

Can You Tell Me If There Is A God?

Prologue

I am one ordinary woman who has seen the goodness of God in the land of the living. I have seen His powerful acts, heard His voice, been comforted by His presence, and changed by His love. I know a personal Lord who brought resurrection life to me in the midst of my son's illness and death, in my battle-scarred marriage, and in the wounded, broken places in my soul and heart.

It was in these difficult events of my life that I learned how to surrender myself in a deep inner way into the hands of a loving Heavenly Father and to allow His power to transform the very foundation and structures of my being into a living, vibrant, creative personality. These transforming experiences culminated when I saw through the eyes of the heart, Christ in me, my union with Christ, and my true self, the new creation.

Because of this, I carry a wealth of vital personal experiences, knowledge and insight gained through my 66 years of adventuring with God—both in low barren deserts, and in the fertile high places. The Psalmist writes:

One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts...And men shall speak of the power of Thine awesome acts; and I will tell of Thy greatness. They shall eagerly utter the memory of Thine abundant goodness and shall shout joyfully of Thy righteousness (Psalms 145:4-7).

This is talking about me. This is why I want to write. I have a story to tell: I have seen the goodness of God in the land of the living. I have seen His powerful acts, heard His voice, been comforted by His presence, and changed by His love. I have a taste of His goodness. I offer my testimony to you who need to find a living God and to those who ask, "Can you tell me if there is a God?"

Part I: Yes, There Is A God

Many people over the years have asked the question, "Can you tell me if there is a God?" I have heard this question asked many times and in many places— trains, clinics, kitchens, homes, and cafes in the Black Forest ...

Appointment In The Black Forest, August, 1987

It was a warm, sunny August day, as we strolled along the streets of Bad Herrenalb. My friend, Nancy and I were here working as "praktikants" in a psychosomatic clinic nestled in the Black Forest of Germany. Pioneered by psychiatrist Dr. Walther Lechler,

the Bad Herrenalb Psychosomatische Klinik was founded upon the concept that in order to get well, one must heal as a whole person, the body, soul, and spirit together.

However with no ability to speak German, one could hardly say we were working! We were there because we wanted to experience the clinic's unique treatment program.

We stayed in the home of a local hausfrau, enjoying fresh prune kuchen as well as the scent of rabbits sheltered underneath the house, waiting for the "pot". In free time, we made walks into the forests and soaked in the "magic" of this story-book countryside. Our senses delighted in the sights and sounds of colorful wild flowers under tall dark evergreens, of streams bubbling down long hillsides, and of red, pink and white geraniums overflowing window boxes on peasant cottages and ancient farms. It was easy to see why the Black Forest was birthplace of our favorite childhood fairy tales.

On this particular day, Nancy and I walked into town, intending to enjoy this enchanting village made famous by its hot springs.

Tourists from all over Germany were here soaking in the warm mineral waters and strolling the picturesque streets. Colorful flowers, sidewalk cafes, and narrow canals of water lined the way. Relaxing as we walked along, we were part of the "holiday" throng. Here and there we spotted the traditional costumes: men in wool green hats and jackets, women in white blouses and dirndl skirts. We fingered local crafts--Cuckoo clocks, hand-carved figurines, and embroidered linens--as we practiced our few words of German with the shopkeepers in a world that seemed so different from ours.

"Go Back To The Clinic"

Suddenly, something changed. Deep within me, I felt an inner urging, a stirring in my spirit that we must return to the clinic at once. This made no sense but over the years of knowing God I had learned to respect these "inner promptings" by His Spirit. I said to Nancy, "I don't understand this, but I think we need to return to the clinic immediately."

We left our shopping and made our way back to the clinic. Upon return, I wasn't sure what to do next. We wandered around inside the clinic for awhile. I talked with some people. But I wondered to myself, "Is this *why* we had returned".

Coffee Drinking

When we finished there, the inner urging and restlessness was still present within me. Not knowing what else to do, I suggested to Nancy that we go across the street to the cafe and have that coffee and kuchen we were going to have earlier. We sat outside on the deck, so we could enjoy the wonderful view of dark green forests, mountains, and rushing streams.

As we lingered in the late afternoon sun, we spoke about our impressions and experiences we were having in this special clinic. Both nurses, we agreed we had *never* encountered any hospitals or clinics like this one!

When I did my student nursing rotation in the psych wards of a Chicago hospital, I had seen nothing even similar to what I was seeing now. Instead of locked rooms and isolated

or tranquilized patients, the corridors here were filled with people holding one another, touching one another, and loving one another. Although the patients came from diverse backgrounds with a wide variety of diagnoses, they were bound together by their pain, their deep spiritual hunger, and their need of a caring family.

As we chatted together, I noticed the inner urging had quieted down with in me--in fact it was gone.

"Can I Borrow Your Hairbrush?"

At length, we finished our coffee and made ready to leave. As we got up from our seats, a voice spoke to me in English. Looking around, I saw that a woman at a nearby table was speaking to me: "Can I borrow your hairbrush?" she was saying.

Taken back for a moment, I hesitated; the woman before me appeared ragged and worn. Her bedraggled hair looked dirty. Sensing a quickening within me, I answered, "Yes." I found my brush and handed it over. Slowly she began to brush back her hair. Then she asked, "Could I talk with you a moment?"

"Can You Tell Me, Is There A God?"

I sat down and listened as she began to tell me her story. Said she had lived in a witches' coven in Berlin for three years and as a result had become schizophrenic. Sent to this clinic, she had run away to France. Now she was back to pick up her belongings; her parents would be arriving shortly to take her home. With dark hopeless eyes fixed on mine, her lips framed a question: "Can you tell me if there is a God?" she asked.

It is amazing, isn't it? On the outside deck of a cafe in the Black Forest far from their homes, two women meet: one has a question and the other, the answer.

"Yes, I Can Tell You That There Is A God."

I went on to tell her about the things God had done for me, things that only a living God could have done. As I shared my personal experiences with God, I literally saw before my eyes the wild, haunted look in her eyes disappear. I watched as peace came into her face. Shortly, her parents arrived and she left, but with a new light shining in her eyes. I knew what had happened to this woman: As she listened to my story, faith had entered her heart. She had begun to believe in a living God who loved her.

Others Ask Similar Questions

Sometimes they asked questions like: "Is this all there is?" "Can I really know God?" "Can He really be trusted?" Sometimes the questions are not asked, but sensed. Here are some more questions asked my people I met in my travels in Europe.

A Mother

This mother's son had committed suicide... She was suffering deeply. As we spoke together, I could feel her unasked questions: "Is there a God who can heal my broken heart?" As I prayed for her, peace came into her eyes. The next day, her dark, somber

face was filled with light. She was telling other patients in the clinic what God had just done for her.

A Man On A Train

One day on a train, I met a man traveling from Berlin to Stuttgart for a job interview. We got to talking, and he asked me why I was in Germany. I gave him an honest answer: "I am here because God has brought me here. I speak to people about how to know Him."

He quickly responded, "I don't believe there is a God." "Oh", I said. "Well I do." And I began to tell him why. Soon tears began to well up in his eyes.

He slowly and with great pain began to tell me his story, about the loss of a dear friend who had died with cancer. I listened to his sad story: "When she refused traditional treatment methods, I did not make her take them." Now, laden with a legacy of guilt, he struggled to go on living.

An Abused Daughter

I met a young mother with a beautiful little old daughter. She had just learned that her daughter had been molested by a teacher in a her kindergarten. They had sacrificed so their child could attend this special school. Now her eyes revealed the deep agony and guilt in her soul, as she asked her question: "How can there be a God?"

A 20 Year Old Woman

She was a twenty-year old alcoholic who captured my heart. Emotionally scarred from early abuse, she had never let anyone hold her. Until one day...when she wanted to sit in my arms. I was sitting on the floor sharing my experiences with a small group of woman: they wanted to hear why I knew there was a God. When I finished, she looked up at me with wide eyes and said, "I felt something come from you to me when you were talking, Judy. Was it God?"

An Abused Son

On one trip to Germany, a former patient from the clinic asked me to come and see her. When I got off the train, the first thing she said was, "Don't say anything, I just want to see if the light is still in your eyes."

After satisfying herself that it was still there, she began to pour out her pain and her questions to me. Her three year old had recently been sexually abused by her boyfriend. She kept saying, "How can this be? The same thing happened to me as a child, now it is happening to my son. How can there be a God who cares? How can there be? "

Feeling helpless, I just shared with her the things God had done for me, loved her, and prayed with her. Later I got a letter in the mail from her. She wrote, "I have a light in my eyes now."

Loss of Mother, Father, Brother

At the request of the therapist, I met with a young patient in her twenties. She had lost both her mother and father from cancer, and now her brother was dying of cancer too. We spoke together using an interpreter: I watched the despair and agony in her eyes as I listened to her questions. She wanted to know if there was a God who can make sense out of suffering? She was asking, "Can you tell me if there is a God?" After a few minutes I saw the torment leave her eyes and peace enter in.

