

Operation Christmas Child: A Story of Hope

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Date: 19 July 2026

Preacher: Marvellous Okonne

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O que é a camada? O que é? This child has to get baptized first. And that's when they took me to church. And the pastor asked my mom, So what are you going to name this child?

And my mom says, For God to keep me alive to see this day, I'm going to name this child

Marvelous. Just want to prosper a little bit to this.

[4:02] My name is Marvellous O'Connor. And I was born in Central Africa. I have two brothers and one sister. And I am the youngest among my siblings. So growing up as a child was really up for my family.

Because my family was poor. And my family couldn't provide for us to go to school. We could barely afford in buying food to eat. And this was a struggle every single day of our life.

My brothers went looking for jobs to support the family. But it was difficult to make ends meet. I

grew up in a Christian family. And we used to live in the northern part of the country.

Where Christians are persecuted by their faith. And eventually run for our life to escape death. And we were kind of curious. I was excited that my dad finally had a job.

That we were going to start school. Everything was good. Wake up in the morning. You know. Get ready for school. Everyone was going to school. My dad was going to his workplace. My mom was staying.

[5:02] Sister, old mom. Take care of the kids and stuff. Suddenly everything changed. We discovered people started running for their life. And we were kind of curious.

What was going on? When you look around. You see churches. Schools. Are burned down. My dad was so scared. That he didn't know what to do.

It became so worse. That people were. People were losing their life. So my dad stepped up.

And said. Well I'm going to take my family back to the south. For safety. So we took the van. And on our way back to the south. We saw a large group of people.

Running towards us. And if we hear the gunshot. In the closed range. My dad had no option. So we all came down. And then I was six years old. And then I could remember then.

[5:55] I was wearing no shoes then. My dad came down. Took my mom. My siblings. They all went to the left side. So I was on the right side.

Trying to get myself together. To join them. And you could hear the gunshots. So close. And my dad thought they had me with them. But they never did. They all ran separate. And I was left all alone.

If you ask me. Marvellous. Do you know what. What are you going to do? I probably say no. But I believe that God. Was just guiding me. Through the right path. And I saw this clear path.

And I just kept going. I didn't know I was going. I just kept going. And God finally sent a good Samaritan. That came along my way. And what he did. He held my hands.

I said. Kid where are you going to? I didn't say a word. He asked me the second time. Kid where are you going to? I didn't say a word. He asked me the third time. Kid where are you going to?

[6:49] I didn't say a word. So what he did. He took me straight to the orphanage room. And the orphanage room was protected by soldiers. And there he says. Kid I don't know your name.

But I am going to leave you here. Because I also. I'm also running for my life. And that's when everything became so real. And I look. I said. Wait. Wait. My family is not here with me. I hope they are alive. Because everything I've seen. Just walking by. Was so. Was. Was a trauma. But you know. I was so blessed.

That God. God sent a group. Men. That came to rescue me. So when I came to the orphanage room. I started making new friends. Because all I could do. Is to make new friends.

And see. Where life takes me. And God did it. The conflict got ended. And they decided to take all the children. Staying at the orphanage room.

[7:44] Back to the south. To see if they can recognize their family. And glory be to God. I got to the south. I looked far ahead. That's when I saw my mom. From afar.

And she ran towards me. And when she was running. She wasn't looking as much. She ran as fast as she can. And she gave me this call. I said. Mom. I thought I had lost you. And she said.

Son. I thought I had lost you also. I looked to my left side. I saw my brothers. My sister. And my dad. And I said. God is good. My family became all united again.

And that's when things became proper for my family. Even more. That my dad lost his holy job. That he's using to take care of his family. There's some days.

That my mom is going to make. She's going to make some food. But what we do is. We are going to serve it for night. So that can sustain us.

[8:41] But. Who would I be to say. Hey mom. What's going on? I'm hungry. I never question my mom. Because I know the struggle. Before we go to bed.

My mom is going to come into the room. And she's going to say a quick prayer. But my siblings. We all stay in one little room. She's going to say a quick prayer. And there's this song that she normally sings.

Each day. And she prays. God will make a way. But there seems to be no way. He walks his way. We cannot see. He will make a way for us.

And he will be my guide. To be close to him inside. And she will walk quietly. Out of the room. And all I could think of.

Is just looking at the ceiling. Looking at the ceiling. And when things are going to be better. And one faithful day. My family. After everything. My family decided to go to church.

[9:44] And that's when we go to the church. And that's when they. They announced that there are special gifts. For all the children. But we were asked to wait. And when they say special gifts.

Ha. You know me. I was so excited. You know. I was really happy. You know. But. They asked us to wait. And after the service got ended.

They invited all the children. To come to the front of the altar. And sit on the ground. And ask all their parents. To stand behind their children. And that's when I realized that. Not just giving children the gifts.

They always share the gospel. And if you ask me there. As a child. Do I know. A little bit more about. Who God is. Who Jesus is. I probably say no. But during that time.

He's trying to show me something. But I guess I don't. I'm not really receiving it. And that's when he showed. The pastor shared the gospel. And he says.

