



My name is Deborah. Until the genocide in 1994 I lived here in Ruhengeri (Rwanda in central Africa) with my husband and eleven children. One evening my son Innocent had cooked for the family. While we were sitting there on the floor, one of the children said that soldiers were approaching.

A few days before this, thieves had broken into the compound where Innocent worked. My son had reported the theft to the authorities. I began to hear rumours that the stolen goods had been taken and hidden by soldiers.

I felt that the soldiers who had come to our house were angry with my son and were coming for him. I said to one of the soldiers, "Please, if you are going to kill him, first let us pray together." They said, "No, we just want to ask him some questions" They took Innocent and left. From the window I could hear Innocent asking them if he could say goodbye to his mother. Two soldiers came back with him. I opened the door to my son who hugged me and said, "Mum, they are going to kill me".

The next morning, we found Innocent's body. After Innocent's funeral, I was angry, asking God, "Why are there people who kill?"

In February 1998, two months after Innocent's death, I was in our sitting room when three soldiers ap-

proached. I was reading the Bible in Matthew 18:21-22 where Peter asks Jesus about how many times he should forgive someone if they wrong him.

One of the soldiers then said, "My name is Charles". I said, "I don't know you". Then, as his tears fell, he said, "I am the one who killed your son. It is not easy for us soldiers to kill someone who is not guilty, so my heart accuses me of the sin I have committed. Do you have the heart to forgive me? If not, take me to court and I am prepared to be killed for my crime, because that is the law".

I began to feel great joy and I hugged Charles. We both shed tears as we held one another. I told him I had been praying for him, and the only punishment I could inflict on him was to take him in place of my son and to feed him the food I would have given my son.*

Grace means undeserved forgiveness. Grace is what Deborah gave to Charles and what God is willing to give to you if you will only ask for his forgiveness.

*Abridged with permission. A longer version can be found at <http://www.thatposter.org/deborah.html>