My Brother's Wife

My brother married a French woman; they lived in Europe. On my first visit to see them in Brussels, she and I sat in the kitchen, talking together about our families. I spoke about the things God had done for me and my family. Suddenly, her eyes welled up with tears, and she whispered, "I didn't know your family had a God". She got up and went into the living room to find my brother: She asked with deep longing, "Why did you marry me? You knew I didn't have a God?" Then I had the joy of sharing with her about a personal God who loved her, and she began to believe during our time together.

Go To God With Your Questions

Recently a man in Salzburg asked, "How can a God of love allow evil things to happen?" I in turn asked him: "Why don't you go to Him and just ask Him yourself?" My question stopped him cold. I suspect some people may use questions as a way to find reasons not to go to God.

Many years ago, my husband and I were chatting in our kitchen with an engineer from Honeywell, a co-worker of my husband. Being a highly intellectual man, and raised as a Catholic, he said he really had no faith that there was a God. We told him what God had done for us, and then challenged him to pray to the God he did not believe in. Pray like this: "If you are real and there, I want to know You and ask you to come into my life....." When we finished, his eyes were filled with light, something had touched him, and his life was changed forever.

Light shines out of darkness

Interesting about the light! The Bible speaks about a light that shall shine in our heart, giving the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of a light that shall shine out of darkness.

What Brought About The Changes?

In all of these "God" moments, I had not done very much. I just simply shared my own experiences with a living God. I told how this God had loved me, how He had come to me in the moment of our son's death, how he had healed my broken heart, how He had spoken to me. I never discussed doctrine, theology, scriptures, or church affiliation. Some I never even prayed with. Yet, their lives were deeply touched in that moment.

The Voice of Personal Experience

So what was it that brought about such dramatic changes? It was the voice of personal experience, the testimony, the witness: the voice that says, "I know, because I know, because I know." This is the one voice modern man still listens to today. This voice carries great power and authority and deeply affects the lives of others.

Hebrews 11:1,2 says: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for...for by it men of old obtained a testimony." The word "testimony" means one who can witness to the power of certain truths. The scriptures say, "How shall they believe in Him who they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?...So faith comes by hearing..." (Romans 10:14-17). Hearing what? Hearing the testimony of what God has done in the life of one ordinary woman. And as they listened, their hearts opened, and they began to believe in God.

Scientific means are not adequate to convey spiritual truth and reality. God becomes real to us only through heart knowledge and experience—not by knowing something with our heads. Deduction and reason can teach us a great deal, but they cannot transform us. Knowing with our heart and through our own experience gives us a certainty and knowledge that touches the hearts of others.

Part II: My Background

Growing Up Years

I was born into a third-generation fishing family on the eve of World War — when horrible atrocities were about to be committed in our 'civilized' society; I "colored" my world dark and gray.

My father's family, descendants of Dutch and German immigrants, were church-going Methodists. The men in the family were hard working and hard drinking fisherman. The love for the sea lingered in their blood. Growing up, I often listened to the secret dream of my father: "I wanted to be a doctor," he said, as he pulled the sliver out of the finger of one of the little kids. I watched in fascination as he wielded his pen knife as if it was a fine surgical tool. It was then that I decided to be a nurse. When he was fourteen, his father died, cutting short his scholarly ambitions. Dropping out of school, he entered the family fishing business.

My mother's family were of English, Irish, and French descent. Divorce, alcohol and suicide marked their family line. All the women in the family had been divorced, except for my mother. She had a different spirit. As a young married woman, she'd read the Bible through — even though her family had not been church-goers. She hungered to know God. After finishing the eighth grade, she dropped out to go to work, taking care of children and keeping house, for twenty-five cents a week.

Family Dominated By Rejection, Fear, Envy, Superstition, Jealousy

Life was a struggle. The great depression and World War II indelibly stamped its mark on the lives of my parents. Stories abound of my father going door to door selling fish for five cents a pound; it was hard to give fish away back then. In the early years, my mother often delivered the fish for my father, driving his bright red Ford pickup from restaurant to restaurant, all the while doing “market research” as she checked out that day’s price scrawled on the windows of their competitors.

My father provided for us very well, but his retail and wholesale fishing business did not leave much time for the fathering of six children. Hugs and kisses were not part of his life. I was 35 before I, with great courage and determination, reached out and hugged my father, saying, "I love you."

Growing up, I didn't know if our family was much different from other families — it was the only family I knew. Fear, envy, jealousy, superstition and prejudice were the rule. Years could go by and we never saw Aunt Jo or Uncle Ven. Then suddenly like magic they'd reappear in our life again — someone finally forgave and forgot some grievous thing. An older brother of my father lived just a stone throw from our hollyhock-lined fence with his two sons, but we never set foot in their house or they in ours. I never knew these cousins. The elderly sisters from that clan of seven didn't talk to one or the other for years at a time.

I Color My World Gray—Journal Writings

The following journal writings written during a time of inquiry and growth illustrate how I “colored” my world as a child.

Dull, Gray World, 1988

Do you think a house with six children could ever seem like a grave yard? Every evening, when it was time for "daddy" to come home, mother would say in a hushed voice, "Your father's coming, now be quiet." If his mood had been lightened by a stop at the Pine Street Bar, we could relax. But if not, we would scatter to all four corners of the house: the mood was dark and somber and black.

Mom tried so hard never to rock the boat. Her philosophy was maintain a sense of peace at any price; but oh, her face spoke pages of words never said. Reading her face for me was like how my father watched the barometer on our dining room wall to see if the weather was going to be good for fishing. By her face, I took my crayons and colored my world.

Who has what? and How much did they pay for it?, peppered the conversation of the grown-ups in my life. When my parents built a home, it was a big two story thing right in the midst of tiny bungalows. Dad didn't want a fireplace, too much work or something, but he went to great trouble to build a false chimney so that it would appear that we did. Did he put it on the side of the house where it should have gone? No. He put this big brick thing on the other end of the house—”for show”. The same with the upstairs deck off my bedroom: it wasn’t really a deck, it was built just “for show”.

“For show” was a big part of my life. As a budding teenager of 14, my mother dressed me in this low-cut black taffeta dress so I could pour punch at my cousin's wedding. It must have cost her a week's groceries.

"Did you see how his eyes followed you around?" she asked with great relish after the wedding, referring to the husband of another cousin. I was but 14!

I remember hearing a conversation between my Mom and grandmother one day in the car. The grown-ups are in front, and me, big ears, in the back. It went something like this, "You know you just can't trust a man; you know what hee's after...he has only one thing on his mind. He will leave you for sure."

Family drives were a big part of our entertainment. On Sundays we all drove to the cemetery and we children walked soberly over the dead until we came to the big gray granite tombstone—the one with the wheel of a fishing boat engraved on it. Grandma is buried here now. He would no longer be stopping every day to see her.

Oh yes, Sunday was also headache day for Daddy. We had to be extra quiet then: "Your father has a headache" Mom would say in her hushed, strained voice—from a face that tried to hide a multitude of unsaid feelings.

There was another drive we often took, to the north part of town where the 'rich' lived. Our elders would ooh and ahh and strain to get glimpse inside these mansions. How strange this seemed to me. After we built the big red shingled house near shanty town, we were called the 'rich' ones in our neighborhood. I squirmed uncomfortably as my friends called me 'rich.'

It seemed as if everyone in Mom's family was divorced. Remember back in the early 40's, this was not so common. In fact, it was a disgrace back then, along with using such words as pregnant and period publicly. My grandma, my mother's sister who finally killed herself with a gun in the late '70's—fulfilling a childhood threat, my mother's brother who was killed in The Battle of the Bulge, and all three of my grandmother's sisters were on husband number two or three. A fractured world I saw.

Remember what I said about going to the four corners of the house when daddy came home. Well, I must tell you how I spent my time in my corner of the house, my bedroom: It was in a world of stories, pioneering adventures and romantic novels. We didn't have TV's then. I always had a book in my hand, even at the dinner table. My favorite was a book called, "Blue Jeans": a story of a city kid living with his country cousins for a summer. He was a greenhorn for sure when it came to the ways of real life. He didn't know how to do anything, was arrogant, quarrelsome and proud.

Anyway, when lights were out at night I struggled to keep on in my hidden world. I read by the beam of the light shining from under the door or the flashlight I smuggled under my covers. And if I didn't have a book, I made up my own stories: instead of being fat and ugly—food was the family's source of comfort and love: "come on, have some cookies, you'll feel better"—I'd go to a doctor and he'd cut off all my fat; then I would be thin, and everyone would notice me. Life would be so grand. I created this story thousands of times; it is deeply engraved in my mind.

But there was another story I lived even more often. I played it like this: something happened, and I would die. I imagined myself lying in my bed, dead, yet I would still be in the room, somewhere up near a corner in the ceiling watching. I could see everyone, but they couldn't see me. I watched them come and cry because I was gone. In this, I found my comfort. Somehow, I was getting even and taking revenge—for what I had no idea—but inwardly I was sobbing, deep without sound.

Strawberry Hill, 1983

Once upon a time there was a little girl who lived on Strawberry Hill. Every day that came, she longed to play, but alas, she could not run or skip, her heart was too weary and sad. The sun would come out to

make her smile, just awhile; but she was afraid to be glad. What if—just when she started to play—what if someone she loved fell sick. Someone might DIE, or be gone for awhile. Hadn't she heard of these terrible things, things to fear.

