GOD'S CHILD

A True Story of Brave Faith in Ethiopia



Justine Taylor

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God's Child: A True Story of Brave Faith in Ethiopia
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God's Child

Come with me to Ethiopia. Journey between the rocky green highlands in the north and the parched deserts of the south. Let us go far from the bustling streets of the capital city, Addis Ababa, and walk down rutted dirt roads. These roads are clouded with dust, kicked up by overloaded buses hurtling past.

We'll go into the small town of Wolisso, through its marketplace. Take a deep breath. It is fragrant from the amber mounds of spices for sale. But watch your step! Clucking chickens skitter underfoot, and they will scold you! Look at the hills. Cattle lower their heavy horns to graze on the dry grass slopes.

Keep going until you see a little house. This house sits in the middle of tall enset trees. The trees stretch up to the sun while giving cool shade beneath.

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The house is circular, with a shaggy thatched roof that covers much of the home. In the yard, a garden plot features tall cornstalks. Nearby, a few naughty-looking goats wander, looking for trouble. Inside the house is a little baby with a big smile, who was born in the early 1950s. This baby has a remarkable story, which you will discover if you keep reading.



Negussie was born in a house like this one.

The baby's name was Negussie Kumbi. The name might sound odd. This is partly because many of you don't speak Amharic, which is the main

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language in Ethiopia. But when you learn what it means, it will make even less sense. Negussie means "My King." How could this little baby, born in a poor home in the backcountry of Ethiopia, have any royal heritage? And while the baby's name carried such honor and promise, the truth was that others would soon reject him.

In those days, and in that area, sometimes a man would have several wives. This isn't God's good plan for marriage. From the beginning, God said a man should stay close to his wife. Only two people should unite as one (Genesis 2:24).

But a lot of people in Ethiopia did not know or follow God. Many people called themselves "Orthodox Christians." Since ancient times, some of them drifted from key teachings of the Bible. As they moved further away, their faith changed beyond recognition. The good news of salvation in Jesus was forgotten and changed.

Even more, many people in Ethiopia still followed old local religions. They believed in strong, evil spirits that need to be appeased. They lived in

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fear and followed the burdensome rules set by witch doctors. And this was true of Negussie's family. They were a little bit of Orthodox, a little bit of local spiritism, and almost none of the one true God.

Negussie's father was from one tribe of people, and his mother was from another tribe. This was unusual because these two groups often didn't like each other and definitely wouldn't marry each other. Negussie's father also had another wife, who lived in a different house on a different little farm.

As Negussie started to grow, it became clear that he was not a healthy boy. He didn't appear to be developing properly. His back was short and hunched over, and he was very small for his age. Perhaps, you may think, they should have gone to a hospital, or seen a doctor or therapist to find out what was wrong? But the superstitious beliefs about evil spirits made them afraid to visit nearby hospitals or clinics run by Christian missionaries.

Instead, as a small child, his mother decided to give Negussie away. What help could a small,

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weak, deformed boy be to her? Maybe she was disappointed or maybe she was overwhelmed. We do not know. As a little boy, he was sent to live with his father's other wife. She was unhappy about getting a child who wasn't hers. He was the son of a rival woman from another ethnic group. She also saw Negussie's bent little body and decided that he would not be useful to have around.

This is a sad beginning to our story. For a mother to reject her child is one of the most heartbreaking things in the world. It is unfair and shortsighted to despise a little boy because of a disability. And to hate someone because of the people group they come from is wrong and foolish.

God's heart is *for* people who are different or weak. He loves each person in this world. He created us in his own image! He wants us to be like him. We should love and care for those who are different, weak, or disabled. He has shown us this same care in our own weakness. And even more, God has proved over and over that our weakness, when it is in his hands, can bring great glory.

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