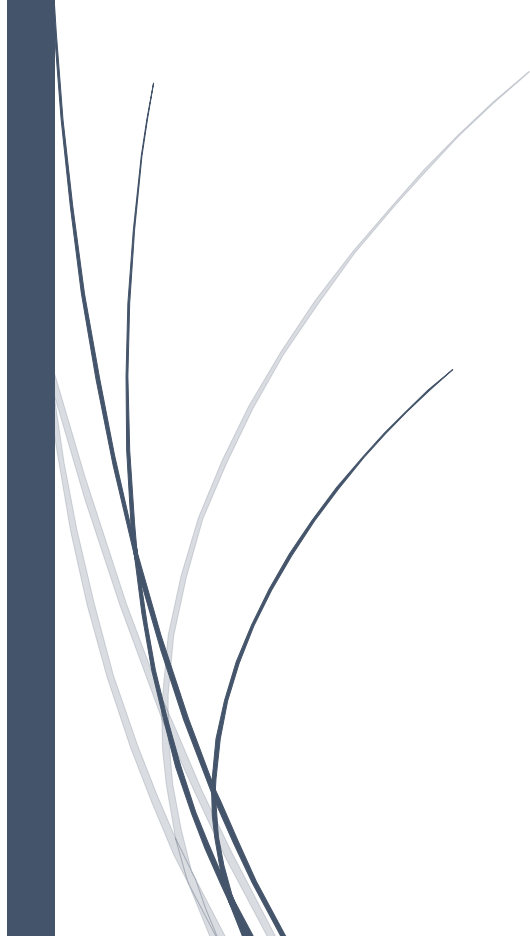




# A JOURNEY OF TRUST

3,258 words



# Chapter One

The sun was scorching, Demola was under its merciless whip that afternoon. He had trekked for over three hours yet hadn't reached where he was going. Looking up to the sky with a show face of frustration he blurted out, "Lord, where do I go from here? I'm beginning to get weary, please help me."

He blurted out as he walked down the endless-looking path.

Demola, a young man in his mid-twenties felt a leading to stay back in the remote village where he did his NYSC (National Youth Service Corps) programme when his mates were getting called by multi-nationals. The most intriguing part was that before he went for the NYSC program he had an offer waiting for him to return. He had celebrated his new job with his family. They wined and dined together to celebrate their son and sibling because the job was certain and secured.

He woke up just the morning of his Passing Out Parade to thank God for the successful journey of 12 solid months only to hear that still small voice.

"Stay."

He just laughed in the middle of prayers and let out the words,

"Holy Spirit, this is a joke right?"

When he heard nothing again he knew the King Spirit had spoken and his was to obey or not, if he chose to.

"What will I tell them at home?"

How will they feel?

They all had hopes on me."

He didn't know when hot tears started running down his cheeks.

He wasn't even told how long he would be there, it was a journey of faith through uncertainty but he obliged.

It had been over three years, that he was stuck in the remote village serving in a local village church, learning under the village's most experienced carpenter, and doing the work of a missionary.

He lived from hand to mouth trusting God daily for provision. Sometimes, the women in the village supported him when they remembered he existed.

He was just returning from a faraway neighboring village where the pastor of his local church had sent him to. Members of the mission team in the church were usually assigned to other villages two by two but he was sent alone and empty-handed.

He wasn't given any financial assistance to aid his journey. He used all he had to pay a truck driver to at least take him to the village.

After his assignment was completed, he had nothing left to return, hence, his trekking.

As he kept walking he had no strength left and he could only sing to The One he had sold his life to serve.

"It pays to serve Jesus I speak from my heart

He'll always be with us if we do our part,

There's not' in this wide world can pleasure afford

There's peace and contentment in serving the Lord

I'll serve him far better than in days of old

I'll love him more truly than ever before

I'll do as he bids me whatever the cost

I'll be a true soldier I'll die at my post".

Some minutes into his singing of the second stanza of the hymn, all he could remember was nothing.

