

Finding God ... and other things to do during a One-Year Airport Layover

Some people dread airport layovers that last longer than an  hour. Imagine a layover for more than one year.

Nigeria-born Elizabeth Woleta was left stranded for more than a year in a terminal in Moscow's Sheremetyevo

International Airport after her passport was stolen in March 2007 in a

15-foot section considered a "legal no man's land" that's couched

between Russian and international territories yet governed by neither.

Despite her predicament, Woleta, now 31, found Christ when American

traveler Brian Dodd told her God loved her. She later used her desperate situation to minister the gospel to people from more than 17

nations.

"It's just the grace of God, " she told *Charisma*. "I was saved by that grace and that same grace had to continue and moved me to preach the Word of God to as many as I could."

Woleta said before praying with Dodd

she was a "tortured" soul who'd never experienced love. "Brian ... showed

me an example that Christ really cares for us," she said.

Despite her numerous attempts to get

help from governmental authorities, airport officials and other

travelers, Woleta was unable to depart the terminal.

After Dodd returned to the U.S. he immediately began working to find a way to help Woleta leave the airport. He and some of his companions smuggled food and a cell phone in for her. Despite their efforts, Woleta would go days without eating and sometimes resorted to drinking water from the toilet. Seeking some form of sustenance Woleta turned to the Word of God.

“[People would] see me reading a particular book for quite a long time,” she said. “In fact, I’d sit in one position for more than six hours just reading the Bible. Others would come to find out what’s making me read that Bible. I actually preached the Word of God to them.”

She’d even use her cell phone, which could only receive calls and send text messages, to ask others to translate Bible verses so she could minister to people speaking other languages. Though Woleta said she didn’t keep count, she estimates that at least 50 people accepted Christ after she witnessed to them in the airport.

After one year, Woleta was finally able to leave the airport when Dodd contacted the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to have her returned to Nigeria, where she continues to host Bible studies.

“The Holy Spirit of God actually helped me. ... [He] has been my food all along,” she said. “I continue to thank God for what He has done in my life.”