

I'D RATHER DIE ON THE HIGH GROUND

NAMANI J. NHARREL



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GRIPPING STORIES OF TRIUMPH OVER THE
POWERS OF DARKNESS AND PERSECUTION
FROM A NIGERIAN MISSION FIELD



WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT THE BOOK

There is hardly any more urgent path to take in the world today than the one Nharrel and his family have taken: the path of wholehearted obedience to God in missionary service among the unreached and least reached. He models for the reader what it means to give one's life over wholly to a missionary calling yet feel all the while abundantly blessed. If it were not for pioneer missionaries like him, who obey God's call to go where Christ is least known or unknown, then my own family would still be living in darkness.

These are also stories of prayer, the glowing ember that is always found at the core of all mission impact, and the engine behind all mission endeavours. May the Lord of the Harvest use these remarkable tales to call more into his harvest fields!

—Dr Joshua Bogunjoko, International Director of SIM

This collection of stories educates, inspires, and challenges the reader. Often, we learn best through stories like these frontline accounts from the field. Told from the perspective of the emerging missionary force from the non-Western world, they are a foretaste of what we might expect in global missions.

—Dr Ted Esler, President of Missio Nexus

Research often tells us statistics of how Christianity is growing rapidly in the continent of Africa. But how is God building his church on the continent? Through carefully narrated stories from Kamukuland, Nigeria, our brother Nharrel opens for us a small window to see the work of the Holy Spirit in Nigeria and in Africa. These stories sounded like they were written about the rural village where I was born and raised in Ethiopia. You will be intrigued by the faith and faithfulness of missionaries and local believers to boldly proclaim the gospel no matter what.

**—Dr Bekele Shanko,
Global Vice President of Campus Crusade for Christ,
President of GACX (a global alliance for church multiplication)**

The book calls our attention to God's awesome power to rescue a people group from bondage to ancestral worship, traditions, cultural practices, and the wicked spirits and evil gods that had held them captive for many years. What can be more convincing of genuine transformation than the fact that some characters in these stories are now themselves missionaries to other people groups? This book is a timely message to the church, especially people who are ashamed of the gospel because they have not yet seen it as "the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

Well-written, precise, and very practical, this book does not present a set of doctrines or theories on how to do evangelism and church planting, but Nharrel's life experiences on the mission field. The book presents testimonies of God's power to provide, heal, deliver from demonic forces, miraculously answer prayers, and defend those who depend on him. The book is a must-read for all serving missionaries and missions and church administrators, and a great asset for pastors, teachers, and all Christians.

**—Prof Ezekiel Oluyemi Odebunmi, Former National Chairman of
Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) Nigeria, Professor of Chemistry at
University of Ilorin**

Concise, simple, and deeply insightful, this book is a faith-induced spiritual goldmine. These stories are proof that God can do extraordinary things through and among ordinary people. Simple prayers offered in faith bring about life-changing results. We sometimes forget this as we get carried away by big grammar, logic, and showmanship.

A guide for anyone looking to grow their faith in Christ, this book also offers revival and renewal for those who have become faint in their walk with God. Reflections and thought-provoking questions at the end of each chapter make the book a valuable resource for deeper Scripture engagement. The transformative power of the gospel is captured in this powerful reminder: God is still in the business of performing miracles for his glory through obedient missionaries. In times like these when Christians are faced with persecution in Nigeria and around the world, this book should be welcomed with two hands and an obedient heart!

**—Rev Dr Gideon Para-Mallam,
Global Mission Leader and Peace Advocate in Jos, Nigeria**

Three things stand out as I reflect on these stories of God's power, faithfulness, and grace in Kamukuland. First, church planting is not a routine or programmed process. Among peoples who have been held in bondage by the evil one for centuries, the words of the gospel have been accompanied by power (1 Thessalonians 1:5). God's Spirit sometimes works like the wind (John 3:8) in people's hearts drawing them out of darkness into the Light. Other times, God's work is like leaven (Luke 13:20-21) in a community, transforming it over decades. When we look back, we are amazed at all he has done. And third, God is preparing the African church to take their place on the global stage as the next generation of Great Commission workers, taking the gospel to hard and hostile peoples and places, and re-evangelizing the West in the lands that sent missionaries to them in the first place! May it be so!

**—Dr Jerry Todd Lafferty,
Executive VP of the International Mission Board**

In his very readable but deeply insightful style, Nharrel takes us behind the curtain to see what a modern African's cross-cultural missionary life and work look like, and at the same time to challenge us to childlike faith. Thanks, my "running mate" for how you serve the church with your writing gift. I pray I catch up soon.