[10:40] God always hears our cries. Just as he hears the cries of the useless suffering. He also hears the cries of his children. Whenever they call his name. For God so loved the world.

That he gave his only begotten son. That whichever delivered him in. Shall not perish. But have an eternal life. But if you ask me. Marvelous.

Were you listening. I probably say no. All I keep thinking about. Was just that gift. Finally. Just started calling. Kids to come get the gift.

And that's when they unwrap everything. All I could see was just. The red. The green. And I was like. What's in there? What's in there? But.

Everything I pray to God for. Was for God to show me a sign. Every day. I wake up in the morning. I look through the window. I will be seeing my friends. Going to school.

[11:39] And I was like. When is it going to be me? Like when? And what my dad normally do is. Each day. Each morning. After everything will come. He's going to come. He's going to put something like.

Like a chalkboard. And he's going to. Teach us like. Like words. Of like language. And all that kind of stuff. So we can still acknowledge. A little bit. Even if you don't go to school. But I was just praying to God.

For God to show me a sign. On anything. And when I opened. When I got my gift. Went back to my seat. It was closed. It was.

What this is. This is a different box. The other one I got. Was the little. Was the one she. She was presenting. But I was with my box. My mom was standing right there. You know as a child.

If they give you a gift. You're so curious. You want to see what's inside. I was trying to unwrap my box. Right then. At that spot. My mom gave me this loop. I opened that box. So.

[12:36] I said yes. You know. After everything got ended. My mom's taking for. She's taking too long. I said mom. We have to go. You know. I got work to do.

So we got home. And the first thing I did. Was to open my precious gift. And you wouldn't believe. Everything I prayed for. Was. In that gift.

In that box. Was school supplies. Toys. And. You know what. One thing I'm so curious about. Is. People think that it's just.

School supplies. But it wasn't. It was just not school supplies. This really gave me hope. And that's when I started. Questioning myself. I said. That means. Maybe God. Maybe this God.

Is talking about. Maybe. He's really. Really answering prayers. But not just. The school supplies. What stood out to me. In my box.

[13:32] Was. A prayer not for one of the family. It wasn't that long. Just something small. Saying. God loves you. No matter what you go through in life. And this tells me. That no matter where you are.

No matter where you go. God is always there. So when you pack shoebox. I know she said that before. Put something like a.

Like a note. Like a prayer note. That means so much to that kid. That means that. There's people all around the world. Praying for me. And also. You can also push a family picture. So that I can see that.

This is the family that pack my shoebox. And I'm just praying one day. That God is going to bring the person. Who pack my shoebox. So I can just say thank you. So on a faithful day.

My mom was sitting in the living room. And I decided to go ask her a question. And I said mom. If God could send me this question box. That means God could surely provide for us to go to school.

[14:30] And she said yes. If only we have faith. And trust in it. Because prayer is the key. And that's why I said mom. Can you. Can you teach me.

Can you show me. The way. A little bit more. She said. Why don't you come with me. When I go to church. When I go to. Some. Some like. Some event.

Come with me. And I said yes man. So each day. She goes to church. I'll be with her. Every single day. And I'll spend my day learning. Praying.

When church is over. She's going to come to the front of the altar. And she's going to pray. I'll just go near with her. And when we got outside. That's when I stepped outside. And I looked up.

I looked up to the sky. And I said. I said God. If this is your wish. I'm going to make. My family proud.

[15:26] And I'm going to. Do your wish. And that's when I made up my mind. I was. During that time. I was. Going to. I think. I believe. And that's when.

I decided to join. I decided to join. An academy. And that academy. They represent. Basketball. Track. And all that kind of sport. So.

Let me backtrack. Again. So everything I've shared. From the beginning. Of my life. Was. Step by step. Everything counts. Growing up as a child. So now.

I'm going to take you back. Take you guys. On how. God has given me the opportunity. To come to the United States. So this is going to be another story again. On how. My journey started. To come to the United States.

So I joined. This precious academy. And each day. From my house. To the place. It's about. I've pulled it. About seven miles. Probably.

[16:21] But in order for me to get there. I have to leave the house. Very. Very early. Because my dad has given us that knowledge. To wake up early. No matter what. Four o'clock. You're up. You're a bit early. Wake up at four.

So you can start your day. Even if I don't like it. But I have to do it. So each day. I wake up in the morning. I do my chores. If you ask me what my chores is.

Is. I wash plate. It means like. I. You put two buckets. And you wash the dishes. Not to run with you. You wash the dishes. You go first water in the stream.

Come back. Swoop the house. And what I do. Take a quick shower. Get my boot bag. And what I do. Next. I run. I run. And you're not for me to get there.

Because there's no transportation. I have to run. So each day with my boot bag. I keep running. I keep running. I keep running. I keep running. And getting close to where I'm going. I'll be tired.

[17:18] I'll be like. Ah. I say God. Give me the strength. When I get to the stadium. Because we say. You don't need to warm up anymore. You're good. So I did that for.

