



Joy

in Suffering

1 PETER 4: 12-19



AN EXPOSITORY
BIBLE STUDY CLASS

Rev. B. Moses Owojaiye, Ph.D.
Expositor



**THE CENTRE FOR BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA IN
COLLABORATION WITH FIRST ECWA ILORIN**

P r e s e n t s

**AN EXPOSITORY
BIBLE STUDY CLASS ON**

**“JOY IN SUFFERINGS”
1PETER 4: 12-19**

**ON SATURDAY 3RD FEBRUARY, 2018
AT FIRST ECWA, ILORIN | 9:30AM – 1PM**

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INTRODUCTION

Today's Christianity is "Saccharine" Christianity. Hardly can you see churches and Christian leaders nowadays that would address the subject of Christian suffering. Each one of us desires "sweet" live. Some would reject any appearance of trials in their lives even when such trials are sent by God to accomplish a specific mission in their lives. Well, humanly speaking, it is a complicated matter. We have suffered so much in Nigeria that we do not want to hear anything about the word "suffering" again, talk much of being involved in it. This is not the kind of suffering that our theme addresses in 1Peter 4: 12-19. The Bible in 1Peter 4:19a, talks about a suffering that "Pleases to God" (NLT). I call that "Biblical" or "Godly" suffering. This is what is known in our text as "trials" and it is a part of our calling as Christians.

1 Peter: A Brief Background

Simon Peter, an apostle of Christ is the author of the book. The life of Peter is a testimony to the transformative power of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was transformed from being a "Son of Thunder" to an Apostle of Christ; and from being a "defender" of Christ to being a martyr of the gospel. Peter wrote the epistle after Paul had written his epistles, somewhere between AD 64 and 67 during the bloody reign of Emperor Nero. The main theme of this epistle of Peter is: Christian hope in the time of trial. The epistle was primarily written to Jewish brethren who were scattered by persecution around the Asia Minor (1Peter 1:1), present day Turkey.



Suffering is anything which hurts or irritates. In the design of God, it is also something to make us think. It is a tool God uses to get our attention and to accomplish His purposes in our lives in a way that would never occur without the trial or irritation.

Types of Suffering

1. Self -Inflicted Suffering: These are sufferings that human caused. They could be personal and communal in nature. They could also manifest in diverse spheres of life be it biological, political, environmental, sociological, legal, to mention just a few. An example of a personal one is what the Bible talks about in 1Peter 4: 15, If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble or prying into other people's affairs" (NLT). Read also Galatians 6: 7-9.

2. Christian Persecution: This is the type of suffering that the Bible addresses in 1 Peter 4: 12-19. Read a case in point in 2Corinthians 11: 16-33. This kind of suffering is inflicted on Christians as a result of their faith in Jesus Christ.

3. Suffering as a result of Divine Discipline: Hebrews 12: 5-11. Just like earthly parents, God lovingly disciplines His children in order that they may become mature in Him.

WHAT IS
SUFFERING?





4. Suffering as a result of Life Trials. There are other kinds of suffering that are neither self-inflicted nor caused by persecution. I call them “trials of faith”. They could also come in diverse forms, sickness, loss of property, delay, death, etc. We see examples of such in the lives of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Hannah, Joseph, Paul, etc. This suffering may come mainly for the name of the Lord to be glorified.

Read an example in John 12: 1-3.

Notes:

1. *a. “...As it is something strange” (NLT) – 1Peter 4: 13. By implication suffering is a part of the things that Christians must be prepared for. Compare to John 16: 1-2.*
2. *There are some sufferings that are “pleasing” to God. That by implication means that some sufferings are not pleasing to Him. Read 1Peter 4:19 and Matthew 20: 20-23.*

Selected Cross References

- a. **John 15:20:** “Do you remember what I told you? A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you.”
- b. **2 Timothy 3: 12:** “Now in fact all who want to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (NET).
- c. **Acts 14:22:** “Where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.”
- d. **1 Corinthians 15:19:** “And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.”
- e. **Corinthians 4:9** “We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.”
- f. **Titus 2:12:** “And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God.”



