

NEVER FORSAKEN

A TESTIMONY COLLECTION



[...I AM WITH YOU...] [...THIS UNBELIEVABLE POWER...] [...REVEALED TO ME...]
[...OPENED MY EYES...] [...ARMS SPREAD OPEN...] [...COMPLETELY HEALED ME...]
[...ANGEL IN BLUE ARMOR...] [...THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF...] [...SEE EVERYTHING CLEARLY...]
[...JESUS CHRIST WALKED THROUGH MY BEDROOM DOOR...] [...FREEING ME...]
[...HAD AN EPIPHANY...] [...AWE-INSPIRING FEELING OF JOY...] [...THE BRIGHTEST LIGHT...]
[...GLOWED AROUND HIS FACE...] [...BEING CARRIED ACROSS THE UNIVERSE...]
[...THE BOOMING VOICE...] [...POWER OF SELFLESS LOVE...] [...GOD IS AFTER ME...]
[...LONELINESS DISSOLVED...] [...LIGHT FROM HEAVEN...] [...LIVE AND THRIVE...]
[...MY SPIRIT DEPARTED...] [...OVERWHELMING SENSE OF PEACE...] [...WAVE OF COMFORT...]

This testimony collection is dedicated to our Lord.

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PREFACE

“...Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”—Hebrews 13:5

Why do people trust in Jesus Christ? That is the question *Never Forsaken: A Testimony Collection* seeks to answer. It offers insight into the reasons people choose to believe in Christ despite their different backgrounds. It exists to dispel the idea that God has abandoned mankind and serves as a reminder of the great glory God reveals today. Christians and non-Christians can benefit from this account of God's power.

This publication consists of three sections: Christ's Freedom, Healing, and Salvation. Readers that struggle with shame from past sins may take a special interest in the Freedom section. The Healing section will appeal to readers who wish to increase their faith in God's willingness and power to cure illness. People who are curious why Christians believe in Jesus will benefit most by reading testimonies categorized under the Salvation section.

I became a Christian over ten years ago after a supernatural experience. Then I began reading testimonies similar to my own on the internet. Some testimonies shared on websites were supernaturally amazing. Others displayed beauty in their simplicity. One thing was for sure, there was no end to them!

I considered how marvelous it would be to spotlight a variety of interesting, well-written, and compelling testimonies in a single publication. I learned through a network of friends about individuals who have spoken their experiences to a limited number of people but never used the written word to communicate them. I took steps to collect and secure these testimonies. Once this work was started, it gained a momentum of its own and was quickly assembled into this final work.

No author, editor, or publisher was paid or compensated in any way for this publication. Due to the sensitive nature of their testimonies, some authors have chosen to protect their identities by using pen names. I consider it impossible to verify the testimonies, but their authors claim the events within their own testimonies are factual. Each testimony stands alone in its claim. The views expressed within this publication are that of the individual author and do not reflect the views of the editor or other authors contained herein. Although most of us attend different churches in various parts of the world, we all agree on this: Jesus is the Way.

I want to thank our Lord Jesus for revealing His great glory to us. I also want to thank the authors for permitting me to publish their amazing testimonies and the hundreds who have prayed over this publication. Finally, I want to thank and bless its readers. Enjoy!



A Great God of Man

By "Joseph"

Exactly to a month, two years ago I was married to the most amazing, godly beautiful Spirit-filled woman I have ever met. I married her because she was everything I had ever wanted in a wife and more. She made me happy; she was what I wanted to be deep inside. I hid things from her and pretended to be someone I wasn't to marry her. I thought I could be who she needed me to be. I used my gifts and talents to cause her to fall in love with me. I deceived her.

When she no longer made me happy and I couldn't get my "high" from her anymore, I turned on her. I began hiding my drug use, using her body, lying to her, watching pornography while she slept and ultimately emotionally and mentally abusing her. I hurt inside and could not allow her to have something I didn't...joy. So I took every ounce of joy out of that woman and systematically tried to erode her faith in Jesus. I failed.

We separated for five months and finally divorced. She tried what she knew how to save us, but neither her nor I could undo what the sin in my heart had done. After she told me she wanted a divorce, I was politely asked not to return to that church because of my lies and deceit within my church and because she still attended the church. I agreed.

One week later due to apathy and the stress of my separation, I could no longer do my job. I was discharged. Another week later, I went to my best friend to talk to him. He told me it would be best if he and I were not friends anymore. My sin had caught up with me. I lost everything I loved. After that I spiraled into a depression. I was praying for death, in complete isolation, and unemployed. With nothing to look forward to, I began drinking and using drugs again.

Exactly one year ago as I turned 25 years old, I found myself in the basement of a house in South Saint Louis smoking methamphetamine. After being clean of this particular drug for over a year, I looked at myself in the mirror and saw who I had become. I had just done a demonic drug I swore to never touch again. I had lost the woman of my dreams to my own selfishness and sin. I had forsaken my God and had just led my best friend into Meth use for the first time. I had hit a new low, only this time I was aware of it. The drugs could not numb what I had become, because I knew the truth. His Spirit lived within me even though I tried to kill it.

I prayed for death and planned my suicide many times. I dreamt of the release of this life I had massacred and the people I had hurt and destroyed. I knew I was already dead and couldn't ever hope to regain life. I had built myself everything I had ever wanted: a godly wife, a nice home, a good paying job, and a network of Christian friends. Still, I found myself

completely empty and I watched myself destroy all of it one piece at a time. There was nothing inside me but death, pain, and destruction. I began to cry for help and throughout this process, my drug counselor and Jesus never abandoned me (though I did not realize it at that time). I slowly began to pick myself up without ever really knowing why.

I got a new job, made some new friends, started going back to a church on and off again and would sometimes attend a twelve-step program. But I still continued using marijuana and drinking during this process. I moved into an apartment by myself to try to start over, but my life still had no meaning or value in my eyes. My divorce and loss of my status still controlled my life, and I continued to numb myself to my pain through pornography, selfishness, empty relationships, drugs, and alcohol. Eventually, shortly after moving to my new place, through counseling with my twelve-step leader, I made a decision to stop using drugs.

I lay in my new apartment with a wrecked life in my hands. I had no hope in sight for any real future. I could not cope with the pain and now withdrawn from the drugs that protected me from the pain, I finally cried out in desperation, "Jesus, I can't do this. Please help me! Would You please come rescue me?!?" In that moment as I lay in bed, Jesus Christ walked through my bedroom door. He came and sat on the end of my bed with me. He said, "My Son, I am here."

I wept uncontrollably for some amount of time as His presence consoled me, and I felt His love pouring out on this broken life. When I began to calm down, the doubts and fears I had always felt about Christianity and following Jesus returned. So I asked Him about them straightforwardly, "Are you going to leave me because I am broken like everyone else did?"

He asked me what His Word said. So I got out my Bible and began reading. I found the verse that says, "...Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). I wept, but that wasn't enough. I told Him my life had no value. I had lost everything.

His response was the same as before. So I read on, finding the verse saying, "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten..." (Joel 2:25) and "For I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

I asked, "How do I know I can trust You?" I found the verse that says, "...there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). This process continued until I had no more questions and eventually fell asleep with my Bible in my hand and Jesus still sitting on the end of my bed.

Over the next few days, I made my decision. I grew determined to live in "Jesus' Camp." I was going to believe in Him no matter what. I was going to try things His way and see if He could do what His Word promised me. In between then and now, I have had many falls. I have

backslidden and relapsed. I have worked through (and am still working through) many of my addictions and pains from my past—things I had come to believe were a part of who I am. But I am still determined to stick with Jesus, and He has never failed to guide me out of the messes I frequently find myself in. He has been faithful to His Word without fail. And although I still struggle and some days cannot even get out of bed, He is there with me and has never left my side.

This year, I celebrated my 26th birthday. I was completely sober. My two best friends in the world were by my side, and my family came together to celebrate my life. I am baptized and in a healthy church. I am a part of an awesome Bible study with friends I didn't think could accept me (or I them), and I am learning to trust again. I have new hobbies that help keep me sober like mountain biking, skiing, and all around adventuring with my two best friends. I have seen and done things in the past year I never thought were possible—things as simple as having a good day without the influence of drugs and being at peace without smoking or drinking myself stupid.

The main purpose I would like to convey out of this is that I am nothing without Jesus. If He were absent in my life, I would wither and die in a matter of weeks. The best I can do without Him is stay numb. But Jesus Christ gladly gave up everything to reconcile me to Himself and would do the same for you, if you would call on His name. Some people might argue that I am a good person who was dealt a bad hand or my old church and friends were to blame. I know differently. Without Jesus Christ, I am just a user, liar, manipulator, narcissist, and self-righteous pompous drug addict that would use you in any way necessary to make himself feel good. But because Jesus Christ became the sins I listed above and was tortured, ridiculed, and nailed to the cross for the sins I did in fact commit, He has redeemed my life. He ultimately suffered separation from His Father and His identity to breach the gap between death and His life so that in spite of the crimes I committed against others and Himself, I could be called a child of God.