For quite some time. I do that. I did that. I was so dedicated. Because I said. I'm going to make my family proud. You know. Because they've done so much for me. So that's when.

God did it again. I was about. 14. 14 years old. 20 to 15. When I got selected.

To represent my country. Nigeria. For the Junior Olympics. If you ask me how I did it. It was more of dedication. So. I was picked. To represent my country.

So that's when I had the opportunity. As a team. We went to London. And from London. We went to Germany. And from Germany. They took this team. To Dubai.

[18:20] And after that. We came back to Nigeria. So. If you ask me where I'm from. My country is Nigeria. But I don't really disclose it. Because it's more secure. Like.

So I'm from Nigeria. So I came back to Nigeria. And that's when I asked God. I said. What next? Is that everything? But no. There was a school in Texas.

That reached out to my coach. The private Christian school. The only private Christian school. That can give. Scholarship. Not public school now.

Public school don't do that yet. In America. Private school. Christian school. They can give.

Scholarship. And that scholarship is required. It's called. I-20.

Student. Everyone. To visit. I-20. So they reached out to my coach. And that's when the coach was like. I want it. So I did all my paperwork. And that's when God.

[19:15] God blessed me again. I got the opportunity. I got my visa. And I was going to get my visa to come to the United States. So before that. That's when I sat my family down.

And I told them. I said. Mom. You know. You were the one that did this for me. Your prayer has kept me in this point. She said. And she told me.

Remember this. Your prayer don't stop now. Just because you have. A scholarship. You've got to continue that process. It's a journey. But you can't stop. Can you do it?

I said. It's hard now. Well. I'm going to try. So. God did it again. I came to the United States. And it's one of the beautiful places I've ever been.

Came down from the airport. I was confused. Didn't know where to go. Didn't know where to go. I was like. This is beautiful. And during that time.

[20:14] I was living with a foster family. And that family. That's when I knew that. That family. They were so dedicated in Samaritan force. And each day.

They go process shoeboxes. They pack shoeboxes. This church is so. Equipped to that. And that's when the church. Finally decided. To come to the Charlotte Processing Center.

To pack shoeboxes. And I said. From Texas. To drive all the way. They said yes. That's how dedicated we are. And that's when I finally got. Charlotte. North Carolina.

And when I first got there. Something wasn't right. And I kept asking myself. What is going on.

Maybe God was just trying to. Show me something again. When I got inside.

All I could see was just. People. Churches. Like just. Smiling. Packed shoeboxes. They were so excited. And I was like. I've never been this excited in my own life.

[21:11] But this is good. You know. But that's when. The lady. Told me. The mom told me. She said.

I thought you said. You received one of these gifts. And I said. Yes. But. I'm not sure. This is the world. So she said. Why don't you call your mom. And ask her. And that's when.

I called my mom back home. And she told me. I said. Mom. When I was growing up as a child. What kind of gift. Did I receive. And my mom just said. The exact same gift. I received. And I said. Mom. I think I'm here. And she was so excited. But I never knew. That. Everything I was saying. They were listening to what I was saying. At the. At the.

At Charlotte. So she came to me. And she said. Mom. It would be such a blessing. That. When someone receives a gift. We want that council to be a speaker. Can you. And then. I was getting ready for college.

[22:04] I was getting ready for college. I wasn't trying to do anything. And I said. She asked me that. Can you be a speaker for Samaritan's program. And I said. No. I said.

I'm getting ready for college. You know. The only way for me to stay in America. Is for me to keep up with my scholarship. You know. So then. I got recruited for track and field. I went to NC State. I don't know if you must know NC State. I went to NC State. And this was for one semester. Before I transferred. To a smaller division school college. It's a college school. Called. Bermond Abbey. So. I was getting ready for college. Then she gave me a card. She said. Don't worry about it. Just. You know. Whenever you're ready. Just let us know. Here's my card. And I said. Okay. But. You know. When God is calling for something. You can never run away from it. So. That's when. God just keeps showing me this sign. Each day. I go to bed. Just keeps showing me this sign. That's when I said.

[23:00] God. I don't know what this is. But. He said yes for me. So I reached out to her. And that's when I started my training. That was in 2018. I started my training. To be a speaker. Even.

Even. It was really. Really hard. But. You know. But I did it. So I said. I want this to be an impact. I want other children.

To know that. God. Loved them. So that's when I said yes to that. So. My story ends here. But. I just want to show you guys.

On how God has impacted my life. Growing up. So that's why I said. Everything. Step by step. Everything counts. If you trust God. So.

My. I'm going to leave you guys with this. To say. Thank you. I'm a big thank. I thank you for a lot. You know. Because it means so much. So I want to say thank you. And thank you. Because everything we're doing.

[23:55] We're not doing it for ourselves. We're doing it for the glory of God. So we don't take any credit. So I want to say thank you so much. And I'm glad to be here. The drive wasn't that bad. I live in off-town Charlotte.

It was a good drive. Two hours drive. So I want to say. I'm blessed to be here today. So take thanks and bless. Bye.