**—Chimezie Onyebilanma, former National Director of Calvary
Ministries (CAPRO) South Africa, host of Chim's Talk Africa on
Trinity Broadcasting Network**

The message of Jesus has always been carried by testimonies. We've experienced his authority over sickness, demons, sin, divorce, snakes, poison, and our greatest enemy death, and we want to tell the world about it! These things show that God is with us and all authority in heaven and earth has been given to him – and people everywhere in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Kamukuland, Europe, America, and the "ends of the earth" should recognize him as King.

These stories from Kamukuland are told here by a master storyteller and expert writer. Read them to your family and friends and be inspired to see the great things that the Lord can do among us if we will only trust him.

**—Prof Andy Warren-Rothlin, Translation Consultant for United
Bible Societies Switzerland**

This book stands in its own class. It is a compilation of true stories from the mission field, but ultimately, it is not about the author, his team, nor the church in Kamukuland. It is about our God. It bears incredible evidence that our God is real, alive, ever faithful, a mighty man of battle, and has all the powers in heaven and on earth. He has given Nharrel the grace to write this book for the glory of his name, the edification of believers, and the strengthening of his church. I commend this book to all believers, trusting in the Holy Spirit's power to transform our lives as we meditate on the heart-thrilling synopsis of God's mighty acts.

**—Prof Adesegun Fatusi,
Vice Chancellor of the University of Medical Sciences, Ondo, Nigeria**

These stories may seem like fairy tales, but they are real. For instance, I was personally involved in the encounter with the Kamuku gods, which may seem exaggerated, but not even half of what transpired has been captured. Read this book and you will come to know that little faith exercised in prayer to God through Jesus Christ changes situations.

**—Rev Samson D. Mancha, Former CAPRO Missionary Colleague,
now Pastor and Lecturer with Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN)**

This is one of the most open, honest, and truly earnest books that you can read to encourage your faith in Christ Jesus. The faith of these simple people, narrated in this book, moved mountains in their various communities. Read this exceptional masterpiece and your life will not remain the same.

**—Dr Mary Erasmus Sulai,
Associate Professor at Gombe State University, Nigeria**

Such an enriching and fascinating read.

**—Yetunde Omodia,
Missionary and Former Missionary Colleague in Kamukuland**

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I'd Rather Die on the High Ground

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**In memory of Baba Sata Maikujeri,
Baba Dogo, and Baba Bulus Bobi.**

These men were among the first Kamuku believers who followed Christ through the ministry of the American missionary, the Reverend L. E. Tuller, who worked in Kamukuland from the 1920s through the 1950s. I met these wonderful men of faith in the late 1990s while in Kamuku. They were a real encouragement to us later missionaries and to the young believers from our work. They have all now joined the presence of the Lord.



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6

FOR THIS, HE MUST DIE

Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, for the light makes everything visible.
Ephesians 5:11-14a

The dreaded Magiro cult is practised among some of the tribes of northwestern Nigeria. Only males are initiated into it, and all members swear an oath of secrecy. No one outside the cult – women, children, or foreigners – can know who Magiro is and what the initiates do. Through fear and terror, the cult controls religious, social, and judicial aspects of community life.

There were stories of men just disappearing, never to be seen again. Sometimes young boys who went for initiation into manhood never returned because Magiro “swallowed them up” for their mistakes or because they could not endure the hardship of the initiation processes. At times women were fined for alleged offences and forced to pay with their own goats. The Magiro cult also had outings which terrorised passers-by and created great tension.

In years past, a chief priest in the Magiro cult was a man named Baba Dogo. But he had not always been in the cult. Baba Dogo had been

among the first Christians in Kamukuland when American missionary Reverend L. E. Tuller first brought the light of the gospel in the 1920s.

Rev Tuller, in collaboration with the few believers he had then, went about from one Kamuku hill to the other exposing the secrets of the Magiro cult. The elders of the land accused Rev Tuller of exposing their idols and their secrets to women and non-initiates. After many threats and attempts on his life had failed, they reported him to the Native Authority in the town of Minna. He returned the second time and still stirred the hornets’ nest. He was deported again.

When Rev Tuller was expelled in 1953, the believers scattered, and Baba fell into the darkness of idolatry, even becoming a chief priest of Magiro.

