

Chapter 1: Death of the Innocent Children

“But the people of Israel had many children, and their number grew greatly. They became very strong, and the country of Egypt was filled with them. Then a new king began to rule Egypt, who did not know who Joseph was. This king said to his people, ‘Look! The people of Israel are too many and too strong for us to handle! If we don’t make plans against them, the number of their people will grow even more. Then if there is a war, they might join our enemies and fight us and escape from the country!’... So the king commanded all his people, ‘Every time a boy is born to the Hebrews, you must throw him into the Nile River...’” – Exodus 1:7-10, 22 (NCV)

It all began many years ago when a Nigerian woman from the Southeastern part of Nigeria, lost two of her daughters in a single night. As the two girls innocently played around their compound one evening, a poisonous snake lurked about. Within seconds, the snake had struck both of them with his venom. It was not uncommon in Obong Ntak to die from a snake bite. If you were fortunate, and the herbalist arrived with anti-venom, you might be spared, but without having anti-venom readily available, if there even was one, it was very unlikely for an individual to survive a snake bite.

“In some towns in northern Nigeria, it is estimated that hundreds of people die each year from snakebites. Health officials blame the deaths on the large variety of snakes and lack of modern facilities in the area. Snakebite victims in northern Nigeria are usually the people who have the least access to health care - subsistence farmers in remote villages. Many of these villages have no roads, and during the rainy season, some are completely cut off from the outside world as ravines fill with water. And it’s the rainy season when the snakes come out.” (Voice of America, Heather Murdock, April 16, 2013 [“Nigeria Plans Hospital Exclusively for Snakebites”](#))

The girls’ mother, Dimah Akpanudo, was beside herself with grief and wept endlessly, not knowing what to do with the loss of her young daughters. At that time she was attending a local

church that was Presbyterian in nature. The native priests considered it a “white man’s religion.” The preacher there met with Dimah and attempted to encourage and comfort her with words from the Bible. Later, the native juju priest of Dimah’s village also came to sympathize with her.

In African culture, the Juju priest is the agent of the gods. In every community there is always one person who is a seer recognized by the society. In some instances, he might also be a native doctor. When he cannot be present, he divines what the gods want and refers his clients to a specialized native doctor of his choice. As a priest, he also offers sacrifices to the gods on behalf of the people. The community chiefs respect him as a holy man. In most cultures this priesthood is hereditary, passing from a father to one of his sons once he is accepted by the gods. Every village or group of villages has a priest, and no one who wanted to live a good life refused his predictions or advice.

The priest told Dimah that the gods of the land were angry that she attended the white man's religious assembly, and that the reason her two daughters were struck by a snake – the agent of the gods – was to show her how angry they were. But Dimah refused to believe this message and despite her secret fears, she continued to go to the white man’s church. Her husband, Akpanudo Atamgumiem, felt insulted by his wife going to the white man’s assembly. At the time, three of Akpanudo’s adult sons, born of his other three wives, were members of the Presbyterian Church and public opinion in the family weighed heavily in favor of them as a result. Because of this Dimah suffered little condemnation for attending there as well. Akpanudo was alone in his anger. He completely agreed with the native juju priest that the death of the two girls was a direct result of Dimah’s disobedience, and he sought for the voice of the gods.

Chapter 2: She Named Him Moses

“Now a man from the family of Levi married a woman who was also from the family of Levi. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw how wonderful the baby was, she hid him for three months. But after three months she was not able to hide the baby any longer, so she got a basket made of reeds and covered it with tar so that it would float. She put the baby in the basket. Then she put the basket among the tall stalks of grass at the edge of the Nile River. The baby’s sister stood a short distance away to see what would happen to him. Then the daughter of the king of Egypt came to the river to take a bath, and her servant girls were walking beside the river. When she saw the basket in the tall grass, she sent her slave girl to get it. The king’s daughter opened the basket and saw the baby boy. He was crying, so she felt sorry for him and said, ‘This is one of the Hebrew babies.’ Then the baby’s sister asked the king’s daughter, ‘Would you like me to go and find a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby for you?’ The king’s daughter said, ‘Go!’ So the girl went and got the baby’s own mother. The king’s daughter said to the woman, ‘Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.’ So the woman took her baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, the woman took him to the king’s daughter, and she adopted the baby as her own son. The king’s daughter named him Moses, because she had pulled him out of the water.” – Exodus 2:1-10 (NCV)

Six months had passed since the loss of Dimah’s two daughters. In a dream one night, Dimah dreamed of struggling for a child with a neighborhood woman who happened to be a member of the same church that she attended. In the dream they struggled for a long time but eventually Dimah won and the baby boy was hers. The other woman went away empty handed and disappointed as she had three girls and wanted a boy so badly.

“It was worse in our culture for mothers with daughters and no sons. Even today, daughters have no part in the family inheritance. It can be difficult to survive unless a mother has good sons-in-law. A son however, is seen as the source of the continuity of the family. Daughters are viewed as total strangers as they mature and eventually are given out in marriage. They occupy a very precarious

position if no one marries them. Such unmarried girls have no voice in their fathers' houses.” – Moses Akpanudo

Dimah eventually got pregnant again and when the baby arrived, it was a boy. Dimah viewed the baby boy as a replacement for the two girls she had lost, so she took the baby to the Presbyterian preacher to receive a Biblical name. The preacher ran through many Bible names and decided on the name "Moses." Akpanudo, Dimah's husband, was a pagan and he named the boy Udoudo, which simply meant third son of his mother. Akpanudo was not interested in anything that came from the new religion. Regardless, the boy was given no choice in the name given to him, and anyone who knows the Biblical story will certainly realize the challenges that were in store for this child.