## Chapter Two

The screeching sound of a shekere (local beaded gourd instrument) was what roused him into consciousness. His head hurt and his entire body was covered with sweat. The atmosphere didn't seem right and the stink of where he was was more piercing than the sound that roused him to consciousness.

Where was he? What had happened? Thoughts ran through his head like a sudden flash of lightning.

Minutes into his revival, he heard someone say "Baba, eran ti ji" (meaning Baba, the meat has woken up).

"Meat?"

Woken up?

Does meat sleep?

Who was speaking and what was being spoken about?"

All these thoughts filled his mind as he made to stand up.

He struggled and struggled to no avail only to realize that he had been bound.

He looked up and saw an old man with grey hair and a good number of broken teeth dressed in black and red apparel alongside two other men casually dressed who stood some centimeters away from him

"Jesus", he exclaimed aloud as reality dawned on him. Suddenly, remembered everything that happened. While he walked, a young man walked up to him claiming to

be stranded and lost asking for help, he had politely told him he had neither silver nor gold and also didn't know the direction of where the man was headed.

Not long after he proceeded, another man walked up to him asking him to join forces with him to help the other man quoting Hebrews 13:2 verbatim. "Guy, the holy book says, be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares, we don't know who this guy is, let's be sensitive to people like this that are in need" the other man had said.

With his convincing speech backed up with scripture, he had won the heart of innocent Demola.

They both walked up to the stranger, the stranger flagged down a supposed regular cab but after that Demola was unconscious all the way down to the forest they had taken him.

"You, and you? So you deceived me? Demola asked as he attempted to point his finger at the two men he tried assisting earlier.

"You even quoted the scriptures. Ha! You people are wicked. He blurted out as he shook his head in regret wondering what fate awaited him.

"As we size you, we see say you carry bible dey trek for road, we know say na bible we go fit use get person like you, na why we use that method (As we looked at you, we saw that you had a bible in hand as you walked and we thought the scriptures was the best strategy to use in deceiving you)." The first man who he later found to be Joba responded in pidgin English laughing aloud.

"Baba, we don't do your job, abeg give us our pay make we go find another meat (Old man, we've met your demand, pay us so we could go look for another prey).", the second man, Tijani said with a husky voice coming from a throat that had suffered long under the siege of 'Master Alcohol'.

"Meet Afolabi in the other room for your payment and get out of here you two, I have serious business to finish", the Baba said in a commanding tone and a note of finality signaling that he wasn't in for talks. The two men left the room obediently like lambs without a word. As they conversed, Demola's head was filled with all manner of thoughts.

"Lord, after all my labour for you, is this where I will end?

Wouldn't it have been better if I went back to my father's house after NYSC instead of going through this suffering and still ending up in a shameful death?"

As the thoughts doubled and tripled, Demola's eyes sojourned around the shrine and his eyes met death.

## Chapter Three

Fifteen human heads sat on red petit clay pots with the same distance apart from each other. Seven of them were males and eight were females. Beside the last human head was an empty clay pot, Demola's head was likely the solution to the riddle. Upon this realization, fear gripped him. The Baba continued shaking the shekere as soon as the two men left and he began chanting some incantations.

"Can this really be the end?" He pondered shivering in fear.

"So when I was singing I'll do as he bids me whatever the cost, I'll be a true soldier, I'll die at my post, I was just a few hours away from death. Hmmmm..." he inhaled deeply.

Revelations 2:10 the last scripture he meditated on replayed in his head.

"Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The Devil will throw some of you into prison and put you to the test, you will be persecuted for ten days. Remain faithful even when facing death, and I will give you the crown of life."

"It really is the end", he thought as he exhaled, "to live is Christ, to die is gain".

He watched the Baba approach closely with a sharp machete as he said his last prayer under his breath. He closed his eyes yet still wasn't able to stop the tears from flowing.

"For Jesus", he said with eyes closed in expectation of death

"Ẹ n lẹ o (Hello)", a voice from outside greeted in Yoruba language.

Demola's eyes opened sharply at the sound of the voice.



"Ta ni yen? (Who is that?)", Baba responded rashly to the voice greeting.