After some time in the cult, Baba Dogo returned again to Christianity. By that time, the Baptist Church, ECWA, and a few other denominations had evangelized a few towns with accessible roads. Then one day he grew sick and needed an operation. A while later, his wife died. In both instances, he felt the church did not give him the sympathy he had expected. Offended and nursing his wounds, he left and joined yet another religion. Thus, over the course of his life, Baba Dogo had twice been a Christian and had twice backslidden.

THE SEED REVIVES

Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) started work among the Kamukus in 1991. Our focus was the other non-evangelised parts of the land where there was little or no Christian witness. Each missionary would learn directly or indirectly that the first and major obstacle to the hearts of the people was their attachment and devotion to their god Magiro.

But in Baba Dogo’s heart, something else was happening. In his very old age, the seed that had been planted in him stirred and revived. Indeed, one day Baba called the missionaries to his home.

So we went to visit him and brought with us one Baba Sata of Maikujeri, a contemporary of Baba Dogo’s and a believer from Rev Tuller’s work. He had been visiting nearby Maruba, where he was invited

to share in the Discipleship Training School (DTS) about how to preach to people who practise African Traditional Religion. The two old men, among the first converts from Rev Tuller's work, had scattered after the deportation of Tuller. While Baba Dogo returned to idolatry, Baba Sata continued strongly in the faith, and God used him to plant churches amidst persecution. At this meeting, they met for the first time in about 50 years. It was a day of great surprise and reunion.

In the presence of Baba Sata, Baba Dogo rededicated his life to Christ. He proclaimed, "I have slept for too long; I now want to wake up from my sleep!" He continued proudly to his people, "I am back to Christ now that I have seen my brothers." From that moment, the news spread.

His "brothers", we missionaries, continued to visit and fellowship with Baba. Sometimes I spent days in his house. With time, the joy of the Lord began to radiate from Baba's face and his unbelieving children and grandchildren took note of it. Some later joined the faith. Baba was greatly encouraged.

But people from other religions, who had thought Baba was with them, were not happy. Some thought to dissuade him, while others took Baba's action as a declaration of war on their gods. From the time of his declaration, the battle lines were drawn.

THE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

Christmas was approaching, and we sent out many invitations in Kamukuland. Many came, including non-believers.

Admittedly, most people were not necessarily there to hear about the Light who had come into the world to draw them out of darkness. Christmas was a new thing, and they came to see what the celebration was all about. Others came to partake in the love feast that marked the end of Christmas services in that young church. And still others came to dance and make merry.

But one invitation – the last and latest – was sent to the venerable old local, Baba Dogo. The idea to have him speak at the celebration had

come that very morning, less than three hours to the occasion. *Would he accept such an invitation? Would it not look disrespectful to the old man?* The church at Kangan Biri and the missionary team thought it would provide an opportunity for Baba to announce that he was fully back to Christianity, as some still wondered where he actually belonged. *But would he be willing to declare publicly at the church what he had declared only in his home to his guests, especially with the battle lines now drawn?*

Anyway, there was no harm in trying, the church and my team thought. We would apologize to him for the lateness. If he accepted the invitation, the young church would live to cherish this rare opportunity, for Baba Dogo had first begun to follow Jesus Christ long before any member of the church or any members of our missionary team were even born.

He could tell the story of how it came to the land in the 1920s, how it was welcomed, and how its light almost died, up until the recent coming of church denominations such as the United Missionary Church for Africa (UMCA), the Baptist Church, and Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA), and mission agencies such as Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) and Harvesters for Christ. What a morale boost it would be for the new Christ-followers who lived in a context where the elders of the land saw Christianity as a thing for small children. It would deepen the church's roots in the knowledge of its own history, and a man in his 90s speaking of Christianity would challenge more elders of the land to give Christianity serious thought.

Baba expressed his surprise at the late and sudden invitation, but he was prevailed upon to leave his village of Kasuwan Dogo to attend.

The problem now was how to get him to the celebration. Old age had weakened his feet too much to walk, and he also had chronic ulcers on both legs. Someone in the church had a motorcycle. That would do. But the motorcycle refused to cooperate. Its clutch cut. A church member graciously agreed to bring Baba on the back of an available bicycle. Baba humbly agreed to come, though it was not going to be fun along the thorny and shrubby bush path.

Back on the mission compound, believers put their heads together to fix the motorcycle. Not long after the bicycle took off with Baba, the

motorcycle was repaired. Soon Baba was transferred to it and had a smoother ride to the church premises, though not without some thorns tearing his feet.