Chapter 3: Something More

“Time passed. Moses grew up. One day he went and saw his brothers, saw all that hard labor.” – Exodus 2:11 (MSG)

This Nigerian Moses grew up as a farm hand. He worked for his parents in the farm trying to do whatever menial duties a child could handle. A typical day began at dusk, that time of day between sunlight and darkness. There were no clocks so the exact time was unknown. Moses depended on cock crows especially at dawn. At the second cock crow, which was probably about 5:00 a.m. Moses was awakened and told to go to the river, which was seven miles away to fetch water for use at home. Small children would go in the company of adults. This was Moses' first morning duty. He would wash in the stream near the river and then fetch about a gallon of water in an earthen pot. This he had to carry on his head with the help of a pad made from an old torn piece of cloth. At times Moses' neck would be stiff by the time he got home. His mother, Dimah, would massage it for some time so as to regulate blood flow. On good days they would sing folk songs as they returned from fetching water from the river. This made the task more enjoyable some of the time but it was most tedious at other times. There were stories of people being scared by objects thought to be ghosts, especially during the dark nights. On nights when the moon would shine till morning, it was crystal clear all over. There were incidents where people were hit by poisonous snakes as they went to, or returned from the stream. This was not uncommon and made for a precarious and frightening trip while carrying jars of water on the journey back to the village. There were a few times when Moses only managed to get his pot of water one or two miles down the path on his return home. On one occasion his pot leaked and the water soaked through Moses' clothes leaving the pot half full. This of course disturbed the balance of the pot as it sat on his head causing it to fall off. Each occasion he lost a pot of water, he would return home in tears. Although Moses' mother hardly scolded or punished him for broken pots, Moses felt guilty for depriving the family of the water supply his contribution would have made. Other children would have hid away for fear of punishment.

The task of getting water for the family was followed by sweeping the house, or at least Moses' portion in the compound. Depending on the season Moses' would also search for mushrooms in the morning. After breakfast Moses would go with his mother to the farm, many times for

the rest of the day. If they were going to be there all day Dimah would be sure to take a lunch with them. Upon returning home Moses' mother would prepare to go to the evening market to sell fish while Moses' went with the other kids to the bush to gather fire wood.

During the rainy season, the kids would use bamboo lit torches to search for snails for their mothers to use in soup making. The boys would also build traps to catch small animals and rodents. Moses was skilled in making traps and in trapping small animals and birds. Once the animal was caught they would dry some of the catch in special basket containers. At the end of the month or during some festive period, the family would enjoy the meat together.

The day's chores were nearly over. In the evening, Moses would help his mother as she prepared meal for the family. Moses' duty consisted of pounding pepper or seeds to be used in soup preparation. His older brothers would pound the yam as Moses was unable to do this yet. Most nights Moses went to bed tuckered out knowing he would have to rise and do it again.

One day as Moses went to the farm with his mother, he saw a younger boy walking by. Moses knew this boy was headed to school and Moses began to wonder why he couldn't go to school like this boy. It was rumored that school was hell as teachers allowed the cane to lead their relationship with pupils. But after a week or so, Moses began to show resistance to going to the farm while his little friend went the opposite direction to school. It was difficult for children to get a western education in the face of the prevalence of child labor. Moses would cry any time going to the farm was mentioned. He protested to his mother about seeing the little boy go to school while Moses had to work on the farm. Moses' mother took it kindly and decided to send him to school at the age of six or seven.

Many parents exploited their children by using them for child labor as much as they could. They knew as the child grew older the desire to go to school became dimmer. The next thing for an older boy was the desire to get married and start his own family. The story for the female child was much different. Her fate was determined by custom. As soon as she was capable of doing most of the home chores, she became a bride. Education for girls was not appealing as training a girl to be married would benefit her husband's family. Her education was viewed as a "lost investment" to her parents' family.

Moses was fortunate in that he was able to attend the Ibio Group School in Ibio Nun Achat located in another village. As a mission school, pupils were taught to memorize many Bible passages as well as the basics of the three R's (arithmetic, writing, and reading). The highest class in this school was the 4th grade. Moses had to go to two other elementary schools to complete his elementary school education. By 1951 Moses was enrolled in a secondary school but had to drop out for lack of funds to pay for his fees. Moses' father had died of what was believed to be malaria, and his mother could not raise enough money from her trade in dried fish.

In time Moses would get a job as a pupil teacher in the same elementary school he had first attended – Ibio Group School. Some years later he would return to this school again as a trained teacher. It was here that Moses first met Jessie who was one of his fourth grade pupils.

Chapter 4: They Meet

“Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters who came as usual to draw water and fill the water troughs for their father’s flocks. But some other shepherds came and chased them away. So, Moses jumped up and rescued the girls from the shepherds. Then he drew water for their flocks. When the girls returned to Reuel, their father, he asked, ‘Why are you back so soon today?’ ‘An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds,’ they answered. ‘And then he drew water for us and watered our flocks.’ ‘Then where is he?’ their father asked. ‘Why did you leave him there? Invite him to come and eat with us.’” – Exodus 2:16-20 (NLT)

Moses’ interest in teaching landed him in two teacher training colleges. The first college was in the town of Uyo and was the only government teachers’ college for the entire eastern region of Nigeria and Cameroon when West Cameroon was part of Nigeria under the rule of Britain. The first two years qualified Moses to teach in junior elementary classes. After a much needed two year break, Moses continued his training for two more years in the field as a teacher at the Qua Iboe Church Teachers’ College in the town of Eket. When Moses’ teaching education was completed he was qualified to teach or head a full elementary school. It was at this time that Moses became the assistant Headmaster in the very school where he had begun his own elementary classes as a pupil. Unbeknownst to Moses at the time, it was here that he would be a teacher for his future wife, Jessie, who was one of the 4th grade pupils in his class.

About six years later, Jessie would become a member of the church choir that Moses was the assistant choir master for. This opportunity would give Moses a second chance to get to know more about Jessie. He was beginning to develop an interest for her at a time when he was looking for a wife. A courtship was started and went on for a little over two years.

