

Testimony of Brother D.

Brother D., WMP's coordinator for Senegal, West Africa, speaks and writes French, English, and Wolof well. Here is his written testimony:

"I was born on June 12, 1980, in Saint-Louis (270 Km north of Dakar, the capital of Senegal). I was born and raised in a Muslim family and in line with Islamic and Wolof traditions and culture.

"When I was born, my father was a civil servant in Mauritania, where he settled our family, working as an agricultural expert. We were economically and socially stable, with the high privilege of getting a good education and attending the best schools in Mauritania. We expected a bright and promising economic-political career both in Senegal and in Mauritania.

"Unfortunately, political tensions between Senegal and Mauritania in 1989 led to tragic events, including mass murders on each side. We were forced as a family to leave Mauritania. By the grace of God we were unharmed as we headed for Senegal, though impoverished and without our belongings and riches. Our hopes and dreams of a promising future, which were beautifully looming on the horizon, were suddenly struck down in a single night.

"My father, mother, brothers, sisters, and I all returned to Senegal under extremely poor and tough conditions. My father had no other choice but to hunt for a job in order to sustain his family while waiting for the aid that was promised to all the refugees by the Senegalese government. Unfortunately, the promises of assistance were broken, and were never reconsidered.

"As my father and some of his friends kept looking for jobs in the city of Saint-Louis, they ran into a church-owned bookshop which was at the time run by an American Baptist missionary. They told the missionary that they were Senegalese refugees returning from Mauritania in search of jobs to support their families. The missionary told them that though he had no job to offer, they could use the bookshop for free instead of paying the subscription fees. My father and his friends spent more time job searching than reading books, but ended up discouraged and returned home. The job searching went on for days, and then my father reconsidered the idea of joining the bookshop and spent his time reading rather than staying idle. That was how my father got linked to a church and a Christian bookstore full of Christian literature, gospel books, and Bibles.

"My father would leave home every morning, only to return late in the evening, routinely spending his time reading books in the church bookstore, where he eventually did a comparative study of the Bible and the Koran. It took years before the promptings of the Holy Spirit convinced him that the Bible was indeed the Word of God. Surprisingly enough, he kept all the times of searching intimately secret in his heart.

"One Sunday morning he called me—as the eldest son of the family, together with my brothers—to go with him to a secret, unknown place. That was the first time for us to set foot in a church, which was both risky and a stumbling block for us, since we were born and bred Muslim. In the church we got to meet another American missionary pastor and his family. Then we went to Sunday school and attended the service.

"We kept faithfully attending church until 1992, when my grandmother—along with my aunt and uncle—called my father on behalf of the extended family to inquire about his Muslim faith, pointing out that apparently he no longer prayed and fasted as a Muslim. (By the way, they were also aware of the fact that he and his entire family had joined the 'white people.')

out that he had the choice of coming back to the former Muslim way and abiding by the family laws, thus quitting the church and this Jesus that he preached, or he would have to leave home. My father said that he would remain faithful to Jesus rather than turning away from Him, because Jesus was the promised Messiah from God who would give salvation to mankind.

“My father’s conversion to Christianity and denying the traditional Muslim way shamefully aroused some kind of family stumbling block because it was the first outstanding religious record in the history of my family and even in the entire region of the then-Senegalese and French West Africa’s capital city, bordering Mauritania, and through which Islam had entered the mainland.

“The event was so scandalous that my father was eventually chased out of the home along with his children. We were disconnected from the extended family, because having a Christian in the midst of a fervent Muslim stronghold was viewed by the community as a disgrace. As a family, we were cursed by our neighbors and the community; we were shamed, seen as evil, cursed at, and excluded from the rest of the world, uninformed about the daily social happenings. Nobody worried about our fate.

“Meanwhile, the American missionary had a son my age who I liked very much because, thanks to him, I got to know more about Jesus through our visits together. I loved attending Sunday school because of the sweet candies we were given and the fun outings.

“Nevertheless, there came a time when life’s circumstances became unbearable again, and the church could no longer support my family because there were new missionaries completely unaware of our realities, and before we knew it, the church had let us down. The few Senegalese who attended the church had a 'fake faith' and were therefore double-minded.

“Once again, we as a family had no source of income because my father was jobless and as a result my mother was pressured by her family to divorce my dad. The socioeconomic problem was coupled with education and schooling issue. The schools needed our registration papers, but those were confiscated and burned by my father’s brother, who told us never to request them again.

“For the first time I hesitantly accepted Jesus as my Savior after the message and invitation call from the pastor. I was faking my faith at the age of 13 just to please my American friend, the son of the missionary.

“Our family situation was getting worse, and knowing it was on the brink of crumbling, I said a special prayer to God, saying, 'Lord, if you would deliver my family from a potential breakup, change my mother’s mind from the thought of divorce, and maybe give us a permanent place to live. (Because we were homeless on and off, our lives were constantly on display.) Lord, if you mend my broken family, I will testify that you are truly God and that Jesus is the truth, and therefore I will follow you whatever the cost.'

“Not long after that, the family situation started getting better, growing more stable, and we made the Word of God our source of inspiration and truth in every aspect of our lives. My father started leading evening family Bible studies from then on, and that was very comforting. My mother changed her mind about the divorce, and I restarted my studies while waiting to get my resident registration papers restored by the state service. We also managed to buy a piece of land where we built a single room to cram our whole family into for years before we had enough means to build a second one.

“God did not forsake us when people and even the church did. Unfortunately, the church did

forsake us because it was not ready to welcome a family from a Muslim background.

“In 2002 I began studying at the University of Dakar, where I graduated in 2009 in the Russian language with a Master’s degree and as a secondary school teacher. At the same time, some of my classmates and I were given a scholarship to go for further studies in Russia, which could have allowed us to teach at a high-school level. But I felt that I might not comfortably earn my living with a teaching career, and at the same time I could be forgetting about those who are lost and headed for an eternity in hell.

“In 2004 I took a couple of courses both in theology and Christian leadership and management. It took me four years to graduate with a BA diploma, and the studies were funded by a Baptist mission. In the course of my training, the Lord taught me how to reach out to the Wolof community and to other ethnic groups with the gospel. I thought long and hard how to best reach the Wolof community (who are 99.99% Muslim) with the gospel of Jesus Christ. I wrote a book in which I tried to chart out some special Muslim (Wolof) oriented evangelism strategies, and how to meet these challenges in order to strengthen the Wolof Christian community.

“I got married in 2006 when I was still studying, and I managed to provide for myself and my wife by lecturing and giving Wolof courses to some missionaries. I met my wife in this context and was able to lead her to Christ, thanks to the spiritual support of the Baptist missionary, who helped me with my theological studies.

“When my wife joined me as both a newly-wed and a newly-converted woman, she also came face-to-face with the same extreme persecution from her own family and was chased out of her home. As a couple we underwent testing times, but since I had personal and family experience with these hardships, I was able to help her through....”

In answer to a question about his qualifications for translation work, Brother D. replied:

“I received my Master’s degree in 2009 in four languages—Russian, French, Wolof, and English. In 2009 I also earned my BA degree in Christian theology and management leadership. I have been evangelizing the Wolof people since 2004. I was also part of the Marie Magdala film translation team. I have already translated a book into Wolof. I have written a book on Wolof people evangelism. I was BA Wolof-graduated out of Cheikh Anta Diop University. I am originally from a Wolof background myself. On top of this, I have been teaching for more than seven years as a Wolof professor. I have a group of people always proofreading my translation work in order to complete the things that might be missing out. The people are from a Christian background as well as Wolof Muslims.”