EXPOSED

The celebration began, and finally the time came for Baba to take the stage. He sat down before the small crowd, well composed, and spoke in Kamuku to the delight of everyone. “*An an duwo? Do tu neba? Kata gabjiya?*” he greeted, which means, “Have you woken up? How was the night? How is your tiredness?” After he spoke, the celebrants began to ask questions about his long life of experiences.

Then a very unexpected question came. A woman asked, “Is it true that the god Magiro kills non-initiates who cross its way?”

Silence settled over the congregation. Baba tried to evade a direct answer. But he was cornered. The men tensed up. The unbelievers held their breath. The womenfolk strained to know about this god of men who had terrorised them for ages. Everyone leaned in to hear Baba’s next words.

Baba’s helplessness was evident. Only he and some believers who were former members of the Magiro cult knew the implications of answering that question truthfully. He had come to encourage the church; could he now confess the truth? What would happen if he said what the men did not expect him to say?

One of his grandchildren in the church reminded him, “You are to speak only the truth, Baba.”

Baba was quiet for some moments. Then he muttered some sounds that seemed to say, “Come what may, I will speak out.” He must have also offered a silent prayer. He cleared his throat.

“It is not true. Magiro does not kill. Rather, it is men who kill people.”

Fire does two things: it scorches, and it gives light. For some, the truth Baba spoke seared them like a fiery dart. For others, the truth was a beam of light, glowing brighter as his words settled in.

And like a fire, the news spread: “Dogo has shamelessly exposed private things before women and children.” People exclaimed, “The

atrocities attributed to Magiro are actually committed by men!" The women and children who once had rushed for cover during Magiro's outings now said with wonder, "Why, it is just men who go about producing loud sounds with metals and other objects, claiming these to be the cry of the gods."

Over 70 years after the Rev Tuller exposed the secrets of Magiro, history was repeating itself. This time, the centre of the controversy was none other than a convert from Tuller's work, an insider and a native of the land, old in years and well respected.

The truth was out. The acts attributed to Magiro were now known to be perpetrated by mere men who masked themselves as gods. Baba Dogo had not only declared himself a true follower of Christ, he had also declared the falsehoods of the cult and enraged its adherents.

This disclosure was received with mixed feelings. The young believers sighed with relief. Their position in leaving the way of falsehood, the way of the ancestors, was now vindicated by no less of an authority than a former chief priest.

The womenfolk, both Christians and non-Christians, rejoiced. At last, the secret of how men oppressed them was exposed. In fact, some of the women went about telling the men after the service, "We now know your secrets. Baba has told us everything." They had lived in fear and oppression, but now they could resist those who had lied, intimidated, extorted payments, and killed their loved ones.

Believing men who had once been members in the Magiro cult witnessed a former chief priest speaking the truth. They would soon see if the power behind the oaths of secrecy would prove to be deadly, or nothing more than dry leaves tossing helplessly in the wind.

However, the whole thing did not go down well with the unbelieving men in the congregation. "If he were not an old man, I would have struck him dead," one elderly man reported to another after the service.

As the news spread, the elders of the land involved in the Magiro cult whispered among themselves and counselled one another: "Something must be done."

SOMETHING MUST BE DONE

The majority of the elders agreed that the missionaries must be expelled from the land. Then the gods should be invoked to afflict the indigenous believers with a disease that causes the belly to swell. Finally, subject to the ratification of the larger council of elders of the land, two men must die – Baba and me, who had invited him.

These threats of the pagans came up to the hearing of the men in the church. They were taught to expect persecution. They knew that Baba caused a ripple in Kamukuland, and his life was in danger. Therefore, they called for prayer and fasting – for the safety of the old man and courage for Christians, that none would fall back when persecution was unleashed. We encouraged the local believers not to fear, assuring them of God’s control of the situation. Some still feared and wondered, *Will this new God save us from Magiro’s wrath?*

One new believer did not pretend to be unafraid. “Well, if you see people’s stomachs start to swell, know that Magiro has started his work,” she announced, looking troubled.

Other believers told her, “Jesus has power over Magiro. If you are a true Christian, can Magiro have power over you?” And so they encouraged themselves and continued to pray.

We also learned that the priests of Magiro would invoke the gods to execute justice against us and planned to achieve this not only through the Magiro of the land, but also the Magiro of the neighboring Kambari tribe. It was widely believed that the Kambari had the most powerful Magiro of the surrounding tribes. Therefore, people were sent to confer with the priests of that tribe, for the Magiro of Kamukuland seemed to have been defied.

