

BAPTISM TESTIMONIES

SPRING 2025

Baptism, which corresponds to this,
now saves you, not as a removal of dirt
from the body but as an appeal to God
for a good conscience, through
the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:21



4 Things You Need to do to Receive Jesus Christ Into Your Life

1. ADMIT your spiritual need. "I am a sinner."
2. REPENT and be willing to turn from your sin.
3. BELIEVE that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.
4. RECEIVE through prayer, Jesus into your heart and life.

PRAY
SOMETHING LIKE THIS FROM
THE SINCERITY OF YOUR HEART

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner.
I believe that you died for my sins.
Right now, I turn from my sins and open the door
to my heart and my life. I receive your forgiveness
and ask you to be my personal Lord and Savior.
Thank you for saving me.

Amen

ANDRES RUIZ

I felt my life was in a stand still. I was ready to make a change in my life but wasn't sure where to begin. I said a prayer to God to show me the right path. A month passed when a promotional opportunity opened up. I said to myself this is my chance, so I took the test. I ended up scoring number one. I was so thankful, I began to read and study God's word.

A few months passed and there was a position with weekend off opening up. Again I said a prayer, "My lord if I'm off the weekend you have my word, I will start going to church, no more excuses, no more football." Keep in mind I have not attended church in over 30 years. I ended up getting the position with weekends off. My lord granted me my prayer.

My first weekend off, December 15, 2024, I found South Bay Community Church, I met Sheri, she took me around introduce me to Pastor Greg and Pastor James. I been attending Church every Sunday. My lord plan has a greater purpose than we see, to give hope and a future.

I was living in sexual sin, confessed my sins to my Lord and savior Jesus, I repent, and I took the steps not just saying it but I took action. In my mind, heart, and direction, moving away from sin. I deleted pictures, I stopped all conversations and felt I needed to talk to my fellow christian brothers and sisters. I prayed more, read more, and fellowship more. Jesus blood washed all our sins away. No matter how bad it is to us he forgives. Our lord being sacrificed in the cross fulfilled the covenant.

God kindness and his love allow us to repent. I love you my Lord and savior Jesus Christ King of Kings

JAIBRIAN GREER

I have always grown up knowing about God. I grew up in Christian household and my mother definitely played a huge role. Going to church on Sundays and Bible study on Wednesdays was not optional and became part of my life. It was expected. However, I went to church because my mother told me to. I had a bible and never used it. I saw her pray and would often ask her to pray for me because I felt like God listened to her better. My parents separated when I was 8 and eventually divorced a few years later and I did not realize how much of an impact that would have on my life. My lack of true relationship with the Lord, left me with an emptiness that I was desperate to fill. I turned to food, social media, and other things to help me feel better. No matter what I turned to, nothing ever felt right or for the short moments it did, I was always left wanting more. I felt lonely, unworthy, unlovable.

It was not until the pandemic that I really reached my breaking point. My dad passed away in August of 2020 and my mom passed away in November of 2021. I used to say that my worst fear was losing my mother and that happened. I was so confused, angry, riddled and overwhelmed with grief. Everyday I had no idea how I was going to make it to the next. The only thing I knew to do was to pray. I saw my mom pray all the time, and I would pray occasionally but more so because I felt like it was expected of me. But my mom was gone and I didn't feel anchored to anything anymore. So I started to pray. At first my prayers were very short, filled with tears and anger and asking God why my mother was gone. But the Lord was so gracious to meet where I was. He allowed me to bring those very strong feelings to him and slowly, I started to feel better. I was getting to know the Lord for myself. I started to read my Bible for the first time and I started to learn about His love for me. I started to learn how merciful, kind, forgiving, faithful, and steadfast Jesus is.

Because of the Lord, I have joy again. He has provided for my brother and I since our parents passed, in ways that I could not have prayed for.

Because of the Lord, I have joy again. He has provided for my brother and I since our parents passed, in ways that I could not have prayed for. Jesus has opened my eyes and softened my heart to start accepting the love that he so graciously offers to me daily. He has walked me through grieving my mother, which is something that felt impossible. I can confidently say now that I know Jesus. He is my redeemer, my Saviour, my Lord, and my greatest and truest friend. He knows me, and He loves me. Where I once felt lonely, I now belong as a daughter of the Most High. Where I once felt unworthy, He calls me His own. Where I once felt unlovable, he calls me His beloved. The things that I used to run to no longer satisfy me. He strengthens me to flee from temptation whenever and however it appears. He allows me to treat and speak to others with love and patience, not anger. I still mess up and ask for forgiveness everyday for the areas where I fall short, but Jesus is what sustains me now. He fills me. He gives me direction and corrects me in love. Jesus has changed my life and He has saved me. I now rest in the fact that nothing I can do can earn His love. He freely loves because He is love. I am now able to live in the freedom of accepting and experiencing the love of the Father. Jesus loved me so much to die for me and I have life because of His resurrection. I am grateful that now I get to live for Him. I choose to live for Jesus!

