

"My father was captured by the LRA, rebels before my birth in 1984. Because my mother could not raise me, I was taken to my grandmother's village to be cared for by her. By my 12th birthday, my mother had died of aids.

At the age of 15, sleeping in my grandmother's village hut, the rebels attacked at 3:00 am. My friend and I were abducted, taken into the bush and beaten 150 times with sticks, and threatened that if we ever escaped, we would be killed. I was unconscious for over a day from the beatings, when I recovered, I was given a human head to carry for 35 miles on foot. This was to make me brave.

Then we were taken to Sudan for 2 months training. We were made to drink animal blood mixed with human blood while the sign of the cross was printed across our bodies. Then they wrapped us with human intestines and made to jump over rotten human bodies. We were tormented with fear and threats of being killed if we ever thought of escaping.

From 1999 to 2003, I moved with Kony's rebels throughout northern Uganda, where I was involved in ambushes, village raids and massacres. I burned huts, and learned to abduct and even kill my own tribal people. During one raid as we were attacking a village, I received a bullet wound to my foot, chest and eye. As I ran wounded to try to escape the fighting, I met a commander from the Ugandan military who told me I had been wounded because of the bad things I was doing, and that if I didn't stop and surrender, I would die. I was already thinking about my grandmother back home, but had been warned by the rebels that all my living relatives had been killed and I would be too if I tried to escape.

I ran 23 miles while the bullets still lodged in the wounds.

In 2003, I was sent with 17 other young men armed with guns to ambush vehicles on the road to the camp of Kitgum and other villages. During one of the raids, we abducted 10 Achole villagers from the camp of Pabo. As we were in the bush that evening with our prisoners, I was ordered to take 2 of them to fetch water. Walking with them to the watering hole, I questioned one of the men, asking him 'Do rebels who surrender ever go back home or are they shot or made to drink poison?' The man now weeping, came close and, said to me, 'If you only knew that you could get help in Gulu if you surrendered, you wouldn't be suffering like this. Many surrendering rebels come out of the bush and are being cared for.' This man's kindness touched my heart and I set the 2 prisoners free, and I told them to look for me in town some day. Back at the rebel camp in the bush, none of my superiors asked me what happened to my prisoners. They just assumed I had killed them.

The next morning as our detachment was marching deep in the bush past a swamp, I told the other soldiers to go on ahead. I quietly dropped my gun next to the swamp, took some sugar, and combat boots with me and started running as fast as I could towards smoke rising from a village far away. When I came to a river, I bathed, threw away my rebel uniform and combed my long unkept hair with a metal instrument. Then I threw away the rosary and olive oil that Kony's commander had given me, and I cried out loud, 'You demonic spirits of Kony depart from me. I am now a new person.'

I ran until I saw a man and his wife farming near a village. When they saw me, they dropped their tools in fear and started running. I yelled, 'Stop, brother, please help me.' The man came back and wanted to know if I was from the bush and if I was alone. I assured him I was and pleaded with him for help. He took me to a UPDF – Ugandan military detachment where they kept me for 2 days to debrief me. I didn't eat during those days because I thought they would poison me. I just drank the sugar I had brought with me from the bush mixed with water.

I was taken by the military to the World Vision Children of War Rehabilitation center in Gulu for 3 months of trauma counseling. It was there I gave my life to Jesus Christ and accepted Him as my personal Savior. In June 2003, I was finally released back to my own village, and finding that my grandmother had died, I moved in with an uncle and aunt. I started going to a little church in Gulu town, where I was allowed to help with the children. I love working with children because I know the Kingdom of heaven has people who are just like them.

I prayed that God would save my family and give me new direction for my life. I asked God to forgive me for the terrible things I had done in the north as a rebel and to change me so I would never be the same again. In February 2004, I went to Africa Resource Ministry portable Bible school in Gulu for 2 months and my life has never been the same since then. I praise God for that school because it brought revival to my heart and showed me God's forgiveness. I began to learn the Word of God and understand God's purpose for my life.

My prayer now is that Jesus will use me to serve Him any way I can. And my greatest prayer is that God will change our nation in Jesus' name. I came through by the grace of Jesus. I would have died if He were not by my side. I praise Him because I will never be the same again since He found me and rescued me."

A smile glows from Patrick's face as he ends his story about the saving deliverance of a mighty mighty God! He is radiant with the love and compassion of Jesus, and today is one of the leaders of our Achole children's choir in the north, which we started 3 months ago. He sings heartily of the love of God as he plays beautifully on one of the native harps made from animal skins and hair. He went through one of our workshops to learn children's ministry and is working with the child evangelism in the town's bus park.

Last month, he joined our staff at the House of Prayer in Gulu for the prayer retreat we had there, helping to lead worship as he skillfully played his African harp. We shared wonderful times of prayer with him, praying for God's perfect direction for his life. My last trip to Gulu, I was able to walk with Patrick through the town of Gulu to the small vocational school where we enrolled him to learn masonry skills. That has been a great desire of his heart along with serving in children's ministry. We have become Patrick's family and now he is praying earnestly for other young rebels in the same situation he was in, to surrender and find their new identity in our Lord Jesus Christ.