I would like to end with this: Am I a great man of God? No, rather Jesus is a great God of men. Thank You, Lord Jesus, and thank you all for your time.

I Was a Prostitute
by Melody Suttles

As a child, I was physically, sexually, and verbally abused. I was regularly beaten with belts and switches. My parents told me, "I wish you had never been born." At a very young age, I was sexually molested by one family member. A few years later, I was molested by a second family member. I was never allowed to talk to boys or even cut my hair. It should come as no surprise that I moved out of my parents' home at the age of seventeen.

Eager to start my own life, I worked two jobs and moved into an apartment. Trouble followed me though. Two strangers raped me by gunpoint. I told no one because I believed the rape was ultimately my fault.

I married shortly after that. He was no "Prince Charming." He physically abused me. On at least one occasion, he broke my nose. Still, I remained with him for a few years and gave birth to his son. Then, I decided my son and I could no longer live with his abuse.

I found myself in a desperate situation. I was unable to pay for rent, daycare, or food. (I received no child support for our son.) Rather than going back home to my abusive parents, I chose to prostitute myself in order to keep a roof over our heads and have food to eat. I hated myself and despised what I was doing. I was so ashamed.

Besides working as a prostitute, I also worked at a convenience store. Customers I did not know began giving me cards, which said things like: "Jesus loves you" or "Come as you are to His throne of grace." At least ten strangers gave me these types of cards. I began looking over my shoulder for some kind of holy bolt of lightning. I even told a couple of coworkers things like, "God is after me" or "God's going to do something to me."

Soon after, I was arrested and charged with prostitution. I had nowhere to look then but up. So I promised God that I would follow Him, and I knew my first act of obedience to Him was to be honest and plead guilty—leaving the rest up to Him. As my first act of faith, I plead guilty.

Since then, God has continuously been faithful to me. He has opened doors for me. He showed me which church to first attend where I would gain a solid foundation of His Word. He performed incredible miracles in my life again and again.

When I was dead broke, I read Malachi 3:10, which states, "...Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."

I tithed out of my personal belongings, such as clothes, shoes, and dishes. When I had money, I gave more. I fell on my face to worship God nearly every evening. I read Bible stories to my son, and we learned to pray together. I made Jesus my husband faithfully for almost two

years. Then the Lord sent the husband of His choosing: a called man of God, an ordained minister with a heart after God's own heart. He proposed to me, and I immediately confessed my sordid past. He said something like, "It only makes me love you more."

We have been married and working together in ministry for eighteen years. He has never once brought up my past. There's my story. It is the truth, and I am glad I have shared it. May God bless you for reading this.

The Occult
By Anonymous

“And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”—1 Corinthians 6:11

I thought witches were ugly old hags with warts that lived in run-down creaky houses. That is until I met my neighbor. She was attractive and behaved normally. My wife and I shared drugs with her, and she shared the world of witchcraft with us. We would do little spells like light candles and incense while chanting and then pray to the moon for good luck. We continued doing spells and incantations according to *The Witches' Almanac*.

Finally, I decided to become baptized into the occult world. On that stormy night, I ceremoniously collected all my magical tools and lit a candle. I began chanting the Lord's Prayer backwards while imagining chains and shackles being removed from my arms and feet.

From that point on, I really became engrossed in witchcraft. I bought a book of dark sentences and spells. I began using our spare bedroom to cast spells—calling it the “magical room.” My wife and I used magic as a tool for controlling spirits to do our bidding. In our coven meetings, we burned herbs and incense while chanting incantations. This combination of drugs, burning herbs, and incense were used to produce an altered state of consciousness where an interface with extra-dimensional forms (demons) would occur.

My first marriage did not work out, and we divorced. Then I fell in love again, and I remarried. With two children in our home, I settled down some. I even visited a psychologist. It was like washing my feet with socks on. The burden of guilt was still there, only shifted.

A friend at work began talking to me about Jesus. Then my daughter was invited to vacation Bible school. She came home asking questions like “What does it mean to be born again?” It got me thinking. When they asked me to visit her class, I went to see what made her so excited. Then the next thing I knew, the preacher had convinced me I needed Christ.

So with my mouth, I confessed Jesus and renounced the devil that I had been living for. My life took on a new meaning that day. I now live for Jesus Christ. The Lord began opening my eyes to the Scripture with regards to witchcraft. He condemns it! I believe the Lord wants me to share my experience to warn others about the occult. Both witches and witchcraft are real, and they are an abomination according to God's Word.

I Saw Jesus

by Jonathan

“The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.”—Revelation 1:14-15

I was seven years old when I saw Jesus. I had a nightmare and woke up crying in my room. Even though the room was dark, I saw Jesus wearing a white robe that had a light blue glow. The light blue glowed around his face and body as well, but His eyes shined the brightest. His eyes were light blue like the hottest part of a flame. He looked straight at me—radiating love, grace, humility, and compassion towards me. With the most humble, nice, and still voice, Jesus said, “You don’t have to be afraid, Jonathan.”

I was diagnosed with a pervasive developmental disorder called “Asberger’s Syndrome.” I regularly took medication to treat the symptoms as well as sleeping and anxiety medication. The medication was no magical cure. In school, I was labeled as a troublemaker and the victim of bullying. In my teenage years, I walked away from the faith and started gaming and also watching pornography, which became addictions.

One day, my mother approached me with an offer. She would give me thirty dollars if I read *The Children’s Bible* by Anne De Vries from cover to cover. At first I read it for the money, but eventually I started reading it because I liked it. I got really touched sometimes and cried out—for example, when I read Jesus’ crucifixion. I wished I had read it of my own free will from the beginning.

I began to attend church regularly. I remember the pastor preaching about how many people think church is boring, but I hungered for church in a way that never happened before. While I was in church, there was a peaceful, joyful presence and music that made me happy. I felt Jesus freeing me from the chains of my addictions.

Even though Jesus had freed me, I kept participating in pleasure-seeking behavior. Every time I did it, the guilt would ruin my entire day. I knew I was sinning against God, and I repented. By the grace of God, I eventually learned to overcome it, and Jesus set me completely free. I stopped completely. It has been a full year since I have given into those addictions that negatively affected my life. Instead, I read the Bible and study theology. My Asberger’s syndrome, anxiety, and sleeping difficulty have caused me so little trouble lately that I no longer even take medication for it. Praise God!

My Struggle Led to My Success

By Caleb Veal

I was raised in church, but I was a curious and mischievous kid. My childhood began with dangerous pranks and progressed to a series of addictions. I smoked my first cigarette when I was nine years old. When I was eleven, I smoked marijuana for the first time. By the time I was twelve, I was smoking it every day. When I was a freshman in high school, I began popping pills, drinking heavily, and skipping school.

I began selling marijuana to support my drug habit, and my sales increased from a little to a lot. During that time, I was selling about six pounds of marijuana per week. Suddenly, I had more than enough money to do anything I wanted. I believed money could buy happiness at that time. I had made it my god.

With the excess money, I started buying and using meth, hallucinogenic mushrooms, and cocaine. One night I snorted too much cocaine, and my nose started gushing blood. I used a white cloth to absorb the blood. Before I knew it, the whole cloth was saturated with blood! I was on the verge of a cocaine-induced seizure. This is just one of the times God kept me alive when I shouldn't be.

As a seventeen year old, I was selling about thirteen pounds of marijuana per week. Everybody in town knew I was a great drug dealer—even the police. Before long, I was arrested and had four felonies on my record: distribution, intent to sell, possession, and trafficking. By God's grace, I only got charged with one felony.

Of course, I was kicked out of my house. I continued to perform illegal activities—mainly because I was struggling just to eat. Just when I thought my life had reached its lowest, I became addicted to yet another new drug: heroin.

One night while I was high on drugs, I turned on the television. There was a televangelist warning about the end of the world, and I just had an epiphany. I looked up and asked God, "Is this the moment you were waiting for? The moment I've been waiting for?" I felt God literally hugging me.

I served the court-ordered time in a rehabilitation facility, but I felt like maybe I should stay for a longer time. I was laying in my room contemplating this when I looked at my bed. The number on my bed was 77. I am obsessed with numbers, and God spoke to me using those numbers. I got up, went into the chapel, and poured my heart out to him saying, "God, I believe in You. I was raised in a great God-loving home. If You've been here through my whole addiction and never left my side, reveal Yourself to me! Show me something. I need You now more than ever!"

I opened up the Bible to some random page. I heard something in my spirit urging me to go to Isaiah and start reading. I read in Isaiah 1:5, "...Why do you persist in rebellion?..." My dad had always called me rebellious, and now it was coming from my heavenly Father.

I felt God was telling me, "Give up! Come to Me! I have a plan, and it is great." From that point on, I let the Lord take control of my life. Since then, several legal charges have been dropped and reduced.

Twenty-two of my friends are dead because of the same addictions I had. Only seven percent of people who try heroin are able to quit completely, and I am one of them. God spared me! I hope my story shares my spirit, strength, and hope for a good future for me and all of you.

