

*Daniel was so sure his brother's new ideas of religion were wrong that he refused to eat the food his brother prayed over.*



Daniel

## Brothers in Faith

Daniel Hassian

*[Ask a teenager or young man to present this first-person report.]*

I grew up in a Muslim family in southern Sudan. My father and I went to the mosque every Friday, and I prayed five times a day, as faithful Muslims do. At school I listened carefully to my religion teachers and memorized sections of the Koran in Arabic. I was a good Muslim. So when I saw my older brother wearing that cross, I was shocked.

### Stubborn Brother

Abram, my brother, told me that he had become a Christian. I was 11 at the time and asked him what Christians believe. He explained that Jesus, who Muslims believe was a good man and a prophet, but not God—this same Jesus really *was* God. Jesus came to earth and showed people how God wants us to live, then He died to save us from our sins.

My teachers had taught us that Jesus was a human, born of human parents, and not divine in any way. In my 11-

year-old mind I decided that my brother was wrong, and I, a righteous Muslim, would show him. Mealtimes became our first battlefield.

Abram would not eat if I prayed to Mohammed to bless our food, and I refused to eat if Abram asked Jesus to bless the food. At one point things became so difficult that once when my brother made the sign of the cross over the meal, I threw my portion away.

“Why did you do this?” Abram asked.

“I will not eat food that has been blessed by the devil,” I said, truly believing every word I spoke. Fortunately for everyone, we decided to compromise. We each prayed silently before meals so that we both could eat.

### Burning Words and New Convictions

When I returned to school, things my brother told me kept coming to mind. I began to

wonder what Christians really believe. One day while walking near our school campus, I found a small New Testament lying on the ground. I looked around to be sure no one was watching, then I picked up the Bible and put it into my pocket. Later, in my room, I took out the little Bible. My fingers traced the Arabic letters that spelled out Holy Bible. *How can this book be holy if it is for Christians?* I asked myself. *Only the Koran is holy. If this book really is holy, I will find the name of God here.*

Knowing I would be expelled from school if someone saw me reading the Bible, I found a deserted place to read undisturbed. I flipped through the pages, looking for the name of God. I found it in John 3:16. I wept as I read that Jesus died so that I could have eternal life, just as my brother had said. *If Abram is right about Jesus*, I thought, *what else is he right about?* I remembered my brother

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talking about the judgment of God and eternal hellfire. The thought frightened me, and I longed to talk with Abram about it. But I had to wait until my next school vacation.

When I arrived home, I was eager to ask Abram more about his Christian faith. I told him about finding the Bible and about my desire to learn more about who Jesus is and what He had done for us. Abram hugged me and prayed for me. This time I did not refuse his prayers; instead I rejoiced.

My father noticed I was not praying and fasting as I used to. Father asked me about my actions, and I feared what he would do to me. But my mother intervened, and I did not have to answer my father. I was not yet ready to confess my interest in Christianity.

### **Seeking a New School**

The war that had wracked Sudan for decades spread to our area and cut off the school, so I had to find another school to attend. I knew that more Christians lived in southern Sudan, and I was determined to find a school where I could learn about God. I convinced my parents to let me travel to southern Sudan to continue my education. At first they resisted, but eventually they allowed me to go.

Because of the fighting in my homeland, I made my way to Ethiopia, planning to turn south and re-enter Sudan.

Along the way I entered a refugee camp. There I met some Christians, and we studied the Bible together. I decided to be baptized the next time a priest came to visit that area. I was excited about my new life and decided to take the name Daniel. But on the day the priest arrived in the village, I was too sick to go to church. I was disappointed that I could not be baptized, for the priest would not return for a year. But during that time I continued to learn about God.

I went to school in the refugee camp, and there I met Isaiah. He said he was a Christian, but he did not attend church on Sunday. He explained that he was a Seventh-day Adventist Christian and that he followed the Bible commandment to keep the seventh day holy. When he showed me the texts in the Bible to support what he said, I was surprised. I asked a church leader about the Sabbath, and he agreed that the Bible Sabbath was Saturday, but said that Christians worship on Sunday in honor of Jesus' resurrection. Now I was *really* confused. I continued worshipping at the church on Sunday, but I joined Isaiah to worship on Saturday.

### **Fighting for Man and God**

I stayed in the refugee camp for four years. Then the government of southern Sudan drafted Isaiah and me

and other boys our age into the army. Isaiah and I stayed together, prayed together, and fought together.

One day evangelists held meetings in our military camp. We studied together, and at last I understood God's plan of salvation. Isaiah and I were baptized together. The evangelists encouraged us to share our faith with our fellow soldiers. They gave us some literature to share, and before we left the military 24 fellow soldiers were baptized as Seventh-day Adventist Christians.

When I was finally released from the military to finish school, I met some people from my tribe who had fled their homes because of the fighting. I shared my faith with them, and 44 of them were baptized before they returned home.

Before I completed my last year of high school, the church asked me to serve as a lay evangelist. I am glad to serve God in this way, and I know He will bless me.

God asks each of us to serve Him in some way. We all can pray, and we all can give to send the gospel around the world. Whatever God asks you to do, do it with all your heart. 🌍

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**Daniel Hassian** has completed high school and is serving as a gospel evangelist in the Maridi district of southern Sudan.