STEVE ALVIRA

Deep in my sin, although I knew God I did not glorify Him as God and I wasn't thankful to God, but I was futile in my thoughts and my foolish heart was darkened. I became a fool and I changed the glory of the incorruptible God for many images of corruptible man. And I found myself worshiping these idols with every thought of my mind and every action of my body.

The shame and past regrets that I had, I covered up with temporal pleasures of the flesh; sex, drugs, alcohol etc. (common to all people) therefore I was given up to a debased, warped mind...and it seemed that, the continual, and repetitiveness of the sins I was committing just increased and the immoral behaviors increased as all of my thoughts were evil continually. (Romans 1:21)

Although, I didn't realize this because I was MASKING everything by trying to be a cool person, a good Dad (and I convinced myself I was a good Dad), or trying to be a good family member or a good worker in my career, therefore, all "the prides of life and lusts of the flesh" (1 John 2:16) that I indulged in, I told myself "I deserved these things." I made excuses like "if God created it he must want me to have it." Pretending to know what God's thoughts were, but never reading His Word to have any true idea. I would utter prayers, go to church on religious holidays and judge myself against the worst of society and say "well, at least I'm not like that".

No one ever asked me during this time, "Steven, what Jesus are you claiming to have "faith" in or "believe in", for Eternal Life?" (Matthew 7:23)

I was completely separate from God. (Romans 1:28)

But, God was working...

Then, came a sequence of events.

What I now know is God's Providence.

Through a series of near death experiences, broken relationships and broken hearts, God was speaking to me. "Chastening those he loves" (Hebrews 12:6 Proverbs 3:11,12)

First, through the love of others.

Specifically my Mom Jan and adult children Anthoni and Jordan who scolded me. (lovingly but sternly) through the years, who made a stand on my behavior as it pertains to my alcohol and drug abuse. Then, without judgement, kindly nurtured my remembrance of what was truly important. Loving others.

Secondly, (as The Lord started pulling me into His Word) I was attending a tiny church on a hill in Mountain Ranch California where I was living. It was at that church, on my knees, in front of the altar (which was a huge cross on the wall), with worship music playing in the background, completely alone, on a Tuesday morning just sobbing, begging and crying for forgiveness... With thankfulness for the emotions (although I despised them at the time) it's what brought me to understand my wretchedness and more importantly, His Love for that feeling, and because of that, that He will transform me one day into His image. (Romans 8:29) Amazing Grace!!!! With the terrible crimes I committed and behaviors I indulged in I could not perceive this feeling was ever possible.

This significant clarity, "change of mind" coupled with sobriety... (remember, I lived a worldly, flesh driven, deceitful, false believing life for 25+ years!!!!)this, allowed the Lord to reveal His promises to me, and to build,... precept upon precept, (Isaiah 28:10) build throughout the last 4+ years and reveal the comforts of His truths to me.

He allowed me to "change my mind" towards Him and His Unmerited Grace towards me. I am so thankful. I want that thankfulness to be reflected by my actions in doing His will.

This has truly been the Holy Spirit working in my life...because, the resistance I face is not unfamiliar to me....but my reaction and responses to them are completely different.

In searching out all of the questions that I thought I had about my faith, all were answered and have been continually answered with emphatic truths from His Word.

The false paradigm I had about everything I was taught and allowed

myself to be taught by the world, were all being erased by the correct Biblical historical narrative.

Shortly after these changes were being formed in me, the Lord gave us a precious gift that I had no deservance of.

Conceived at the beginning of God's regeneration of my life, Our daughter Marylee Janetta (MJ) was born. She was welcomed into the world 3 years ago and she has proven to be a precious gift from God to us all. Happy, healthy and full of love.

This is another clear and evident sign God has given me of restoration.

Because, only one year prior to her conception, a child was lost. A child I did nothing to protect and in fact, I helped encourage the emotions that led to the loss with my behavior.