Faith Is What Makes Us the Overcomers We Are Called to Be

By Shilo

“...the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”—1 John 4:4

In October 2004, I was watching a television show about speaking to the dead. This program discussed why they believed ghosts were real and how to contact them. Then they showed some of the photos they had taken. I did not believe it, but I thought it would be fun to try.

Armed with the information from the show, I tried to contact the dead at a nearby cemetery. I took my children and stayed for only a little while that first night. I heard only one voice that time. It sounded like a young girl. She asked, “What did you bring me?”

The next day, I brought a flower and looked for a young girl’s grave in the area. I decided one that was about ten feet from where we had stood the night before was her.

At first, the spirits came to me disguised as children. Then things started to change one day at the cemetery. A spirit said, “Get out of here. Get out of here and do not walk by me again.” I never brought my children with me again.

After awhile I could communicate with the spirits inside my house. I got scratches. I could feel them all around me. I saw visions. One day they told me they were black demons. I did not know what a black demon was, so I used my computer to learn more. I searched for “black demon.” Then, I opened a website. After it loaded the page, I read its words: If you have reached this website your soul has been taken.

I told my preacher what had been going on, but he did not understand and thought it was something else. I called my sister and told her everything. She searched the internet using the words “black demons,” but she could never find the same website I had found with those eerie words. My sister took me to a man she knew from church. He gave me a Christian book about spiritual warfare.

I read the book every day, but I was not getting better. The demons clouded my thoughts with uncertainty, fear, and confusion. My anxiety grew worse. After not eating for three days, I had a panic attack. It was right after this God began showing me His power and protection would help me if I only trusted Him with childlike faith.

With this newfound faith, I used the warfare prayers from the book, and they started working. I listened to praise music, watched Christian television, prayed, and read the Bible. Then the demons began to flee. It is because of God’s power, mercy, and grace that I am here today. I owe everything to God who has a plan for my life. I will always praise Him for freeing me from Satan’s power.

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

by Josiah Serra

“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”—Luke 18:9-14

I grew up with two main influences in my life: my mom who was a praying, Jesus-loving, Pentecostal lady and my dad who was a big guy from Chicago dealing with a lot of mental illness and personal demons. In my home life, there was a lot of church and there was a lot of chaos. The mix of the two left me angry, depressed, afraid, and longing to feel free and safe.

When I turned 18, I decided to run as far from church and God as I could get. In my world, that meant drugs. I was introduced to pornography when I was seven or eight years old, and so shame and hiding from people (as well as addiction) were a big part of my life already. What I didn't know was how free drugs and the friends that came with it would make me feel. This was what I thought my mom's Jesus and all of the yelling and crying preachers were saying was supposed to come your way if you just say you believed in God, but all I ever got from saying that was guilt and fear and seeing that God didn't seem to care about my broken dad and broken home.

Acid, pot, coke, and especially meth were delivering the right-now feel-good freedom that I had longed for all of my life. On top of that, you didn't have to try to be a better person to get drugs to do anything for you. You just had to take them. That left me free to pursue my first love, which was criticizing everything and everybody because I knew what was really wrong with the world.

Well, the story has been told many times and mine is no different. Pursing those highs led me deeper and deeper down a dark spiral of breaking my body, destroying all my relationships, blowing my mind apart, and locking me up tighter and tighter in chains. When I had hit my rock bottom and God knew I was ready to hear the truth, He spoke to me in my heart one night and said something like, “Josiah, you think you know what's wrong with the world and

what I should be doing about it, but what's really wrong with the world is people who act like you.”

Anyone who has ever wrestled with God knows that He knows how to win, and I couldn't argue with Him anymore. That's why the story in Luke is one of my favorites. I have played both ends. I was the Pharisee who took pride in knowing that I wasn't a phony or a hypocrite. I was a good person because I knew all the corruption in everyone else. That was my armor, and I used drugs to support the lie and keep me from feeling my real hurts. I went out the night that God spoke to me and sat on a boulder outside my apartment complex and realized I was the tax collector.

I cried to God and just said, “I do not want to be the person I am anymore.” I felt some peace that night like I knew I had been heard. Starting the next day, God began involving Himself in my life in very real ways. He led me back to church and to a 12-step meeting in the basement of another church, where I finally started facing up to my life and asking for help instead of running and blaming others.

Jesus is my best friend, my Savior, and my Lord. I do not believe in quick fixes, and it has been a wild ten-year ride of confession, discipline, asking for help, and learning to not do things on my own. Through that often difficult process, God has brought me my wife, five cool kids, and the privilege to pastor in the church I washed up at when God found me. I now love spending my life helping other guys see that their own pride and stubbornness are their real enemy and that God loves to rescue and save His enemies by the power of selfless love. To Jesus Christ, be all the glory.



HEALING

To Come Back From Broken

by Van Martin

“Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”—Matthew 2:21-22

After the summer of my eighth grade year, I was at my speed skating practice. Practice began as normal with stretching and warm ups. During the last warm up, I headed into a turn too fast and my front stopper got stuck in someone else’s back two wheels. This sent him tumbling to the floor with me following and landing flat on my face. As I tried to get up, one of the skaters behind me had also tripped—which caused her to land on top of me with her elbow and forearm striking the back of my head, knocking me unconscious.

Once the ambulance arrived, they strapped me to a gurney and hurried me off with my mom. When we got to the emergency room, they rushed me in for an x-ray to examine the damage. The x-ray showed that I had a broken neck, fluid on the spine and brain, a fractured skull, and a very badly bruised brain where my memory and comprehension areas are.

My mom and dad had called everyone from the church we had started attending just a few months before. They piled into the hospital lobby and began to intercede for my life. By this time, I was in a deep coma.

The lead neurologist asked my parents to come into his office so he could discuss the severity of my injuries. The doctor told my parents that with all the injuries I had sustained I would at best be a vegetable for the rest of my life, but that they really did not expect me to live through the night. My parents refused to accept the report—trusting that God was going to heal me.

Later that night, I had stabilized enough for them to conduct more tests. They ran a CAT scan on me to get a more detailed look at all of my injuries.

Early the next morning, the neurologist called my parents back into his office to discuss the results of the tests. A bit dumbfounded, he laid the CAT scan images next to the x-rays and did not know how to explain the differences the images were displaying. The CAT scan revealed that I did not have a broken neck, fluid on the spine and brain, nor a fractured skull. There was still some bruising on my brain in the memory and comprehension areas but not to the severity that the earlier test had shown.

The neurologist did note that I was not out of the water yet and that I would need special education due to my brain injuries. My parents were overjoyed at the news of my drastic recovery and knew the healing was not complete.

Two weeks after my accident, I was back out on the floor at skating practice with my teammates. My parents did not put me into special education but allowed me to register as a regular student. My first year in high school, I made the honor roll five out of six times (only missing the sixth by two points).

Now twenty-one years later, I have two degrees, three certificates, and am a senior project manager for a national advertising agency. God has completely healed me. This stands as a constant reminder that God is not neutral in our lives, but active and ever present.

Alive Again From the Dead

By Anton Whitener

“Lord, my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.

You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead;

You spared me from going down to the pit.”—Psalm 30:2-3

“Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?”—Romans 2:4

I was raised to know Jesus at an early age. I was good at school and popular among my peers, but I fell into a web of deception during my teen years. I began to create my own deity by piecing together bits from multiple religions mixed with philosophy. I dabbled in transcendental meditation and ESP. I guess you could call it ‘New Age’ religion.

I hung out with some friends that were into the streets and drugs. I started doing favors for people who were transporters of narcotics from Mexico to the United States. The money was very tempting, and the lifestyle was glamorous. Deep in my heart I always knew there was something unique about Jesus, but He didn’t seem to fit my lifestyle. I added a little bit of Jesus into my self-created deities. I had been invited to church a couple of times, and I did go. I felt the Lord drawing me in, but I did not understand what it was at that time.

I arrived home from a night of partying on October 16, 2003. Two individuals approached me in my driveway. They were seeking money, drugs, and whatever else they could get from me. One robber put a gun to my head. Suddenly, all of the regrets rose in my heart about how I should have changed my life.

The money I had on me did not satisfy them so they planned to enter my home. I tried to delay them. I made noise in an attempt to wake my landlord, who lived in the same building as I did. The criminal smacked me in the head with the side of the gun.

I recognized the gunman. He had evil in his eyes. Since I already knew him, I was aware he had taken a life before. I knew mine would not be any different. I grew desperate. I knocked the gun out of his hand. We both struggled to get the gun.

The other robber gained control of the gun and gave it back to the first robber. He was only a few feet away when I heard and saw what seemed like booms and unending gunfire right in front of me. As I walked up my steps in shock and awe, I looked down and realized I had been shot. I was standing in a pool of blood.

I began to panic. I banged at my landlord’s door and ended up breaking his window. I was screaming, “I’m dyin’! I’m dyin’!” My girlfriend and uncle heard me from me from the part of

the building I lived in. They rushed to my aid. My uncle had been a medic in Vietnam, and he stopped up my bullet holes with his shirt. My girlfriend gave me CPR and called 911.