When one goes to ask for a girl's hand in marriage, he will go with his father or uncles. If he has no father or uncles, other family elders must go along otherwise the girl's parents will not listen to him. The prospective husband will make one, two and sometimes three visits to the future bride’s family depending on how long the process of negotiating the bride price lasts, to determine if the man has the means to foot all the bills. The prospective husband might go to

the bride's family with a goat, a keg of wine, some other drinks, kola nuts and bitter cola. In some cultures they will ask for a head of dried tobacco. To execute the marriage, the prospective husband will take one big bottle of drink and give it to the girl. He will ask her to take the drink and give it to her father if she is willing to marry him. The girl will do so and hopefully her dad will gladly accept the drink. Secondly, if the girl actually intends to marry the young man, a smaller bottle of wine will be given to her for her mother. If both of the girl's parents accept the bottles and drink from them, then the other gifts will follow that same day. Some will split this into two processes depending on their ability to purchase the required gifts. A specified sum of money will follow and a goat will be slaughtered. The bridegroom is given one of the front legs of the goat and the bride's parents will be given the rest of the meat.

Jessie's parents were approached by Moses, his elder brother and a few other family elders. It was a very hard bargain. Jessie's father was the Village Chief; a man who was known as a strong disciplinarian. As Village Chief, he also sat at the District Court as one of the Judges. He had expected a senior civil servant to look for the hand of his daughter in marriage, not a village teacher like Moses. Jessie's father was offended every time Moses went to visit with them. He had welcomed Moses warmly prior to Moses making his intentions known. When the bargain started, Jessie's father asked for a bride price nobody had asked for in the whole clan. He asked for something close to \$3,000 at a time when a teacher's salary in Nigeria was just a few hundred dollars a year. Jessie's father thought he had found a weapon to eliminate Moses' interest in his daughter. This, however, only produced the opposite effect for Moses. Within the next year and a half, Moses was able to round up almost half of the amount he needed, so he went to pay this portion to Jessie's father. Marriage rites were not often accomplished in one shot.

By July 1958, Moses and Jessie were wed. Jessie's father refused to come to their wedding as Moses had not paid the entire dowry he had required. Jessie's father felt that Moses and Jessie's marriage was null and void without payment of the entire dowry, which he fully expected to receive. In his absence, the Village Chief's junior brother gave Jessie away. Jessie's father struggled to overcome his fears that his first daughter had married into hardship in the hands of a local teacher. He was one of the most successful traders in the area and could not understand why anyone would want to remain poor. It wasn't until he saw Moses begin the process of building a cement block residential house with two floors that he overcame his fears

for the welfare of his daughter. It did not go unnoticed that Jessie's father would personally come to supervise the work in Moses' absence.

Chapter 5: Escaping Captivity

“God said, ‘I’ve taken a good, long look at the affliction of my people in Egypt. I’ve heard their cries for deliverance from their slave masters; I know all about their pain. And now I have come down to help them, pry them loose from the grip of Egypt, get them out of that country and bring them to a good land with wide-open spaces, a land lush with milk and honey, the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. The Israelite cry for help has come to me, and I’ve seen for myself how cruelly they’re being treated by the Egyptians. It’s time for you to go back: I’m sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the People of Israel, out of Egypt.’ Moses answered God, ‘But why me? What makes you think that I could ever go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?’ ‘I’ll be with you,’ God said. ‘And this will be the proof that I am the one who sent you: When you have brought my people out of Egypt, you will worship God right here at this very mountain.’ Then Moses said to God, ‘Suppose I go to the People of Israel and I tell them, “The God of your fathers sent me to you”; and they ask me, “What is his name?” What do I tell them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I-AM-WHO-I-AM. Tell the People of Israel, “I-AM sent me to you.”’ – Exodus 3:7-14 (MSG)

Once married a woman is supposed to leave her parents to live with her husband in their new home. Jessie’s father intervened once again, preventing her from enjoying this privilege. Shortly after the birth of Moses’ and Jessie’s first child, Jessie’s father abducted her and forced Jessie to return to his home with her baby. Although there were many hands in the house of Jessie’s father to help babysit the child, Jessie was extremely frustrated and unhappy. Jessie wanted to raise the baby with her husband, Moses, in their own home. Over time, local people began to ridicule Jessie as they became aware of her father’s role in all of this. It became apparent that if Jessie was to be reunited with her husband she would have to take matters into her own hands. The next time her father traveled away on a business trip, Jessie ran away and returned to Moses with their baby girl.

Moses and Jessie enjoyed four years with their first child. Her name was Enobong, meaning God's gift. Enobong acquired the measles at a time when medical services in the community

were very poor. Though everything was done in their power to care for her, Enobong succumbed to the disease.

Moses was still trying to obtain additional education to upgrade his status, and by 1964 he was admitted to do a degree course in Business Administration. During Moses' second year at the Enugu Campus of the University of Nigeria, Moses had close contact with a Mennonite missionary couple by the name of Lloyd and Evelyn Fisher. Mr. and Mrs. Fisher gave Moses all the information he needed to start the Mennonite Mission work in his village of Obong Ntak, and Moses went on to plant four other Mennonite churches in the area. Moses and Jessie's first two sons, Imo and Esang, were born during this time.

In March of 1966, a year before the Civil War broke out and while Moses was still at school, Uto, Moses and Jessie's only surviving daughter was born. As Moses' university course was coming to an end, the Nigerian Civil War was looming, and there were many challenges for everyone during this time of uncertainty.

On Sunday, March 31, 1968, at 5 a.m. Moses and Jessie's third son, Usenime, was born. Usenime means "day of patience," and he could not have been more appropriately named. That morning, the retreating Biafran troops who were fighting for a separate country to be known by that name, came through Moses' village. Moses had been paying close attention to what was going on in his country and realizing the impact of what this would mean for him and his family he decided it was time to get them to a safer place. Just before Moses and his family departed, Jessie's father came to congratulate them on the arrival of their new baby. He was shocked to find Moses and Jessie packing whatever they could take in preparation of running away. Moses would always remember how angry Jessie's father was at Moses' cowardice. Her father did not understand the difference between the frequent skirmishes among villages for farmland trespass, and a civil war. When he eventually ran from his palace, he was unable to take anything with him.