Although I had not started truly following the Lord nor being obedient to His Word, the fact that almost immediately - the Lord restored a child to me?! A child that I didn't deserve?! Simultaneously orchestrating events that allowed me to be a regular part of Her life?! And to influence Her life...with the truth...that Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life?!...this reality is something so miraculous!!

His answering of prayers from years past and restoring that which is not deserved. Such love I can't comprehend. But I'm grateful, so grateful.

My life now has been renewed by Jesus. His undeserved death on the cross for what I deserve....I want to repay and honor with my life. My life has been renewed by The Word. He's HAD a hold of me all along, but it is by His Word that He's opened my eyes to my need for Him alone.

Although the strongholds of the past have been mostly torn down, by understanding and learning more of His Word, He is revealing the sanctification part of my faith and my walk with Him.

Through serving others, through the loving instruction of fellow disciples and Saints in the church who have been praying for me, who have counseled me, who have modeled true discipleship and a true understanding of Gods word by being "diligent Bereans", (Acts 17:11)

because of all of this encouragement, - I am feeling stronger and stronger everyday.

I don't take this as an overconfidence.

I know that the "satan masquerades himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14) and "is prowling around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

But My thoughts and the desires of my heart are towards God now. By His Will. "And with the sword of The Spirit which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17) I will resist the devil and he will flee (James 4:7)

I still have many resentments, like bitterness of lost time, hurts and past transgressions, But, I'm learning to persevere, to not question God's perfect plan or Providence, (as difficult as that is to do), I am learning, and I am committed to The Lord.

"As for me and my House We will Serve The Lord". (Joshua 24:15)

I want to make a clear and necessary testimony to the world that I am a Witness for Jesus Christ, that He's the Lord Of My Life and I will be a slave to Him and to what He wants me to do instead of listening to the world and its lies.

His Word is Truth, His word is Pure, (Proverbs 30:5) and He does not lie to me when He tells me "do not be deceived" (Matthew 24:4) and again when He tells me that I need "to watch, to remember, to repent" and that "to he who overcomes HE will confess his name before God and before His angels." (Revelation 2-3)

I want to always be learning more of His truth. I want to always be learning and discussing His truths to my family, friends and fellow disciples daily and not "conform to this world but be transformed by the renewing of my mind." (Romans 12:2) This is my faith in Christ.

So, thank you so much to Jesus! Thank you so much to you SBCC!!

Thank you to Pastor Dan, to all the staff and to all the volunteers who serve the True and Living King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Our Coming Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Amen

DEVIN SANCHEZ

I have always believed in God. But I didn't KNOW God. When I was little, I would pray, and I remember being able to hear God. Before I knew it, it was all lost. Before Jesus, I lived a carefree life, which came with consequences. My life was a rollercoaster ride without the safety belt. I found myself looking for guidance in self-help books, unhealthy relationships, excessive exercise, or even at my lowest, partying and drinking. It all felt okay for the moment but would fade away too quickly. I tried to be strong when faced with life's tribulations, searching for answers in all the wrong "outlets." Unfamiliar with God's word, He always gave me signs He was there waiting for me to connect with Him. I was in a maze that would never end, trying to make sense of my every turn, searching for love, safety, and peace. I thought I had found the way out but faced a dead end. All the while, God patiently waited for me to look up and see Him. I gave up trying to control my life without His guidance, which was the smartest thing I could have ever done.

He changed my life.

It was this one night my heart was in so much pain, and I prayed so hard. I released much of the tears, pain, confusion, and anxiety that I had built up. I felt the love of Jesus embracing me. It was a calm, comforting peace that hugged my body. God told me that night that He is my Father and that, with Him, He will always love me and keep me safe. He welcomed me into the door that ended the maze. On the other side was the beginning of our relationship.

I will never forget it.

Soon after, I was invited to bible study that my God brother was hosting and was gifted a new bible by my Godmother. Since then, I have hit the ground running. Because Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins with His sacrifice on the cross, He has offered me forgiveness. His resurrection is a powerful affirmation of victory over sin and death, providing me with profound faith and a personal relationship with Him. The faith that Jesus instilled led me to many answered prayers, and as I continued to build my relationship with Him, I realized that He will always love, protect, and provide. He has taught me patience, to be kind to myself, and to love others unconditionally.

