



Family

West Chicago Church of Christ

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A Preacher's Perspective

Courage and compassion. These are qualities which God rewarded in a young Nigerian man named Obadiah Abimiku Doka. He was reared in an environment of animism and Islam, but his concern for a friend who was having a seizure led him to find a World Bible School lesson on the floor and eventually to become a Christian.

We have been blessed to know our brother, Doka, since 2000, when he was returning home after graduation from Freed-Hardeman University. Jack Plummer called to tell us about this young man who was having visa problems and needed some hospitality for a few days.

Chester, Phyllis and Kim Sitler were hosts to Doka, and we all came to know and love him, and to admire his courage and commitment to God. Doka returned to Nigeria, though he had opportunities to remain in the states and to work here in ministry. His life in the U.S. would have been much more economically rewarding. His heart, however, called him back to Africa to bless his countrymen with the gospel which had come to mean so much to him. He chose the greater riches.

In the southern part of Nigeria, there are over 300,000 brothers and sisters in Christ. In the north, however, there are few. Few missionaries or church planters are drawn to the north where Islam and paganism continue to stand in the way of the growth of the Kingdom.

Doka returned to northern Nigeria, eventually choosing to work and live in Abuja, the Federal Capitol. He has been developing literacy programs which are so important to the improvement of the lives of the citizens of Nigeria, and which are vital to their ability to study and understand the Bible.

In the 10 years of his ministry in Nigeria, there have been 994 baptisms,

establishment of 30 congregations in the central area, and 10,000 enrolled in the literacy training program.

The West Chicago congregation has been blessed to provide support for Doka through individual contributions of members. Doka is sponsored by the Rogersville Church of Christ in Rogersville, AL. The minister there, Alex Bayes, was a classmate of Doka at Freed-Hardeman and has visited Doka in Nigeria. We are blessed to have this beloved brother with us today.

Chuck Miller



Northern Nigeria is not a Christian-friendly world. Here, Muslims advocate sharia, the imposition of strict and harsh Muslim law and jihad. Northern Nigeria is an area where Christians have been killed with impunity and even with the support of the government. Witchcraft, paganism and the occult also provide a backdrop for the spiritual darkness of this part of sub-Saharan Africa.

Obadiah Abimiku Doka grew up as the son of the head of the Witchcraft Association in Keffi, about an hour from Abuja, the federal capital. From his earliest days Doka was warned against the “white man’s religion.” His father told him that Christianity was a lie, that Jesus was not true, and that the ministers of this faith were criminals and liars. Doka accepted those teachings. He became Muslim, he worshiped the family idols with his father each morning, and he desired nothing to do with Christianity.

Doka was a bright young man and he was given the opportunity to attend a boarding high school, which provided him the education to become a teacher and become a man of substance in Nigeria. One day in 1984, Doka saw a circle of students running away from something on the ground. That “something” was a fellow student, Bitrus Ishimitu O’Malley, who was convulsing from a seizure. Doka asked, “What’s wrong.”

“He’s sick,” was the reply, “and if you touch him, you will get sick and die.” But Doka could not watch the suffering of his classmate without responding. He persuaded others to help him take Bitrus to a clinic where he received treatment. Later, Doka visited the home of Bitrus O’Malley to see about his friend. As he was leaving, he noticed a piece of paper on the floor.

“What’s this?” he asked Bitrus.

“Shhhh! Doka, don’t speak of this! This is World Bible School course from U.S.” Bitrus feared his family would discover the course and that he would be in serious trouble. Bitrus was studying with a teacher from Ozark, MO, named Charles White. He gave the paper to Doka who filled out an enrollment form and also became a student of Charles White.

Doka was an eager learner. Charles White guided Doka through the materials and Doka learned the lessons well. When Doka asked for a Bible, WBS supplied one.

The day the Bible came, Doka went to the post office. The postmaster, watched as Doka unwrapped the book. When the postmaster realized what it was, he took the Bible, poured kerosene on it, and burned it. “Boy, if you took this to your home, you would be in serious trouble,” he warned Doka.