How to Respond to Suffering as a Believer in Christ

1. Trust your life into the hand of God. Why?

- God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand – 1Cor. 10:13.
- He is your Creator and He will never fail you – 1 Peter 4: 19 (NLT)
- He is the Potter and you are the clay – Isaiah 68: 4.
- His thoughts and plans towards you are always good – Jeremiah 29:11.
- “We know that in all things God works together for good ... Romans 8:28.

2. Ask God grace – 1Kings 19:6; 2Corinthians 12: 8-10.

3. Let you love for God be intact. “What shall separate us from the love of Christ...” – Romans 8: 35-39.

4. Keep on doing what is right – 1 Peter 4:19 (NLT). Compare this to when God told Moses that he would enter the Land of Promise (Numbers 20: 1-13). Did Moses curse the people despite the fact that they were partly responsible for his ordeal (Deut. 33: 1-29; Compare to Deut. 34:1-8)?

5. Rejoice – 1 Peter 4:13

a. It is an opportunity to be a partner with Christ in His suffering – 1 Peter 4: 13.

- Compare this to Paul's life and ministry goal in Philippians 3: 10. “...My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death... As Christians, we like in sharing in the glory of Christ but what about His suffering! **Read 2Corinthians 11: 16-33.**

b. You should rejoice because “You will be blessed...” – 1 Peter 4: 14.

- “... For the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you” – 1 Peter 4: 14.
- God uses our endurance in suffering to form our character and strengthen our faith in Him – Romans 5: 3-4; James 1:4.
- Because it provides us an opportunity to witness Christ to others - Phil. 1: 12-14; 2Timothy 2: 8-10; 1Peter 3: 13-17.
- Because it help to know how to appreciate or sympathize with others better – 2 Corinthians 1: 3-5.
- Because God uses it to deal with our pride - 2 Corinthians 12:7.
- God uses it to train and grow us into maturity in Christ – Heb. 12:5; 1Pet. 1:6; Jam. 1:2-4.
- Because of the eternal benefits that are laid ahead of us – Heb. 12:1-4.

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IN TODAY'S NIGERIA

A BRIEF SURVEY

What is Christian Persecution?

Christian persecution is any hostility experienced from the world as a result of one's identification as a Christian. From verbal harassment to hostile feelings, attitudes and actions, Christians in areas with severe religious restrictions pay a heavy price for their faith. Beatings, physical torture, confinement, isolation, rape, severe punishment, imprisonment, slavery, discrimination in education and employment, and even death are just a few examples of the persecution they experience on a daily basis. According to The Pew Research Center, over 75% of the world's population lives in areas with severe religious restrictions (and many of these people are Christians). Also, according to the United States Department of State, Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution from their governments or surrounding neighbors simply because of their belief in Jesus Christ. According to the study of Open Doors International, a US based research and relief organization serving persecuted Christians in the world:

Each Month

322 Christians are
KILLED globally for their
faith in Jesus Christ.

214 Churches and
Christian Properties are
DESTROYED

772 forms of VIOLENCE are
committed against
Christians (such as beatings,
abductions, rapes, arrests
and forced marriages)



NIGERIA IN THE GLOBAL EYES



In 1966, the United Nations developed the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in addition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 18 of the ICCPR focuses on four elements of religious freedom:

- Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.
- No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.
- Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.
- The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

Nigeria is not only a signatory to the above treaty; the spirit of this agreement is also entrenched in the nation's constitution. But the realities on ground show the contrary. According to ThisdayLive of February 4, 2017 "The United States House of Representatives referred Nigeria as the most dangerous place for Christians in the world and that impunity for those responsible for the killing of Christians in the country "seems to be widespread."" While the submission of the US House



Representative labeling Nigeria as most dangerous place to be as a Christian may be contestable; it is certainly true that it one of the most dangerous places. The Open Doors World WatchList 2017 ranks Nigeria as 12th amongst fifty (50) nations where Christians are facing extreme or very high persecutions. According to the study, there are more Christian persecutions in Nigeria than Saudi Arabia, the spiritual headquarters of Islam. Nigeria alarmingly ranks as 5th in Christian persecution list in Africa trailing behind Islamic and communist states such as Somalia, Sudan, Libya and Eritrea respectively. See the attached appendix for details.