While we worried over what would become of Baba, the old man remained calm. He admitted that in earlier times, he would have been killed without notice. Yet his heart remained unshakable. “Since we believe in God, you just go and continue to pray for me. If they say I exposed their secrets, let them come and confront me directly, and I will expose more secrets! When they killed so-and-so, they said it was

Magiro. When they killed the son of so-and-so, they said it was Magiro.” One could feel the anger arising in Baba’s voice over people’s wicked hearts. “Magiro has no business killing people. It is people killing one another under cover of darkness and saying it is Magiro.”

Meanwhile the threat to Baba’s life and ours continued to gain ground. The elders of the land and representatives of the clans met twice to deliberate over what to do. They met in the bush. Among the elders was a “traitor” who informed Baba what was discussed. Baba, in turn, passed the information to me for prayer.

I contemplated reporting the threats to the district head or to the police. But to my surprise, Baba did not support the idea. He reasoned, “If we report these people, we will win the case, but we will lose the people. They would never want to hear our gospel again.”

He felt that some of the rulers of the land or the police might seize the opportunity to extort money from the people, adding to other inconveniences and sufferings they would be made to go through. Thereafter, everyone would hold the Christians responsible for their hardships. “We must continue to pray only,” Baba counselled.

Thus it was that the man who once fled in the face of persecution now cared less for his own safety and more for the evangelistic work, the witness of Christians, and the suffering of the people. Though he had defected from the faith twice before, he refused to budge from it again. Though death itself fixed its gaze on him, Baba fixed his gaze on the Light, his fortress and his deliverer.

THE MEETING THAT SEALED OUR FATE

More than 40 men from various parts of the land travelled from far and near for the General Council of the elders of the land. It was the last meeting in which Baba’s fate and mine were to be sealed.

The penalty for the type of offence under discussion was death. Normally, no time was wasted in talk. Once the elders pronounced a person guilty, the person died. It remains a mystery, however, why the Council took so long to decide what to do with Baba. Surely God’s

restraining power – the result of prayers of the Christians – prevailed. Maybe it was also fear of the government, for many people erroneously believed I and my team represented the government. Therefore, they had to take care what they did with these “government agents”, as we were called. It was obvious God was at work, fighting on behalf of his servants and his church.

By tradition, the nearest relation of the offender was given the task of executing the sentence, so the elders appointed Baba’s nearest kin. “What are you going to do with your ‘father’?” the Council asked him.

The man replied, “What has my ‘father’ done that deserves what you are asking me to do?”

The men looked at one another in disbelief. “What have we been meeting and talking about all these weeks?” they asked each other.

Somebody stood menacingly, sensing betrayal in their midst. “Your father said what should not be said before women and children. For this, he must die!”

The kinsman of Baba straightened up and cleared his throat. “Pardon me, all the elders of our land. I am not refusing to do what the elders and the ancestors have decided should be done. The offence is grave enough. Yet as you all know, in cases like this, the facts about such an offence must come from those who witnessed when the offence was committed. Now what we have been discussing took place in the church. Which of us seated here was present when my father said what is attributed to him?”

The place fell silent. The men began to look at one another in disbelief as if to say, *What type of question is this?*

“It’s just like I said!” someone exclaimed. “We are not together in this matter.”

Another man shot up. “None of us was there, but we all heard it from the air.”

Baba’s relation retorted, “That is sheer nonsense.”

A second witness stood up. “Well, we were not there, but some of our women were there. They came back to tell us all what the old man had said.”

“How interesting,” Baba’s relation said mockingly. “You all know as well as I that this Council does not take evidence from women. So, what are you talking about?” He clenched his fists and glared.

A third man stood to speak. He was the scribe of one of the local chiefs of the land and appeared learned. “Well,” calling attention to himself. “This is not a small matter we are handling. It has reached the big chief in our big town, and he says we must do something concrete about it.”

“Where is the letter from your chief?” Baba’s relation queried. “Even a chief cannot just send a verbal word.”

No letter was produced. No one testified that the accused, being tried in absentia, actually had committed the offense he was accused of. His kinsman, who had a sworn allegiance to Magiro and to protecting his interests, accidentally yet ably defended Baba Dogo without planning to do so.

