

Ex-Slave Forced into Islam Meets Jesus

A Christian nonprofit worker helping bring Sudanese slaves to freedom revealed a touching story that showcases the physical and spiritual importance of his organization's work.

Joel Veldkamp, head of international communications at Christian Solidarity International (CSI), recently joined CBN News Christians to explain how Christians and indigenous religions in South Sudan have been the hardest hit over the past few decades by dangerous slave raids.

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As previously reported, CSI helped free 1,500 Sudanese slaves last year, bringing the total liberated by the group over the past 30 years to over 100,000. Veldkamp shared the horrific ordeals these captives face.

From sexual violence to family separation and forced conversion to Islam, many have suffered. And yet many have held on to their faith.

"I'm thinking of one young man I met ... who was just old enough when he was enslaved to know that he didn't come from a Muslim background but not old enough to really know anything about Christianity at all," Veldkamp said. "So, he grew up in slavery, and he grew up being forced to learn the Quran, and go to Islamic school at night, and work during the day, always being told he was a Muslim, always being forced to pray like a Muslim."

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Yet the man always resisted the identity that was imposed upon him. And when he finally became free, he explored the Christian faith heritage of which he had been deprived.

“When he came back to South Sudan, he had the chance for the first time to learn what it meant to be a Christian, and he learned the Jesus story,” Veldkamp said. “And he told me the Jesus story is way better—Jesus came and he gave himself for the world; he doesn’t force anyone to follow him. He doesn’t force anyone to worship him; he just loves us.” {eo}

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