

## AN AMAZING LOVE STORY When God Touches Hearts

2016

Recently I was reading a book written by the renowned evangelist, Billy Graham. In one of his chapters he was sharing about a subject that he believed to be the absolute truth. He was so adamant about it that he said if someone would ask him how he knows this for a fact, he would simply answer: *'Because the Bible says so!'* As a Bible believer, I can appreciate his response, but I doubt the same favorable reaction would come from someone who does not believe in it. So, how does God reach these people?

I headed out the door for my morning walk hoping the preacher would help me figure this out. I took the usual route and stepped onto the grounds of the retirement community looking for his signature red scarf but he was nowhere to be found. I must admit I was a bit disappointed but decided to hang around for a while in the event he would show up. I found a bench with a view on the lake and sat down. As I pondered over the question I asked myself this morning, I realized that there's no 'one-size-fits-all' answer.

One thing I did understand, however, is that with all the religions in the world and with their followers vouching theirs as the only true one, how can anyone *not* be confused?... If we are being honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we all have a longing for happiness in our lives and are constantly searching for ways to get it either through relationships, in adhering to a religion, acquiring more possessions, status, entertainment or whatever the world has to offer. And what is kind of ironic is that God himself planted that longing in human souls knowing very well that *he* only can fully satisfy.

Based on my personal experience, in order to believe in the Bible, our hearts have to be prepared and touched by God in some way or another. Only then can we accept it as the true Word of God. As for me, this is *the* book on which I depend daily. It is God's manual of instructions so to speak, in which I can find his will for my life, the encouragement, strength, wisdom and peace I need. I also strive to apply its principles and be a testimony of God's love in whatever I do or say.

So much has been said and written on the veracity of the Bible already that I don't want to extrapolate on it here. Anyhow, it would probably be pointless for those hardcore Bible *unbelievers* out there. For even if Isaiah prophesied the birth of Jesus some seven hundred years before it happened<sup>1</sup>; that Zechariah prophesied that Jesus would be deserted by his friends<sup>2</sup>, betrayed for thirty pieces of silver<sup>3</sup>; that the Psalmist prophesied that Jesus would know the fury and rage of his enemies<sup>4</sup>, would be pierced on the cross<sup>5</sup> and none of his bones would be broken<sup>6</sup>, that his garments would be parted by casting of lots<sup>7</sup> and would be given vinegar to drink<sup>8</sup>, that he would cry out in the pain of distress<sup>9</sup> and would cry out the victory cry: "it is finished"<sup>10</sup>, that he would rise from the dead<sup>11</sup> and would ascend to heaven<sup>12</sup>; or that the disciples who walked with Him, saw his miracles and witnessed his resurrection, preached about it, and were persecuted and put to death for it..., they would still not believe. And you know why? *Because the Bible says so!* And they don't believe in it.

There has never been a book as popular or *unpopular* as this one. It's the subject of many controversies, disputes, hatred and even killings amongst people all over the world. But it's also recognized as being the most compelling and powerful book ever written. It's, in a nutshell, a history book and God's will for humanity. It becomes evident as you read it that God's wisdom is not as the world perceives it. So, can we rationalize God and make him fit into our own perception of him?.. My husband and I can testify that it would be utterly utopic to think so, as our personal stories prove it.

It was in 1977 when we decided to take a trip to Fort Lauderdale, FL to visit his family. We didn't foresee at the time that this trip would be the catalyst of a spiritual revolution in our household. We had heard through the grapevine that his younger brother and his wife had experienced a spiritual awakening and I must admit that we were curious and eager to learn more about it. The opportunity presented itself one evening as we were alone with them. In a nutshell, his brother explained that they had discovered God in such a powerful way that it totally transformed their lives. His story sounded a bit farfetched and our first thought was that they had joined a cult.

Following his exposé, my husband finally confessed that he simply didn't believe in God. But, he added, that he might change his mind if he would ask him to move the table in front of us... His brother explained that God will not do that, and even if he did, he would still find a reason *not* to believe. However, he was willing to say a prayer if my husband accepted to repeat it after him. To my surprise, he agreed to his proposition. His prayer was short and simple: '*God, I do not believe in you... But if you do exist, I ask forgiveness for my sins.*' My husband repeated the beginning of it with much conviction, but he was unable to finish it. He simply burst into tears... His brother then recommended him to get a Bible and start reading the New Testament. I must admit that we were somewhat perturbed when they left us that evening but intrigued, nonetheless. As a witness to the whole scene, I wondered what my husband's next step would be. Well, he did buy a Bible and started reading the New Testament as his brother suggested, but without much interest or conviction at the time.

While we were still in Florida, our oldest son got sick badly enough to warrant a trip to the hospital. Upon our return back home, his condition had not improved and every night he would keep waking up coughing and choking. We finally took him to our pediatrician who thought it could be asthma. So, she made an appointment at the hospital for tests which was scheduled a month later. In the interim, she prescribed a stronger cough medicine and plenty of humidity which somewhat helped to control the attacks.