Oh, the world is a frightful place, for a little girl. One, must be careful, you see. There are ogres and boogie men down behind my daddy's store. Every night when daddy was late, Mother would worry and fret. Her face would not smile, grimness was here. Either Daddy was drunk or lying dead, down in the dark alley for sure.

Oh, life is a grim place, don't forget. My uncle was killed. It was the Germans, they said. But who are they? Another enemy to fear. And my daddy might go to the war, to some place far away. But now he can't, because his blood pressure is too high, another enemy to fear.

Is there not a safe place in all the world for a little girl? A place where one can forget all her troubles and cares. A little brother was born. Supposed to be fun, but something happened to him. Bed and rest for over a year, caused me worry and fear. Mom would sigh and press her brow. Would he ever get well?

My Gaga—I loved. His big broad hand and his warm smile made me forget for a little while. We would laugh, and I'd throw the dice. He had a heart for a little girl. I didn't know that he wasn't my mother's dad. Cause hers had run away years before. I was told later that he was dead.

My Gaga, worked hard, a garbage man, with a simple heart, but he made me an igloo, to hide in and play. My Gaga I love you; you were wonderful! One bright light in my young life; I'm sorry, yours was so dark. My Grandma, was bad. I didn't like her at all. She yelled and hollered and gossiped all the while. She was sick and died when I was fourteen. I am so glad my momma isn't like her.

I was filled with fear, of atomic wars and quarrels. Of a rapture that would leave me behind. Of death or disease. Or divorce if you please. You see my Daddy slept down at the store. Drinking and drunkenness and work filled his life. There wasn't much time for me, and I wasn't a boy. He made me a playroom, a tool box for Ken, and a boat for himself—he was so proud. He was a clever man.

Other worries filled my life; I was too ugly, too fat, too clumsy. My grandmother made fun of my breasts. I wanted my mother's approval. I tried hard to win her smile. I dreamed of death, behind closed doors—of watching them weep and grieve. Nobody liked me, I was sure. I tried hard to win their hearts. But I was neither clever or funny, but too serious and intense. Hadn't my fears and worries done that?

I Needed Healing

According to inner healing expert Leanne Payne, "Memories of growing up in (seemingly) unloving and deadly dull circumstances are often described as long, gray blurs. The memory is tonal in nature, an aura of sadness is there, but no memory of particularly traumatic events haunts the deep mind. A case such as this needs special prayers for healing too" (*The Broken Image*, p. 20).

I now know that I suffered from a feeling of "insecurity and vague apprehensiveness", called *basic anxiety* by psychology. I was always tense and on guard; my speech was pressured. My insides felt as if a taunt string was strung between my arms and legs with a tight knot in the middle of my stomach. For years, I did not know this was not normal.

I also felt rejected and unloved, isolated and helpless in a world I conceived as potentially hostile. A feeling of emptiness permeated me deep on the inside. I tried to attach to people who I thought were important and I fixated on people who I thought were beautiful, slender, and gifted. I clung to people like a codependent person. Because I did not know who I was I lived in fear

A Seed Of Hope

In the midst of my dull, gray existence, a seed of hope in God was planted. As an infant, I was baptized in the Methodist church, the one uptown my father's family belonged to. Although my mother had never gone to church, she hung a picture of Jesus over my crib—my first word was 'Jesus'.

When I got older, my mother sent me to a Sunday School. There I heard wonderful stories about people who knew and experienced God. On flannel graph boards, ancient people like Joseph, Abraham, Isaac, Ruth, Joshua, Mary and Baby Jesus came alive again for a small girl with a hurting heart.

In Child Evangelism, Sunday School, and Daily Vacation Bible School, I found an oasis' of hope and joy. There I sang songs about God and listened to the stories of men and women who'd followed Him. I played parts in the Christmas pageants, made crafts, and won prizes memorizing volumes of scripture verses.

Our girl's club presented programs for our Mothers. One year we sang "Faith of Our Mothers" holding glowing candles in our quavering hands—while our mother's beamed on.

In the process, I learned well the lessons of morality, virtue, and how to be a 'good girl'. I wanted so badly to be good; I wanted to be loved; I wanted to be somebody. I often thought to myself, "Someday, I am going to get to know this God who loved the world and sent His son for me."

The Little White Church On The Corner

When I was eleven, my parents were hospitalized at the same time: my mother with a ruptured hernia; and my father from hemorrhaging—his blood pressure had gone sky high when my mother almost died. While in the hospital the pastor from the little white church corner across the street from us went to see them. He prayed with my parents, and they invited Jesus into their hearts. After that, things changed in our house. The very first Sunday out of the hospital, my father took my hand and we walked to that little white church—the one with a black pot-bellied stove alive with a fire that warmed our bodies. It was the happiest day of my childhood. From then on our family became deeply involved with God and the church. No more drinking, no more drunkenness, and no more talks of divorce.

Most Sunday evenings after church, the pastor and his wife and other friends came for coffee and dessert. Sitting around our dining room table, peals of laughter rang through the house—into my dull gray world. The pastor had a great sense of humor and loved music. Before coming to know God, he and his wife had played the trumpet and saxophone in the night clubs of Chicago. We had a lively orchestra that played the old gospel songs with great zest.

However, the sermons were all about how to escape hell-fire and brimstone, and how to avoid worldly sins as a good Christian. Smoking, drinking, card-playing and dancing were all out. Because of this, all the girls from our church obtained permission to be excused from the square dancing in gym class. We woman had a long list of no, no's: no shorts, no mini skirts, no slacks, and no excessive make up and jewelry.

Sometimes missionaries came from far off places. Their stories and slides about their work in dark Africa or the jungles of South America enthralled me. These missionaries often visited in our home.

But I was frightened of talks about hell-fire and brimstone, and a 'rapture' that might leave me behind. Sometimes when I came home from school and found nobody, I'd become terribly afraid that the rapture had occurred, and I was not taken. I ran through the house calling out to see if anyone was there.

Sometimes I'd lie awake in my bed at night trying to imagine what it would be like to be with God forever. I tried to imagine being outside time and space, but I was terrified of this. I had a deep desire to know Him, yet at the same time I was afraid.

At twelve, with prompting by my mother, I answered an altar call and prayed to ask Jesus into my heart. I was once more baptized—this time in a tank of water.

As a teenager, I continued to go to church twice on Sunday and on Wednesday evenings as well. In our youth group, 'Mom Slager' (she'd raised 14 of her own children) taught us to pray on our knees, pass out gospel tracts on downtown streets, conduct services for the bums at the City Rescue Mission, and sing songs for the folks at the Old People's Home. Her teaching on the book of Nehemiah lingers on in my memories today—"the people had a mind to work".

One year at summer camp, I raised my hand to say that I was willing to give my life to God and die for Him. Yet I knew somewhere deep inside that I did not even know Him.

"Someday I Want To Know God"

I kept saying to myself, "Someday. . . someday I want to find God. Someday I want to know Him, but not until I get married, not until I have children." I was afraid that if I

got to know God, I wouldn't have any fun. I wouldn't be able to get married or have children. I think I was afraid of what it might cost me. Almost everyone in my church was poor and had many problems. They seemed to be carrying heavy burdens. In my child's mind, I connected this with the cost of knowing God.

And I wanted to do my own thing – yet within the boundaries of the rules of my church. When I dated a boy "who was not good," my mother got together with Mom Slager and prayed for me. Shortly thereafter I met my husband, Jerry; he was from a "good" Christian home. Two years later, in the middle of my nurse's training, we married. We were just 19 but very determined.

My Young Adult Years

Working hard, I graduated from nurse's training. When I finished we moved to the northern most part of the Upper Peninsula where Jerry studied for his engineering degree. During the next three years, I juggled my responsibilities as a young wife, homemaker, and mother – gave birth to two sons – while working as a nurse in the nearby hospital. I gave my energy to establishing myself as a wife, mother, good church member and nurse. And I followed all the rules.

At the time it was enough, a very satisfying existence, albeit a rather narrow one. In the following years, I stayed active in the life of the Baptist churches we attended: led a girl's club and other teen groups, orchestrated Christmas pageants, and taught Daily Vacation Bible School. I also organized social outings for our young married couple's group, attended Sunday School, prayer meetings, Navigator's Bible studies, Growth by Groups, and Campus Crusade programs. I witnessed to others about the love of God and even prayed with people to give their lives to Him.

To all appearances, I looked as if I was a good Christian – people told me I was a good woman. Yet with all of these church activities, I had no assurance of God in my life or peace in my heart. I kept saying, "Someday I am going to get to know God; someday. . ."

Filled With Fear

At times, my needs, fears, and coping mechanisms from childhood created havoc and chaos within me and in my marriage. I suffered with chronic bouts of loneliness, boredom and emptiness. Sometimes I escaped into sleep, books, fantasy, or soap operas.

Other times, my emotions became all stirred up with jealousy, resentment, revenge, and anxiety. I lost my own sense of self easily. I often had the feeling of my mother's identity overwhelming me. For instance, I would be ironing, and suddenly a picture of my mother ironing filled my mind, and I would feel as if I was my mother ironing it. My own identity blurred with hers.

