

Testimony of Jim Joshua

an EYN Christian from Jos, Plateau State

Regarding his experience during the violence of Nov. 2008

(transcribed from a recorded interview by Del Keeney)

Among our Nigerian brothers and sisters in Christ...we discovered that their context for loving is remarkably challenging. We asked our question, "how do you keep courage and remain faithful in times of fear". Little did we know, as we were preparing our final proposal and planning to travel to Nigeria, that a new challenge would erupt there.

In November of 2008, violence broke out and took the lives of some 300 people in the aftermath of an election in the city of Jos - the major city in the center of the country and in what is called Plateau State. Shops and homes in a major market were destroyed. Mosques and Churches were set ablaze as retaliation occurred.

During our group's time in Nigeria, we had the unique privilege of sitting down with some members of the EYN church in Jos. These were lay persons and church leaders. We heard many stories. Among them was this one from a young man by the name of Jim Joshua. Jim Joshua is an engineer by training, though still looking for work in his field. He has a wife, and we saw the area of the city in which he lives. And we caught a glimpse of what it is like to be faithful when loving is not easy, but hard! We all wonder, on occasion, how we would respond in a difficult situation! Here is Jim Joshua's story.

In the community where Jim Joshua lives, there are both Muslims and Christians. His own tribe is represented there, and some of them are Muslim as well as Christian. They live peacefully with each other. In this story, the violence had already erupted in other parts of the city of Jos. The market had been burned and ravaged during the night, and according to their testimony, in this case there were Muslims perpetrating violence against Christians initially. A day had passed as the violence had escalated.

On the second morning after the burning of the market, in this part of Jos where Christians and Muslims live together, a group of Christians were coming to retaliate. The Christians (and some Muslims of their tribe there) came out of the houses and try to arm and protect themselves. This is the scene that Jim Joshua was called to face and to respond to...

Listen to his story...in his own words...

JIM JOSHUA'S TESTIMONY...

My own experience is on the 29th...On that fateful day, though I traveled out, I came back on that same day the 28th.

When I came back, I couldn't find my family. I called my wife. She said that she had been trying to get across to me but the network was bad. I said, "where are you?". She said that she is in the barracks, the air force barracks with my cousin brother. I said, "what of my late brother's family?" She said, they are still at home, they didn't move away from the house. I said "why?"

I slept at the house.

That fateful day on the 29th early in the morning, I woke up around 5...something said to me "get these people ready and move out of this place...take them to a safer place...to the air force barracks. I went out, after I had finished my prayers and day had broken. I bought some tea ingredients, and went to the house so that they would have some breakfast before we would start moving. Then something keep telling me that...go out and see what is happening. Something keep telling me, my mind keeps beating...

My brother's daughter was sweeping the compound. After she went out, she now saw a crowd. They had already surrounded us. That breakfast, we couldn't take it any more.

What came into my mind when the girl run inside and told us that "daddy, daddy, come and see people...come and see people". When I came out and saw the crowd, I told my brother's wife to carry the kids into one room. Go on your knees and keep praying. And a voice just came to me saying, "go and talk to these people". Go and talk to these people.

I started shivering. I shared it with my brother's wife. I said, "Look at the voice that is telling me that I should go and talk to these people. Who am I to go and talk to these people? She said, "the Lord is with you". That was just the last comment she told me.

And I locked it...I locked them inside. I said, "go in and pray". When I came out, the people within my area have already come out too. Some with sticks, some with daggers, and the rest. What I told them was, "What are you people going to do with this? Go and drop the sticks and stay in your houses. Nothing is going to happen.

Looking at those people, it is not the muslims that came in. It is the Christians. Because in that territory there is no way that a muslim person would be there. Because it is all the areas where the christian resides. Now that voice keep telling me "go and talk to them". And there is a specific person, and old and elderly person. He is my tribal man, but he is a muslim. I told him, "Babba, go and give the stick. Follow me and let us go and talk to these people." He said, "these children they will never listen, they will never hear you. I said, "I will try". Let's go. If you know you cannot go,

please stay. And if you know you are going to follow me with the stick, please don't go.

They (the group that had come in to our community) started stoning. They started stoning. In fact my brother's house was just like, the house that they are targeting, because it is the first house they are going to approach (come to) first. So they were stoning that very house to be specific.

I now raise up my hand "I surrender"...I keep moving to them. It was a hill. I climb up the hill...getting to the middle, I saw somebody waving his hand like this...raise up his hand like this and tell these people to stop. That they should wait, and hear from me...what I am coming there to do. Since I already surrender, they should listen to me.

When I came closer, they now ask me to stop there and I stop there. A few of them...comment to me...who are you...introduce yourself. And I told them my name is Jim Joshua. Then they now said, "are you one of us?" I said, "who are you?" They said, "We are Christians". I said, "Thank God. I am a Christian too."

Why are you coming to us? I said, I come to talk to you people. Why do want to intrude into this place? They said, they are here for the muslims...they are here to help us. They are here to kill the muslims so that they will help us.

And I'm now questioning them like that...somebody now give me the slap. I say, I am sorry, I don't mean to provoke you, but there are no muslims here. They said, "It is a lie! There are muslims!"

I said, "Yes. It is not that there are no muslims, as such. But there are just very few. And those muslims, they can't do anything here because they are all tribal muslims. And they don't have houses here. They only rent from some of us...that was just what I told them.

But they insisted that they must enter and burn all the houses...that all the people residing here are muslims, and I prove myself to them. I have to remove all the ID Cards that I have within me to prove myself to them. Before now, somebody shouted my name. He said "Joshua! I know you! You are _____?? and EYN. That is just what I heard.