Using his cranky old bicycle, Moses began the tedious process of moving his family beginning with Jesse and their baby boy, Usenime, who had been born that morning. It was an eight mile trek to the first village Moses went to, and for this reason a very slow and difficult task of non-stop biking by day and night to escape with all of his family, including his aging mother, and the

few possessions and food items they could carry. It took four trips going eight miles each way to move everyone. This was just the first leg of the journey. The next thirty months from the end of March 1968 were to be a period of great travail for Moses' people especially those who were non-Ibos and did not quite know what would be gained by a civil war.

The Civil War, which broke out in May, 1967, lasted till January, 1970. It began as a result of the Ibos, the 3rd largest ethnic group in Nigeria feeling marginalized. The Ibos also suspected non-Ibos of the Eastern Region as being loyal to Nigeria. Following many violent encounters in the North against Easterners, the Ibos, who are a majority tribe in Eastern Nigeria, revolted and tried to secede from the Federation of Nigeria. If Biafra succeeded as a new nation, the minority tribes including Moses' tribe, the Anangs, would be absorbed and phased out and they would have no rights as a people. Moses and many others who were part of Eastern Nigeria but of a minority tribe had to flee for their lives since the Nigerian soldiers who came to reclaim the territory did not distinguish who was Ibo, and who was not. The Nigerian soldiers at the frontline of the battle where Moses lived were very suspicious of Moses and his people. It seemed as though they sat between the devil and the sea. Moses had never been through anything like this up to this point in his life and fearing for his family he lead them out of their home village to begin a new life as refugees in unknown territory.

Chapter 6: Wandering the Wilderness

“The people grabbed their bread dough before it had risen, bundled their bread bowls in their cloaks and threw them over their shoulders. The Israelites moved on from Rameses to Succoth, about 600,000 on foot, besides their dependents. There was also a crowd of riffraff tagging along, not to mention the large flocks and herds of livestock. They baked unraised cakes with the bread dough they had brought out of Egypt; it hadn’t raised—they’d been rushed out of Egypt and hadn’t time to fix food for the journey.” – Exodus 12:34, 37-39 (MSG)

Moses and his family escaped to the liberated town of Ikot Okoro where thousands of refugees squatted in remote villages. The villagers in those areas were not sure of their own daily bread, but were kind enough to receive the refugees during the first few weeks. Later, the pressure became too much for them and they began to turn the refugees away to the streets. There was hunger, misery and death especially among young children, and unfortunately Relief Agencies had not yet penetrated to the areas where the people had taken refuge. The average refugee had real trouble as they had no funds with them, no employment and knew no one to obtain assistance as they were far away from home.

Moses continued to follow the news of the Civil War and each time Moses heard the area they were in would soon be under attack, he repeated the escape of his family to a new location, reducing the items they carried each time. Moses was unemployed during this time, and because of the uncertainty in their society, even if he found a job it would be risky to take it, especially if it took him away from the village. This would have put Moses and his family in great danger if he was away when armed soldiers entered the village. He continued his work of church planting of Mennonite churches, however, during the entire time of war.

Moses fortunately had built friendships with some college friends over the years and through their generosity Moses and his family were able to live in his friends’ homes on a rotation basis during the time of the Civil War. Though it had none of the facilities they had had at home, they were thankful for a place to stay. Still, because they were refugees in a place that wasn’t there home, Moses and Jessie had to manage with whatever food they could find to survive. Water was rationed as they had very few pots to store the water.

The final relocation for Moses and his family was reached on foot, walking three miles with their oldest child and Moses' mother. The baby and two smaller kids sat on the bicycle while Moses rolled them along. Jessie walked beside the bike holding the baby in a make shift seat on the bicycle carrier. This last location would be safe until the end of the war. Four times Moses had to escape with his family before they were in an area that was stable. Again, Moses' friends were able to provide him and his family with a place of shelter. Moses and his family of seven, including his mother, shared one room that was smaller than a twelve foot by twelve foot room. Jessie cooked in an open kitchen with no roof over her head and with whatever earthen cooking pots were loaned to them by Moses' friend. Their food was stored in the same room they slept in. At nighttime they each slept on mats woven from rattan palm leaves, which they spread on the floor each evening. In addition to the fear everywhere at this time, it was also a life of extreme discipline and patience.

Eventually imported goods started to come in, including rice, wheat flour, canned fish, corned beef and corn meal. Local vegetables and herbs were used to prepare some of them to suit local tastes. Snails, mushrooms and whatever items the refugees, including Moses and Jessie, were able to gather supplemented food supplied by foreign donor agencies like Red Cross, Salvation Army and Catholic Relief Service, CARITAS.

Chapter 7: Food for Body and Soul

“At twilight you will eat meat, and every morning you will eat all the bread you want. Then you will know I am the LORD your God.” That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost were on the desert ground. When the Israelites saw it, they asked each other, ‘What is it?’ because they did not know what it was. So Moses told them, ‘This is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.’” – Exodus 16:12-15 (NCV)

“Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven; it is my Father who is giving you the true bread from heaven. God’s bread is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ‘The people said, “Sir, give us this bread always.”’ – John 6:32-34 (NCV)

Nine months after Moses and his family arrived to the liberated area in the town of Abak schools began to reopen and teachers were in high demand. A friend sent for Moses and told him of a job at Holy Family College, a Catholic institution that was taken over by the Military Government of Nigeria. Although this was an all-boys school originally, for the purpose of rehabilitation students of both sexes were admitted. Qualified refugee teachers were being recruited for teaching positions in these schools and Moses was able to obtain a teaching job here where he taught English and Economics at the senior secondary level and European History to the college preparatory level.

