had always known. I remained obedient and respectful, but inside I knew something was missing. I struggled on my own to avoid anything sinful, but instead of the joy and freedom that salvation brings, I had the guilt and burden of sin.

After high school I entered university, and my sins grew wilder with the amusements of that environment. God continually spoke to my heart, but rather than acknowledging my errors and denouncing them, I responded by attempting to defend and justify my actions. It was easier to blame other people for my situations, rather than looking inward where the real problem lay. In an effort to find relief, I visited other religious ministries that taught different ways of getting saved. I read many books, attended seminars, and visited crusades where calls were made to those who desired to be born again. This all fascinated me, and I did go forward and repeated what they told us to say to be saved. However, my prayer was never truly sincere. I was looking for an easier way out of the guilt I felt, yet the burden of sin remained. I still found myself doing the sins I had done before, and I had no solace.

Like the Prodigal Son, I had wandered far away. I thank God who always brings His lost sheep back into the fold when they cry to Him for help. On my twenty-fourth birthday, I received a call from my mom. She asked if I had read my Bible and studied my Sunday school lesson. My response was a lie, telling her that I had. That call became a turning point in my life. After

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hanging up, a strong conviction came upon me. I began shivering as a weight of guilt came over me, and then I started to weep. I cried out to God for forgiveness and promised Him that if He saved me, I would serve Him the rest of my life. I thank God for his lovingkindness; He saved me that very day and turned my life around completely.

When God forgave my sins, I experienced complete freedom and He renewed my mind. At times in the past, I had been overwhelmed with fear and anxiety, but in God I found unshakable confidence. Later, as I consecrated my

life more deeply to God, He also sanctified me and baptized me with the Holy Spirit. Since then, Jesus has been my Healer, my Provider—in fact, He is all in all to me!

I prayed for a spouse and God gave me a beautiful, loving wife in this Gospel who is a virtuous woman. One year after we were married, I was in a devastating car accident but God restored my life. God has done so much for me and I am forever grateful. He gave me a new life, and I know He will do the same for anyone who surrenders one-hundred percent to Him.

MICHELLE'S TESTIMONY

BORN AND RAISED IN THE city of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria, my godly parents introduced me to this Gospel at a very tender age. As an inquisitive little girl, I always wanted to know more about Jesus. I remember asking my dad many questions about God, and he did his best to explain the need to get saved, so that as a family we all could go to Heaven.

Going to Sunday school was something I loved. I enjoyed the songs and lessons that were taught. However, at first I really did not understand the Gospel message. I knew that I did naughty things, but I felt that if I could do more good things, they would outweigh the bad. I also thought that since my parents were saved, God would take me to Heaven because of my parents' salvation. After church services, I always loved to go to the altar, just for goings' sake and to please my mum. At the altar I would mutter a few words and then peek around to see other people crying and receiving something from God. Then I would leave the same way as I had come, unchanged.

As I grew older, I realized the need to repent and have my sins forgiven. However, I wanted to postpone my salvation until later in life. I told myself it would be better to get saved after I'd had all the fun one can have outside of church. That was my plan, but God had a better plan for me.

At the age of eleven, during a prayer meeting on a Wednesday, there was no preaching or altar call but I felt very sorry for my sins. God was dealing with my heart, and I began to confess my sins. All the wrong things I had done in the past were revealed to me like a movie playing before me. I wept bitterly to Jesus, and He saved my soul and filled me with so much joy and peace! In the parking lot that evening, I was so excited to share my experience with my family.

Since my early childhood, I had suffered with seizures. But when God saved me, He also healed me. The month that I was saved was the last month that I ever had convulsions. Not only had God completely changed my heart, but He broke the chains of that disease which had tormented me for so long. From then on, I was very happy to participate in the youth programs at church and to tell others about Jesus.

Upon entering the university, I grew slack spiritually. I continued going to church, but I stopped praying and reading my Bible as I should have. I was keeping bad company at school, and my friends enticed me to go deep into sin. Every time I went to church I felt guilty; I knew I had left the right path, yet I couldn't help myself. Not only did I forfeit my salvation, but I sank so low that I was convinced there could not be a way back to God for me. My grades were poor and my



life was unstable. It seemed everything was a complete mess, and even my relationship with my parents was affected, though they kept praying for me.