I called out to God. “Lord, I’m sorry for running from you. I know Your Son is the Way. If I die today, I want to be in Your arms for eternity.” At that moment, it felt as if someone was pouring hot oil over me. It was like liquid love—a warm feeling of peace. I had been experiencing panic and the eerie feeling of death, but in this moment I was overwhelmed with love.

It was just like they say about your life flashing before your eyes. My life literally flashed before my eyes in a second. I remember seeing Christmases and more scenes from life all the way up until the point I was laying there on the ground.

Next, my spirit departed from my body and rose up. I was aware of what was going on in my surroundings. I could look down and see my girlfriend giving me CPR. I saw my uncle attending to my bullet holes. I could even hear what they were saying and feel their emotions.

The next thing I remember, I was back in my body. I could feel myself being jostled around in the ambulance. I only remember a few seconds of this.

Next, I was on the operating table. I do not remember if I was in or out of the body. I could hear the doctors saying they lost me a couple of times. I had been shot 5-7 times. I had lost 85-90% of my blood. My brain and organs were deprived of blood. The doctors told my parents I would be partially paralyzed or a vegetable.

My life was saved, but the battle was not over. My family stood in the gap and fought an enduring fight of faith. I was in a coma for a period of time. They confessed the Word of God over me daily. They placed headphones over my ears and played worship music or messages of faith and love.

As soon as I awoke from the coma, I knew I was spiritually different somehow. Initially I did have some bitterness towards the criminals for what they had done to me, but I felt something else taking place in my heart as well. I felt compassion for them. That’s when I knew my heart had been changed.

Just when my body seemed to be getting better, the doctors gave my family another grim diagnosis. My lung had become infected. It was rotting inside my body with the potential of sending an infection throughout my whole body. The doctors told me they needed to remove the lung.

Moments before the doctors planned to operate, one doctor decided to get a CAT Scan. After they saw the results, the doctors had these puzzled looks on their faces. One said, “We aren’t gonna fix what is not broken.” The doctor explained organs don’t normally regenerate—a liver could, but he had never seen a lung do that before.

Through God's power, I overcame numerous blood infections, pneumonia, and viral infections. One night, I felt a holy anger come over me. I thought to myself, "A man of God should not be laying in bed." I knew it was not God's destiny for me to be laying in bed, so I stood up. A nurse saw me and nearly tackled me to put me back in bed since I was not supposed to walk.

Everything sped up after that. I was supposed to have a long rehab, but I didn't have anything like that. On the day they released me, I could have walked right out the door of the hospital. (But they took me out in a wheelchair because it was hospital procedure.)

My girlfriend came to the Lord after seeing what happened to me. She later became my wife. Now we have two kids. This is amazing to me since one of the last thoughts I had before I died was, "I never had the chance to have kids."

I graduated Bible school. I have spoken to large groups of people about my experience (even though I am an introvert). I had the privilege of leading others to Christ—like my aunt and neighbor. I thank God I am alive so I could be there for them. My immediate family is all saved and serves Christ, as well as some aunts and uncles. I am on the road to the destiny God has for me. He changed my heart and life.

A Victorious Close Encounter

By Anthony Frederick

“...God is light...”—1 John 1:5

I had a history of heart problems on and off for all of 2008. After a bunch of tests, the doctor finally told me one of my heart valves was working at five percent. As if that was not bad enough, two other valves were clogged. I received heart valve replacement surgery the following Monday.

After the surgery, I woke up at about two o'clock p.m. on Tuesday in my private hospital room. I had 28 staples down the center of my chest and IVs in my legs, arms, hands, and neck. An attending nurse removed an IV from my neck and placed a band-aid over the skin and then walked out of the room.

Suddenly, I could feel blood squirting out of my neck. I wanted to call the nurse, but my nurse call-button had been put on the table. I could not lift my arm to reach it. I had absolutely no energy. I turned my head to the side to keep the blood from gushing out.

I prayed, “Lord, I’ve done my best. Take me.” Instantly, the brightest light came through the wall. It pulled me like a vacuum. I felt my spirit slowly leaving my body. It was peaceful.

Then the nurse returned, and the holy light went out. She cried out and touched my body with her hand. I felt as if I was dropped. A hot soldering iron felt like it was on my neck. The medical staff began a blood transfusion. I felt the cold blood being pushed into my body.

There was blood on the floor and the bed and the nurses. They led me into a shower where I was placed on a stool. They washed the blood from my ears and hair. When I returned to the room, they had cleaned up all the blood.

I was happy, but I still wanted a glimpse of heaven to see Jesus and touch Him. I wanted to say to Him face to face, “I love You, Jesus. Thank You for Calvary and my salvation.”

In the clean room, the nurse returned and sat by me. I told her the whole story of what had happened with my spirit lifting out of my body. She said, “I put my hand on your body when I felt that your spirit was trying to leave your body. I have worked in this hospital a long time.”

Later in life, I got my hands on a book called *A Divine Revelation of Hell* by Mary Baxter. The story resonated with me and brought me to tears. I have always been very spiritual and am even more after that incident. I feel like I have been chosen to be a blessing in a mighty way. My life has not been easy since that occurred, but I believe God is going to do something great in my life.

God Healed My Wrists

by Kristen Nelson*

Shortly after my daughter was born, I noticed an aching in both of my wrists. My doctor said it was caused either by arthritis or carpal tunnel syndrome, which is an inflammation of key nerves in the wrist. He prescribed wrist braces and instructed me to wear them 24 hours a day during the first week and then only at night. This worked well for about a year and a half. Then the discomfort grew to tremendous pain.

Everyday tasks became a major undertaking and some were impossible. Typing, picking up a gallon of milk by the handle, and even patting my children on the back were agonizing. Opening bottles, grinding pepper, even snapping were unimaginable for me (and with two toddlers running around the house, snapping is a must for this mama). That is when I knew I needed to seek further medical care.

After explaining the symptoms to my doctor, he diagnosed me with carpal tunnel syndrome. He referred me to an orthopedic specialist who confirmed the diagnosis and recommended surgery. Prior to the operation, he advised me to schedule electromyography (EMG) tests to conclusively prove the diagnosis.

That night I was restless. I tossed and turned, thinking and praying on the “solution” the specialist had offered for my wrist pain. Surgery was not resonating with my spirit. It was not consistent with the solution I felt God had for me. When I woke up, I knew I was not going to have surgery and that God was going to heal my wrists. I knew it just like I knew I was going to eat breakfast...just like I knew my own name. There was no question. It was just the reality—God was going to heal me, period.

Even though I knew God was going to heal me and surgery was not the solution for my pain, I took my specialist’s advice and proceeded with the testing. After the EMG test, the technician seemed more confident than ever that I suffered from carpal tunnel. Following this test, a doctor performed a different kind of testing that produced a baffling result.

He said, “Well, you do not have carpal tunnel!” He did not offer anything to suggest what I did have...just that I did not have carpal tunnel, but I wondered what I did have because the pain in my wrists was as present as ever.

The following evening, I attended a midweek church service. As I stood praying, I felt God put His hand on me. Immediately, I doubled over weeping and sobbing. I did this for some time; how much time, I have no idea. Then I saw a bright light that kept getting brighter and brighter like a car driving toward me with its brights on until it filled my entire line of sight. This

happened two times. I was not sure exactly what God was doing, but I had an overwhelming sense of peace.

It was when I was driving home that I began to notice the pain in my wrists was gone! At home, I told my husband what happened and that my wrists appeared to be healed. That night I did not sleep with my wrist braces on—which would usually result in me waking up in excruciating pain, but there was none! When I woke up, there was no pain! Throughout the day, I was able to do all of the things I had not been able to do in the last several months or even years!

I typed without pain. I lifted my children without pain. I opened a new apple juice bottle, ground fresh pepper, and poured a new gallon of milk. Where there was once constant, unrelenting pain was now totally pain free! God had done what He promised He would do...what I knew deep in my spirit He was going to do...He healed my wrists.

The pain I had was negatively impacting my quality of life, whereas God's Word says in John 10:10 "...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." He is a God who keeps all of His promises. He is a God who cares deeply for each one of us. He hung the stars in the sky, yet He knows each one of us by name. Our God is love and when we know Him, we know true love.

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God Gives a New Heart

By Dave Stanfield

For most of my life, I never had a broken bone, deep cut, or any other reason to be cut by a physician. I had a relationship with the Lord, but I had no testimony of the Lord's grace in my life. That all changed when I was diagnosed with congestive heart failure in 2007.

I visited doctors for more and more tests, but each test revealed worse results than the last. Finally, I ended up in ICU after a successful quadruple bypass surgery. Four days later, I was a code blue. I was dying from acute kidney and liver failure, which caused the toxins in my urine to seep back into my bloodstream and skin.

The doctors and nurses used paddles on my chest. They declared "CLEAR!" between each blast of electricity to my heart muscle. My heart's beating function was down to a jiggle. They also injected adrenaline and other drugs to restart my heart to no avail. Nothing worked and my doctors were just leaving the room to pronounce me dead, when...all of a sudden...ba-boom, ba-boom! My heart woke up good and strong. I was handed a miracle—one of many.