And I said, "Thank God, one of you know me." The only person that I can only know and recognize among them is their leader. He was once a colleague of my late elder brother. He was the same person that stopped them from doing what they are supposed to do.

Now as we are talking, they were coming down...we were all coming down...reaching in front of my late brother's house. They now said...they are going to use me, so that I will now show them all their rooms. They are not going to burn any

houses...the houses does not belong to them...but I have to point out all their rooms, let them bring out all their things...burn it to ashes.

They said, where are the muslims? I said, they have already run away...since yesterday. Meanwhile on the 28th, the son of that old man created a problem in that community. I wasn't around. I just came and heard the news. The elders of that community called on themselves...talked to themselves that we should allow anything to happen here. For many?? years we've been together. There was no problem. We shouldn't allow anybody to come and intimidate us or to come and cause problem to us.

They now called the youths again to address them. And that boy to confess. He said "no!"...that enough is enough. That the killing... that the christians they are killing their brothers inside the town. They must take their revenge here.

They try try try try to talk to him, but he failed to understand. Even their own Imam there tried to talk to him. He refused. He said he "must" retaliate.

Now there was one of the elderly person there that spoke to him...spoke to him very badly, he refused to agree with what they said. That old man, raise up his hand...wanted to slap the boy....He now fall down and collapse. They took him to hospital.

Immediately (when) I came back on that same 28, I was told about that story. And the first thing I did was I call on the boy. I said "Jacubu...why are you feeling like this? For several times I have been talking to concerning fighting from one fight to another. Why are you behaving like this? And you just got married. You have kids now. Why can't you stay and take care of your family? He said, uncle I've listened to you. I won't do it again.

Now on that 29th, as we are talking in front of my brother's house, that same boy just opened his mouth and said "Allah wa Quar" We are fighting Jihad here! As he screamed like that...

They now said to me, you said there is no muslim here. They now carry dagger, want to stab me. I said, "please". "I'm sorry. This person, I don't know him". I pretended that way. I collected a stick from one of them. I said "allow me to kill this boy myself". As I was running after him, I was speaking in my dialect to him because he...we are in the same tribe. I was telling him to run away for his life.

His father is there to testify this.

Before I would come back, somebody now pinpointed his father and said, this is the father of the boy. They start brutalizing him with daggers, machetes and the rest. Set fire on him with petrol. When I came I saw it, and I pleaded with them...grabbed the man...like this (also I thank God that I didn't get the fire on me)...I pleaded with them not to touch the old man. They are the same people that used their hands in

quenching the fire...from the man. They now said, we agree with you. But next time, don't lie to us.

I said to them, I didn't lie. In the midst of this crowd, how would I know that this people would have come in again? I have to present it like that.

As we are doing that, one of them grew annoyed and set fire on my late elder brother's house. I now have to start pleading with them again. They now quench the fire. As I was now trying to go to my house, they called me back and said "come". I come. They now start asking me, whose house is this? Whose house is this. That same boy's house? I said, no, that is not that boy's house. He doesn't live here.

I protected about fifty houses there, because I counted them. All the houses that they pointed I would count. Fifty houses. I protected all those houses.

They now said, but...there is a mosque inside! And I told them "Yes, I won't lie to you, there is a mosque." Now to please them, I have to tell them that you can go there...destroy the mosque but don't burn it, because the house that is directly close to the mosque belongs to my sister. That is what I told them. Then they said, we agree, we will not do that.

As we're moving together (because they said I must follow them), as we are moving with them, there was one of my neighbors there where I used to park my car in front of his house. He is a Fulani man. They now said, "this is one of them". They now carried...he was trying to close his door...they were now kind of pushing, you know, struggling. I was pleading with them. At long last, they succeeded in opening the door, bringing him out. They wanted to start stabbing him with machete. I pleaded with them, pleaded with them, pleaded with them. I went on my knees. The person was on the ground laying down. I was on my knees. I told them that instead of killing this man, please...kill me.

Then their leader now said, for this man to protect this man, you know there is something. And...of this man, he is a very very old man. What can he do? Let's just leave him. They entered the man's house. They didn't see anybody. They now said, okay, let's go.

Before we know it, some of them said, we won't agree. This man is a liar.

Before I know, they stab me with (a) dagger.

I just started feeling dizzy before...my phone was in my hand. Now before I went off, I called security. That was just what I knew. I didn't even know I was taken to the hospital.

But meanwhile there was a boy that was killed in front of my late brother's house. Together with that old man...a muslim boy. There was a kind of stoning them...after I left that place they were stoning those people with stones. They now said, since

these people are stoning us, we must deal with them. They stabbed that boy to death, set fire on him, and he died. That was the main reason why they were annoyed with me and stabbed me on the head.

Q: The old man died also?"

That old man did not die. The old man that they stabbed did not die. Until now..as I am telling you....he is still in the hospital...

But that second old man...the Fulani man...did not die (there), because they did not touch him...but suffered a heart attack, and spent some couple of days in the hospital, after some couple of days they brought him back home. Now passed away.

ADDENDUM

The interview went on, but please note - since that time, the old Muslim man...the father of the young Muslim, Jacobu, with whom Jim Joshua counseled...has been visited almost daily by Jim Joshua. After he recovered from his serious wounds himself, he returned to the air force hospital where the man was receiving care. Moreover, after our interview, Jim went with us to that hospital, so that we could meet this elderly Muslim man - two and a half months later ... still trying to recover from his injuries. We met him, along with his daughter. He asked that we pray for him in that place. It was a holy moment, for we saw with our own eyes the profound results of love that will lay down its life for another!