

Real Life Stories
Samuel Morris, Missionary To America

You have heard of missionaries who went to Africa to tell the people about Jesus. But did you know that in the late 1800s an African man came to our country and showed Americans the love of Jesus?

His name was Samuel Morris, or Kaboo, as he was known to his tribe. His story is as amazing today as it was to those who met the young Samuel Morris more than 100 years ago. Here is his story based on his own account.

Pay or Sammy Suffers!

The year: 1872

The place: My native country of Liberia, in Africa



"You must pay if you want peace," threatened the enemy chief. "We will pay," thundered my father, "We will pay." As the oldest son, I was taken as a hostage until my father, also a tribal chief, could pay off the war debts. Each month, my father brought gifts to the enemy chief, but they were never enough. The chief beat me daily with a poisonous, thorny vine he used as a whip. The poisonous thorns infected the wounds on my back, making me sick with chills and a fever.

A Bright Light and Broken Knots

After many whippings, I was so weak, I could no longer stand. I was tied to a wooden cross to be beaten. My captors planned to bury me alive if my father didn't bring enough goods next time. I actually began to look forward to death. At least I would be released from this unbearable pain. As I hung over the grave they had dug, I could feel myself slowly dying. Then suddenly a bright light appeared over me! The ropes miraculously fell off my hands and feet! I heard a voice call my name, and it told me to run! All of a sudden, I felt strong. I ran as fast as I could into the jungle and hid in a hollow tree until night came. I now had time to think about what had happened. What caused the bright light? Who had spoken to me? How did I become strong so quickly? I didn't have any answers, but I knew I must run far away. If I returned to my father, the enemy chief would kill my entire tribe.

As I stepped out of the hollow tree into the darkness, I was amazed--the bright light that shone on me earlier was still there. It guided me through the night.

After walking for many days, I came to a farm. A young worker greeted me and took me to his boss. The boss gave me clothes to wear and a job. I noticed there was something different about the young farm worker. I often saw him kneeling on the floor. He told me he was praying to God, his Father in heaven. He invited me to go to church with him. I went and found the presence of God there. It all began to make sense to me. I now know it was Jesus who saved me from my captors. Jesus was the light who guided me through the jungle and to my new home!

As I began to learn more about Jesus, I asked him to be my Savior. After I was baptized, an American missionary who was teaching me gave me a new Christian name: Samuel Morris.

It Really Did Happen

I know my story about the bright light seems impossible, but many months later I met a young boy who had been a slave of the enemy chief at the time I was a hostage. He said, "We did not know what had happened to you. We saw the bright light flash over you. We heard someone call your name, and then you were gone." After I told him about the miracle, he became a Christian, too.

Nothing Stops God Taking Me to America

I had so many questions. I was hungry to know more about God. I decided to go to America to study and learn. I went to the African coast and found a ship headed to America. The ship's captain refused to let me on board. I

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asked God to change his heart, and he did! One of his sailors became very sick. The captain let me take his job, assuming that I knew how to sail, but I didn't. When he and the sailors drank too much, they treated me very badly. One man even tried to kill me. But I showed them God's love. Over the months at sea, many of them, including the captain, became Christians. A ship, once so full of hatred and drunkenness, became a vessel of love and unity in Christ.

America Warms to Sammy Morris

We arrived in New York City, and I spent many months with Stephen Merritt, a man the missionaries said could teach me more. My desire to know God better helped stir the hearts of the men at the homeless mission that Stephen operated. Many of them became Christians. Stephen later urged me to go to Taylor University, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Even though the University was having hard times, the dean felt that God wanted me to come. God used my desire to know him better to start a spiritual revival in the town, after a local newspaper printed a story about an all-night prayer service we had. It also included the story of my capture and conversion to Christianity. The name Samuel Morris became known in almost every home in Fort Wayne. So many donations came in to the "Samuel Faith Fund" that the university began to grow. (The fund helped other needy students, too.)

PostScript

Samuel often became sick because of the cold Indiana climate that he was not used to. He asked God to heal him, but Samuel's work on earth was done. He died just five years after coming to America. But the story doesn't end there. God used Samuel's simple faith and strong prayer life in a mighty way. Many students took the Gospel that Samuel understood so well back to Africa and even around the world. Taylor University is still sending out missionaries today, thanks in part to the faith of a young African man named Samuel Morris.

(1873 - May 12, 1893)

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