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTIONS IN NIGERIA: SOME STRATEGIC EXAMPLES

1. Direct Islamic Persecution

- a. Boko-Haram innumerable destructions of lives and property.
- b. Distribution of aids in IDP Camps based on Islamic-religious affiliation.
- c. Fulani Herdsmen and the disposition of our government.

2. Muslim gathering and the “Misuse” of public facilities

- a. Street prayer and party.
- b. Erection of religious sign posts in public domains.
- c. Using public facilities for Islamic meetings.

3. Islamic -Political Jihad

- a. Political appointments.
- b. Lopsidedness of appointments and promotion of public officers.

- c. Lobbying for policies compatible or compliant with Islam at both the state and national levels (e.g., Islamic banking, the case of school uniforms in Osun State, CRK in the Curriculum of our schools, etc).
- d. Admissions into tertiary institutions and job placements.
- e. The mad-rush to worship on Sunday like Christians and copying of Christian doctrinal practices.
- f. Mobilization of Muslim youths to marry non-Muslims, particularly Christian girls.
- g. Secret mobilization to stop family planning particularly for Muslim women.
- h. Use of public amenities such as the mass media and other publicly owned infrastructures at highly subsidized rates or free in some cases.



4. Political Gimmicks and Christian Carelessness

- a. Appointment of nominal Christians into public offices.
- b. Appointment of influential Christians to cause internal division and unrest within the church.
- c. Careless, slow and casual response of the church to issues related to Islamic domination and persecution.
- d. Lack of Christian-unity in Nigeria.





CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- The church should pray about the matter.
- Investment in evangelization, and this where the strategic edge of NEF comes to play.
- Intentional investment in biblical discipleship.
- Mobilization of our members to be involved in active-participation in partisan politics.
- The church must be united.
- Learn more about Islam.
- Take advantage of our leading role in the Education Sector of Nigeria at all levels.
- Teach on the subject of persecution to brethren. We may even make “Christian Persecution” the topic of the mission week. We should not be caught unaware. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin; Stephen; Paul and Silas in Jail; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; Daniel are a few examples of believers who suffered as a result of their faith. Below are some of the Scriptures that prepare us for about persecution:
- “Remember the word that I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you as well; if they kept My word, they will keep yours as well” (John 15:20).
- “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because



great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).

- "Strengthening the souls of the disciples and encouraging them to continue in the faith."We must endure many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said" (Acts 14:22).

*For further reading, see: **John 16: 1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:19; 2 Corinthians 4:9; Romans 12:21; 2 Timothy 3:11-12.***

HYMN

Jesus call us over the tumult Jesu npe wa losan loru,

1. Jesus call us over the tumult
Of our life's wide, restless, sea;
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth
Saying Christian, follow Me!

2. As of old Saint Andrew heard it
By the Galilean lake
Turned from home and toil and kindred
Leaving all for Jesus' sake

3. Jesus calls us from the worship
Of the vain world's golden store,
From each idol that would keep us
Saying, Christian, love Me more!

4. In our joys and our sorrows,
Days of toil and hours of ease,
Still He calls, in cares and pleasures,
Christian, love Me more than these!

5. Jesus calls us! By Thy mercies,
Savior may we hear Thy call,
Give our hearts to Thy obedience
Serve and love Thee best of all.

Jesu npe wa losan loru,
Laarin irumi aiye;
Lojoojumo l'a ngbohun Re,
Wipe, "Kristian", tele Mi."