“So, you condemned a man to death before you proved him guilty? Then I would have killed my father for nothing? I insist that the charge against my father be proven or else I take the whole of this Council to court,” the man said with finality.

Grumblings bubbled up like the surface of a pot of stew over hot flame. Surprisingly, most of the delegates agreed with the man who defended Baba. Those who had to travel a long distance began to count their loss. They had left some of their businesses unattended. Those who came by foot talked of how tiring the journey was.

Next came exchanges of hot words, accusations, and counter accusations. The orderly meeting became chaotic. Some suggested letting the matter die down. But the kinsman refused. The least he would agree to was that the most elderly ones among them apologize to Baba. Otherwise, he threatened police or court action. Some felt it was not necessary, while some agreed. Rowdiness threatened to reign again.

With no solution forthcoming, the most elderly among them rose to leave one after the other. Like the accusers in John 8 who dropped their stones and slipped away one by one, the leaders in the meeting also dispersed in different directions. Some left defeated; some disappointed.

Others left vowing to see that the gods and the ancestors be avenged. “Baba must not see the end of the year,” they swore.

BABA’S RESPONSE

When all this was reported to Baba, he laughed. “I wish I knew who wants me dead. I would buy salt and distribute it to their wives to show that I have no ill feeling towards anyone.” His next words echoed those of Joseph to his brothers who had sold him into slavery in Egypt (Genesis 50:20), “They had planned evil against me, but God brought their plan to naught.”

Baba lived for a few more years before he died a natural death at a very ripe age of about 100. We were not expelled from the land, nor did anyone die. None of the believers had swollen stomachs.

REFLECTIONS



Isn't it amazing how God comes to the defence of his people using agents who society may overlook, and even who believers may think unworthy? God can use even his enemies, like Baba Dogo's kinsman. This man, himself a devotee of Magiro, was the executioner appointed by humans, but the liberator appointed by God. God used him to reverse a certain death sentence into a demand for an apology.

God can also use people who have backslidden (like Baba Dogo), women (like the woman who posed the question to Baba Dogo), children (like the Hebrew slave girl who helped her leprous master, Namaan), and even the weather (like the storm that shipwrecked Paul). God can use anyone and anything he chooses, no matter how unlikely, to accomplish his purposes, protect his people, and proclaim his glory.

Question: How can this knowledge increase your faith today in areas where you are facing what seems to be a lack of help?

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:2; John 7:24; Isaiah 55:9



I believe the Lord gave Baba Dogo the opportunity to prove that his turning back was genuine and, indeed, final. Although in the past he had defected from the faith for lesser reasons, the current threat before him was the ultimate one – death itself. Surely, this was a man transformed! Peter the disciple denied Christ three times on the night of Christ’s trial, yet he went on to face death and become a “pillar in the church”. So Baba Dogo denied Christ twice, but also went on to stand firm in the face of death, and the Lord used him to grow the faith of the fledgling church.

Baba Dogo declared, “Let them come and confront me directly, *and I will expose more secrets.*” Let us be wary of the habit of secret-keeping in our own families, churches, and communities. When you begin to bump into the presence of secrets, consider that these may be footholds of the devil. Secrets must be brought to the light by courageous truth-telling. Surely, nothing is hidden from the Lord.

Question: Are there secrets held in your own life or community that may be concealing sin or injustices?

Read: John 3:20-21; Proverbs 28:13; Psalm 32:5; Hebrews 4:13; Ephesians 5:11-14

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank God who made it possible to write this account of faith. The work started towards the end of our stay in Kamukuland in 1999. However, the Lord helped me to keep revising and adding new material to the manuscript over time. This is the second printing after the first in 2020, under the title *Encouraged by Their Faith*.

I am grateful to my wife and friend, Laku, who has been a wonderful encouragement to me in ministry ever since we agreed to become missionaries during our courtship.

I am deeply touched by the support of two key men: Rev (Dr) David Abolarin, who was my immediate pastor at Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) Bacita, Kwara State, from where my wife and I left for missions, and Mr Chimezie Onyebilanma, my missionary colleague and friend.