He led me to join bible studies with loved ones, find South Bay Community Church, and a new way of living. My life is so different. Even in my darkest hours, my faith in Jesus lights up my every step. He has reconnected me to the person He intended me to be. I am the "little" Devin when she was genuinely happy living and finding everything beautiful. I threw away the "fake smile" mask I had to wear to be strong. I have learned to celebrate Him in my brightest days but even more in my dimmest days because with those, there are many lessons to be learned. I am so grateful to be his student. His love, patience, and reassurance will never fade. Jesus is my role model, my courage, and my faith.

I am ready for it all. For His will be done in me.

JOHN DINCO

LIFE BEFORE KNOWING CHRIST:

Growing up I was raised in the Catholic church. All my years growing up I believed in God. I went to mass every Sunday (at least tried to). During those times when I'm in church, my mind would be wandering else where not even connecting with God through the bible. I seriously had no clue how to read the Bible. I lived my life knowing that there's God but didn't know him intimately like I do now. I had this thought that as long as I showed up to church every Sunday, it's my ticket to heaven. I grew up not appreciating people and things in my life. I had no sense of gratitude and appreciation for the good things that were in my life.

HOW DID YOU COME TO BELIEVE IN JESUS?

I always believed in Jesus but it wasn't until 1997 that I really witnessed His power and love for me. It was March of 1997 when I was diagnosed with TB/Meningitis. For those that don't have a clue what meningitis is, it's the inflammation of the brain. I was confined in the hospital for two months. While in the hospital, I lost 67 pounds and was down to 98 pounds. I was in and out of my consciousness due to the stress from the inflammation my brain was going through. About a month and a half in to my illness, my neurologist talked to my mom and gave her what all family members don't ever want to hear. The doctor said that I had a 50/50 chance of surviving due to the viral count in my body. The medication they were giving me was not enough to cure me. So that evening, my mom told me that she didn't go to sleep. Instead, she prayed hard and offered my soul to God saying that if it's my time to go to heaven, she's willing to let me go and be with God. But if it's not my time yet, that I may be cured with His grace and mercy. In about a few weeks, a surgeon heard about my case and performed a procedure to try and help me fight this illness. The procedure went very well with the grace of God. After the procedure was done. I was told that my body along with the medication was fighting off the virus and I was going to be healed and go back to a healthy life.

After being discharged from the hospital around May '97, I had a very difficult time getting back to my normal life. I had some memory loss due to the trauma my brain had gone through fighting off the virus. On top of that, I had to learn how to walk all over again and gain all my motor development skills back.

Not to mention trying to go back to school again to get my degree. I developed a severe case of depression and had thoughts of the unthinkable. During those very dark times I was ready to give up and had so much anger towards God. I remember lashing at Him asking, "WHY ME???". I was placed on medication to help with my depression. During that time, I prayed to God wholeheartedly asking Him desperately to help me with my life. Along with the medication I was able to battle depression and get back to my normal life. I remember the day I spoke to a priest at my old Catholic church about what I had gone through within the past few months and he had mentioned to me that I'm here for a purpose. God has a purpose for me and I better be ready serve His purpose for me when the time comes. At that moment I was clueless to what he meant.

Fast forward to 16 years later, the year 2013 I developed DVT deep vein thrombosis aka blood clots in my legs. I was in Japan at that time and had no clue on how to be treated with the right medication to break the clots in my legs. I chose to endure the pain and not receive any treatment for it. I prayed to God desperately asking for help to get home safely and get treatment here. When I got in the plane, my whole row was empty which allowed me to elevate my legs to prevent the blood clots from spreading throughout my body. I was then able to get the proper treatment to break up the blood clots in my body. That was another life experience that God showed me His love, grace and mercy. I was truly saved by God and I wouldn't be where I am now if it wasn't for God almighty!!!

Before I was saved from meningitis and my younger years in college, I was very free, reckless, and arrogant. I treated people thinking I was better than them. I took advantage of people and took them for granted, yet I would feel no guilt afterwards. I lost a lot of friends because of my narcissistic mentality. God saw those imperfections in my heart. As a result he sent Jesus to forgive me of all my sins I have committed to people in my life. His death on the cross gave me another chance to be a better version of me the way God wants me to be. He died for me on the cross to forgive my old self filled with selfishness, pride, greed, deceit, arrogance and narcissism. Jesus died on the cross to rid of all those ungodly traits that the world had imprinted in my heart. With Jesus dying on the cross for me, His precious blood washed away all the filthy and earthly traits that my heart had. Now I proclaim that His ultimate sacrifice on the cross gave me a new heart that is filled with God!!!