As a graduate teacher Moses was given accommodations on campus. This house became a camp for countless other refugees who had fled across the Akwa Ibom River. All who knew Moses gathered to receive food and shelter. There was no room left both inside or outside the building as fellow refugees occupied every inch that existed. In addition to providing for the continued establishment of Mennonite churches, one of which Moses planted in the town of Abak, Moses’ salary also provided for him and his wife, their four children, his mother, and everyone who could find his or her way to Moses’ new home. These refugees, many from the very community of villages Moses and his family had escaped from, would never see their

homes again after the war. Food was scarce and hunger more than bullets, could send them to an early death.

By 1969 Moses left Holy Family College for a position as vice principal of the Nigerian Christian Secondary School in Ukpom Abak, an institution run by the African Christian Schools Foundation (a church of Christ school). Moses continued as a Mennonite preacher for another year, but things changed after that. An evangelist by the name of David Anako, who was also principal of the Nigerian Christian Bible College opposite the secondary school where Moses was vice principal took a special interest in Moses and his religious beliefs. David avoided trying to convert Moses directly knowing Moses might argue him out of direction. Instead, he gave Moses a book called the "Eternal Kingdom." This book was written by Dr. F.W. Mattox, who was the Pioneer President of Lubbock Christian College in Lubbock, Texas. The book contained a history of the church identified in the Bible and narrated her existence from Pentecost through the ages. It didn't take long for Moses to understand that neither Martin Luther, the man to whom the Lutheran Church is named after, nor Simon Menno, the founder of the Mennonite Church had any authority to start a church. No one but Christ could be the Rock on which His Church was established.

Two weeks after reading through the book, Moses was personally convicted and went to the preacher to express his gratitude for helping him learn the truth about Christ and His Church. Moses told David he was ready to confess Christ as his Savior and be baptized into His Church. To Moses' surprise, David didn't believe him and instead changed the conversation to talk about other things for about twenty minutes. The preacher saw Moses as a known Mennonite graduate teacher. He also knew that Moses had been one of the top refugee teachers working at the Catholic School prior to becoming vice principal at the Nigerian Christian Secondary School and for these reasons was not convinced it was right to baptize Moses and refused to do so. As the night progressed, Moses became disappointed and told the preacher that he was headed back to his house on campus. He decided he would try one more tactic to convince the preacher to baptize him. Moses told the preacher that if he died in his sleep that night, God would hold the preacher accountable for his soul. Taken aback by Moses' words, the preacher called the teachers and students of the Bible College to join Moses and him at the nearby stream to baptize Moses paying no heed to the snakes. A new babe in Christ was born that night on January 15, 1970.

Chapter 8: Additional Training

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Come up to me on the mountain. Stay there, and I will give you the tablets of stone on which I have inscribed the instructions and commands so you can teach the people.’ So Moses and his assistant Joshua set out, and Moses climbed up the mountain of God.

Moses told the elders, ‘Stay here and wait for us until we come back. Aaron and Hur are here with you. If anyone has a dispute while I am gone, consult with them.’

Then Moses climbed up the mountain, and the cloud covered it. And the glory of the LORD settled down on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from inside the cloud. To the Israelites at the foot of the mountain, the glory of the LORD appeared at the summit like a consuming fire. Then Moses disappeared into the cloud as he climbed higher up the mountain. He remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights.” – Exodus 24:12-18

The news of Moses’ baptism went far and wide and the American missionaries who visited the country to see how the churches were doing in the liberated areas warmly embraced Moses and his work there. By 1971, Moses was sent to run a new Community Secondary School at Ikot Okoro. This institution was the first Comprehensive Secondary School in the newly created South Eastern State of Nigeria. As Principal, Moses had to liaise with the African Christian School Foundation and the Southern Annang Community Elders. The state Government was also involved in the school. Within a period of three years the school had grown to the size of four hundred rural students. Moses made sure that he planted a campus church at the school, and today that church continues to be well grounded in the town of Ikot Okoro.

The Government was impressed with Moses’ work and offered him the opportunity to go to Britain to learn how to run Comprehensive Schools. When the African Christian Schools Foundation learned about this, they told Moses they had a better option and to ignore the opportunity to go to Britain in preference for graduate school work in America. And that is how Moses’ entire family of five children came to the United States in August, 1973.

While Moses was enrolled in the Graduate School of Management in Vanderbilt University for a degree in Business Administration, his wife, Jessie, was enrolled in David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tennessee. Their children went to various metro schools during this time. It was a struggle for Moses and Jessie to go to school in addition to taking care of five children in a foreign country and they were thankful to God for some very kind brethren in Nashville who made their stay less burdensome. Moses was responsible for dropping Jessie off each morning at school and returning to get her each evening. He also dropped their children off at school each day as they did not ride the school bus. In addition to attending school, Jessie served as a housewife as Moses had not learned to cook and had no intention to do so. In order to make ends meet, Moses got permission to work in a Business College downtown, serve in a bakery, and preach at the Third Avenue Church of Christ. Fortunately for Moses and his family no one became seriously sick during the four years except for Jessie who had to go in for an operation for a hernia during the last few months of their stay in the United States.

Moses' wife and children returned to Nigeria in December, 1976. Moses had to stay back in the United States to defend his dissertation at Vanderbilt University, which was successfully completed in February, 1977. The following week, Moses returned to Nigeria to join his family.

Chapter 9: Leading the People

*“I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.” –
Deuteronomy 18:18*

Moses and his family had returned from the United States to their native village of Obong Ntak in the south-eastern part of the country. Moses didn't go back to his previous job as Principal of the Government high school. Instead, Moses worked with the Christian Training Centre in the village. Moses had established this institution a year after his conversion in 1970 for the training of young Christian people in various vocations. These students were taught how to evangelize and live good Christian lives with the Bible as their instruction manual.

In Moses' spare time he visited many communities to advise them on new ways of living and making the best of their situations. Moses' home served as a counseling center for community leaders including chiefs. Jessie held classes for local women to instruct them in matters of home care, cooking and the Bible.