I didn't go to heaven (to my disappointment), but I soon heard God tell me I couldn't go. He said I needed to stay and carry out His plans for my life. (I am still trying to figure that out today!)

The following day, I was awake and remembering things well. I was sitting in my robe on the chair. I felt the Lord give me a fighting heart to live. After a few more days, some Christians visited and prayed for my recovery in a circle. As they were bowing their heads, I saw a figure that looked like an angel in blue armor. He was between me and another Christian next to me. He looked amazing. He had this notebook in his hands and was writing something on it. He was taking note of what we were praying for! He gave me a quick nod and a smile and took off up through the ceiling. No one saw him but me.

The doctors scheduled me for 12 weeks to one year of therapy. I was out of there in nine weeks and back to work. I was told I would be on heart meds for life. Nope, I was off of them after just a short time.

Some time later, I was praying in church. I saw a vision of an angel that took me to a warehouse. He took my hand, and we sped off so quickly to a spot with a row of shelves. We stopped in an instant, and there was a heart on a shelf. It had a tag on it. After the vision ended, I found this verse: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you..." (Ezekiel 36:26). I hold onto that verse dearly to this day.

My heart is healing slowly. I am contending for healing in my body and mind as fears and pain have come in their seasons to me. I have learned many new things and possibilities in the Spirit for me and for those in need around me.

A Healing Gift

by Jac Mueth

“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”—Deuteronomy 6:6-7

When I was little, I was told that one person out of every generation of my family had a special gift. I came to the conclusion this was a psychic gift, and I was the one out of my generation after I realized I was seeing spirits and having premonitions. My mother had preceded me, her mother before her, and my aunt before her. Although it was rarely discussed, I knew it was these women because of the things I had witnessed in my family as a child.

When my mother was twenty, she was approached by a stranger that told her he could see she had a gift; this man later led my mother to try witchcraft. She really didn't think it would work until it happened. She did not dabble in it for long; she was terrified at what she saw. Sadly as a young child, I also saw what she conjured up, which led to sleepless nights with my head under the covers.

I remember a man knocking on my aunt's door saying he was in pain from his arthritis. My aunt placed her hands on him, and the man said his pain was gone. I didn't understand what this was until later in life.

One time while visiting my grandmother at a young age, she got out the Ouija board. She started to communicate with spirits using it. I remember the pointer moving without us pushing it. A spirit was present.

I never examined how my family had used these gifts. Like them, I was unaware Scripture warned against doing such things. I didn't realize the consequences our actions may have had until our family was faced with tragedy.

My aunt, sister, and I were all pregnant at the same time. None of the pregnancies were planned and all were born boys. My aunt's son died at the age of eleven. My sister's son died at the age of twenty-two. Six days after my nephew's death, my own son died. All three boys died in unrelated incidents. We knew something wasn't right; it was bone chilling and sad.

I came to realize that due to my family not staying faithful to God, because they were unaware of the dangers of dabbling with the supernatural, they unknowingly invited evil into our lives. I wanted to make things right with God. I needed to make sure there was no more suffering. I prayed for forgiveness and started going to church on a regular basis.

The day before my forty-fifth birthday, I decided it was time to ask my mom to pray for forgiveness for practicing witchcraft. My mother agreed.

I knew my mom prayed because something extraordinary happened early in the morning on my forty-fifth birthday. Jesus came down in front of me with His arms spread open and then floated upward until He was out of my sight. A white light came down upon my head and lit up the room. I felt warmth all over. I had no idea what was happening. I looked out of the corner of my eye at my husband to see if he was catching any of it. No, he was oblivious. It takes more than a bright white light to wake him up.

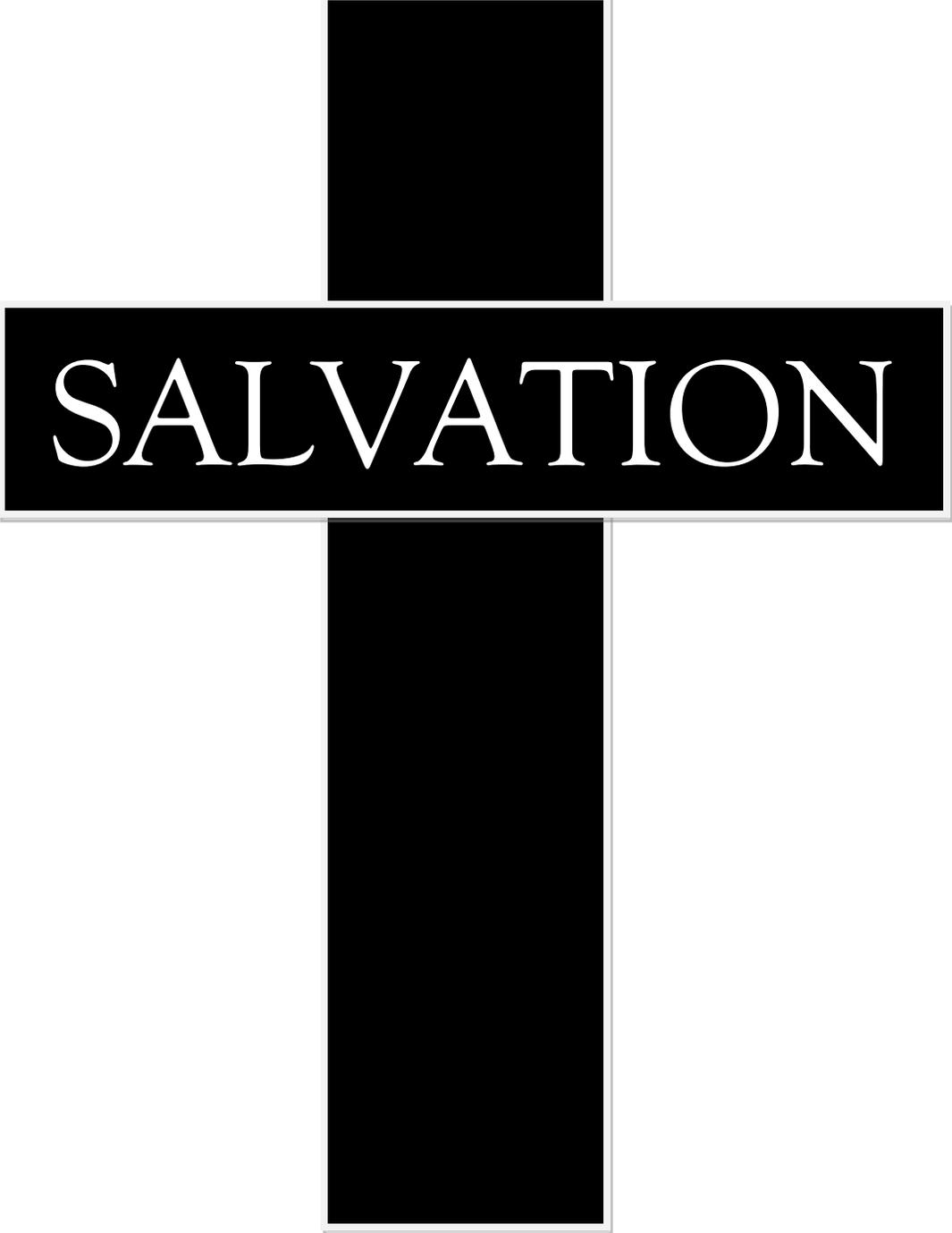
When I woke up in the morning, I knew I was a changed person. Every breath was about God and what Jesus did for me when He was beaten and nailed to that cross. I still can't make it through communion without crying. I knew the Holy Spirit was encouraging me to lay my hands on the sick to pray for their healing.

The first opportunity to use the spiritual gift was on my seven-year-old son. I laid my hands on him and prayed. The moment I said "amen," his pain went away. Soon after, my son's girlfriend had an infected finger. It was green and swollen. She could not touch or move it. I held her hand and prayed. When I said "amen," the pain was gone and the infection started draining from her finger. It was amazing to watch God heal it in front of our eyes. Since then, doctors have been left scratching their heads about serious illness here one day and gone the next. What an awesome God I serve!

God promises to mend the broken hearts of His believers. He has done just that by giving me this gift. With it, I can help bring others to a closer relationship with Him by witnessing His miraculous healings. I will continue to try to spread the word about the importance of teaching His children of God and putting our trust and faith in Him.

I know that as a family, we were straying from our Creator together. Without this happening, we would go about our lives without God. Now that God led us back to Him, we are kinder to one another. I am going to do everything in my power to make sure my future generations know our story and live by God's Word and are His faithful servants.

My son's headstone reads, "Our brief partings on Earth will appear as nothing beside the joy of eternity together." This is what keeps me going, the prospect of being with my son again. I know he is there waiting for me. God told me.



SALVATION

Broken Marriage

By Lennie Fisher

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”—Joshua 1:9

As my marriage fell apart, I tried to cope with two busy little boys on yet another long weekend. Normally my wife was out of town Thursday to Tuesday. I guess with a very heavy heart—in a kind of way—I was talking to God. Was God real? Or had I been forgotten? Was my Christianity in doubt because I had probably made some mistakes in my life? Or was I still accepted by God? (Maybe you can relate to what I was wondering.)