There were times I felt like I didn't want to live. And I was filled with all kinds of fears: I was afraid of losing my husband to another woman, afraid of sickness and disease, afraid of storms, afraid of death, afraid of being rejected by people, afraid of expressing myself, and most of all I was afraid of losing a child.

As the years went by, my longing to know a living God increased – but now I had a new reason to keep from drawing near: I was afraid if I did He might do something bad to one of my children. As a student nurse, I'd watched heartbroken parents as their children died. I was convinced that I could never live through something like this. This fear continued to obsess me.

I Question My Faith

During these years, two different experiences caused me to begin to question what I believed. The first occurred one summer evening as we sat around a campfire with good friends, discussing scripture. We were intrigued by one particular passage – the one where Jesus said, "The things that I do you shall do, and even greater things because I go to my Father."

These words stuck me. No one I'd ever known believed these words or practiced them. In fact they ignored them. They just never talked about them. I began to think, "Did Jesus really mean what He said? Were we meant to do greater things than He? According to the Bible, Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, and proclaimed the good news that the Kingdom of God was at hand. Were we to do the same?"

The second experience was a fiction book by Adelle St. Rogers, "Tell No Man." The story told about a successful business man in Chicago who decided to take the words of Jesus seriously: he left his career and began to practice what the Bible said. As a result, the lives of people around him changed. Miracles, works of power, and healings began to happen.

This book stirred me up on the inside. I asked more questions: "Is this really how it should be? Is there a God who wants to touch people in a personal and powerful way?"

My Image of God

My concept of God held that He was only interested in 'saving' us, so we could go to heaven someday and be with him. That meant going down a church aisle, telling God we are bad sinners, asking him to send Jesus into our hearts, trying to live a good life while we waited for Jesus to come back for us someday. Never had I heard about a God of power who was interested in performing miracles and healing us. My church taught this stuff was only for the New Testament period. God didn't need to do these things any more – because He had given us the Bible.

Head Knowledge

All of my years in the church resulted in a practice of religion and a head knowledge of God. I knew about a God who loved me, but I did not know the reality of it in my heart. I knew the scriptures, but I did not know the voice of the Spirit in my heart. I knew how to follow all the rules, but I had no assurance of God within me.

Prison of Fear, Rejection, Jealousy, Emptiness

More years went by; soon I was thirty. I had my husband, and I had my children—our third son was born the year before. I wasn't any closer to knowing God than I'd been at twelve. Still afraid to draw close to Him—to get to really get to know him, because of what might happen if I did. I lived in a state of anxiety. I was afraid one of my children would get sick and die. These fears continued to keep me from searching for God.

The tension became so great, that one day I finally found the courage to tell someone about my longings and my fears. I made an appointment with my pastor of the Baptist church. I told him of my fears of drawing close to God; and that if I did, He might do something to one of my children. Pastor Jim listened and answered me with these words: "Judy, I think perhaps if you don't surrender yourself totally to God maybe something bad will happen." Now I was frightened even more.

Some of you will have questions and answers regarding all of these fears. Some say "the things we fear will come upon us." I believe there is truth in this. Some say Satan is a liar and a deceiver and is out to rob, kill, and destroy. I certainly believe this also. Interestingly, his first lie was to Adam and Eve: "Hey you guys, God can't be trusted. He is keeping the good stuff from you. God really doesn't have your best interests at heart. He doesn't know what will fulfill you and make your life full and rich." But, perhaps there is more to this than we all understand at the present time.

Locked into this state year after year, I lived in a prison of fear, fear of living and fear of dying. I had no sense of living life fully. Working hard to follow all of the rules had not brought me any peace or fullness of life. The scriptures speak about a witness in the heart which says, "Abba Father". I didn't have this inner witness or for that matter any personal experiences with God. I had no assurance that God was with me. I was not changed or healed on the inside. I wonder how many more years would have gone by like this—if my world hadn't fallen apart.

Part III: My World Falls Apart

California: February 1970

Life beckoned us as we boarded our jet in the midst of a Midwestern snowstorm. We were going to sunny California; the tropical paradise of San Diego. Jerry was already

there, working in his new job. The long years of schooling were completed; we were off to spread our wings.

Our parents waved good-by with tears streaming down their faces: their "foolish kids" were going so far from home. The "big boys", Jeff (8) and David (6), went up front to see the cockpit and meet the pilot. I cradled our six-week Tim and looked out the window. Soon all that was familiar, our families, friends, and Midwestern way of life, would be far behind.

Landing in the golden rays of high noon, the children threw winter coats into the air as they ran into the arms of their father. For the next seven months we explored our new land with its exotic flora, palm trees, tide pools, and ocean life. We thrilled at the feel of the warm sand and rock on our feet; "going barefoot in February – unheard of," I said.

We learned about historic Spanish missions, Navy battleships, and Mexican food. In the evenings we strolled along the ocean edge, watching our sons scrambled about on the rocks and caves. When the sun set over the Pacific, we'd head home. Yes, life was full of promise.

Until . . . Our son became sick

"Take him home tonight, and I'll arrange for him to be admitted to the hospital in the morning," our pediatrician said. "I think he may have leukemia." He went on to tell us that he had "just" learned about a new research program for children with leukemia at the University of California Hospital of San Diego: "If he were my child, I would take him there."

Remember in 1970, leukemia meant an automatic death sentence. There was no effective treatment available. Children died with a few short months. How does one describe the bleakness that creeps into your soul upon hearing a pronouncement of coming death for your child? Memories from the past flooded my mind. I had been there before, but not with my own: It was the blond, blue-eyed toddler with blood oozing out his nose, lying in his parents' arms. "Is this it? Is he gone?" they asked, searching into the face of this young 19-year old student nurse.

Now our own hearts wrenched with agony cried out, "Please God let them be wrong, not our son – he's too young." We prayed together to God for His strength and comfort. God had to be somewhere around; perhaps we could find Him. Looking into his little face that night, holding him, kissing him, we tried to still our fears and panic. "There's something wrong with your blood," we lied, "they think you are anemic."

The night was long. Our bodies wracked with tension, trembled violently as we clung to one another for strength. There was a glimmer of hope, wasn't there? Didn't he say, "verify it"?

The Hospital

Morning came, as it always does. David was admitted. We were told of the new progress being made in the field of childhood cancers. If the diagnosis is correct, David would receive, chemotherapy, and the possibility of living ... longer.

We left our frightened youngster clinging to a rabbit's foot. I don't know where it came from, but he was too old for blankies or bears. We paced in the garden around the hospital, seeing, yet not seeing the brilliant golden day or the exotic purple flowers flowing down over the Spanish archways. Soft sea breezes blew in our faces, but our hearts and minds were elsewhere.

I believe I was praying something like this, "God if you will prevent this, keep this horrible thing from David, I will serve you; I will do whatever you asked."

Bargaining with God it is called. Because in the midst of this blackness there was a tiny ray of light – of hope. We knew there had to be a God somewhere. We were God fearing church go-ers, weren't we?

“Your Son Has Leukemia”

Dr. Faith Chung walked into the room where we waited. We knew by her eyes it was not good news. "Your son has acute lymphocytic leukemia," she said. She went on to tell us about the results of their research program: so far they had some children in remission for over two years. Hopefully David would respond well to the drugs and would go into remission too.

New words were introduced into our everyday vocabulary: bone marrow, spinal tap, methotrexate, cortisone, clinic visits, blood test, and radiation. "Earthshaking words," I say. Words I thought I could never face; words I once thought I would destroy me. With that, David entered into their program and became a statistic in their research studies.

The Pastor Visits: Psalm 34

We called our church. The pastor came to call and comfort us. He read the following scriptures that day:

I sought the Lord, and He answered me, And delivered me from all my fears.
They looked to Him and were radiant, And their faces shall never be ashamed
This poor man cried and the Lord heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. The
angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them. O taste and
see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! The righteous
cry and the Lord hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the

brokenhearted, And saves those who are crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; But the Lord delivers him out of them all. (Psalm 34: 4-8; 15-19)

I clung to those words like a drowning man clings to his capsized boat. I read them and reread them: "I sought the Lord, and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears... The Lord is near into them that are broken hearted...and saves those who are crushed in spirit." This was me, wasn't it? I was filled with fear. I was broken-hearted. I was crushed in spirit. I began to take comfort in these words from the Bible.

People from our church rallied around and enfolded us in their loving arms, even though we had been there just seven months. They gave of themselves to us and to our children in countless ways: they brought gifts, made meals, baby-sat, prayed, etc. We owe a debt to these people of University City Baptist Church in San Diego. Many of them were new transplants like ourselves. David was quickly returned to us, pronounced in "remission", and life resumed a broken course.

"Only God Can Help Me, If I Can Find Him"

Meanwhile, an explosion had taken place in my life – an explosion of a myth: boy meets girl, children follow, and they live happily ever after. All my fantasies about life were shattered. In the wake of this explosion, my life was thrown into personal chaos. I now faced the greatest challenges of my entire life: how to live and survive the life-threatening illness of my child. How to make sense out of suffering and loss. How to grapple with one of the great human issues of life, death itself?

