

Godson's Story

'But for God, I Should Be Dead by Now'

At 7 years old, Godson was sent to live with his uncle. The promise of school filled his mind. When he arrived at his new home, however, he found that there would be no school - there wasn't even a school in the village. Instead, his uncle forced Godson to work on a small fishing boat on Lake Volta.

For more than 12 hours a day, six days a week, the small boy dove into the murky water to untangle nets from tree stumps in the great depths of the lake. The dream of school was replaced by a new thought: he wondered if he would ever make it out alive.

The thousands of boys working on the lake battle treacherous conditions. Drowning is common. Godson's friend, Yaw, was one of the unlucky ones.

"After his death, I was full of fear anytime I was on the lake. I thought it could have happened to me."

He would return home after nightfall, exhausted, for dinner—his only meal of the day. At just seven years old, and several hours' journey from his father and mother, there was no way for Godson to escape.

Yet Godson never let go of the hope that his future would be different. He held on to that hope for ten long years.

In March 2015, IJM and Ghanaian police rescued Godson, along with nine other boys.

"He wasn't surprised when we came to rescue him," said Adebayo, a member of our aftercare team. **"It was almost as if he was expecting us."**

Godson stayed at an aftercare home where he would be safe. At the home, he thrived. He received counselling to begin to heal from the years of trauma, and he was finally able to go to school.

When IJM located Godson's mother, there was a joyful reunion. She had no idea what had happened to her son and, after ten long years, she was desperate to hear from him.

Today, Godson is 18 years old. He is confident and bright. When IJM staff visit, Godson runs to greet them.

Godson says he remembers life on the lake sometimes but tries not to dwell on it. The future is too bright to live in the past.