The baby was crying so I was walking around outside, trying to cope and trying to watch the older boy who was fishing on the boat dock. The 19-month-old baby was clinging to me as if in his short life he could feel uncertainty, as dark forces targeted our little family.

In the midst of all this mental turmoil, I just said with a voice of disgust, “God, where are You and why are You allowing this to happen to me?” I guess I had some twisted notion that bad things do not happen to people who believe in God.

My prayer was answered in an instant. I was told most clearly, “Lennie, I am with you. I am holding you just like you are holding the baby.”

I thought, “Well, that’s little comfort, but I would like to hear something more.”

“No, no,” was the reply. “You do not understand. I am holding you exactly as you are holding the baby.”

I am very fortunate because, for sure, God talks to me sometimes. So now I was wide awake and ready to hear His voice.

He again said to me, “Lennie, I am holding you just like you are holding the baby. You are holding the baby in your arms in the ‘love’ position. His head is on your shoulder. Listen to Me,” the Lord said. “Because of this position, the baby can see where he is now and can see over your shoulder where he has been, but he cannot see where he is going. He has his trust in you as to where he is going. Now I am holding you and you can see where you are now, and you can see where you have been...but you cannot see where you are going. You must trust Me.”

I was deeply touched and am thankful for this insight. I must say that now, years later, if I had known the very tough times ahead, I would have been in deep despair. It is my faith and trust in God that keeps me going. He does not want us to see the future. He needs us to embrace and trust Him no matter what the circumstances.

I Cannot Do This Alone

by Kristina Simms

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”—James 4:10

As early as I can remember, I challenged the existence of God. In my childlike yet literal mind, I thought, ‘They all lied to me about a man named Santa Claus. This is probably a hoax too.’ My early twenties began my phase of bad decisions. Poor choice after poor choice yet with a strong will to look successful on the outside left me living a life of lies. I did not even know who I was. I had a circle of friends and family, yet I was so alone. And confused. And angry. Angry about anything and everything. I cried a lot ‘in the dark’ at night alone in the bathroom but most often in the car where no one else could witness it. But why was I crying? Outwardly, I looked great—if a loved one were to record my life as they viewed it in a resume form, I would look great on paper.

Then I found out about this church where another ‘lost soul’ had started going. He said, “No one judges you there...you just wear blue jeans and an old tee shirt, and they play music with real guitars.” I was so lost and alone, I thought, ‘If HE can go to this church, I can too.’ That was the beginning of my Christian surrender.

My ‘friend’ quit going and, yet, I felt driven to show up alone. I would sit in the back row and listen. I cried a lot at first. So much pain I felt. And then it happened. The pastor played “Lifesong” by Casting Crowns, and I felt a shift deep in my soul. Throughout the next year, I used this ‘unknown (to me)’ genre of music as my outlet and guide to cleansing my soul and surrendering myself to God.

The anger and loneliness dissolved. The crying lessened and was replaced with bouts of JOY. I felt peace at last. I accept who I am and know that God still loves me. I am not perfect. I will fall and stray at times. And when I do that loneliness will creep back in, that ‘anger’ will seep into my veins, and I know I need to call out to God and allow myself to feel His embrace. God is my guide; I cannot do it alone.

Compassion

By Mark

“Jesus did not let him, but said, ‘Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.’—Mark 5:19

I found a note from my mother. It said, “Goodbye Son, I cannot take you anymore. Here is twenty dollars.” So I decided to travel to the warm state of Florida. My brother took me as far as the highway and dropped me off. I began hitchhiking.

A guy picked me up, and he started telling me about Jesus. I pulled a large knife and put it to his throat—warning him to let me out or shut up.

The man told me he was not afraid of me. He said, “I have Jesus in me. Who is in you? The devil? I am a pastor at a college in Kentucky. That is where I am heading. Now do you want to ride or walk?”

I put my knife away, and he remained silent for the next four hours. Then he offered me some food. As we ate, I told him about the rough neighborhood I had grown up in, how my alcoholic father had died, and that I had served in the military.

The pastor invited me to stay at the college dorm, and I accepted. While I was there, I roomed with a guy named Woody. He asked me if I was a believer. I told him I only believed in myself. Then he began reading his Bible...for FOUR hours. I just laid in bed and watched this guy.

When he finally finished, I assumed he was going to leave, but no. He went by his bed to pray! I went to sleep for a couple of hours. When I woke up, he was still in the same spot praying! I went to get something to eat. When I came back, he was still praying! Woody did the same thing night after night.

That is until one night, a young man knocked at the door. It was about 1:00 a.m., and I pretended to sleep but I heard the young man ask Woody for prayer. He had sprained his arm and needed to pitch the next day. They prayed until finally there was a loud snap. They started jumping around the dorm room claiming Jesus had healed him.

The next day, I went to watch this guy pitch. He pitched a six hitter. I went back to the dorm room and felt this unbelievable power. I wept uncontrollably. Woody came back to the room, so I went in the mop closet to hide my tears. I sat on the mop bucket with my hand over my mouth. I could not stop crying. I never had anything happen to me like this in my whole life.

The bucket gave way, and I fell out of the closet onto the ground. Woody was laughing at me. He said that Jesus had told him He had found his lost sheep. Later that night, I gave my life to Christ.

Vision of Hell—Jesus Christ Saved Me

by Richard Kansley*

“...with God all things are possible.”—Matthew 19:26

I knew the Lord when I was young, but I had not made Him Lord of my life. As a result, my soul was constantly being tugged between the Lord and Satan. I wanted to do what was right, but I fell into temptation and eventually became a slave to addictions as I grew into a young man. My mother knew about my struggles, and she arranged for me to meet with a pastor. I agreed to talk with the pastor over a light meal during my stay in London the day before Easter in 2010.

The night before our meeting, I woke up early in the morning. I went back to sleep after a few minutes. Suddenly, I found myself in the middle of space being carried across the universe at lightning speed. It was not like a dream. It was more like my soul was somewhere else. I did not have any control of where I could go; I was just pulled across space as if something was taking me somewhere.

The stars shone brightly. The galaxies came upon me so fast, it was truly breathtaking. The galaxy that I was near had a golden bright sun in the middle. The stars and clusters were in a ring-like shape orbiting around the giant sun in the middle. Huge clusters of asteroids were flying around me. A giant asteroid came into view. It slowly drifted across but then as the asteroid moved away, it revealed a planet which I had never seen before.

The planet appeared to be black with a rusty surface, but as I grew nearer to it I saw the surface was on fire. I knew it was hell, and I was headed straight for it. I kept asking myself, “Why am I going there?”

Huge volcanoes poked out of the planet’s crust. Men and women stood on top of the lava rock mounts. They appeared as black figures that had been set on fire. I came closer to the ground, and there was a black lake of fire as far as the eye could see.

Pockets of black lava rock islands were scattered around this black lake. Then I looked up into the sky, and I saw, which looked at first like bats, but were actually huge black winged demons. They were flying in the distance towards me. They were all set ablaze, the fire from their bodies lit up the black sky in red. I then started to hear and see people fall with me to this place. They were all screaming, shouting, and groaning in pain and agony. I have never heard anything so terrible in my life. (I can still hear the cries and screams in my head right now.) The moment my feet touched the ground, I was on one of the black rock islands.

I stood there and said to myself, “No matter what—I LOVE GOD, and I will fight my way out of this.” Scorpions and huge lava worms were coming out of the ground. The scorpions

were stinging at my feet and my legs, but I couldn't feel any pain. The lava worms were coming up from underground attacking the people all around me. One of the lava worms came at me. I tried to kill it but had no weapons of any kind. I grabbed it with both hands. It was so big that I couldn't keep it from attacking me. Its mouth opened and a smaller mouth came out, which aimed towards my chest.

I woke up and sat at the edge of my bed. It took a few minutes for the vision to sink in before I knew that I was shown hell. I never felt so dead in my life. It was as if my soul was ripped out of my body yet my flesh was alive.

I was eager to discuss my dream with the pastor when I met her later in the day. She said, "Richard, this is not a dream...it is a revelation! God loves you, and He showed this vision of hell to you so others can see hell does exist." As our discussion continued, the pastor had one thing in mind for me and that was to bring me to Jesus Christ!

We prayed together. I began repeating her words and confessing, "Jesus is Lord. He rose from the dead." Then I felt a strong heat—a presence I knew was evil. It tried to make me laugh at the pastor. It tried to disrupt us. It used great force to make me smile an evil grin at her. I almost felt I had no control of what was happening. I used my hands to apply pressure to my face so that I could gain control and continue repeating the words.

Through me, Satan came out from within and took over my body. I put both hands over my face—screaming in pain and groaning and shouting at the pastor, "No! Stop! I can't do this...stop, please stop!"

The pastor banged on the table and shouted, "Richard, finish it!" I had enough strength and finished my confession. Suddenly, I felt a huge force leave my body. I was out of breath, exhausted as if two powerful forces were pulling my soul. The pastor shouted, "Richard! Praise be to God! You are with Jesus, and you are saved. Satan is defeated! Your name is now in the Book of Life!"