In the next ten years, David would relapse from his remission when he was 12, be re-treated in the Tufts University Hospital research program (Boston), and live four more years in remission. He relapsed again at age 16, endured seven-long months of failed treatment and then died.

I found that nothing in my life had prepared me psychologically or spiritually for handling such a catastrophe – not my nursing school, not the church, and not the educational systems of society. These institutions failed to teach me how to cope with pain, suffering, and death. For years the fear of losing a child had tormented me, now I must face my fears. And there were no textbooks or manuals to help me, only God could . . . if I can find Him.

Part IV: Encounter With The Holy Spirit

For all of my church going, I did not know how to find God or if He was even knowable. Over the years I listened to many experts debate and discuss the validity of God, the person of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. I frequently heard things like, "God doesn't do that any more; that was only for their time. He doesn't need to do miracles, cast out demons, or heal the sick. That time is over with. And those apostles, prophets

and workers of miracles – well we don't need them either. They are not for us. We have something better, something more perfect: we have the book that tells us how it used to be." Some even told said that God was dead. In 1968, *Time Magazine* reported the 'God Is Dead Movement'. Apparently He wasn't very knowable by ordinary people.

The ongoing crisis of David's battle with leukemia brought a tremendous pressure to bear upon my life. There was no way I could survive this unless I found God. This pressure became the catalyst for an intense spiritual search, a search that was to lead me outside of my narrow and rigid confines – to a time of profound change in my orientation to life.

About this time the spiritual climate across California was stirring; there was a longing in the air. People were looking for something more. Old ways no longer satisfied them. In the 60's, youth from across the nation had come there in droves, seeking more freedom and liberty. For many, it was a time of copping out or breaking free from rigid, lifeless lifestyles. For others it was a time of seeking spiritual reality – they hungered to find God.

A fresh wind was blowing in the church too. Books about the power of the Holy Spirit began to pour into the market place from every quarter of the world, books like *9:00 In The Morning*, *A New Song*, *They Speak With Other Tongues*, and *Like a Mighty Wind*. These books gave accounts of men and women who were experiencing God in a new and living way.

What was this all about? Miracles, healings, and other supernatural phenomena. I had just read in *Time Magazine* that God was dead. Apparently reports of His death were premature.

Seeking God

I set out to find these things for myself. My search took me to small storefront churches where "Jesus People" in sandals and shorts sat on the floor praising God. I went to large healing crusades, conducted by Kathryn Kuhleman in her flowing white dresses, and to Full Gospel Christian Businessmen's meetings, where people prayed in tongues and lifted their hands in praise to God.

All these groups seemed to have something in common: the people were alive with joy and enthusiasm. They radiated a sense of God's presence among them, and they expected God to do something for them.

I examined the scriptures, searching for their meaning: "Does God heal today? What is the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Who is it for? How do we receive it? What is speaking in another tongue? I pondered on the following scripture:

“Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off. . .” (Acts 2:38,29).

“Can it really be?” I asked myself. The only time I’d about these things was when the adults whispered – “They speak in tongues and roll in the aisles!” – as we drove by a tiny white church with shades pulled. In the midst of my searching, a faith and expectancy in a personal God began to take root in me.

Our church also opened itself to these new ideas through books and discussion. The pastor, himself, was interested. Controversy swirled over the Holy Spirit, miracles, tongues, prophecy, demons, and healing. People were all stirred up over these things: some of my friends hungered to know for themselves, some just did not know, while others openly said they had no interest – they did not want more from God.

Finally, I made up my own mind. I became convinced that it was possible to experience God in a personal way, now in the twentieth century. I began to seek God in earnest, confessing my sins, and praying for Him to forgive me, and make Himself real to me.

The Bible says, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." I was asking and asking. One day, I knelt down beside my bed and cried out to God to manifest Himself to me. Nothing happened. Another day, I stretched out on the floor before God, crying out to Him. Nothing seemed to happen. I tried following all of the steps in one of the books, reading the prayers, confessing His name, and praising God. But to no avail. Nothing happened. I was still the same on the inside. I couldn't find the 'magic' formula.

During this time, something unusual was taking place in our Sunday School class. The room had swelled to overflowing with people standing at the door. An air of expectancy was present. People were searching for something – they wanted more. These were good church people!

One couple in the class seemed different from the others. Their names were Andy and Nancy Woods. When they prayed, they acted as if they really believed God heard them. They even gave reports of answered prayers and physical healing. One Sunday, they quietly dropped a bomb on the class: "We pray in tongues," they said. I could hear a pin drop. This was unknown to us Baptists who claimed these things weren't needed any longer – we were in a different dispensation, because we had the Bible. Intrigued by the things this couple shared and by their confidence in God, I asked Nancy to come to my house. I wanted to hear more. I wanted to know God like she did. But I didn't want anyone else to know, so I kept her visit a secret.

A Secret Visitor

Nancy came. Feeling very nervous, self-conscious, and embarrassed, I did not know what to say. I blurted out that I wanted to receive the Holy Spirit. She responded by asking me to tell her something about my relationship with God. I spoke about my church experience, going down the aisle at twelve to receive Christ, and my water baptisms. I also told her of my fear of God and of my lack of assurance that He was in me. I explained how hard I had been praying, and yet nothing seemed to change.

The Key: Luke 11:8-13

Then Nancy said, "Let's begin at the beginning; let's talk about your spiritual foundation. She explained to me the underlying premise of true Christian experience. In so doing, I was given the *key* which opened the door for me to an authentic experience with God, that is...

without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

Even though I had prayed many times, went to church all of my life, been baptized, and walked the aisle to receive Christ, I had no genuine faith or heart belief in God. My mind believed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, but I had never learned how to apply faith in God when I came to Him. At thirty years of age, I finally understood.

Nancy read to me:

I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks find, and everyone who knocks, the door shall be opened. When a child who asks his father for fish, will his father give him a snake? Or if he asks for an egg, will he be given a scorpion? If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how" much more" shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask? (Luke 11:8-13).

...when his son shall ask him for a loaf, he will not give him a stone...how much more will he give what is good to those who ask (Matt. 7:11).

Building My Faith

When she finished, she turned to me and asked, "What does Jesus say a child will get if he asks his father for a fish? Will he get a snake?" "No," I said, "the child will not get a snake; he will receive what he asked for, a fish." "What does Jesus say a child will get if he asks his father for an egg? Will he be given a scorpion?" Nancy asked. "No", I said, "He will not get a scorpion; he will be given an egg."

Can God Lie?

Then she asked me a question, "Judy, can God lie?" This brought me up short. Nancy was asking me to make a 'decision' about the nature of God. I struggled with it for a

moment, then I knew my answer, "No, I said, "I do not believe God can lie." At that moment something happened. Something quickened in my heart: it was faith. In the moment I made the decision God could not lie, faith became alive and active in me.

My hungry heart was like a dry sponge soaking up the truth. Nancy made it sound so easy: "Judy, Jesus taught that those who seek will find, and those who ask will receive. Jesus absolutely believed this. Do you? From what you tell me, you have been asking, but not receiving. Why? Does God, or does He not, want to give the Holy Spirit to you?" she probed.

Now for the first time, I really heard the words of Jesus and they were united by faith in me. My faith expanded more.

"Now," she said, "let's start at the beginning again. You've asked many times but never applied any faith. Now this time as you ask, apply your faith in God and in what He has said."

I Pray,

Under her guidance, I began to pray, "God I ask for your help. I want to know you. I need your son Jesus. I place my faith in His work on the cross, His burial and His resurrection. I accept the blood He shed as enough for my sins and the sins of others against me. Please come into my heart and cause me to live."

As I spoke these words aloud, my heart looked only to the trustworthiness of God and to what He said. I did not look to my feelings or my own thoughts. When I finished, Nancy asked, "Where is Jesus now?"

Still not feeling anything, my mind went back to what she had read: If a child asks his father for loaf, he will not give him a stone . . . how much more will the heavenly Father give what is good to those who ask.

I *had asked* my heavenly Father to forgive my sins and to send Jesus to live within my heart, hadn't I? These were good things, weren't they? I reasoned to myself. Then had He done what He promised to do? It was decision time. If I chose not to take God at His word, I would be calling him a liar. And I could not do that. My decision was made.

"He is in my heart," I responded with confidence.

Nancy pressed, "Why is He in your heart?"

"Because God simply cannot lie," I replied. "I choose to place my faith and trust in His words and His words."

Genuine Heart Faith—Not Mental Assent

I want to make it clear, I was doing something more than mouthing words or giving mental assent when I prayed. I did that for years. I was adding something to my words: faith.

“We have had the good new preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard“ (Heb. 4:2b).

Jesus said, "the man who hears His words and does not act upon them is like the foolish man who builds his house upon the sand (Matt. 7:24-27). Up until that point, I was like the foolish person; the words I had listened to about God had not profited me.

Faith is hard to describe because it is far more than an idea, an emotion, or a mental belief; it means persuasion, i.e. conviction. In the Greek, “faith” (Gr. Pistis) means to be fully persuaded, convinced, convicted in our heart and mind, that what God says is true (Rom. 4:20-21). To believe means to have faith; i.e. to entrust or commit (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible). Faith is not system of religious truths, but a vital life force. An electric atmosphere develops when spiritual power is released.