In addition to having no running water and no electricity, there were also no good roads in this area. As a result, Moses and his family made daily trips by foot to the river to draw water into their four-gallon containers for use in their home. Over time Moses was able to raise funds from his American friends to dig an eighty foot Jacob's well, which served Moses' family and the entire community of people. Moses was also able to light his home for a few hours each night with the use of a small diesel generator.

As a result of his interaction with leaders while visiting their communities, Moses attracted the attention of the Chief of Chiefs of the Obong people. Okuku Akpan Udofia, the Clan Head and chief over 27 other chiefs, was a sorcerer. His ancestors transferred their treasured curious craft to him and as a result he was always being consulted by clients near and far away from the Clan. He adopted Moses as his chief adviser and it was this relationship that endeared Moses to the chief. Moses used this closeness to talk to the chief about the Almighty God who controls the affairs of man, including the spirits that the chief was a medium for. He disregarded Moses' words on this matter during the first few months, but Moses kept on telling the chief about the

wonders of his Savior whenever he had the opportunity. It did not seem to yield any fruits initially, but unbeknownst to Moses at the time, a seed was planted. The witch doctor became sick to the point of being near death. This news was reported to Moses who rushed him to the nearest hospital 25 miles away on the only bumpy road they had. Moses instructed the doctor not to allow any visitors to see the chief other than those endorsed by Moses himself. Moses didn't want anyone to pollute the chief's mind with fairy tales.

In two weeks' time the chief was well enough to be discharged and Moses took him and headed for home. On the way Moses told the chief how much God loved him, even allowing the chief to survive the illness everyone thought he would succumb to. Moses asked him to believe and accept that God had spared him for a greater purpose. To Moses' surprise, the chief consented and the Chief of Chiefs of the Obong people and an age-long necromancer was baptized into Christ that afternoon on their way home in a stream two miles away from the hospital. The story of the chief's conversion spread like wild fire across the entire area. Idols were taken down and set ablaze. With the help of the saints in the United States, funds were raised to build a place of worship on the very ground where the temples of the gods had stood and the chief and his family worshipped there till the day he died.

Chapter 10: Building for Service

“The LORD has gifted Bezalel, Oholiab, and the other skilled craftsmen with wisdom and ability to perform any task involved in building the sanctuary. Let them construct and furnish the Tabernacle, just as the LORD has commanded.”

So Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and all the others who were specially gifted by the LORD and were eager to get to work. Moses gave them the materials donated by the people of Israel as sacred offerings for the completion of the sanctuary. But the people continued to bring additional gifts each morning. Finally the craftsmen who were working on the sanctuary left their work. They went to Moses and reported, ‘The people have given more than enough materials to complete the job the LORD has commanded us to do!’” – Exodus 36:1-5

By 1979, the Military regime gave up their rule in Nigeria and a nationwide election was conducted. Moses’ community encouraged him to contest so as to represent them in the State Legislature. Moses planned to turn down the offer as he had no financial resources to back up this lofty idea, but the people assured him of maximum support and their votes. They kept their word. Moses was given massive support during the general election of July that year, and that is how he found himself in the Cross River State House of Assembly in Calabar during the second Republic from 1979 to 1983. Additionally, Moses was made the House Committee Chairman for education. At the expiration of his term, Moses returned to the village and established Obong Christian High School in January, 1986, which replaced the Christian Training Center. A campus church came aboard one year after that.

Moses’ relationship with the church of Christ in Mount Morris, Michigan in the United States began when one of the students of the Christian Training Center by the name of Friday Dick Jackson needed a letter of recommendation. His World Bible School teachers, Vicky Cheek and Sue Lamb, requested this letter so Moses prepared one for Friday to present to them. In Moses’ letter he named some church leaders in Tennessee who knew Moses. Two of these leaders were an elder and a deacon from the Madison Church of Christ by the names of Roger Street and James Compton. They were supporting Moses’ work at that time. Roger and James told

members of the Mt. Morris congregation more about Moses' work as both men had visited Moses' home in Nigeria twice since Moses and his family had gone back from the States. The Mt. Morris Church of Christ became interested in Moses' work because of this and ultimately invested in Obong Christian High School in 1997. Their financial gifts helped Moses build the Mt. Morris Building in Nigeria, which is the Home Economics and Home Management Center. The church's oversight of this work in Nigeria created interest for many other American congregations who also joined hands to support this work. The relationship with the Mt. Morris Church of Christ grew stronger as the years went by. The only building on the property before this was an open hall constructed with 4-inch cement blocks. This building is now popularly known as their "Mother Hall".

As the high school attracted more and more students each year, the need arose for a school with a lower level of education to be established. A Nursery/Primary section known as the Gene and Sue Lamb School came on board. Funds for this school came primarily from the family of Gene and Sue Lamb of the Mt. Morris Church. Gene is one of the elders there. The school met for two years in the Mother Hall before it moved to its new location as a separate campus across the road.

The Campus Church Moses had established early on began their work of visiting distant communities, planting churches in these areas. In addition to the students, many people in the surrounding communities were converted into New Testament Christianity. The record of the school's academic excellence was proved as their final year students scored highly in the West African Examinations taken at the end of the six-year course. In addition to their coursework the students were taught the Bible so that they could preach anywhere about Christ and His Church. Some of them still preach full time today.

A need to train middle-level management personnel drove Moses to establish the African College of Management on yet a new campus two kilometers from the existing institutions. Although this was a Junior Management College, Bible was a required course during the two-year diploma course. It was affiliated with a Federal Government institution, the University of Calabar. Many who took this route were able to advance into the business world. Some have remained preachers of the Gospel while working in lucrative businesses in their spare time.

