

THE GIFT OF A NEW LIFE

2024

Dear Reader,

While every person has a unique life story, we all strive to live our lives as best as we can with the resources we've been given. Our circumstances, challenges, and hardships may differ, but we're all looking for happiness, joy, peace, and personal fulfillment that the world can offer. My husband and I were also searching for the same things, but an unexpected turn of events in our lives changed everything...

To begin with, I'd like to say that we were both brought up in a religious tradition that we followed and obeyed. However, when we reached the age of making our own decisions, my then husband-to-be had no desire to continue those practices, and chose to give them up entirely. Personally, I wasn't ready to take such a drastic step, so I stayed committed to the religion I was raised in for a bit longer... We then got married and began to make plans for our future. One of them was to have children, and we agreed that the moral education we received as children would be the foundation for their upbringing. And as it happened, three years later we began a new chapter in our lives: parenthood.

I was a stay-at-home mom with two young boys, who were three and six months old at the time, when I felt a heaviness in my heart. Although I loved our kids deeply, I had lost the happiness, joy and peace that I once had, and began searching for a way to get them back... One day, I came across a booklet on eastern mental techniques promising stress relief, and peace of mind. It sounded great, and I decided to give transcendental meditation and yoga a shot. Even though they were beneficial in some way, I was longing for something more substantial and long lasting, so I eventually gave them up. My husband joined me in what I liked to call, 'my spiritual quest', but he didn't pursue it either. Actually, at some point, he came to question the very existence of God...

We were living in Canada when we decided to plan a trip to visit my husband's family who had moved to Florida several years earlier. We were told by his parents that his youngest brother and his wife had some kind of a spiritual awakening, and that he would likely share their story with us. Upon hearing the news, I was curious to know more about their new experience, but my husband had already made up his mind to challenge him about it.

Sometime after our arrival, while we were both alone with them, his brother began to share about what actually happened to them. In a nutshell, he explained that they had discovered God in such a powerful way that it not only changed their hearts, but also transformed their lives... As soon as he finished his story, my husband immediately made it clear that he didn't believe in God. Yet, he added that he might change his mind if he would ask Him to move the table in front of him... His brother explained that God wouldn't do that since he would find a reason not to believe. But he asked him if he would agree to repeat after him: "God, I don't believe in you..." My husband agreed and said it with a great deal of conviction. His brother then continued saying: "Forgive my sins..." Immediately upon hearing those words, he suddenly burst into tears, unable to speak... I was stunned by his reaction and didn't know what to do or say, but his brother took that moment to tell him to get a Bible, and start reading the book of John in the New Testament. As a witness to that incredible scene, I wondered what my husband's next move would be... Well, he bought a Bible and began reading the New Testament, but without 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 home, his condition had not improved. Every night he would wake up, coughing and choking. We finally took him to our pediatrician, who thought it could be asthma. She then set up an appointment with the hospital for tests, which were scheduled a month later.

Meanwhile, my husband read an advertisement in the newspapers announcing the visit of an evangelist on a one-week tour. I was already in bed and fully awake when he came back from his first meeting. Curious, I asked him how it went. In brief, he explained that he had never been to a meeting like that one; that the preacher had prayed for our son, and while he was driving back home, he somehow was convinced that he was healed... On his ludicrous statement, I said: "Come to bed, you must be tired!" The next day, we asked about each other's night, and realized that neither of us had been up for him, and we never did after that... We finally made it to the hospital appointment for tests, which confirmed that he had asthma. However, the extraordinary news was that his respiratory tract was completely healed and healthy! Our

pediatrician was taken aback by the results, stating that asthma cannot be cured, but can only be treated and controlled with proper medication. We then realized that something really strange had just happened...

My husband still had many unanswered questions, and intrigued by this turn of events, he kept attending the meetings. I still remember the last day he came back home. He was in awe of what had just happened to him. His joy, excitement, and undeniable peace were evident as he was sharing his experience... He explained that without any logical explanation, he finally believed that God had sent His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for him, a sinner. He believed that Jesus was buried, resurrected from the grave and ascended to heaven. And as proof of his faith, he had asked forgiveness for his sins, and willingly surrendered his life to God... I was perplexed and expected him to calm down within a day or two, but he never did. For days and weeks, he kept talking about it... I have to admit that I was worried about him, but also intrigued to find out about what was really going on in those meetings. So, when he told me a few weeks later that another evangelist was in town and that he wanted to go and listen to him, I decided to join him.

I must add here that even before I set foot in the auditorium, I had made up my mind that I wouldn't let myself be brainwashed by some preacher on God and religion. I sincerely believed that I was in good standing with God because of my moral and religious values. The fact that my husband was influenced by some new theology was understandable since he didn't believe in God, but that wasn't the case for me.

The preacher ended his sermon asking those who wished to receive Jesus in their lives or needed prayers to come forward. There was no reason for me to answer his call, so I remained seated. Although no one was approaching the front, I unexpectedly stood up and made my way up the center aisle. I must say that the whole situation was kind of surreal... It was as if an invisible force had pushed me out of my seat, and I had no control over it... I was standing up front, alone and frightened, for what seemed an eternity before others finally joined me. Puzzled and embarrassed, I desperately wanted to return to my seat, but I couldn't. My feet seemed glued to the floor... At this point, I was in a state of panic when someone behind me gently put a hand on my shoulder. A woman began to pray, and I immediately felt such an amazing peace that I simply can't describe... Confused and perplexed by this whole situation, I was then led to a room where someone 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 realize the full extent of it until weeks later. As I began reading the Bible, I discovered that it was more than a history book after all. It was 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 true one that matters, and it's through His Son, Jesus, who died on the cross for us all, sinners... It was only through God's love and grace, and by faith, that I received the gift of a new life in Him, and became His child. I had found a new friend in Jesus, and a close relationship began between us... I was able to open my heart to Him; share my deepest thoughts, concerns and greatest needs; be confident that He would understand, comfort and help me, and that one day, I would enjoy eternal life in His presence. God had fulfilled my deepest longings, and my quest for lasting peace, joy and rest had finally ended... And to top it all off, three years later, God blessed us with our third child, another baby boy!

Although our stories may be hard to believe, they are nonetheless true... It happened a long time ago, and we're grateful to say that we're still a living testimony of God's amazing grace and power in our lives. However, God doesn't show favoritism or partiality to any person. He loves and welcomes everyone to receive this great gift through His Son, Jesus. In fact, it isn't about being a morally good and religious person or doing good deeds. It isn't only about believing in Jesus, but in humbling ourselves and asking His forgiveness for our sins; in trusting Him and giving our whole hearts and lives to Him; in following Him and obeying His teachings. That's the essence of a new life in Jesus.

So, let me ask you... Are you searching for something or someone to fill your heart with lasting peace, joy, and rest? Are you looking for a true sense of fulfillment in your life? If so, simply open your heart to God and ask Him to reveal the only and genuine source that can provide them. I sincerely believe that He will answer you, and it may happen in the most unexpected way...

With love

Beth ☺