The Bible says it is “with the heart man believes” (Rom. 10:10). True faith goes beyond doctrine and theology; it must reside in a deeper place within us – in our heart. The heart is a much deeper thing than our mind. According to Dr. Bruce Morgan, "We come to know truth with our hearts or spirits, rather than with our minds". Our western world has not known very much about our heart. We have been trapped in our heads and tried to make our relationship with God work through it.

Catholic lay evangelist, Ralph Nault (The New Life, Inc., Barton, VT), says when it comes to Christianity, "We often put the cart before the horse. We teach people how to have a nice cart, how to be a good Christian, but give them nothing to pull it with." Faith is necessary in obtaining and receiving all of God's provisions and promises. The extent to which I receive God's blessings depends precisely upon the degree to which I believe.

- If thou cast believe, all things are possible to him that believes (Mark 9:23).
- If I have faith. . . nothing shall be impossible unto me. (Mt. 17:20)
- According to your faith be it unto you. (Mt. 9:29)

Applying My New Faith In God

Back to my visitor. Nancy then asked if I would like to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. She explained this is what the Father promised to those who believed (Acts 1:8; 2:17; 2:33-39.) For weeks I'd poured over the Scriptures about this and decided the promise of the Holy Spirit was meant for “all who were far off”, and that was me. Now I was

really nervous because I knew the coming of the Holy Spirit was connected to a phenomena called tongues. This, I was afraid of.

She explained to be more about tongues. I learned God does not want us to be lacking in any gift (I Cor. 1:4-7), and that my spirit is not dumb; it can speak.

When it came time to pray, I was so frightened and embarrassed I told her I'd go into my bedroom and pray alone. She said okay, and waited out in the living room. In my room, I got down on my knees and prayed to God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, but all the time I felt nothing. I tried to do as Nancy instructed me, and make whatever timid sounds I could. Finally I returned to Nancy, and told her what I'd did. She said, "Good, now let's pray in tongues together!"

She began to pray fluently in another language, a language I did not know. I tried to let go of my tongue and give it free reign to make whatever sounds that came, while I kept my faith centered in on God and His trust worthiness. I remembered the words, "these signs will follow them *who have believed*: . . . they will speak with new tongues. . . (Mark 16:17)." I had believed! I could speak in a new tongue.

I felt very foolish and awkward making these strange sounds, but after a few moments Nancy said, "That's it! Listen, you are praying exactly the same sound, syllable for syllable as I am! Now I know why God changed my prayer language this morning, it was for you".

I filled with joy and excitement. Suddenly, an inner knowing of God's presence burst forth in my heart. I knew that I knew, with a deep inner awareness, that God was my Father, Jesus was in me, and my sins were forgiven. A feeling of peace permeated me.

"Abba! Father!" I Am His Child

God came in a way that He never had before. For the first time in my life, I **knew** – I knew God was within me. I knew for certain that He had forgiven me, I knew I was His child. Jesus was no longer just an historical event. I would need Him desperately in the years ahead!

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father! The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:15,16).

I had been afraid of God for so many years. Now my suffering and pain had brought me to the place where I came to Him with all of my heart, believing He would hear me and answer. And as a result, God became real to me. I knew that I knew I belonged to Him, and I was His child. An inner witness had been established in my spirit. What a

place to be in! Today, thirty-five years later, this witness remains in me. He said, He would never leave me, or forsake me, and He hasn't.

I had known about God before, but now I'd experienced His power and His presence for myself. I was so excited, I wanted to tell everyone, especially Jerry. But somehow I felt impressed not to say very much about this to him. For the next seven months I went quietly about my life.

During this time, the Bible became alive to me. I couldn't get enough of it. I also loved praying. My prayers became alive and relevant. I loved singing praises to God and worshipping Him. He seemed so near. I had more vitality and more joy. My steps were lighter. There seemed to be a new peace, a new strength, and a new stability in me. Life took on new meaning and purpose – in spite of David's illness.

Seven months later, Jerry suddenly said, "You know, you are different; I want what you have." Interestingly, it was the changes in me that caused him to desire for more from God – not my words. Right then, we got down on our knees by our living room couch and prayed for Jesus to baptize him in the Holy Spirit, too. In a moment, God's spirit fell upon him in a powerful way: this electrical engineer bolted backwards in a somersault and came up praising God in a strange new tongue.

Part V: Experiencing A God Of Power

Our hearts filled with new joy and enthusiasm because of the power of God at work in our lives. By the way, enthusiasm means to be overflowing with God. Our Christian walk was no longer an external practice of religion but a real and living experience. We were learning to look to God for everything – like when my car wouldn't start.

God Fixes Cars

It was during the time Jerry had to work in New York for six weeks, while I stayed in San Diego with the children. One morning, when I went out to take David for his weekly clinic visit, the car would not start. When I turned the key, the only thing I heard was a click. I started to react and feel sorry for myself: here I was left alone, with a tremendous responsibility on my shoulders. But then I remembered God and turned to Him, "Lord help me, please start this car."

I turned the key, but the car did not start. I could not believe this was happening to me. In desperation, I prayed again, "Please Lord, cause my car to start. You know I need to get David to his appointment. I need your help."

Again, nothing happened. I prayed some more and turned the key some more, and finally quit in frustration. Going back into the house, I went into my bedroom, knelt beside my bed, and began to quiet myself in the presence of God. I read verses from the

Bible about God's desire to meet our needs. I reminded myself of the things I had seen God do already.

And I reminded God of things He promised. I prayed in my new tongue. Soon my spirit was strengthened, and so was my faith. Finally, going deep into my heart, where my faith was, I prayed again and applied my new faith in the power of God. I do not remember all I prayed, but I do remember praying this: "Lord would you start my car and cause it to work until the day Jerry comes home from New York?"

I went back out to my car. Standing beside it, I laid my hands on the hood, and in the name of Jesus Christ I spoke to it to start. I felt foolish, but I was determined to put my trust and faith in God into action. I got into my car, turned the key, and it started! I will never forget that moment: with my own eyes I saw the power of God being manifested in my experience. To me it was a miracle. Nobody would ever be able to take it from me. Rejoicing, I drove to the clinic praising God, for He was truly with me. I was not alone: "I have a God who hears my prayers, a God who cares for me!

Later, the most incredible thing happened! For the next six weeks, the car ran faithfully – until the very day Jerry arrived back home from New York. On that day, it stopped and had to go for repairs.

Migraine Headaches Healed

Our ten-year-old son was healed from migraine headaches. He suffered from those things from the time he was four – they were the kind that didn't let up until he vomited. Afterwards, he'd fall asleep for hours. But all of that changed one day. It was in 1972, just a few months have Jerry received the power of the Holy Spirit. We were sightseeing along the coast of southern California, when suddenly our son fell ill with one of those headaches. Something rose up in Jerry, and he went over and laid his hands on our son's head, praying with great boldness for God to heal him. I joined him in praying. He didn't say just one short prayer and quit. He persisted for sometime, alternately using his spiritual authority to rebuke any spirit of infirmity that was involved, and confessing the name of Jesus over our son. At times, he'd pray in his new tongue and worship God in praise.

At first nothing changed except our son said he felt like he had to vomit. Jerry continued to pray, applying his faith and trust in the promises of God. He became stirred up in his spirit, announcing that he would not accept this headache upon his son any longer: we belonged to God and this thing had no place in our family. He prayed for about forty-five minutes, I believe.

Our child gradually began to feel better. First, the nausea left without his vomiting. This was incredible; it had never happened before. Then the pain lifted along with the lethargy! He returned to his play. We parents rejoiced and praised God for His power.

No more headaches! He was free of them. And most significantly, he never had another migraine headache during his growing up years in our house. Amazing, isn't it. You, too, can experience God's power in your home!

I like this scripture, because it points me to God: "that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (I Cor. 2:5). For years my belief in God was based on what others told me, now I was learning to place my faith and trust in God Himself. Another scripture caused me to see this more clearly: "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is these that bear witness of me; and you are unwilling to come to me that you may have life" (John 5:38,39).

I'd read the Scriptures for years, but they had never brought me any closer to Jesus. In fact, they were a substitute for coming to Him. The Scriptures are important in my Christian experience, but Jesus makes it very clear they can not bring me to Him. They only told me about Jesus, but they could not give me the "life" I so desperately needed. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*" We must learn how to come to Jesus.

I Call For The Elders To Pray For My Healing

Another healing happened to me. I'd been experiencing a lot of discomfort in my groins, whenever I sat for any period. On a recent flight to Boston I'd actually had to lay down on the floor of the plane because of the pain. The doctors told me the pain was probably cause by varicosity's in my groins. Said there was nothing they could do, except to give me pain pills.

I turned down the pain pills and decided to look to God for healing. I read books about healing and studied the scriptures on the subject. In the Bible I read, "Is anyone among you sick,? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. . . (James 5:14-15). Hum, I thought, I had never seen anyone do *that* before. I wonder ...