Moses also went to Cameroon to encourage the saints there as he recruited new students. This effort for the African College of Management was the fore-runner of Obong University, which was given a license to operate in May, 2008. This is the first privately run University on the whole continent of Africa associated with the Churches of Christ. Through the Campus Church and these schools, students receive not only an academic education, but a spiritual education as well. Obong University has a great responsibility in furthering the cause of Christ in the huge continent of Africa where civilization first began.

With the large number of students on campus, a new challenge arose involving taking care of their medical needs. The nearest hospital was thirty miles away in an area difficult to access from the campus location. It would take no less than two or three hours to reach the hospital during the dry season. During the rains it was extremely difficult or near impossible to attempt the trip. Moses appealed to the Elders at Crieve Hall Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee who had worked with Moses over the years requesting funds to operate a health facility. Their response was quick and favorable. Funds were sent for the establishment of a cottage hospital, which was named “Akwabia Hospital.” The word “Akwabia” means “Big Doctor” in their language, and represents God, the best doctor the world has ever known. The facility was established in January, 1987, exactly one year after Obong Christian High School came into existence.

The need to engage young people in church work was great and resulted in the All Nigeria Youth forum being created. Letters were sent to many local churches of Christ to invite their young people to attend the forum. This became an annual December event after that. From a humble beginning with less than two hundred youths attending in December, 1997, the forum has grown to attract not less than two thousand youths annually for many years now. Because of increased interest in the many activities that take place, the duration was increased from three to four days. Obong Christian High School Campus Church in co-operation with the Mt. Morris Church of Christ in Michigan, as well as the Tusculum Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee hosts the forum annually. Local churches also take part in contributing what food items they can afford as meals are usually served twice daily. Selected sisters from local churches work with volunteer young sisters who attend the forum to teach them food preparation skills.

2,308 young people attended the most recent youth forum with 194 churches being represented. Despite all efforts, many had to sleep in the open due to lack of space in the school dorms and classrooms at Obong Christian High School and the Gene & Sue Lamp Primary School. The cold desert harmattan winds from north Africa made it much colder than usual. Even in these not so pleasant conditions, 35 young people made the decision to be baptized during this event. Nothing could deter them from their choice, even having to travel seven miles by foot to the river due to the fact the school baptistery had a leak. Three major sessions were held each day along with chapel and small group Bible studies, and they somehow managed to provide enough food and water for over 2300 people over the four-day time period.

Chapter 11: Solving Disagreements

“The next day Moses solved disagreements among the people, and the people stood around him from morning until night. When Moses’ father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he asked, ‘What is all this you are doing for the people? Why are you the only one to solve disagreements? All the people are standing around you from morning until night!’

Then Moses said to his father-in-law, ‘It is because the people come to me for God’s help in solving their disagreements. When people have a disagreement, they come to me, and I decide who is right. I tell them God’s laws and teachings.’

Moses’ father-in-law said to him, ‘You are not doing this right. You and the people who come to you will get too tired. This is too much work for you; you can’t do it by yourself. Now listen to me, and I will give you some advice. I want God to be with you. You must speak to God for the people and tell him about their disagreements. Warn them about the laws and teachings, and teach them the right way to live and what they should do. But choose some capable men from among the people—men who respect God, who can be trusted, and who will not change their decisions for money. Make these men officers over the people, to rule over groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Let these officers solve the disagreements among the people all the time. They can bring the hard cases to you, but they can decide the simple cases themselves. That will make it easier for you, because they will share the work with you. If you do this as God commands you, then you will be able to do your job, and all the people will go home with their disagreements solved.’” – Exodus 18:13-23 (NCV)

It is not unusual for Moses to be approached daily by individuals who need guidance, counseling, or instruction in various areas of their lives. Moses works hard to meet the needs of the people in his community and the surrounding areas and this includes using wisdom and discernment from his instruction manual, God’s Word, to guide and direct those who appeal to him for help.

Recently, when Moses and Jessie had returned home from one of their trips to the United States, it was reported to Moses that a refugee family had returned home due to disaster and that they were stranded. This family had been worshipping in one of the new churches that Moses and others had planted in the village of Ikot Udo Mbang, and they were baptized in Northern Nigeria some years ago but were forced to return home because of Boko Haram hostilities. In visiting with the couple when they lived in Northern Nigeria, Moses found out that the wife had actually given birth to five children in the course of their marriage, but only three of them had survived. The oldest child was about ten years old. At that time, the husband had a hernia and could not earn enough income to support his family. With the help of Tusculum Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee, Moses was able to provide funds for the husband to be taken to the Medical Center and have the hernia removed. Moses gave them additional funds to help them manage their everyday lives until the husband was strong enough to support his family again.

Moses was surprised to learn that upon returning home from Northern Nigeria, this young wife left her husband and their three children to go live with her brother in the city of Port Harcourt. Moses tried to find out from her husband what really happened and was not given a good report. Moses subsequently visited with the mother who told him that her son-in-law had not paid the traditional bride price plus two goats and other items, which are required by customary laws. When this young wife became a bride, she was taken by her husband to Northern Nigeria to a place so far away from home she could not return home on her own accord, and she was too young to know what she entered into when the husband came for her hands. Although she knew that her husband still had something to do to complete the marriage process, she had no means to run away to her home village, which was over one thousand miles away. It was only when disaster struck and the family was forced home, and back to her village, she was able to return to her family again.

At Christmas time, Moses invited the young wife to his home. The preacher in the local church in Port Harcourt who was also helping the young wife brought her to Moses' home. Moses was very concerned for this young wife as it is unusual for a mother to run away from not only her husband, but her children too. Upon arriving and after some discussion, the young wife confirmed what her mother had told Moses, and this was the reason she had left her husband and children. Moses read Isaiah 49:5 to her to show how strong a mother's love is for her child

and how it can be abused. He told her if she would honor the Lord in her role as wife and mother, God would give her renewed strength each day and never forsake her. The young wife wept as Moses narrated the story from the Bible and impressed upon her how her leaving her husband and children negatively impacted their lives. Moses met with her a couple times and in the final visit the young wife agreed to return to her husband and children if her husband was willing to provide the items required by customary law.

