



## A True Story About Pastor Obi

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I just finished reading Pastor Obi's final report from his most recent project funded through SIFAT's Graduates' Projects Committee (GPC). This report shows a well-done project. I am so happy that SIFAT can help Pastor Obi. He is a dedicated Christian, and I will never forget when he attended the Practicum years ago at SIFAT.

This may be a long story, but I feel I must share it with you. While I sit here writing, I remember Pastor Obi and the last day he was with us in Alabama. I cannot keep the tears from my eyes, but they are tears of joy because of what God has done in Pastor Obi's life, spiritually and physically. It is based on a very hard decision he had to make, and thank God, he chose right!

After graduation, Pastor Obi asked to come to our house for advice before returning home. He was very worried. The next day, he poured out his heart to us, telling us that he was one of the leading pastors in his indigenous denomination. After years of struggling as a junior pastor with barely enough to take care of his family, he had reached a leadership role in the church, which allowed him to provide his children with nutrition and education. He said his denomination thought the only work for God is preaching and getting souls saved for heaven. Now, he had learned from SIFAT training and believed what we said — that meeting people's physical needs is also part of the Gospel. But, he thought his

church leaders would not accept this idea. Pastor Obi worried that if he went back to preach and implemented the things he had learned, he would be fired and his ordination to pastor churches taken away.

He was greatly troubled. "I am ready to sacrifice for Christ myself," Pastor Obi said, "because I now believe that SIFAT's way is the will of God." He broke down and wept. "But I don't want to sacrifice my children. We will be evicted from the parsonage and be homeless. My children will have to leave school and be undernourished, as I have no other job or way to support them."



*Pastor Obi (center) celebrates bringing clean water to a remote community! During training at SIFAT, he learned about the integrated Gospel to meet physical and spiritual needs, which led him to face a difficult decision for his future ministry efforts.*

We could not advise him anything new. He was convinced that God's will was to preach the integrated Gospel to body, mind and soul. But to do so was risking everything for him and for his family. "What can I do?" he pleaded with us for an answer to save him from that destiny. We could not give him his answer. We told him we understood. All we could do was to pray for him to let God lead him.

We had a time of prayer. Real prayer the African way. They pour their hearts out to God, and we joined him as he wept and prayed for God not to send him back to preach the integrated Gospel. When we finished, he got up off his knees with tears in his eyes and said, "Yes, I know what I

have to do. I have to be faithful to God's message. He has given me this light, and I have to take it to my church leaders, although I feel they will not accept it, but even if we die, I have to be faithful."

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How we hurt for Pastor Obi, but we could not tell him what to do. Only God could. He would have to make the decision. All we could do was to pray for him. He made the decision on his knees in our living room and went home to face it. As he left, he told us about going to one of these villages before he came to SIFAT. It was far out and was very impoverished. Many were sick from drinking polluted water. He said as he went into the village, he saw they were just finishing a funeral burying a child that had died.

The grieving father looked up at Pastor Obi as he arrived and said, "Man of God! You come again bringing us the message of God's love for us. Where is your God? If He loves us, why do our children keep dying? Man of God, can you give us no hope?!?" Pastor Obi said he had felt desperate for the man, but had no answer for him.

Now, he has an answer for that father, but if Pastor Obi takes it back to the village, he may lose his job and any way to keep his own children alive. But, he made the decision that afternoon at our house.



"Yes! I am going back with hope for that village. I will teach them the spiritual things they need to know about God, and I will find a way to help them survive physically, even if my church throws me out."

A month after he returned home, Pastor Obi wrote us from an internet café. He had called the church leaders together, and he told them what he had learned at SIFAT and that he had made a decision to follow that light God had given him in his ministry. The leading pastors were stunned. They thought that was dealing with worldly things, but they said let us pray about this. And, they did! They came back with the answer. "Brother Obi, we have heard you, and we believe you are right. We have only been preaching part of God's message." They asked him to lead and teach all the pastors things he had learned at SIFAT.

After his willingness to sacrifice everything for God, it makes me so happy that SIFAT did not send Pastor Obi home empty handed.

*Our Graduates' Project Committee receives applications from people who have completed SIFAT's training courses and need financial aid or "seed money" to implement projects in their communities. Since 2017, Pastor Obi has successfully led five projects in his home country!*

I thank God for the GPC and how they have guided our graduates and raised funds for community projects, including Pastor Obi's water boreholes. Pastor Obi can successfully preach the integrated Gospel to those suffering villages. When Pastor Obi gets water for them, it is not only physical water. It is the water of life, too, that Jesus gives. Pastor Obi really integrates the whole Gospel. He is *Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways!*