Finally, I asked the pastor if I could have this done. Even though he had never done it before, he said yes. It was just before our move to the East Coast. There was an engineering recession, and the San Diego branch of Honeywell was closing. Jerry was being transferred to Massachusetts. Our church was going to have a farewell for us during our last Sunday evening service there. The pastor thought this would be a good time to have the elders pray over me.

The evening came. Interestingly, the pastor did not call for the elders of the church to come forward, but only for those men who had faith in God's healing power! Several got up out of their seats and stood around me, including Nancy's husband, Andy.

These men along with the pastor, laid their hands on me, anointed me with oil, and prayed for healing in the name of Jesus—just like the scriptures said. The moment remains etched in my memory so clearly. A feeling of awe prevailed. We were actually *doing* something the Bible says to do—applying our faith—just like they did in the book, “*Tell No Man*,” the one that had stirred me up so much.

As they prayed, I felt nothing, but I kept the eyes of my heart upon God and His promises. I was learning that feelings have nothing to do with God’s power being manifested, only faith. After the service, we left and went home. In the next few days, I had no pain. I was busy packing. Then we left for our drive east.

Suddenly I had a lot of time on my hands. I began to think about my physical problem. I kept checking the place where the pain was to see if it might return. I was fearful it might. On our third day of driving, the pain returned. I was very upset. Finally, I told Jerry. In that moment, Jerry turned around while driving—I was sitting in the back—and pointing his finger at my body, he rebuked the pain and commanded it to leave.

Amazingly, the pain left! I was free of pain again. Interesting, I thought. Several hours went by. From time to time I’d check to see if it was returning. Sure enough, whenever I looked for the pain, the pain returned. I’d struggle with it for some time, then ask Jerry to pray again. Each time it left. The rest of the trip was like that. Slowly I learned how to stand in faith for my healing: how to believe God, how to resist the pain in the name of Jesus—from the deep place in me where faith resided. I did not win this spiritual battle over night. In fact, it took me quite awhile to learn how to exercise my faith and walk in this healing.

A Night-Time Dream

One night I had a dream about a sick woman in a wheelchair. She looked emaciated and very weak. But in the dream as we laid our hands on her and prayed for her in the name of Jesus, taking authority over this infirmity, the sickness disappeared. Her color returned and strength increased. However, when we stopped praying, the illness returned. We’d pray some more, again the illness faded and health returned.

I believe the dream was trying to teach me something about healing and prayer, in particular the need to exert the spiritual power and authority God has given us until the victory is complete.

Disappointments and Unanswered Prayers

During this time, we also experienced some trials that challenged our new faith in God. In the space of one week, our two-year-old son became ill with chicken pox; he couldn’t eat because they were in his mouth too. We prayed, but ended up taking him to a hospital for relief. Then, I had a horse accident. The horse I was riding stumbled and fell; my hip was trapped under his weight. I was taken to an emergency room. And

following this, the two year old burned his hand on a camp heater. Ouch! We prayed and prayed, but his pain lessened oh, so, slowly.

Even though we had these “disappointments,” the witness of God’s presence remained in our hearts. In San Diego I had seen my world fall apart, yet I also had encountered first-hand God’s power! Nothing could take this from me now. We were like young children, filled with joy and enthusiasm, as we headed to Boston. God was alive and with us – right in our own family!

I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11).

God Has A Voice

Interesting about Boston. . . . I’d known for nine years we’d live there some day. I didn’t know how I knew, I just did. The impression first came to me nine years before, in 1963. It was at the time of Jerry’s graduation from Michigan Tech; he came to Boston for an interview with Raytheon and I came with him. As I was toured around, I felt a deep pull in my heart. Jerry turned the job offer down, but I knew then someday we’d be living here.

This “knowing” intrigued me. How could I have known we would come to live here? Intuition? Could God have placed it in my spirit somehow – or was it already in me when I was born? And we came by such a long circuitous route – Muskegon, to Houghton, then Milwaukee, Lafayette and Indianapolis successively, on to San Diego, and finally to Boston – I never could have figured it out before.

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the spirit of truth . . . I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you . . . and I will disclose Myself to him (John 14:16-17)

Shortly after our arrival, I received a letter from Nancy saying, “God is going to give you someone very special.” And through a “coincidental” circumstance, He did. I literally bumped backwards into a woman in a Christian bookstore; she was the wife of the pastor of Wellesley Baptist Church. Following apologies, she immediately said, “You need to meet Irene Jenison; she goes to our church.”

It didn’t take me long to visit her church. Sure enough, after the service someone said, “Come, meet Irene Jennison”. I was taken over to a gracious white-haired woman in her late sixties. With her face wreathed in a warm, welcoming smile, she said “hello”. She simply glowed with God’s life. Her eyes filled with love said, “Come Judy, we have an appointment together.”

Irene, together with her husband, became a great blessing – both as spiritual mother and role model – to me. She held me, hugged me, comforted me, loved me, and ministered God’s healing power to me – as I struggled to break free from my childhood legacy and live in the face of David’s ongoing battle with leukemia.

I bring this out, because I want you to see how much God cares about us. He used a woman on the west coast to send a woman on the east coast a “word” from Him. The Bible calls it “a word of knowledge”, a manifestation of the Holy Spirit (I. Cor. 127,8).

Yes, the living God speaks. He has a voice. It is important to learn how to recognize His voice. His words prepare us recognize His provision and receive it. In fact, this word created in me faith and an air of expectancy. I was on the alert for the person.

“Return the stolen books”

I was also learning to recognize the voice of God when He spoke in my own heart through the Holy Spirit. I felt this as an inner “prompting” or “impression” or “urging”. Some of these promptings brought me joy and anticipation, while others brought correction and pain. For instance, one day I felt an impression I needed to return two books to my high school. Ouch! I didn’t like this at all. These books belonged to me, I thought! Yet they didn’t; I’d taken them out of the school library – without checking them out.

I ask why now, after fifteen years, do I suddenly feel the urging to return them? To be sure, I’d never felt this before. I enjoyed owning those books, they were mine!

Or why did I another time feel an inner prompting to tell my husband something I’d kept secret from him? Could it be the power of God was at work inside of me? The following scriptures helped me understand something of what was going on inside of me:

O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life...I will put my Spirit within you, and you will come to life and I will place you on your own land (Ezek. 37:5-14).

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:26).

. . .for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. . . we have received the spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.” (I Cor. 2:10b-12).

I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts” (Heb. 8:10).

I struggled with these impressions from the Spirit for some time, then finally I sent the books with a letter explaining their return. And I sat down and shared my secret with Jerry. When I finished, a sense of peace filled my heart; I felt cleaner and freer inside.

“You Need To Be Baptized Again”

Another interesting experience centered around an inner urging to be baptized again. As I already mentioned I been baptized twice already – once as an infant and again when I was twelve – but I knew this was from the Holy Spirit. I struggled with it for some time, then asked God why. I heard God say in a clear way, “Because you had never applied any faith before.”

According to the scriptures, it is in the act of baptism that we are buried with Christ into death, so that we too might walk in newness of life: our old self is crucified with Him, and we no need to be slaves to sin. It is in baptism that sin loses its power over us. We no longer have to let it reign in us (Romans 6).

When I understood, I said to God, “Okay, I will do this, but I do not want my mother to know.” I knew she would not understand and it would hurt her. I made arrangements to be baptized at a Baptist Church. It was to take place on a Friday. I was all set, but . . . at four o’clock that day, my doorbell rings. “Who is at my door?” I wonder.

You guessed it. My mother! I couldn’t believe my eyes. Here she was, all the way from Michigan, along with her friend and my sister. She’d never come to my house unannounced before – let alone on the very day I am being baptized.

“Interesting,” I thought. “This is God’s doing.”

I gulped, “Mom, I have to go out tonight. I am being baptized in a Baptist Church. Would you like to go with us? I was glad I could say it was a Baptist Church. I hoped that would help.

Her face stiffened and she shook her head, no. “What’s the matter? Wasn’t your Baptist baptism good enough for you?” she asked. Ouch! What could I say? I went to the service hurting for her, yet knowing I had to obey God’s voice and not my mother’s.

Bringing Jesus Into Every Situation

During the seventies, we were learning to bring Jesus into all of our circumstances and experiences. And we saw remarkable results many times. Here are some of them.

Healing of Jerry’s Back

One day Jerry injured his back while removing a huge rock from his garden. He came into the house staggering in pain, and crumpled down on the floor. There he laid, writhing in pain. I called the children and we praying for God’s healing power to touch

Jerry, in the name of the Lord. We prayed perhaps for forty minutes – then suddenly the pain stopped. Jerry stood up and walked around without any discomfort!

It would take many pages for me to write about all the wondrous ways we saw the power of God operating in our lives at that time. We tried to apply faith in God in every area of our lives – fishing, weather, parking places, shopping, postponing a company move to Boston, buying a house. God seemed to meet us every time. During this time we saw the healing power of God manifested in our family.