"Emi ni o, Chief Afe (it's me, Chief Afe)", the voice returned.

"Jowo duro, Mo n bo (Please wait, I'm coming)", Baba said, excited at the worthy distraction.

"You, stay here. Baba said in a commanding tone pointing at Demola as he left.

"Oh God, why me?" Demola blurted out. "Why won't this death just come once and for all?

Didn't you say I should endure even till death?

Or is there another plan?

Holy Spirit, please speak to me", he pleaded.

"Souls", the still small voice said.

"Souls? Can the dead win souls?" He asked.

"I have a mission for you here", the still small voice said. "Your suffering is not unto death but to the glory of God".

Baba's guest Chief Afe was his most prominent customer, always regular, never delayed payments, and always added some tips to the requested amount even when the bills were unnecessarily outrageous.

He stopped by to do his routine 'destiny' check with Baba. He had been having some terrible experiences and had come to know how to handle them.

"They don't stop coming, it's becoming too much for me to bear". Chief Afe said in a worried tone.

"It's not a difficult thing my son. The thing is, when you bring another sacrifice, we will use the blood to atone for you so you won't see them again". Baba responded in his thick Yoruba accent ending with a mild laugh.

"But Baba that's what you said the last time and it wasn't up to 2 weeks before they returned. I want a permanent solution", Chief Afe replied as he balanced himself on the wooden seat he sat on.

"It is what it is my son", Baba said hitting his left palm against the back of his right palm.

"You need to continue the sacrifices if you want to protect yourself, Baba continued.

Afterward, a huge silence followed.

"It is not possible for the blood of bulls or goats or even humans to take away sins", Demola who had been listening to their conversation found himself saying loudly, loud enough for everyone within that environment to hear. He was surprised at himself he didn't know how that came out, it was as if his mouth was speaking of its own accord.

"Who is that?" Baba inquired with a voice roaring like that of an angry lion. He was actually terrified at the audible voice that came from inside his shrine. He just tried to man up so his client wouldn't see his fear. Rather than notice him, Chief Afe was curious about what was said, it was exactly the words he heard from an early morning preacher after he woke up from one of those midnight mares and couldn't afford to sleep back.

He didn't really understand neither did he care so much about what the man said but he knew those words stuck in his heart, and now, this voice.

Who was speaking this time?

Demola walked out of the shrine into the company of the two men.

"You! Who released you?" Baba said, surprised the young man he bound had become free.

Even Demola didn't know how he was freed. Immediately those words from scripture came out of his mouth, he was so astonished and terrified that he tried covering his mouth with his hands thinking he had gotten himself into trouble only to realize his hands were no longer bound and neither were his feet. It was a miracle, Apostle Peter's prison experience had just been replayed, an angel must have visited. Filled with much boldness he couldn't explain, with confidence as high as the mountains, he walked up to them fearing nothing, including death.

## Chapter Four

Fear had no grip on him anymore, he could feel the presence of God strongly.

What was happening? Nobody could explain but as soon as he came face to face with the Baba and made eye contact, Baba began to shout "My eyes, my eyes, what's happening to me?"

Chief Afe also startled at the presence of the young man he had just seen, rushed to help Baba looking frightened as he glanced at Demola.

"I can't see, I can't see, what did you do to me?" Baba asked panting as he paced about in no particular direction.

Panic had begun rising in Chief Afe with shock hitting him like the force of water let out from a dam.

"Had someone more powerful than Baba come to avenge the death of the numerous lives he had taken?" He thought.

"Sir, who are you?" Chief Afe finally able to voice out found himself addressing an obviously young man with the title 'Sir'.

And what do you want from us?" He said shuddering as he asked.

"I am the voice of one speaking as a representative of the Most High and Exalted king whose name is greater than every other name, whose blood is the highest covenant and sacrifice, greater than any man can make, He's I AM I AM, and he sent me to you".

Demola said strongly under the power of the Holy Ghost.

