

Along the Way

**Disclaimer: The following story is a work of fiction inspired by true events. Efe's name has been changed, and some details have been simplified or softened for younger readers.*

My name is Efe and I live in Benin. I grew up in a stilt house overlooking a lake. Our entire community – including the mosques – was built on stilts above the water. I was always careful to keep my balance, especially along the narrow wooden pathways to school. I still remember the panic I felt when I heard the drums of a *Vodún* ceremony in the distance and almost fell in. The drums made me uneasy, even though they were common. I brushed it off, and life continued.

With a big family, I rarely got my father's attention. I learned to stay out of his way and help my mother. I felt small, but I was safe.

When I was a teenager, my father died. My mother remarried and had more children. Deciding I was old enough to fend for myself, she made me leave. I went to live with my aunt

and uncle, spending my days cleaning and running errands. I cried often during that time.

One day, walking to the market platform, I heard joyful singing from a nearby church. I'd never been to church before. Curious, I went inside. The pastor's wife made me feel welcome, and soon after, I gave my life to Jesus. For the first time, I thought life would get better.

Instead, things became much harder. One Sunday, my aunt confronted me: "A seller at the market told me you went to a church."

Hoping she cared, I admitted the truth: "I've given my life to Jesus and have become a Christian."

She beat me and kicked me out. Rejected again, I spent months sleeping on wooden platforms and walkways until a Muslim woman offered me work as a house cleaner. I had a place to stay again, and she even let me go to church.

But as I became more involved in the Christian

community, my employer changed her mind. I had to sneak out to attend, and when she caught me, she punished me harshly, withholding my wages and mocking my faith when I asked for them. "Go ask Jesus for money!" she would shout.

I discovered that following Jesus had a cost. With no other option, I stayed and took sewing classes, hoping to start a business. When I passed my exams, she kicked me out too.

"I've given my life to Jesus and have become a Christian."

Once again, I slept on wooden walkways until the sewing academy allowed me to stay in their workshop. Unknown to me, my pastor's wife told VOM ministry workers about my situation. Through the generosity of other Christians, I received everything I needed to start my business, including a place to live and work.

When things were dark, I wasn't sure the Lord would rescue me. Now I know He was working everything for my good. I pray that Christians won't grow tired of praying for and supporting those who suffer for the Gospel. I praise God for everything He has done for me!

Reading Between the Lines

True or False

Circle T or F.

1. Efe lived in a house on land. T / F
2. A church welcomed Efe. T / F
3. Efe gave up after things got hard. T / F

Nouns and Verbs

Circle the nouns and underline the verbs in each sentence below.

1. Efe walked to school.
2. The drums scared Efe.
3. The employer kicked Efe out.

Past Tense Practice

Fill in the blanks with the correct past tense verbs.

1. Efe _____ (live) by a lake.
2. She _____ (hear) drums.
3. She _____ (learn) how to sew.

Finish the Sentence

Complete the sentences in your own words.

1. Efe felt afraid when _____

2. Efe felt hopeful when _____