Awon Aposteli 'gbaani,
Ni odo Galili ni;
Nwon ko ile, ona, sile,
Gbogbo won si nto O lehin.

Jesu npewa kuro ninu,
Ohun aiye asan yi;
Laarin afe aiye, O nwi,
Pe, "Kristian" e feran Mi.

Laarin ayo at' ekun wa,
Laarin laalaa on rorun,
Tantan l'o npe l'ohun rara
Pe, "Kristian" e feran Mi.

Olugbala nip'aanu Re;
Je ki a gbo ipe Re:
F'eti igboran fun gbogbo wa,
K'a fe O ju aiye lo. Amin!



Aigbagbo Bila

Aigbagbo bila! Temi l'Oluwa
Oun o si dide fun igbala mi,
Ki n sa ma gbadura, Oun o se 'ranwo:
'Gba Krist' wa lodo mi, ifoya ko si.

Bona mi ba su, Oun l'O sa n to mi,
Ki n sa gboran sa, Oun o si pese;
Biranlowo eda gbogbo ba saki,
Oro tenu Re so yo bori dandan.

Ife to n fi han, ko je ki n ro pe,
Yo fi mi sile ninu wahala;
Iranwo ti mo si n ri lojumo,
O n ki mi laya pe emi o la ja.

Emi o se kun tori iponju,
Tabi irora? O ti so tele!
Mo moro Re pawon ajogun 'gbala,
Wo ko le sai koja larin wahala.

Eda ko le so kikoro ago
T'Olugbala mu kelese le ye;

Aye Re tile buru ju temi lo,
Jesu ha le jiya, kemi si ma sa.
Nje bohun gbogbo ti n sise ire,
Adun nikoro, ounje li oogun;
Boni tile koro, sa ko ni pe mo,
Gbana orin 'segun yio ti dun to!

Begone Unbelief

Begone, unbelief; my Savior is near,
and for my relief will surely appear;
by prayer let me wrestle, and he will perform;
with Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.

Though dark be my way, since he is my guide,
'tis mine to obey, 'tis his to provide;
though cisterns be broken and creatures all
fail, the word he has spoken shall surely
prevail.

His love in time past forbids me to think
he'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
while each Ebenezer I have in review
confirms his good pleasure to help me quite
through.

Why should I complain of want or distress,
temptation or pain? He told me no less;
the heirs of salvation, I know from his word,
through much tribulation must follow their Lord.

How bitter that cup, no heart can conceive,
which he drank right up that sinners might live;
his way was much rougher and darker than mine;
did Jesus thus suffer, and shall I repine?

Since all that I meet, shall work for my good,
the bitter is sweet, the med'cine is food;
though painful at present, 'twill cease before long;
and then, O how pleasant the conqueror's song!



Christian, seek not yet repose

1. Christian, seek not yet repose,
Hear thy gracious Savior say;
Thou art in the midst of foes:
Watch and pray.

2. Principalities and powers,
Mustering their unseen array,
Wait for thy unguarded hours:
Watch and pray.

3. Gird thy heavenly armor on,
Wear it ever night and day;
Ambushed lies the evil one:
Watch and pray.

4. Hear the victors who o'ercame,
Still they mark each warrior's way;

All with one sweet voice exclaim,
Watch and pray.

5. Hear, above all, hear thy Lord,
Him thou lovest to obey;
Hide within thy heart His word:
Watch and pray.

6. Watch, as if on that alone,
Hung the issue of the day;
Pray, that help may be sent down:
Watch and pray.

Kristian ma ti wa 'simi,

Kristian ma ti wa 'simi,
Gbo b'Angeli re ti nwi,
Ni arin ota l'o wa,
Ma sora!

Ogun orun apadi,
T'a kori nko 'ra won jo,
Nwon nso ijafara re,
Ma sora!

