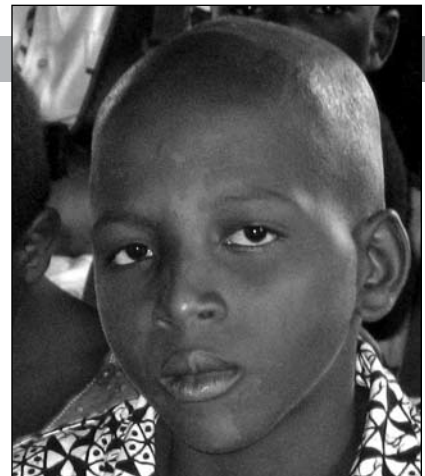


GraceLink Connection: Service.

“Papa, please come and listen to the music down the road! It is so beautiful!”



Basile

Basile’s Discovery

Djossou Simon

Papa was glad to be back in his home village in Benin, West Africa [*locate on a map*]. His family was large. It included his two wives and lots of children, including Basile [bah-SEEL]. Then there were Papa’s brother and sister and all of Basile’s cousins, too. They finally arrived in the village where Papa had been born.

Papa and his older sons built a compound house (several hut-like rooms surrounded by a courtyard wall). He started working as a baker, and soon the family members settled into a comfortable routine.

Benin is well known for a form of witchcraft called “voodoo.” Papa was convinced that his own father had died as a result of a curse someone had put on him. Therefore, Papa wanted to be sure his family was protected from the spirits. He filled his house with voodoo gods—the gods of water, thunder, snakes, trees, rocks, dead ancestors, and more. Everywhere there were fetishes—objects that the voodoo priest had blessed—that Papa believed would protect

his home and family. At Papa’s bakery, he and the other workers often argued over which fetish provided the best protection.

Beautiful Music

One day as Basile was walking along the street toward home, he heard a choir singing outside a church. Curious, he stopped to listen. It was such beautiful music! He hurried home and called out, “Papa, Papa! Come hear the beautiful music down the road.” Papa smiled at his son. Although it was a busy day, he stopped his work and followed Basile out into the street.

Papa and Basile heard the music before they could see the choir. They stood a short distance away and listened as the choir sang songs Basile had never heard before. When they stopped singing, Basile and his father watched as two men stepped into a large concrete tub of water. The older man raised his hand and spoke some words, then he pushed the younger man under the water! The older man then raised the

young man quickly out of the water and hugged him! Basile and his father had never seen a ceremony quite like this before, and Papa wondered what kind of voodoo it was. He was going to tap Basile on the shoulder to tell him they should leave when the choir sang another song. When it ended, Papa and Basile turned to walk home. But a man stepped up to them and invited them to come and enjoy the music again the next week. “We meet every Saturday morning, and we would be happy to have you come,” the man said.

Papa thanked the man, then father and son walked toward home. “Papa, the music was so beautiful. May I come back next week and listen to the music again?” Basile asked.

Papa smiled at Basile. “Yes, Son, you may return,” Papa said. “But don’t let anyone put you into that tank of water.” Even though Papa trusted in the power of the spirits, he did not mind if his son wanted to hear the Christians sing.

Learning About God

The next Saturday morning Basile walked to the Christian meeting place and sat down. He enjoyed the happy music and listened to the stories about Jesus. Week after week he attended the meetings, returning home to tell his parents what he had heard.

One day Basile came home from the meeting with a serious look on his face. "Why are you so sad, my son?" Papa asked.

"Papa," Basile answered, "the pastor said that the voodoo fetishes have no power of their own. He said their power lies with the devil, and the devil is not as strong as Jesus, the Son of the living God. If that is true, we should not worship the fetishes but should worship Jesus."

Basile told his family what he was learning at the church and invited them to come to the church with him. Basile's mother and sisters began going to church with Basile, and in time they accepted Jesus as their Savior.

But Basile's oldest brother did not like this change in his family. He wanted his family to see that this new religion was not good.

He devised a plan to shame the church pastor by asking questions he was sure the pastor could not answer. On Sabbath Basile's brother went to church with the family in order to confront the pastor. But as he asked his questions, the pastor lovingly gave him answers from the Bible. In time Basile's brother also accepted Jesus as his Savior and joined the Adventist Church.

Papa reluctantly got rid of his fetishes. In time he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. But he could not be baptized, because he had two wives.

Tragedy and Test

Soon after Basile and his family joined the Adventist Church, tragedy struck. One of his younger brothers died. Members of the larger, extended family were not at all pleased when they learned that Papa had forsaken the family's traditional gods. At the boy's funeral family members mocked the new Christians. However, God had His own way of working things out.

Basile's aunt became ill. The

family hired voodoo priests to conduct ceremonies to get rid of the evil spirits that were making her sick, but his aunt remained seriously ill. Even the modern medicine could not cure her. Desperate, she turned to Papa for help. With earnest prayer, Papa called on God to heal his sister. God answered this prayer, and his sister was healed, much to the surprise of everyone. Following her healing, Basile's aunt began attending church, and eventually she was baptized, along with two of her children. After much prayer and many hours of sharing God's love with him, the aunt's husband also was converted.

One day Papa's second wife agreed to leave the family and return to her home village. Once Papa had only one wife, he was baptized into church membership. Now the family is united in Christ, all because young Basile believed and shared what he learned about the love of God. 🌍

Djossou Simon is Basile's older brother. He told this story on his way to study for the ministry.

Let's talk

? Basile's family believed in the power of voodoo, a form of witchcraft. What does voodoo, or witchcraft, mean? What is a fetish? [Voodoo is a form of witchcraft, a belief that humans can manipulate the spirits of animals, demons, and ancestors to work their own will. A fetish is some tangible object that a witch doctor or voodoo priest has blessed or cursed for a specific purpose.]

? What obstacles or difficulties would you imagine a person must overcome when converting from voodoo worship to Christianity? [Suggested answers: Many new Christians find it extremely difficult to give up their former reliance on fetishes and witchcraft when crises come into their lives. They must learn to trust in a power they cannot see. Family members often disown those who convert to Christianity.]

PRAY pray **PRAY**

Pray this quarter that people who still believe in witchcraft will see God's love in action and will trust Him with their lives. Pray that new Christians who have come out of a background of witchcraft will remain strong in Jesus when difficulties strike.