

# Stillborn

BY JOHN HOLBROOK



“Push!” I encouraged my wife as she struggled to deliver our baby. Hour dragged after hour as my wife fought bravely to bring our son into the world. I did my best to help, but there was little I could do.

My name is Bay-in Aton, and I live deep in the mountains of Mindoro in the Philippines. For centuries, my people lived in slavery to the spirits that haunted us. That is until about a year before my son was born. That is when Emmanuel, a missionary from the Tawbuid tribe, came to our village. He had been trained by missionary John and taught us to pray and trust in Jesus.

That night, though, all of this was far from my mind as my wife struggled to give birth. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity of sweat, blood, and pain, our son was born. We were overjoyed, and relief flooded through us. The struggle was over.

I began to clean up while my wife reached for the baby. Suddenly, a chilling cry cut through the air. “He’s dead! He’s dead!”

Rushing over, I put my hands on the tiny body. Our son was as cold and clammy as the stones in the river near our village. No heartbeat fluttered in his chest, and no air moved through his nose or mouth. A wave of cold sorrow washed over me, and I stumbled out of the hut into the darkness.

Hearing our cries of despair, friends and family rushed to comfort us. My wife staggered down the ladder. Together, we sat in unseeing sorrow, tears running down our cheeks. Our son, our handsome little child, was dead before he even had a chance to live.

We sat like this for four hours, unheeding of all that was happening around us. Finally, as is our custom, one of the village elders came to me. Putting his hand on my shoulder, he spoke, “It is time to bury your child. Remember our ways. Before the sun comes up, he should be in the ground.”

“Wait,” I said, seeming to wake from a dream. “Don’t bury him yet. I remember now that the missionary told me to always trust God and to pray to Him about any problems we have.”

“Jesus,” I prayed, kneeling on the damp ground. “I have given my life to You, and I trust You. If it is Your will, please bring our child back to life.”

Jumping up, I climbed the ladder into our little hut. Our son lay where I had last seen him. He had not moved an inch in the four hours that had gone by. During that time, nearly the whole village had passed through our house, checking on him. For four long hours, every friend and neighbor had confirmed what I knew: he was dead.

Now I knelt next to my son again. My hand trembled as I reached out to lay it on his little chest. He was warm! Still, nothing moved inside of him. There was no heartbeat, and his chest did not move. But he was warm. Grabbing a blanket, I quickly wrapped him up. Crying with joy and hope, I rocked him and called for my wife.

As she ran up, I gave our son a gentle slap on his back. To our unbounded joy, he took a deep breath and let out a wail—the most beautiful

music I have ever heard! His chest began to rise and fall, and for the first time, I could feel his tiny heartbeat through his chest and stomach.

Today, I am the leader of the church here in the village of Hubkub. Because the missionaries taught me to pray and trust in Jesus, my son is alive today and the people in my village know that Christ is the true God.

Thank you for sending and supporting missionaries. Because of you, our lives have been saved.

*John Holbrook has served with Adventist Frontier Missions in the Philippines since 2011. This story, written on behalf of Bay-in Aton, has been reprinted with permission of Adventist Frontier Missions.*

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# World Church Prayer Requests

JANUARY 24 — 30, 2025

- **United States:** Pray for the students in public college and university campuses. Pray that they will maintain their identity in Christ as they serve as His ambassadors while facing tremendous challenges.
- **Papua New Guinea:** Please pray for the Gepahina SDA Church as they seek to relocate their elementary school to a location that will better serve the community. Pray that this ministry will touch the hearts of many students, staff, and parents.
- **South Africa:** Pray for the NU9 SDA Church as they seek to learn and share the health and temperance ministry. Pray that those being treated will regain full health as a testimony of Jesus' power.
- **United States:** Pray for all long-term caregivers in the United States and around the world. Pray that God will show His compassion through their work to the people they care for.
- **Mozambique:** Pray for the Caleb Project, an evangelistic project and social initiative for students to establish churches in places without Adventist presence. The second event planned was postponed due to post elections protests. Pray that God will open doors for those students to continue to minister to the people around them and that they will be able to enter the area soon.
- **Philippines:** Pray for the upcoming medical and evangelistic series in Bohol, Mindanao, Bicol, and Quezon provinces. Pray that God's Spirit will go ahead and prepare the hearts of the people.