"I just saw flash images of the head of an eagle, a lion, an ox, and a man in one creature, and those images moved with the speed of light, and I saw another man in a white robe.

He was like a light brighter than I've ever seen, my eyes felt like they were about to burst out and I tried closing them only to open again and see nothing. Sir please I want to see again" Baba pleaded as he narrated what he had seen with great fear and trembling.

"Yes sir, please don't harm us, we will do whatever you say, just don't harm us", Chief Afe pleaded prostrating to the ground nearly shedding tears out of fear.

"He didn't send me here because he wants to slay you, he sent me here because he wants to save you", Demola said with compassion in his voice.

"All these", Demola continued as he pointed at the items in the shrine within view, "they cannot save you, only the blood of Jesus can."

"It's all I've known, it has been passed to me from generation to generation by my fathers, how can you ask me to forsake all these", Baba asked on his knees in a concerned and appealing tone.

"Jesus existed before the foundation of the earth was laid and his blood was shed for you, don't you think he is older than the practices of your fathers? Jesus is offering a hand of salvation to you both, will you accept this offer?" Demola asked. Chief Afe burst out in tears still maintaining his posture on the ground where he had been.

"He kept speaking to me over and over again. With every day of my oppression, someone spoke his words to me directly or indirectly but I refused to heed, I refused to heed. He repeated emphatically still in tears. "Who else do I need to speak to me again?" He asked rhetorically.

"I accept him, I accept him, I can't carry this load anymore, I need him, I know I need him."

"I saw him, I saw his light, yes, I will....." Baba suddenly began to choke on his words as he attempted to make his declaration.

## Chapter Five

A ferocious beast appeared and stood right before Baba, its voice sounded like a resounding gong.

"How dare you? What do you think you're doing? It said in rage.

"Are you about to give up the gods of your fathers for a strange God?" It asked.

"He might be a stranger but he has great light and power. My father handed over darkness as an inheritance to me but he's offering me light. For this once, please, let me embrace light", Baba pleaded as he exchanged words with the being that appeared visible only to him immediately after he started out his profession.

"Then be prepared to die", the fierce beast said.

"I accept Jesus, I accept his salvation, I want his light even if I have to die, at least I'll die in peace", Baba said

"Then so be it", the being said as he made to take his life.

All Demola and Chief Afe saw was an unconscious Baba lying on the ground and shaking vigorously, and all they heard was his faint voice shouting "Jesus" as he was sent to his demise.

"We lost him", Chief Afe said in grief.

"But God won him", Demola replied with a mild smile.

Demola and Chief Afe made their way out of the shrine. At last Demola saw the outside world again as a free man. He found his way to the village but not without a parting

counsel to Chief Afe to attach himself to a bible believing church and never return to sin otherwise something worse might happen.

Upon returning to the village, he received an unpleasant welcome from the church pastor for overshooting the time of his errand and running his own personal programs without being given an ear for explanations.

Regardless, he received the scolding in good fate knowing all that he did was for God not for man if not, would he have been there in the first place?

Two years later, early one morning while having his quiet time, he heard the still small voice say,

"It's time".

"Time? Time for what?" Demola asked.

Demola chuckled softly, a little intensely, and soon began laughing.

"Are you asking me to go home now?" He asked curious and eager for the response.

"The offer is still open, your job has been secured since the day you got it, nobody has taken your position, and nobody has sat on your seat. Return and occupy your position. For your faithfulness, I will reward you."

Demola returned home, everyone was glad to receive the long-lost son. It was like receiving the dead back to life. True to the words spoken to him, when he put a call through to the company they surprisingly asked where he had been and what took him so long. He was asked to report to the office the next day as a staff.



He stood on the church's beautifully decorated altar and spoke to the congregation sharing his testimony.

"My dear people of Jesus, God never forgets his own, what are you doing that seems insignificant?

What are you doing for God that seems like no one appreciates?

What are you doing for God that you're already beginning to think of giving up because nothing else seems to work? God surely rewards those who seek and serve him diligently and God will surely reward you, Demola said as he rounded off his testimony at his home church following resounding applause.