Wo 'hamora orun re,
Wo l'osan ati l'oru,
Esu ba, o nlo de re,
Ma sora!

Awon t'o segun saju,
Nwon nwo wa b'awa ti nja,
Nwon nfi ohun kan wipe,
Ma sora!

Gbo b'Oluwa re ti nwi,
Eniti iwo feran,
Foro Re si okan re,
Ma sora!

Ma sora, bi enipe,
Nibe n'isehun re wa,
Gbadura fun 'ranlowo,
Ma sora!



Fun mi ni'fe agbelebu

Fun mi ni'fe agbelebu,
Ijinle ife julio,
Ife ti nfarada isoro,
Ife l'atoke wa.

2. Fun mi ni'fe ife mimo,
Gege bii ti Jesu Oba,
T' O nwi pe, Baba dariji won,
Ife l'atoke wa.

3. Fun mi ni'fe ife pipe
Ife s'omo enikeji wa;
Ife lati ma ran ni lowo,
Ninu isoro won.

4. Fun mi ni'fe ife mimo,
Gege bii t'Olugbala wa;
T' O ngba ni la, t'O tun nwo ni san,
Ife l'atoke wa

5. Fun mi ni'fe agbelebu,
Ijinle ife julio,
Ife ti nfarada isoro,
Ife l'atoke wa.

Thou my everlasting Portion,

1. Thou my everlasting Portion,
More than friend or life to me,
All along my pilgrim journey,
Savior, let me walk with Thee.

*Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
All along my pilgrim journey,
Savior, let me walk with Thee.*

2. Not for ease or worldly pleasure,
Not for fame my prayer shall be;
Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with Thee.

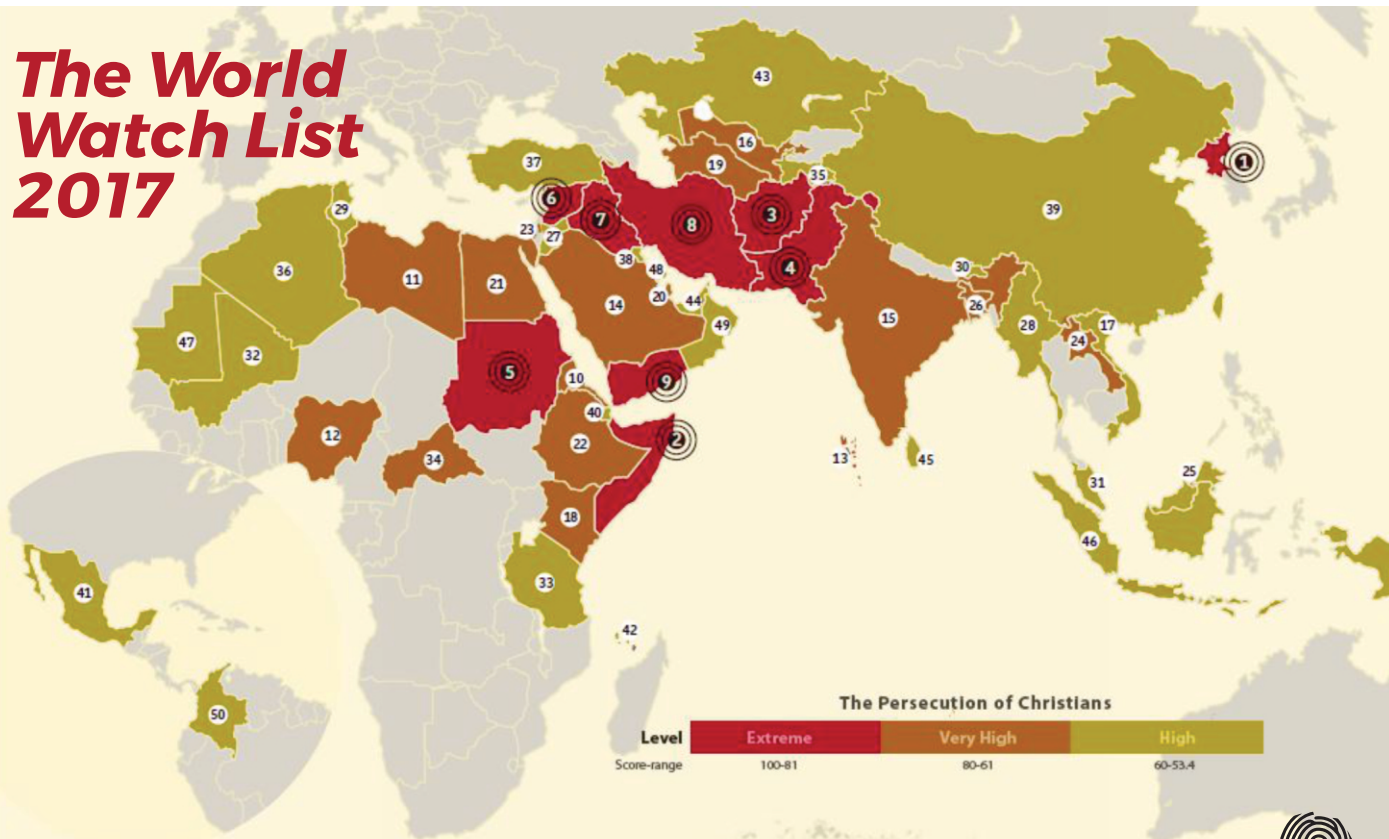
*Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with Thee.*