Over and over again, I have expressed how thankful and in awe I am of Jesus for freeing me and showing me the truth that day. I remained in contact with the pastor, and she told me about the future God had planned for me. She said that I would soon meet a Christian girl in nine months time. I even denied it—telling her I would remain single the rest of my life. However, the Lord brought a wonderful Christian girl into my life nine months later just as God had said.

*Read more about this and the other great things God has done in Richard Kansley's life at his website: www.mysaviourjesus.wordpress.com/my-testimony/.

Searching for What Is Right in Front of Me

By Dustin Niemeyer*

“Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.”—Psalms 62:6

One day my dad was on his way home from a business trip in a major snowstorm. He never made it home. He had hit a bank of snow, bounced off, and collided head on with a semi. He died instantly.

I was a thirteen-year-old boy with no dad. It seemed so unfair. I blamed God. I hated God. As I grew older, I continued to hate God. How could I trust Him when He took away my dad?

In high school, I began to hang out with the party kids. I started to drink. I moved farther away from God. I wanted nothing to do with Him. This all continued through college. While in college, I met a wonderful young woman. She came from one of those strong Christian families—the type that held hands when they prayed over food. I thought it was weird, but I put up with it because I really liked her (and the food was great).

She tried many times to convince me to go to church or just to read a book about God. Usually, I was just too hung-over or simply didn't care. We did go to church a few times, but not often. My stubbornness when it came to God strained our relationship. I can say with certainty I brought her down more than I built her up. After three years, we called it quits. I felt alone. I hit the bottle hard.

One morning, I woke up and realized something was not right. I felt like I was completely missing something. It was like there was a hole in my heart. I dug out a Bible. I began to read. And read. And read some more.

I began to feel like I really wasn't alone. I began to feel a wave of comfort roll over me. It was strange, yet very pleasant. This God and Jesus dude really did not seem too bad.

The next Sunday, I decided to go to church. I went to the only church that we had ever gone to—the biggest church in the city. Talk about overwhelming! I sat in my car for nearly 15 minutes and tried to talk myself out of going. But in the back of my mind, I kept hearing a very quiet voice telling me, “Go in. You will be fine.”

I went in. I found the highest seat possible where no one was around me. The sermon that morning was about lost sheep and it struck me to the core. I continued to go back. I began to get involved. I began to serve. I began to understand God's love. I began to find answers and ask questions that weren't just surface questions. I began to learn. I would hate to see where I would be at if I did talk myself out of going that day. I do not want to think about it. I was headed down a very dark path before that.

I have learned many things about myself and my faith since that day nearly three years ago. I am not perfect. I will still mess up, and I have messed up. Trying to build a strong faith is not easy. It is a struggle, but I am not alone. God is there. This is just the beginning. However, I would easily trade that past life for this journey with Christ any day of the week and twice on Sundays.

Rescued by the Living God

By Reshmi Alex*

“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name,
he gave the right to become children of God—”—John 1:12

I was born and raised a Hindu. My mother was a very devout Hindu woman, and her faith instilled in us a strong belief in God. I grew up earnestly believing in the gods that my religion offered and never found a reason to look beyond my religion.

That was until 1991. I had started out on my four-year engineering graduate course in India full of hope, but my life began taking a different direction. I started blanking out. My teachers would ask me to stand in class and answer questions, but my mind was completely blank. My confidence plummeted, and I felt humiliated.

Over time, my situation worsened. I could not concentrate enough to read a whole page. Girls studied and discussed all around me, but I sat staring at the same page morning to evening. Suicide was not an option because the Hindu scriptural studies had instilled in me the thought that suicide is sin.

One night, I locked my door, sat on my bed, and cried aloud (not even knowing to whom), “I know I can do nothing to improve my situation. My hands are out of reach of anything that I can grab to help myself. There is so much bitterness, envy, and hatred in my heart. I know it is wrong. I don’t want it, but there’s nothing I can do about it.”

When morning came, I was able to concentrate on my studies for the first time in over a year! I also noticed a heaviness within me had lifted. At this instance, I became aware of the image of a man somewhere within me—not seeing him with my physical eyes, but I could sense the presence of this man within me. He was dressed in a long robe. He carried a stick in his hand. (Later, I came to know this is called the shepherd’s staff.) As I was seeing the form, I was convinced in my spirit that this man was Jesus Christ! I heard a voice repeat itself within me, “Get away devil. Get away devil. He is with me.”

I was convinced the man I saw was Jesus Christ and the “He” in the voice referred to Him. The voice that repeated within me did not appeal to my intellect. I had never heard about the devil or believed in one. But this was happening inside me involuntarily—without any thinking on my part.

The reality and magnitude of the moment sunk in. I had always thought I had believed in God, but my belief was so misplaced and limited. I had known God as a distant supreme power, but here was one I had never known—a real God!

When college closed for vacation, I went home as a new being. One of our new neighbors invited me to a Christian church, and I accepted. There the gospel of Jesus Christ was delivered to me. I had seen the crucifix before, but I had never understood the reason the God of the Christians hung from the cross. There, I formally accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. After the pastor visited our home, my mother and sister received the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. One year later, I was baptized.

I never failed an exam after the day I accepted Jesus into my heart. By the end of the four years, God enabled me to clear all the papers. Months later, a retreat was held at my college. The Lord gave me an opportunity to testify what He had done in my life in the presence of my classmates. My shame had been rolled away. Since then, my testimony has been and continues to be a witness before peoples of many nations.

*Reshmi Alex can be reached at www.godfoundme.wordpress.com.

God Is Patient

By Kim Cason

“The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.

He will take great delight in you;

In his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.”—Zephaniah 3:17

I grew up in Saint Louis, Missouri. I was a sixth grader with a Day-Timer. I had a plan for everything. As the typical first-born child, I was fiercely independent and thought I knew exactly what I wanted for my life.

After finishing grad school, just before I turned 30, I moved to Atlanta, Georgia. To me, that symbolized I had achieved all of my goals because I had a great job that paid well and gave me the freedom to live the lifestyle I had dreamed of and have all the things I ever wanted—without the help of anyone else.

But when I got here, what I realized is that I didn't feel satisfied at all. Instead, I felt lost. Empty. Alone. Unloved. Truly hopeless.

However, with a lot of help from my faithful and determined friend, Wendy, who walked me through the book of John over the course of several months, I came to the realization that my plan wasn't working. I realized that whatever God had planned for me was way better than anything I could imagine for myself.

At that moment, the Spirit began speaking to my heart. I was overwhelmed. All I could do was sit on my kitchen floor and sob as I looked back at my life. It was as if I began to see everything clearly for the first time. I realized that God had been with me on my walk my entire life, just waiting patiently for me to open my heart to Him.

That's when I surrendered control of my life over to Christ.

Since then, He has redirected my desires to things that really are fulfilling. Shortly after this experience, I met my future husband and have been able to receive His blessings in abundance, including two beautiful children that doctors told me I wouldn't be able to have.

I praise Him for all the ways He works in my life—every second. Jesus is my Lord and Savior, my Father, my shelter, my Redeemer, my hope.

God's Love and Grace Can Cover All

by E. H.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”—Ephesians 2:8-10

I grew up in a loving home and went to church with my parents almost every Sunday. However, church seemed very legalistic when I was growing up. It felt like there was always a list of rules that I could never live up to. No one had ever talked to me about a personal relationship with God. The idea was foreign to me.

When I went to college and started working, I largely stopped going to church and lived selfishly for myself. I made one bad decision after another. Throughout this time, my life felt empty.

In 2004, I met my wife and returned to church with her. I learned that I did not need to follow every rule and be free from sin before I could have a relationship with God. I realized that God did not want to see me fail by breaking rules but to live and thrive through His grace and the love of Jesus Christ.

I feel like one of the odd ones who cannot pinpoint the exact moment when I accepted Christ. My relationship with God continued to grow, and I continued to put more and more of my faith and trust—not in myself—but in Him. The more I gave to God and trusted God, the more I was rewarded with peace.

I am by no means perfect and continue to make mistakes, but I know that God has given me grace. I have a relationship with Him, and I know that He loves me. The knowledge of those things has made my life so much better.

God has blessed me with two awesome sons, a welcoming church, and a supportive small group. I am thankful for my parents, who gave me a foundation of God’s love. I am also grateful to my wife for loving me and showing me what it truly means to have a personal relationship with God. Today, I am proud to say Jesus Christ is *my* personal Lord and Savior.

I Have 68 Pages to Prove That God Loves Me

by Seo Jeong Min*

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” –Philippians 4:13

I was born on February 16, 1985 in a small village located in Kyongi-Do, South Korea. My biological mother at the time was very young and had me out of wedlock, which in South Korea is considered extremely shameful from what I've heard. Despite the strong stigma, as well as I'm guessing many of her friends and family who told her to get an abortion, she gave me life. She gave birth to me in the adoption agency (Eastern Child Welfare) and basically left. No records, no documents, only a name, which may or may not be her real name. There I was, abandoned at birth, which I still feel today despite it happening so many years ago. After my biological mom gave birth to me, I was sent to an orphanage with a temporary foster mother and two sisters.

