

How two fellowship founders buried ministry's member secretly after mysterious sickness, death

By Oluwatoyin Malik, Crime Editor

LEADERS of a Christian fellowship, Chidi Samuel and Paul Zakari, are undergoing interrogation at the Homicide Section of the State Criminal Investigation Department, Elewera, Abeokuta, Ogun State after they were arrested by state police command in connection with the death of a member, 20-year-old Okumazor Favour, whom they also buried secretly without the knowledge or consent of her parents.

Before Favour's death, she was said to have been very sick without her parents being informed.

Briefing journalists about the suspects' arrest, the state Commissioner of Police, Lanre Bankole, said that Samuel and Zakari took seven youths away from their parents to an isolated area in Oyan Village via Imala for what they claimed to be Bible study and fellowship.

"While in the isolated area, one of the youths, whose parents have reported missing at Ibafo police station, fell sick and later died. The suspects, who refused to let the girl go when she fell sick secretly, buried her in a shallow grave within the village," the police commissioner disclosed.

He added that it was one of the youths who escaped from the group that informed the deceased's parents, leading to the suspects' arrest.

Saturday Tribune also learnt that the person who accommodated the fellowship members was not informed of the lady's death. She had reportedly returned home one day and asked about Favour, but was told that she had returned to her parents, unknown to her that she had been buried after she died.



Three of the group members were said to have engaged in the secret burial.

In an interview with **Saturday Tribune**, 32-year-old Samuel narrated his side of the story: "I'm from Abia State but living at Alamo, Magboro. I am a pastor at Lifebuilders Network. It is a ministry not a church, and it's about youth programme, evangelism and Bible study.

"In October 2021, we went for a programme at Oyan Village in Imala town to engage in Bible study and prayer. The journey was supposed to last for six months. We had

done about four months when we got sick. We managed ourselves but one of the girls we came with got so bad. With the little money we had, we took her to hospital but she died."

According to him, the nurse who treated her said that she had typhoid, malaria, and anemia.

On whether her parents were informed about the journey, Samuel replied in the affirmative, saying that the invited youths called their parents when they got there. However, he admitted not calling the deceased's parents when she was sick.

"We tried our best. It was a spiritual attack, but our mistake was that we did not call her parents," Chidi stated.

He also said that the second mistake made was in burying the deceased without her parents' knowledge."

The second suspect, 39-year-old Zakari, from Idoma in Benue State, and a member of the fellowship, said that he found the place they stayed in Oyan Village because the fellowship needed a quiet place to avoid distraction.

"I didn't have any bad mind. We didn't force any of the youths to follow us. They followed us willingly with the consent of their parents. We were there studying the Bible and praying. When Favour became sick, we took her to the hospital but were told she was dead as she was short of blood. We took her back home and started praying to God for her to come back to life, but nothing happened. Out of fear, we decided to bury her there. We didn't tell the person in whose house we were staying because we didn't want to put her in trouble. I know we didn't do the right thing and I'm not proud of what we did. We are very sorry," Zakari said with remorse.