Although I did not inform him early enough, Rev Abolarin made the church pray for my family and released us to work with Calvary Ministries (CAPRO). He is a very humble man. While in Bacita, he encouraged our outreach to Bode Sadu where my family and Sha'aibu Shigben Isa planted a church among some migrant farmers (Dakarkari, Kambari, and Dukawa) from Kebbi and Niger states; and to some fishing settlements of Zabarmawa people from Kebbi State along the river Niger. I recall my wife and I visiting Rev Abolarin's family from our mission field. By then, he had moved to Ilorin to become the ECWA Ilorin District Church Council (DCC) Secretary. When we alighted

from the taxi, he came and carried our heavy travelling bag on his head to the house. After that visit, we lost contact. I reconnected with him via phone call about 16 years later, and he gave me the surprise of my life. "How is the mission field?" he asked. "I pray for you every Monday since you left Bacita," he revealed. Unknown to me, my pastor had lifted my family and ministry in prayer before the Lord for about 20 years!

Chimezie and I trained for mission work in set 27 at the CAPRO School of Mission, Gana Ropp. I call him my "running mate." Each of us came with about a six-month-old daughter. Before the year ended, we each had a second daughter. Our third and fourth children were boys born on mission fields. Chimezie introduced me to A. W. Tozer who became one of my favourite authors. He has been my accountability partner since our training days at Gana Ropp and after he left to work in Togo and South Africa. One day he wrote, "Nharrel, I pray for you every Wednesday since we left Gana Ropp."

I am surprised that God is using very busy ministers to pray consistently for me. But then I understand why, in spite of my weaknesses, God has used me thus far. Whatever God enabled us to do in Kamuku field and in mission work in general was in answer to the prayers of the likes of Rev David Abolarin and Chimezie Onyebilanma. Some we know and others we do not know. To God be the glory and praise. Should I and my wife receive credit at all, it would go to our prayer partners and supporters.

I thank all my co-labourers, those who pioneered the CAPRO work in Kamukuland in 1990 and teammates with whom we worked between 1996 and 2000 to see that Christ is enthroned in Kamukuland. My prayer is that the fruit of our collective labours will continue to flourish in Kamukuland and beyond until Jesus comes.

I thank all who helped to make the first edition of this book a reality. These include Professor Odebunmi Ezekiel Oluyemi who, in addition to writing the original preface, also took time to do some editorial work on the book. Mr Ralph Madugu, editor of *Today's Challenge* magazine, and Eric Pam of the English department in Plateau State Polytechnic in

Nigeria, helped with editing. Miss Uche Ofulue proofread and did more editorial work. Several others read through and made corrections and useful suggestions.

Mrs Nora Okoye saw the title of the book listed among my works in *His Commands in Other Words* (one of my published books), and without knowing or meeting me in person, offered to contribute financially to the first edition's printing. Pastor Sunny Wogu of the Redeemed Christian Church of God gave money for its production. Mr Erasmus and Dr Mary Sulai made a donation after the latter went through the book and did corrections. I am very grateful to these and others who gave towards the realization of this work, but whose names are not mentioned here, because the book was already with the printer when their contributions came in.

I thank Yammune, my daughter and the only strong critic I have had so far. She read the final draft and pointed out many lapses – that some stories were too scattered to follow while others were scanty.

Now in my second printing and under a new title, I wish to thank my wonderful editors. Miss Hannah Rasmussen, the acquisitions editor at Oasis International Publishing has been very encouraging. Not only did she consider the book worth publishing, she also made useful suggestions as we worked together on this new and international edition.

Thanks to the publishers at Oasis International who have agreed to publish this book even if the writer is not a well-known author.

Mrs Tabitha Crowley of SIM has been very wonderful at re-editing the book to suit the publishers' specifications. As we worked together on this edition, I find her a very considerate, friendly, and caring person. I appreciate all her valuable contributions in making this book what it is in its present form.

Apart from those who came alongside me in ensuring the book came to be, there are those without whom the stories themselves would not have happened.

I thank the Kamuku believers whose lives provided the amazing stories recorded here, and many more that are not written down. For good reasons, I have changed their names. These believers agreed for me to write their stories and supplied vital details, including historical events that occurred before I arrived in the land and after I left. I am indebted to these wonderful believers whose faith encouraged mine, and I believe will encourage that of the readers.

I received encouragement from many individuals and churches who believed in and supported our work faithfully and sacrificially. Some visited to encourage us with their presence and presents. Worthy of mention is the Ilorin Chapter, now Ilorin CAST (CAPRO Sending Team), in financing many of the projects we undertook. The members contributed much in putting up buildings on the field, and I consider them wonderful teammates.

