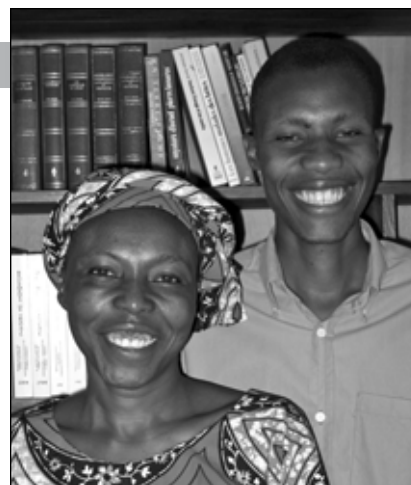


*A mother was upset that her children insisted on attending that strange church. Then a life-threatening illness changed her mind.*



Cecile and Hippolyte

## Come and See

Cecile Zocli and Hippolyte Zeagnon

*[Ask a woman and two teen or young adult boys to present this first-person dialogue.]*

**Cecile:** I am Cecile, and I live in Benin, West Africa. I have four wonderful children who never gave me trouble—until a neighbor invited them to visit his church.

**Martin:** I am Martin. I lived next door to the Zocli [ZOH-lee] family. I enjoyed spending time with Hippolyte [hih-POH-leet] and his family.

**Hippolyte:** I am Hippolyte [hih-POH-leet]. Martin and I had a lot of fun together playing games and spending time with my family. He often talked about his church and the interesting activities they had for young people. So when he invited us to visit his church, my sisters and I decided to go.

**Cecile:** When the children asked if they could go to church with Martin, I was surprised, especially when I learned that church members

worshipped on Saturday, not Sunday. But I let them go, thinking it couldn't hurt.

**Hippolyte:** The people at the church were friendly, even though they didn't know us. The Sabbath School teacher told such interesting stories. We decided we wanted to go again.

**Cecile:** The children came home from Martin's church eager to tell me about the worship service. I couldn't believe how much they enjoyed going to church. They begged to go to church with Martin again.

**Hippolyte:** We made lots of new friends at the Adventist church. Church members invited us to prayer meetings, Friday night vespers, and other church functions. We spent more time at Martin's church than at our own. In fact, before long we did not want to go to

our own church anymore.

**Cecile:** I began to worry that my children were spending too much time at Martin's church. So when they told me they no longer wanted to attend church with me on Sunday, I was upset. I told them they could not go to Martin's church anymore. My youngest daughter actually cried. She said that Martin's church had more interesting children's programs than our family's church did.

**Hippolyte:** Mother had taught us to obey her, but when she told us we could not go to church with Martin anymore, we sneaked away. Sometimes we told her we were going to friends' houses so we could go to the church. But Mother soon discovered what we were doing when we all suddenly had plans for Saturday mornings.

**Cecile:** I tried to reason with the children, to convince them to attend our family's church, but they insisted on going to church with Martin. What could I do? If I punished them for attending the Adventist church, I feared that I would drive them away from God completely. We are a close family, and that would have broken my heart.

**Hippolyte:** I was learning a lot about God in the Adventist church, and after several months I decided to be baptized into that church. Then one by one my sisters joined the church too.

**Martin:** I was happy that my friends had found a church home in the Adventist church. It pleased me that the church members treated them like family, nurturing and loving them into the church.

**Hippolyte:** Early one morning I was sitting outside studying when a flock of bats flew over and began attacking me. Shocked, I called out, "Jesus, help me!" and the bats flew away. But that evening I began feeling pain throughout my body. I told my mother about the bat attack and the pain, and she took me to the doctor.

**Cecile:** The doctor said he did not know what caused my son's sudden pain. They gave him some medicine and sent us home. The next day Hippolyte came home from school feeling quite sick. Suddenly he collapsed onto the floor. I called the doctor, but he said he had done all he could for him.

My husband thought someone had put a curse on Hippolyte. He went to a

traditional healer to get some "juju" to release our son from the curse that was causing his illness, but Hippolyte refused to take the medicine. He said he would trust in God to heal him. That evening Hippolyte began groaning and talking gibberish. It sounded as if he was trying to pray, but the words were garbled. We rushed him back to the hospital.

**Martin:** Cecile asked the church members to go and pray for Hippolyte. Several went to the hospital and fasted and prayed by his bedside.

**Cecile:** Hippolyte lost consciousness and remained in a coma for a month! I hardly left his bedside. The Adventist believers came every day to pray for him. Slowly he got better, and at last he awoke from this nightmare!

**Hippolyte:** I was really tired and had no energy, but the pain was gone. Doctors told me to stay home and rest for six months. But after a week or so I begged Mother to take me to church.

**Cecile:** I worried that Hippolyte would get sick again, but worshipping God meant so much to him that I decided to take him. I listened to people pray for my son. I listened as the congregation sang joyfully to God and as the pastor spoke. I saw how happy Hippolyte was to be back in church, and I was touched.

**Martin:** Hippolyte continued to improve, and soon he could attend church on his own.

**Cecile:** Then I got sick. I had seen how the Adventists rushed to my son's bedside

when he needed prayer, so I asked the members of my church to come and pray for me. But no one came.

**Hippolyte:** I saw how disappointed mother was that her church family did not come to comfort her when she was sick. So I asked some Adventists to come and pray for her, and they did.

**Cecile:** I was glad the Adventists came. I felt better just hearing them pray for me. When I was well again I started attending the Adventist church with my children. I know that made them happy. I saw what a wonderful family the Adventists were. I felt at home.

**Hippolyte:** When our mother decided to take Bible studies and be baptized, my sisters and I were thrilled. Then Father started coming to church too. Now we all worship God together every Sabbath.

**Cecile:** We are Adventist Christians today because Martin invited my children to worship with him in his church. Now on Sabbath afternoons our family visits our friends and neighbors and invites them to come to the church and see what God can do in their lives.

**Hippolyte:** That's what Adventist mission is all about—telling the world, one person at a time, that Jesus loves them and died for them. Sharing in mission through the mission offering is one way everyone can have a part in telling the world about the Savior.

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**Cecile Zoeli** and her family share their faith in southwestern Benin.