

Along *the Way*

Note to Parents and Educators: As the following true story contains themes of violence, we ask that you use your discretion to determine if the subject matter is suitable for younger audiences.

It was a normal Friday evening in 2002 when eight-year-old Nankpak's village in Plateau State, Nigeria, was suddenly invaded by militant Fulani herdsmen. The Fulani, a large ethnic group in West Africa, are known for raising cattle and moving from place to place. Nankpak's father, a local pastor, was away when the attack began. Upon hearing the news, the church leader raced home, desperate to warn his family.

"[My father] told us to run away," Nankpak remembers. "Our neighbours' houses [were] on fire. We left [our] house and decided to run for our lives." With danger closing in and no time to gather their belongings, Nankpak, his mother and younger siblings quickly fled into the thick bush.

The family remained hidden until gunfire erupted nearby. As they scrambled to a new hiding place, both Nankpak and his mother were struck by bullets. Wounded and frightened, the Christians continued to hide in the bush for several days,

clinging to hope that the attackers would leave. During this time, Nankpak learned that his father had escaped the initial attack – but was tragically captured and killed after returning to the village to search for his family. Later that same day, one of the militants discovered the family's hiding spot. Nankpak miraculously survived, but his mother, younger brother Pirmak, and younger sister Jane were all killed.

After recovering from his injuries, Nankpak was taken in by his uncle's family. Four years later, a Christian orphanage heard about the young boy's story and welcomed him into the centre. There, he was able to attend school and begin healing from the traumatic loss of his family members. "There were so many people coming around to [comfort] us [and encourage] us," Nankpak recalls. "They would tell us that everything would be alright [and that] God had not forgotten about [us]."

Nankpak spent seven years at the orphanage and eventually graduated from university with a degree in microbiology. Although he once dreamed of becoming a medical doctor, the Lord had another plan.

Today, Nankpak works with Stephanos Foundation, a Christian organization that supports Nigerian believers who have been persecuted for their faith in Jesus.

"My faith was never shaken; I know that God is with me in all situations," reflects Nankpak, now 30 years old. "It says in Matthew 6:12, 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.' This is the Scripture that has helped me to forgive those who have killed my parents and my younger siblings."

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Nankpak affirms that God has carried him through every step of his journey, and now, this faithful follower of Jesus is helping persecuted Christians rebuild their lives, just as others once helped him. His life is a powerful reminder that, even in suffering, God is writing a greater story – one of healing, purpose and hope!

To watch VOMC's video interview with Nankpak, visit www.vomcanada.com/video/Nankpak or scan the QR code.



Reading Between the Lines

Story Sequence

Number the events below from 1 to 5, in the order they happened in the story.

- ___ Nankpak lives with his uncle's family.
- ___ Militant Fulani herdsmen attack Nankpak's village.
- ___ Nankpak studies microbiology.
- ___ Nankpak hides in the bush and survives.
- ___ Nankpak lives at an orphanage.

True or False

Decide if each statement about Nankpak's story below is true or false. Circle the answer.

- a) God's calling for Nankpak was to be a medical doctor. **True** or **False**?
- b) Nankpak's father was not home when the herdsmen attacked. **True** or **False**?
- c) Nankpak had two younger siblings. **True** or **False**?
- d) Nankpak's family lived in Borno state, Nigeria. **True** or **False**?