I must also appreciate the hand of fellowship extended to us by Christian denominations such as the Baptist Church and the United Missionary Church for Africa (UMCA), which were in Kamukuland long before Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) entered to work in the Tegin, Maruba, Kaya, Ukuru, and Uchindawa areas. The Baptist pastors in Mariga and Kagara assisted in our field activities, such as teaching in the Discipleship Training School (DTS). I was humbled by Mr Bahago, the UMCA pastor in Kampanin Bobi, who submitted himself to participate in the DTS with some of his church members. He studied at the school during the week and returned to minister in his church on weekends.

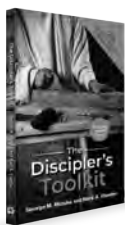
The ECWA Church, Lemu Road, in Kaduna supported our work, and even after leaving the field they still consider my wife and me as their missionaries. The same goes for the Chapel of Grace, Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital (OAUTH) Complex, whose support continued long after we left Kamuku. I recall one of its pastors,

my friend Adesegun Fatusi, visiting us in Kangon Biri and appreciating what he saw. I asked him if he was going to join us on the mission field, and he replied, “No! But I now know how to go and pray appropriately for mission work.”

I thank all the partners – individuals, churches, and organizations – who prayed, gave, visited, and aided the Kamuku work in one way or the other. Without you, Kamukuland would not have heard the gospel in the way it did, and these stories would not have come to pass to be written.

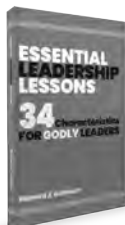
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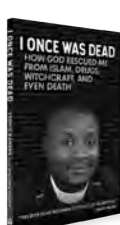
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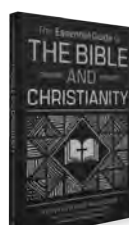
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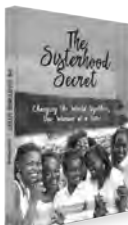
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Cedric Kanana with Benjamin Fischer
This book's riveting, action-packed plot has one central message shining through: Jesus is stronger than death, than addiction, than Islam, than traditional religion, than curses. Trust Jesus alone! The miracles recorded in *I Once Was Dead* echo the book of Acts and give all glory to God – whether healing, deliverance, resurrection, protection from threats, or hearing God's voice.



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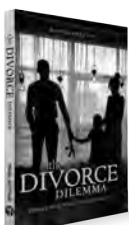
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Ernest Wamboye with Waturi Wamboye
In *Baesics*, Ernest and Waturi Wamboye give no-nonsense advice on how to build a fulfilling love life and marriage. Young adults in African cities feel marriage is priority but are often unprepared. *Baesics* addresses the relationship dilemmas many young adults are facing today from a Christian point of view.



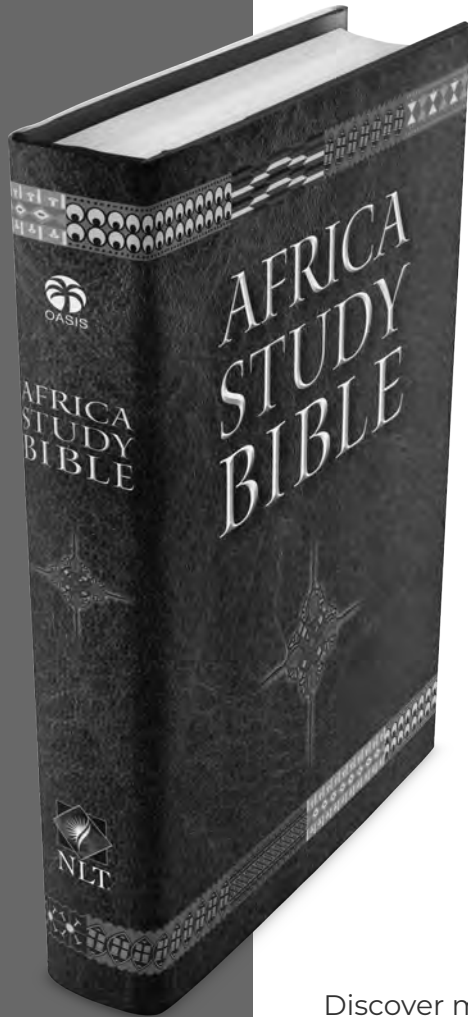
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Written as a friendly and light-hearted conversation, this book is perfect for you and your fiancé(e) to read and discuss together. Drawing from timeless wisdom and real-life examples, this husband-and-wife team helps couples to resolve conflicts before they explode.



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Ron Misiko and Ray Motsi
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- Dr Ed Stetzer, Executive Director of the BILLY GRAHAM CENTER

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