Meanwhile, my husband read an advertisement in the newspapers announcing the visit of an Evangelist on a three-day tour. The meetings were going to be held on the other side of town and a good hour drive from home, but he did not mind the ride. I was already in bed but fully awake when he came back from his first meeting, so I asked him how it went. In brief, he explained that he had never been to a meeting like this one, that the preacher had prayed for our son and while he was driving back home, he somehow got convinced that he was healed. On his ludicrous statement, I said: "Come to bed, you must be tired."

The next morning, we inquired about each other's night and found that neither of us had been up for our son. And, strangely enough, we never did afterwards. We finally went to the hospital appointment and the test results showed scars or residuals of asthma in his respiratory tracts. Our pediatrician was flabbergasted by the results. She commented that there was no cure for asthma which can only be controlled with proper medication. We then realized that something really strange had just happened.

My husband still had lots of unanswered questions and intrigued by the last turn of events, he kept attending the meetings. I still remember the day when he entered our home after the last meeting in total amazement of what had just happened to him. His joy, excitement and an undeniable peace were obvious as he was sharing his experience. He had finally opened his heart and accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior! I listened to him quite perplexed and figured he would calm down after a day or two, but it was not the case. He kept talking about it for days and weeks. I must admit I was curious and eager to find out more about what was going on in those meetings. So, when he told me a few weeks later that another Evangelist was in town and

he wanted to go and listen to him, I decided to join him.

I must say though that even before I set foot in the auditorium, I had made up my mind that I would not let myself be brainwashed by some preacher on God and religion. I honestly considered myself in good standing with God since I always tried my best to observe his Ten Commandments, to follow the Golden Rule and to some extent, practice a religion. The fact that my husband had been influenced by some new theology was understandable since he didn't believe in the existence of God in the first place, but that wasn't my case. I must admit though that while raising our young family at the time, I needed something in my life to help me deal with the daily routine and the many responsibilities it entailed. But as I listened to the preacher, I was surprised to find myself agreeing with what he was saying which by the way was quoted from the Bible, thus confirming that I was in right standing with God. As I realized this, I felt much better.

At the end of the meeting, the preacher asked people who wanted to accept Jesus-Christ in their lives or needed prayers to come up front. There was no reason for me to answer his call, so I remained seated. No one was approaching the front just yet when, quite unexpectedly, I stood up and started to make my way up the center aisle. I must say the whole situation was kind of surreal... It was as if an invisible force had pushed me out of my seat, and I didn't have any control over it... I was the first one to get in front of a huge platform where the preacher was standing. Alone and frightened, I stood there for what seems an eternity before others finally joined me. Baffled and embarrassed by the whole situation, I desperately wanted to return to my seat, but I couldn't. My feet seemed glued to the floor and in as much as I wanted to move them and go back, I couldn't... I was really panicking by then when someone standing behind me gently put a hand on my shoulder. A woman began to pray and I immediately felt an amazing peace..., a peace that I simply can't describe and that I had never experienced before... Still perplexed, I was then led to a room where I was explained that God had just touched my heart in a very special way.

I couldn't deny that something strange had just happened, but I didn't discover the full extent of it until weeks later. As I started reading the Bible, I discovered that it wasn't only a history book after all. It was also the most compelling love story ever written between God and humanity... I finally understood that no matter what we do or believe in to reach God, *his way* is the only one that matters, and it's through his Son Jesus. I had found a new friend in Him and a close relationship started between us. Visiting... talking... listening... an intimate friendship. That's what a personal, life-changing relationship with Jesus really is. What an amazing feeling it was to know that I could open my heart to Him, share my deepest concerns and greatest needs, and be confident that he would understand and help me. He had filled the void in my heart and my search for that 'something' had finally ended.

As farfetched as our stories may sound, they are true, nonetheless. God knew how and when to reach us, and our hearts and lives were changed in the process. It happened a long time ago and I'm grateful to say that we're still a living testimony of God's amazing grace and power in our lives. But God makes no exception of persons, and everyone is invited to share his great gift. And as for all the Bible unbelievers out there, I know that God loves them and if they would only pour out their hearts to Him, admit their unbelief and ask Him to show them the truth, I have no doubt in my mind that he will answer. For Jesus says: *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."*<sup>13</sup>. And it could happen in a most unexpected way...

When I came back home after my walk this morning, I believe I had found the answer to my question as I was reminded of a verse I read many times: 'When Jesus was asked: *"Who then*

can be saved?” He replied: “*What is impossible with men is possible with God.*”<sup>14</sup>

God is such a loving God that he will keep waiting for these unbelievers to turn to Him. And as they do, they will find that their lives as they knew it will never be the same. They will know without a shadow of a doubt that God loves them no matter what..., that he will be with them throughout their lifetime and beyond..., that he will care for them..., that he will carry them along and save them.

So, I'll keep praying for my loved ones who are not there yet. I will not give up on them. Yes, I will continue to pray, be a witness of God's love, and leave the outcome of it all in God's hands. God hears my prayers and he will answer them in due time. How do I know this for a fact?.. *Because the Bible says so!..*

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 9:6

<sup>2</sup> Zechariah 13:7

<sup>3</sup> Zechariah 11:12

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 2:2

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 22:16

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 34:20

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 22:18

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 69:21

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 22:1

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 22:31

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 16:10

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 68:18

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 7:7

<sup>14</sup> Luke 18:26-27