Jesus On The Ferris Wheel

Another healing experience happened when Jerry asked God why he felt anxiety when a plane lurches in turbulent air – especially because he loves flying and has no fear of it. Immediately a picture of he and his four years old brother riding a Ferris wheel came to mind. His little brother freaked out that day; in great anxiety, Jerry frantically tried to flag the attention of the operator as he was whirling around and around through the air. We took this memory to the Lord and asked Him to heal Jerry. As we prayed, Jerry saw in the “eye of his spirit”, Jesus on the Ferris wheel, sitting between his brother and himself. His arms were wrapped around both of them, holding them tightly. On his face was a big smile. This resolved the anxiety.

“Jesus is pulling all the gray stuff out of my heart”

Another time, our third-grade son Tim came home from school filled with fear. Said he had to stand up and make a speech the next day.

“Do you know where the fear comes from?” I asked.

He thought for a moment and said, “Yes, it came the time you made me go into the post office to buy stamps. I didn’t have enough money, so I had to go back out to the car for more. I was so embarrassed, but you made me go back in with the money anyway.” I remembered the day; He was four years old at the time. I apologized for the injury I caused him, then suggested we pray together for healing. I prayed something like this:

“Dear Jesus, you see Tim when he was just a little boy and afraid. Please go back with him to that moment and heal him.” When I finished, Tim excitedly said, “Mom! Jesus came, and I saw him pull some gray stuff out of my heart.”

The next day he gave his speech without fear. Years later, in high school, I saw him stand up before hundreds of people and speak with great ease. I wonder if he could have done this if the anxiety and fear from this painful experience had not been healed?

“Mom, I want an Irish Setter for a dog.”

As he grew up, this son learned to bring many of his needs to God – lost toys, wanted dogs, the flu, difficulty in learning to read, etc. – hence we saw the power of God manifested in all kinds of situations. For instance, the dog. He came to me one day and

said, “Mom, I would like to have an Irish Setter for a dog.” Wanting to ignore his request, I told him to go and tell the Lord about it. A few hours later, I received a phone call from a lady in Lexington. While chatting, she asked if anyone we knew would like an Irish Setter. Somebody she knew in Hull, Massachusetts needed find a home for theirs. Tim got his Irish Setter that day! I ask, “What are the odds of this happening?”

The Power Of God Overflows Into Our Community

The joy of my new experiences often overflowed to others. Hence, many people came to know God in a more personal way. Eventually we opened our home for Christian meetings and invited a variety of people – priests, ministers and other ministries, both Catholic and Protestant – to come and teach the things of God.

As a result, we saw see the power of God transform the lives of many people. One was our neighbor Tom, an executive at Digital. After coming to our house and hearing about God, Tom decided he wanted to know God for himself. So the next day, in the midst of painting his kitchen ceiling, he asked God to come and fill him with the Holy Spirit. The power of God came and Tom burst out in another tongue – while standing on his ladder!

There are many more wonderful stories I could tell you, but I’d never get to the end of this book if I did. But we did see miracles, healings and changed lives – just like the Bible says:

You shall receive **power** (Grk. *dunamis*: force, miraculous kind of power) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses. . . even to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

These signs will accompany those who have believed: in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues. . . they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (Mark 16:17,18)

He is able to exceeding abundantly beyond all we ask or think, according to the **power** that works within us (Eph. 3:20).

Part VI: Christianity Offers Direct Experiences

One basic distinction between Christianity and the many other religions is that Christianity goes beyond a simple code of ethics, a list of rules and laws that one must follow, and offers direct, spiritual experiences with a loving God. It is a major provision of the New Testament period that God has come to dwell within the hearts of men. (Note: See John 14:16-18; I Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor 4:7)

The essence of the New Testament experiences was that of being intimately in touch with the Living God, some sort of inner communion or inner experience. We nourish an inward way of knowing. Christianity is more than...

- A system of theology and doctrine, a denomination
- A system of rituals and tradition
- A social system and network
- An institutional setting; A hierarchal system
- A system of good works; A code of ethics
- A system of rules and laws; A moral code

Two hallmarks of New Testament Christianity are spiritual reality and personal experience. We not only know about God, we experience Him. God has sent His Holy Spirit into our hearts, crying "Abba Father" so that we can have a direct, on-going love experience with Him.

Hence, we come to know truth with our hearts or spirits, rather than with our minds. God reveals things that our natural eyes and ears could never sense through His Spirit speaking directly to our spirits. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, God has given us direct communion with Himself. We hear His voice within our hearts. We are led by the Spirit. We have inner subjective experiences. Through insight, we receive revelation from Him, and He illuminates Scripture to us. Through intuition, we sense the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the voice of God.

“Go To Jesus”

As the body of Christ, we need to learn how to take people to Jesus. Jesus said,

“You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life” (John 5:39-40).

He also said,

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28).

Inter Action

Go To God In Prayer

Spiritual Realm Does Not Work By Magic

The spiritual realm of God *does not* work through “magic,” but through faith that resides in an honest heart. There are no magical words that will make God become real to you—but only an honest heart that recognizes its need and a tiny bit of faith *that God cannot lie, that what He said is true*. God Himself said that He sent Jesus to die for our sins so we can have newness of life. Did God lie when He said this? Can you trust what He says? It is faith in God Himself and in the power of God, revealed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that brings about changes within us.

Use The Key: Apply Your Faith In A God Who Cannot Lie!

Now simply go to God, praying from an *honest* heart. Begin your journey to God by praying something that is honest to you, such as...

God, I don't know if you are real, and if you are really there for me, but if you are, I need You in my life. I don't understand everything, but I know that I need a power greater than myself. I need You. Please come into my life. Thank you.

Here is the prayer I prayed thirty-five years ago:

God, I ask for your help. I want to know You. I need Your son Jesus. I place my faith in His work on the cross, His burial and His resurrection. I accept the blood He shed as enough for my sins and the sins of others against me. Jesus, I ask You to come live inside of me. I invite You to come into my life. And I thank you. Amen.

Two examples of the “Sinner’s Prayer”

God I am a sinner. I cannot save myself. I know according to your Word that I cannot make myself righteous, but I thank You because You love me and sent the Lord Jesus to die for me. And through His righteousness, redemption is made available to me. I believe that He died for my sins according to the scripture. I believe that He was raised from the dead and is my justification. I confess Him now and take Him as my Saviour.

Father, I know that I have broken your laws and my sins have separated me from you. I am truly sorry, and now I want to turn away from my past sinful life toward you. Please forgive me, and help me avoid sinning again. I believe that your son, Jesus Christ died for my sins, was resurrected from the dead, is alive, and hears my prayer. I invite Jesus to become the Lord of my life, to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. Please send your Holy Spirit to help me obey You, and to do Your will for the rest of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.” (taken from <http://www.gotquestions.org/sinners-prayer.html>)

Now, Where Is Jesus?

If I ask you where is Jesus, can you say with confidence: "He is in my heart. I asked Him to come in, and I know He did, because God cannot lie."

Those of you who already have opened yourself to Jesus Christ and His work may want to pray something like this:

Lord Jesus, I want to know You better, to come closer to You. Please cause me to see more clearly who You are and what You have done for me. Please reveal Christ in me. I thank you. Amen.

To learn more about the work of the Holy Spirit see Program Notes, "The Work of the Holy Spirit," 22 January 2006.

Inter Action

Read the following suggestions and questions, marking the ones you feel some kind of a positive response to. Also note what questions you felt a resistance to. Ask yourself what is that resistance for? Now do some of the following...

1. Read over the scriptures referred to in these program notes and meditate on them. Ask God for revelation of His truth for you.
2. Answer the question, "Can God lie?"
3. Using a scale of 0 to 10 (zero being none and 10 being absolute), how much trust do you have in God? Why did you choose the number you did.
4. Have you ever believed in God?
5. What caused you to no longer believe in God and when did that occur.
6. What keeps you from trusting or believing in God now?
7. What is it that you believe in?
8. What give you special strength and meaning in your life?
9. What personal evidence do you have that God is real?
10. Draw or paint what God means to you.
11. Do you desire to put your faith and trust in God?
12. Is God involved in your problems?
13. How has God revealed Himself to you through the earth and His creation?
14. Do you know of any miracles Jesus has done in your family?
15. List spiritual experience, those times when it seems that God had broken through and touched your life.
16. Ask God to show you the various kinds of intuitive, spiritual experiences you have had with Him in your life.
17. Have you every had a dream which seemed to come from God?
18. Record dreams that seem have a connection to your faith and trust in God.
19. How has God been there for you?

20. Recall the time in your life when you came to Jesus or God. What factors in your life led you to the point that wanted to know Jesus better?
21. Write out the story of your experience with God: you can use novel form, dialogue, poem, allegory, or essay.
22. Or draw that which will express what happened to you. Express the significance of the grand encounter to you. Record what happened to you during this drawing.
23. Draw a picture of your heart to represent the presence or absence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God living within it.
24. If you prayed one of the prayers, write the prayer down and date it.
25. Thank God out loud every morning and evening, that He lives with in you through His Son Jesus Christ.
26. Daily affirm the presence of God in you, through His Son Jesus Christ.
27. Share your story of how Jesus has touched your life with someone else.
28. Make God a partner in some kind of creativity or activity.
29. Find someone with whom you feel safe to share your experiences and struggles to believe in God.

Start a spiritual life journal in which to record your journey with God.