Thank God, He did not abandon me in that low state. During an Easter retreat at our local church, my heart was broken. I regretted all my sinful ways and asked God for forgiveness. I asked Him to take me back as His dear daughter, and God graciously restored my salvation. Despite my utter depravity and sinfulness, He forgave me. In that moment, I felt great relief and my heart bubbled with joy. I pressed forward and God sanctified me, and later that year He baptized me with the Holy Ghost and fire.

After that, I felt the power of God in my life and began going from strength to strength. My life was transformed.

I cut off connections with my old friends, my grades in the university improved, and God saw me through the hurdles of university until I graduated.

There was a time when my father was very ill, diagnosed with bladder stones and other problems. My sister and I prayed for him, and God miraculously healed him! That increased my faith further in God's power to heal.

After graduating from the university, I had some suitors but I told God that I wanted to marry a godly man from the same household of faith, who also loved the heritage of this Gospel. That is exactly what God did for me; He gave me the desire of my heart and I married a loving man of God.

God has been so faithful to me, and He continues to demonstrate His goodness to me daily.



OCTOBER 8, 2014

THE ACCIDENT

SOMETIMES, LIFE CAN CHANGE IN a moment. For our family, that moment came on October 8, 2014, two days before our first wedding anniversary. Derin was involved in a near-fatal car accident in Paris, France, and this began our greatest test of faith and the clearest example of God's miraculous power in our lives.

Derin was walking on a pedestrian path when a van ran into him and projected him fifteen meters from the point of impact. The driver of the van fled the scene, and Derin was left unconscious on the road. From the police report, we understood that it was a passer-by who called the police and emergency services after twenty minutes had passed. When first responders arrived, he was unresponsive and bleeding profusely from the head.

When the accident occurred, I was in the United Kingdom studying for my master's degree while Derin was in France. I remember getting the call from the police saying my husband

had been involved in an accident. I was in shock; it felt as if my whole world came crashing down in a second. All I could say was, "God, please touch him; don't let him die." Many thoughts raced through my mind. I said to myself, I just got married, and now what will become of me? The devil was whispering to me that I was going to become the latest widow. I was in deep agony. I informed my mother-in-law, who later came to me, and we wept and prayed for God's intervention together. I felt deep sorrow and pain. But I thank God that at my darkest hour, Jesus was there whispering sweet peace to my soul, telling me that I should be still and witness His faithfulness. Indeed, our God is faithful.

Given the nature of the accident, the fact that Derin had not died on the spot was miraculous. He was admitted into the intensive care unit; medical scans showed that he had a severe hemorrhage in the left part of his brain, and also a fracture to his left shoulder bone. I left the United Kingdom

immediately for France, and as the news went out to our church family, brethren from all over the world began praying and offering their full support. I thank God for the love and unity of the brethren. Derin was intubated and remained unresponsive. The next several days were a rollercoaster of emotions for me, punctuated by the fact that the medical personnel told us that he might or might not survive, and that if he did, he could remain in a vegetative state. The doctors also said he may need to stay in the intensive care unit for a long time.

A war of faith was waging in my heart. I had always known that God could miraculously heal, but I did not know if God was going to heal Derin. All I could do was cry to God to help me through, praying in the Name of Jesus and trusting that His power is very real.

After a week in a coma, Derin opened his eyes. He was not fully aware of his environment, but this began a recovery that would shock doctors and prove the power of faith in Christ. His condition improved dramatically and he was discharged from the hospital two weeks later. The doctors in charge said they believed it was a miracle.

At home, we faced more challenges. For a couple of months, Derin did not recognize me as his wife. In fact, he did not even believe he'd had an accident, and sometimes he would tell me to pack my things and leave. Yet, God saw us through that difficult period. There has been a long process of rehabilitation, and Derin has had to learn to cope with ongoing migraines, but God has been with us.

It seemed at first that all our plans as a young couple were delayed by this accident, but we believe and know that God has better plans for us. I have learned to rely on Jesus, and every day He gives me strength and endurance. When I think about those initial moments after the accident, tears roll down my cheeks and I thank God for His goodness, mercy, and love.

By all statistics and doctors' reports, Derin should not have survived his accident. Just to see him alive today is amazing. To see him walking, talking, and even serving as a member of the web and audio/visual department of our church in Paris is unbelievable. It is a miracle. His faith is strong in spite of all he has gone through—it is even strengthened. We know our testimonies are not yet complete. God is still at work and will continue to do great and mighty things in our lives, for His glory. ■

Derin and Michelle Madojutimi are members of the Apostolic Faith Church in Paris, France.



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