

Ogun religious retreat goes awry:

How 20-yr-old woman died mysteriously during outreach

By James Ogunnaike

ABEOKUTA—CHRISTIAN groups undergo religious exercises to renew their faith, bond together among themselves and gain spiritual strength to spread the gospel.

Oftentimes, such groups go to secluded places for this type of programme. While some go to mountains, some go to rivers and some travel to places outside their usual places of worship.

The essence of this is to avoid distractions and concentrate on achieving their spiritual rejuvenation. In doing this, they draw inspiration from Elijah and some other prophets, who went into seclusion, for days, for spiritual rejuvenation.

It was in line with this belief, that Pastor Chidi Ejiogu and his assistant, Paul Zakari of Life Builders Network, Mowe, took some members of the Church, including 20-year-old Favour Okumazor, on an outreach programme in Ogun State.

Parading the two pastors at Ogun

State Police Command headquarters, Elewera in Abeokuta, the State Police Commissioner, Lanre Bankole said Pastors Ejiogu and Zakari led Favour and some members of the fellowship to a remote location in Oyan village in Ogun State on October 2, 2021, without the consent of her parents for what he termed 'Bible study.'

As the programme progressed, a wave of strange ailments struck them with every one of the participants reporting one form of illness or the other.

"Favour was said to have had bouts of stooling and vomiting, and for lack of first aid or accessible healthcare facility, she passed away in the night and was buried immediately in the village without her family's consent."

A survivor who fled the weird Bible Study retreat in the said far-flung village reported the experience to the police and also led detectives to the location where Pastor Chidi and his assistant were arrested.

It was a spiritual attack—Chidi Narrating what happened, Chidi attributed their experience to a "spiritual attack."

He said: "I observed that all those I took to the outreach programme were struck with 'strange illnesses' and I thought I could use 'faith' to deliver and heal them."

The ugly incident happened on the third day of the retreat.

All the members were afflicted with a strange illness.

He said he regretted not seeking medical help to address the health emergency instead of resorting to "prayer and faith."

He also regretted burying Favour in the remote village without informing her parents.

He said: "Since this fellowship started in 2018, nothing of such has been recorded."

All of us were struck down by an unknown sickness; we did not know what happened.

We realised one morning when we woke up that Favour was dead. We did not know what to do, so, we had to bury her. We are very sorry and we apologise to her parents for not seeking their consent before burying her. That was the mistake we made."

The Police Commissioner said detectives were still investigating the remains of late Favour Okumazor.