Moses knew the husband did not have the money to pay the required bride price so Moses met with the husband to help him negotiate a settlement with the wife's parents. This would require Moses to come up with the funds needed to help the husband buy the items to give to his wife's parents to appease them. With the help of the local preacher, Moses was able to persuade the young wife to continue to worship when they knew she was visiting her parents who live in the same village as her husband. (The following pictures are of Moses and the young wife in one of their counseling sessions.)

Moses' role often includes keeping peace among villages that would break apart if his advice was not sought for and implemented. Less than a decade ago, the village of Nkek in the Ukanafun Local Government Area had a dispute about who deserved to sit on the chieftaincy stool. The case went to the High Court where it dragged on for two years. Suspicion and enmity reigned throughout the village of about 3,000 people. Incidentally, this was Moses' mother's village. This placed Moses in a unique position being a grandson of the village. According to native laws and customs, grandchildren are like sacred cows. No one in the village touches them even if they do something wrong. If he or she is to be punished by the village elders, they will use a kid glove. Likewise, the grandson has the same respect for his or her grandparents. The Council of Elders of Nkek Village sent for Moses to help keep the village from falling apart because of the disputed chieftaincy matter. Moses accepted the invitation and called a meeting of the Elders in the village hall.

The two factions as well as their attorneys were present. As the chairman of the assembly, Moses took note of salient points raised by each party. Moses then summarized the harm done by the many feuds emanating from the problem and emphasized the benefits that would come if they would shield their swords. Moses gave a verdict for the present chief to be allowed to sit on the throne as the chief of the village. Everyone gave in and in two months' time a coronation

ceremony was held. To show his appreciation for their accepting him as a good grandson and an arbiter, Moses donated a fat cow to the village to help them have a befitting ceremony. To Moses, this was a singular honor for him.

In yet another situation, Moses received an invitation from an Association of Retired Officers of the Department of State Services. This is the equivalent of the Secret Police of any nation. They asked Moses to give them advice on aspects of community development and how to live successful lives. These retired officers chose to honor Moses as a Patron of their organization because they see him as a good leader of the community. This was an honor for Moses and a privilege money cannot buy. Moses was given the opportunity to share with these men how God had given him success in all that he put his hand to and how they could achieve success as well in their retirement.

Jessie, Moses' wife, also helps in counseling and training the women of the community. She teaches the women about survival methods with the help of her own experiences throughout her life in hopes of helping them in hard economic times. These women depend on subsistence farming and processing of oil from oil palm fruits for income in their struggle to survive economically. Many of these women are also members of the church. (Pictures of Jessie addressing community women.)

Jessie also plays a large role in the monthly Women's Gospel meetings. When Jessie addresses the Women's Gospel meeting she does so as their elder sister and patron of the women's efforts. Jessie is an experienced pioneer Bible teacher. The topics selected are based on the needs of the women. There may be a desire to address family issues such as raising Christian children. Personal problems like gossiping and related issues are also addressed at these meetings. Preacher's wives also invite Jessie to help them understand their role and the ways they can complement the efforts of their husbands. They also use this time to discuss practical examples in relating with people inside and outside the church. Resources used for these meetings include Bible stories and local customs of the people that are beneficial for becoming effective citizens, as printed materials are scarce. (Pictures of Jessie addressing an audience during the first monthly Women's Gospel meeting of the year for 2016 held at the Church of Christ in Obong Ntak.)

Chapter 12: Making Disciples

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All power in heaven and on earth is given to me. So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you, and I will be with you always, even until the end of this age.’” – Matthew 28:18-20 (NCV)

God continues to work in the lives of Moses and Jessie and their efforts with the area communities. Moses continues to report of God’s love and kindness and souls being won for Christ.

Moses often preaches in remote churches, one of which lies between Akwa Ibom State and the Atlantic Ocean area of Port Harcourt. Here in the village of Odoro Ikot two women were won for Christ one Sunday.

Recently, a Pentecostal Pastor of the Four Square Gospel Church let go of the title of "Reverend Pastor" to become just a Christian. Moses was so happy to see the Pentecostal Pastor and his wife baptized into Christ. Moses had studied the Bible with this man for two months. More Bible studies and door to door campaigns are being organized this dry season.

Moses has witnessed many heartbreaking situations as he evangelizes in their land. After visiting with the family of a couple that were converted late last year, Moses noticed that they lived in what he referred to as a "nest of a house." As the big rains were descending this couple along with their children had nowhere else to lay their heads. Despite a tight budget, Moses engaged a carpenter to take the heavily damaged roof down and put up a more fortified one for them to stay dry. As resources and funds become available they will have to deal with the floor and the walls that have cracks in them.

Moses and Jessie’s own family continues to grow extending their ministry into the United States through their children and grandchildren.

This all started in 1986 with the establishment of a Christian education system. In the past 30 years this system has established 42 churches, baptized 100’s, built a preschool through high

school, established an annual youth forum with an average of over 2000 young people in attendance each year for the past 25 years, a hospital, Obong University, and a program to help provide food for widows.

One might wonder how Moses' work will go on after he is gone, but Moses has put a lot of time and effort into training his children who have also bought into his dream. When the time comes, the baton will be passed. Succession plans are in place and close aides who work with Moses as Ministerial Assistants are being trained as well. Additionally, a College level Bible program will commence at Obong University in the next academic session in September, 2016, to train evangelists. This class of preachers will continue to spread the gospel far and wide to a region in need of a savior.

Just as the church struggles worldwide, the church in Africa also has hidden enemies that would seek to discredit their work and lead people astray, even reverting to old customs and placing emphasis on driving out demons and their agents in an attempt to prosper materially from these practices. Freedom obtained only through Christ is hard for many to understand and comprehend. Moses and his successors will need the continued support of their American brethren to continue to fight this spiritual battle.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support for our work.