Lead me through the vale of shadows,
Bear me o'er life's fitful sea;
Then the gate of life eternal
May I enter, Lord, with Thee.

*Close to Thee, close to Thee,
Close to Thee, close to Thee;
Then the gate of life eternal
May I enter, Lord with Thee!*



The World Watch List 2017



Deepening the Roots of Biblical Christianity in Africa





The *World Watch List 2017* uses data from Open Doors' field workers and independent experts to track the deep structures of Christian persecution. It measures the degree of freedom a Christian has to live out their faith in various spheres of life – private, family, community, national and church – plus a sixth sphere measuring the degree of violence. The data is translated into points, and countries are ranked accordingly, with the top 50 countries appearing on the list. The list is independently audited by the International Institute of Religious Freedom.

1. North Korea	92	26. Bangladesh	63
2. Somalia	91	27. Jordan	63
3. Afghanistan	89	28. Myanmar	62
4. Pakistan	88	29. Tunisia	61
5. Sudan	87	30. Bhutan	61
6. Syria	86	31. Malaysia	60
7. Iraq	86	32. Mali	59
8. Iran	85	33. Tanzania	59
9. Yemen	85	34. Cent. Af. Rep.	58
10. Eritrea	82	35. Tajikistan	58
11. Libya	78	36. Algeria	58
12. Nigeria	78	37. Turkey	57
13. Maldives	76	38. Kuwait	57
14. Saudi Arabia	76	39. China	57
15. India	73	40. Djibouti	57
16. Uzbekistan	71	41. Mexico	57
17. Vietnam	71	42. Comoros	56
18. Kenya	68	43. Kazakhstan	56
19. Turkmenistan	66	44. UAE	55
20. Qatar	65	45. Sri Lanka	55
21. Egypt	64	46. Indonesia	55
22. Ethiopia	64	47. Mauritania	55
23. Palestinian Terr.	64	48. Bahrain	54
24. Laos	64	49. Oman	53
25. Brunei	64	50. Colombia	53

Centre for Biblical Christianity in Africa,



Deepening the Roots of Biblical Christianity in Africa



Centre for Biblical Christianity in Africa, ☎
P.O. Box 6409, Ilorin, Kwara. Nigeria.

+234 (0) 703 778 8583 ☎

+234 (0) 809 786 1295

bmowojaiye@cbcafrica.com ✉

www.cbcafrica.com 🌐



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