Looking back, Doka agrees that this might have been a great problem. But even without a Bible, through the teaching in the WBS lessons, Doka was soon ready to be baptized. Charles White began to correspond with Christians in Nigeria to go baptize him.

No one was willing. Etem E. Young, a gospel preacher who lived a great distance away, told Charles White that he would be killed if he went to Keffi, because this was a very dangerous area for anyone admitting to being a Christian. Charles White communicated the problem to Doka, but Doka was determined to become a Christian and desperately wanted to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Finally, he made the five-hour trip to the home of Etem E. Young and told him of his determination.

After a period of study, Etem agreed that Doka was ready to be baptized, but he hesitated because there was no church nearby with which he could worship. Doka, however, insisted. He had not come so far only to return home still in his sins. Etem E. Young reluctantly baptized Doka who returned to his family in Keffi.

When he returned home, Doka could tell no one his exciting new secret. For a while, he continued to worship the family idols with his father early in the morning, although he knew this was wrong. To escape this practice, he got up early, before worship, and went out to the family garden. He told his father he was going to drive away the birds and animals from the food. His father was pleased to have such a responsible son, and Doka was temporarily free from the idolatrous worship.

At last, however, Doka shared the truth of his conversion to Christianity with one of his brothers. This brother told Doka’s stepmother who told his father. Doka’s father was furious. “Where did you hear about this Christianity?” He drew a line in the dirt. “Here is where your body will lie, if you do not abandon this Christianity! Choose between this religion and your life.”

But Doka refused to recant his faith. He was outcast, considered no longer a member of the family. His father even tried to prevent him from using the family name. But still, Doka held on to his faith. Doka’s father went to the parents of Doka’s wife, Naomi, and tried to persuade them to take back their daughter. They refused, and still Doka persisted in his faith. The situation came to a climax when Doka’s half-sister, Mary, asked him to escort her across town. He willingly went with her. At an intersection, by arrangement of the family members, there was a large fish-truck with ice, waiting to run down the Christian and kill him. Doka was hit by the truck and knocked over a pile of sand in a construction area. Mary, however, was run over by the wheel of the truck and was immediately killed.

In the confusion, the bystanders believed Doka was dead, too. The family was drinking and celebrating. But Doka was not dead. When he reappeared, his relatives and friends were disappointed. Some Christians in a safer area of Nigeria heard of Doka’s injury and his peril and sent for him. Clarence Wilson, who had been working to establish Christianity in Nigeria for 11 years, cared for Doka until he was fully recovered. Soon after, Doka completed a course in Bible training, and, after much prayer and discussion, decided to return to Keffi to preach and teach. Many of his friends considered this a fatal mistake.

But Doka returned. At first, only he and Naomi were Christians. Then five. Then twelve. Perhaps as many as 250 eventually became Christians in Keffi, although many disappeared. Some probably ran away to escape persecution. A church of about 60 was eventually established and remains today, still growing.

One of the friends of Doka’s father, who became a Christian later, asked his father, “You have said this boy will die. But Doka is not dead! Why?”

Doka’s father answered, “He has a strong spirit behind him!”

The friend shared this with Doka, who was surprised to hear his father’s statement. As Doka thought of this, and as he studied the Bible, he remembered the statement by John, “he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” Later Doka told his father’s friend, “Yes, I do have a strong spirit behind me.” He went on to explain that his “strong spirit” was Jesus Christ.

Through contacts from America, Doka was sponsored to come to America to study Bible. He received a Bible degree in 2000 from Freed-Hardeman University. Doka returned to Nigeria. After a brief time back in Keffi, Doka and Naomi and their children moved to Abuja, the Federal Capitol, where there is more opportunity to spread the faith.

Doka’s remarkable story reminds us of the power of God to use simple resources to accomplish great purposes. An act of compassion. A piece of paper on the floor.