A few months later, I was adopted by my adoptive parents who lived in Wisconsin. I then made the 12 hour journey from Korea to the United States, crying the entire time. My adoptive parents were Caucasian, as well as my sister who was adopted as well. This made life pretty difficult growing up because how often do you see a Caucasian mom and a little Korean son as a family? Fitting in at school was really hard as well. I can't tell you how many times I've been asked or been told, “How can you see out of those eyes?”; “You're weird looking”; “Chink”; “China man”; “Slanted eyes”; “Go back to your own country.” The list goes on and on and on. As you can expect, my self-esteem was pretty low, and I really started to believe all of the things that people said about me. I started to resent the fact that I was different as opposed to embracing my Korean heritage. I still struggle with it.

At the age of five or six, my adoptive parents divorced. My mom remarried when I was seven or eight. Like many divorced families, our Christmases were split between my mother and father. My sister and I thought it was pretty cool because we got double the presents, but I became more sad and frustrated as I grew older and understood what was really happening. It was so hard only seeing my dad for a week or two. I would try and hold my feelings in, but I was crying inside. Around the age of 13, my mom and stepdad divorced. Needless to say, my childhood and teenage years were pretty dysfunctional. In spite of this, I do realize my parents are amazing. I am so blessed to have them.

Early on in my life, my family did go to church regularly. I knew all of the church songs and loved singing, “My little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shinnnee.” Despite this, church and ‘God’ never really came up after my mom's first divorce. Fast forward a few years, I had just finished my freshman year of college, failed seven courses,

was depressed, thought of suicide (but never attempted it), was lonely, and suffered with major self-esteem issues. I wound up taking a few years off from college and eventually moved to California. 3,500 miles away from my home state of Wisconsin was when I first noticed God working in my life.

A family (who I truly believe was sent by God for me) allowed me to stay at their place while I looked for an apartment to live in. They happened to be strong Christians (which made me uncomfortable), but I couldn't complain since they were offering a place to stay temporarily. When I first met them, I was actually agnostic and had a lot of negative views about God, Christians, and church that had been put in my mind from the news, other people, and my own experiences.

As I lived with them longer and longer, I noticed that things were much different than my family, what I considered the 'typical' family. They prayed together before they ate, read the Bible regularly together, and seemed to really have fun together as a family. They went to church and asked me if I wanted to go. Of course, I went because I felt like it would be rude not to go. I went to church a few times, and eventually their pastor asked if I wanted to meet with him—just to get to know me better. I said, "Sure, what's the harm in that?" The day we met I remember sitting with him, and I expressed my disbelief in the Bible and God and everything Christian. However even though my words professed that, my heart was changing.

Watching how genuinely loving the family was towards me and how different they were compared to my own, I felt as if something or someone was pulling me there. I remember telling him all of the doubts I had and, for some reason, all of his answers seemed to make sense to me. They were like the answers I never knew, but deep down I felt as if they were right. In one moment, we were on the topic of angels, and he was explaining to me how God uses angels to help people.

I don't know what happened at that moment. I can't explain it—other than it was like the most overwhelming, comforting, awe-inspiring feeling of joy coming over every inch of my body. I felt as if someone much, much larger and greater than I was there with me, touching my heart. I accepted Jesus Christ that day and now have over 68 pages worth of experiences proving that God loves me, is working in my life and others, and wants others to experience what I did.

I've been blessed with an incredible Christian woman and have been able to overcome many of the addictions that were destroying me before God saved me. God's grace has no limits no matter what you've done in the past. God is real, God loves you, and I pray that whoever reads this who is in doubt, unsure, or even is a Christian needing something to strengthen your faith—that you'll be touched by what I said. The world is not the answer; the

world is messed up and is in need of a Savior just like you and I are. Thankfully, God's ultimate love was demonstrated for us when he died for us.

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Drawn to Him

By Kim Bond

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them,
and I will raise them up at the last day.” –John 6:44

December, 1996

Like many college students, it was common for me to stay up late. This particular night, I wrote a letter and listened to music in my living room. It was 2:50 a.m.; I know for certain because I stepped into the kitchen to glance at the mauve wall clock that hung against the floral-patterned wallpaper.

When I turned slightly away from the clock, I heard a voice. The booming voice said to me, “God is real, and the Bible is truth.” My body warmed and tingled. I stood there in shock. When I finally regained my composure, I returned to my living room to consider the strange event that had just occurred.

I did not believe in the Bible, nor did I believe in God. I was acquainted with the gospel, but I considered it too unrealistic to ever be true. Yet here I sat, confronted with an experience ill-fitted for my atheistic belief system. And so I became a Christian overnight. The experience was real—real enough for me to change my beliefs and way of life.

I modeled my habits after the activities that seemed consistent with Christianity and began attending church regularly. With my new Christian ways, I was eager to resume life as usual. God, however, had other plans. While I believe He appreciated my token sacrifices, He had so many other changes planned for my life. As I prayed, strange requests rose from my lips. Instead of asking for increasing beauty, I asked for increasing humility. Rather than praying to win lottery money, I prayed to forgive the people in my life. Additionally, the desire to be married and have children began to blossom in my heart.

These challenges are not as easily accomplished as a decision to go to church. In my case, they happened as a consequence of a transformation in the course of my life. And life did not hesitate to change considerably for me.

I am now married with two beautiful children and a strong faith in Christ. Over the years, the Lord has given me the opportunity to share my story of salvation with hundreds of people including the good people of Perm, Russia. Every year, I am amazed by the work God continues to do in my life.

Visit Kim Bond at www.drawnear.webs.com.

Paul's Conversion

[adapted from the Bible] by Kim Bond

“As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’”—Acts 9:3-4

In the years after Christ's crucifixion, there lived a well-educated Roman citizen named Saul (also called Paul). He was Jewish by birth and practiced Judaism according to his family's tradition. He did not believe the claims that Jesus was the one God had promised through Jewish Scripture or that Jesus had risen from the dead. In an attempt to slow the growth of Christianity, Paul imprisoned Christian men and women. His infamous reputation was well-known throughout the area.

One day, Paul was travelling on a journey when something happened that would change him forever. Paul saw a light from heaven. He fell to the ground. A voice asked, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Paul asked who it was speaking to him. The voice said, “I am Jesus.”

The men travelling with him could hear the voice, but they did not see the light that Paul had seen. After his encounter with the light, Paul became blind for three days. The other men led him into the city.

The Lord sent a man to pray for Paul's sight to be restored. As soon as the man prayed, Paul could instantly see. He was baptized and started preaching that Jesus *was* the one God had promised in Jewish Scripture and that He had risen from the dead.

Paul spent the remainder of his days travelling and teaching people about Jesus. As a Christian, Paul was persecuted and imprisoned on more than one occasion. From prison, he wrote letters of instruction to church leaders. Over ten of these letters became books of the New Testament.

Paul never complained about his circumstance, but he praised God as he endured suffering. One time, Paul sang and prayed to God though he was imprisoned and in chains. Then, a violent earthquake shook the prison—opening his cell door to free him. He did not run from the prison but instead remained with the jailer.

The jailer asked what he must do to be saved. Paul answered him, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” The jailer and his household were baptized. Paul was the Lord's instrument to reach that jailer and thousands of other people for Christ.

A NOTE TO READERS

Maybe these testimonies caused you to reminisce about the remarkable ways in which God has changed your own life. Please take the time to write and share your story with others in your life. Some people choose to share them on blogs and websites especially designed for sharing testimonies like www.healingfromgod.com.

Perhaps you cannot think of any specific testimony, yet you have believed for a long time. Feel joyful! Most of these testimonies were born from years of suffering—many of them at the end of their ropes. Be encouraged and trust God loves the very fact you believe in Him without miraculous signs. Remember Jesus' words in John 20:29, "...blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Possibly, you have come to believe in Jesus because these stories convinced you of Christ's saving power. You do not have to be someone special or even what society considers a "good" person to become a Christian. According to John 3:16, "...**whoever** believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (emphasis added).

There is no formula that transforms someone into a Christian. It only takes a willingness to surrender your life to the One who created you and knows your every thought. If you have made the decision with your heart and mind to ask the Creator of the universe to transform you into the person He wants you to be, please pray the following prayer:

Father God, I give You my whole heart. I hold nothing back because You held nothing back—not even Your only Son. I confess I have made mistakes in my life and sinned against You. I believe Your Son died on the cross, and His blood paid for my sins. I believe You raised Him from the dead, and He is alive today. Thank You that Jesus Christ is my Savior. In Christ's Name, Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, congratulations on your wonderful decision! A great next step is to confess your decision to other Christians in your life. Having a group of Christians to support your decision is invaluable as you continue on your walk of faith.

Whether you have just begun your journey of faith or have been on it a long time, I wish you the very best. Thank you for reading this journal with an open mind and heart. If reading this journal has blessed you, I humbly ask you to consider passing it on so other people might know the love of Jesus Christ.