LIFE BECAUSE OF JESUS: HOW HAS HE CHANGED YOU SINCE YOU PLACED YOUR FAITH IN HIM. WHERE IS HE LEADING YOU?

My life now is beyond all that I imagined because of Jesus. I now have a beautiful family (my beautiful wife Madoka and two beautiful children Nina and Kaiyu), a great career that enables me to support my family. Ever since God saved me TWICE, I completely dedicated my life to Him by serving Him any way I could. Now I'm here to testify about God's love and faithfulness to all His children. Our loving Father is always watching over us and longs for us to come to Him when we go through trials in our life. Now that I found my home SBCC, I have been able to connect with the men's ministry, my brothers in Men of Faith. I would have never thought that I would be this close to God and have an intimate relationship with Him if it wasn't for Southbay Community Church. I feel that God's purpose for my life is developing as I learn more about the Bible and how to apply it to disciple people and bring them to God. Now I wake up everyday excited to be a part of SBCC so that I can serve God and fulfill His purpose for me. I know for a fact that He brought me here to SBCC to serve and do His will. I am beyond grateful for all the members of the SBCC staff. All the pastors that work hard to deliver the gospel of God to our community. I'm so excited to see and fulfill God's purpose for me as part of the SBCC family. All the glory to GOD!! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

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TOYNELL WILLIAMS

Before Jesus

Before I encountered Jesus, my life was filled with overwhelming guilt, shame, and despair. After my daughter was born with a disability, I struggled deeply with postpartum depression. I blamed myself and questioned God, wondering why this was happening and why I wasn't the perfect mother my daughter deserved. At the same time, I was dealing with the pain of a failed relationship, which deepened my feelings of worthlessness and loneliness. I drank more, using alcohol as a way to numb the pain and escape my dark thoughts. My depression weighed heavily on me, and there were moments when I struggled with thoughts of suicide. I was in such a dark place. I kept telling myself I just needed to be stronger, that I could handle everything on my own. But the more I tried to fix things, the more I realized I couldn't do it alone. I was stuck in a cycle of self-doubt, fear, and hopelessness.

Believing Jesus

The first step toward Jesus began when my neighbors invited me to church. I went, but I was hesitant, unsure if it was the right place for me, and I felt like I didn't belong. After some time, I was invited again, this time by a friend. That day, the sermon felt like it was speaking directly to me. Every word seemed to address the pain I was carrying, the struggles I was facing, and the hope I was searching for. It was as if God Himself was reaching out to me through that message. Though I still didn't fully understand everything, and I wasn't perfect, I knew that what I was hearing was something I needed to embrace. I began to realize that church wasn't just a place I was invited to, but a place I needed to be. I wasn't perfect, and I didn't know everything about the Bible, but I felt a deep desire to learn, to grow, and to trust in Jesus.

When I first encountered Jesus, I came to understand that He wasn't just a historical figure but the Son of God who came to earth out of love for me. I learned that He lived a perfect life, died on the cross for my sins, and rose from the dead, offering me new life. What struck me most was the depth of His sacrifice. Jesus took on the punishment I deserved, bearing all my guilt and shame. I realized that I couldn't save myself, and no amount of effort could erase the weight of my past. But Jesus, in His mercy, did what I couldn't. Through His death and resurrection, He made a way for me to be forgiven and reconciled with God.

I came to see that Jesus wasn't just my Savior in the sense of rescuing me from sin and death, but also in every struggle I face. He offers me hope, healing, and peace, not because I'm perfect, but because He loves me unconditionally. Through Him, I've found the strength to forgive myself, release my burdens, and move forward with hope. Jesus has transformed my life in ways I never thought possible. He has given me the courage to face my pain, my mistakes, and the challenges I still encounter, knowing I don't have to do it alone.

Though I am still a work in progress, I trust that Jesus continues to guide me, offering forgiveness and the strength to live in His love. He's not just the answer to my past mistakes, but the hope for my future, giving me purpose and peace beyond what I can understand. Through His grace, I am redeemed, and I no longer carry the weight of guilt and shame. I am free to live the new life He has given me, and each day I grow closer to Him, trusting that He is with me every step of the way.

Because of Jesus

Since I have surrendered, everything has changed. My relationship with Jesus began when I realized I couldn't fix myself and that I needed Him. I started trusting Him more, leaning into His love and grace. I learned that my worth isn't defined by my mistakes or past, but by the fact that I am deeply loved by God. Jesus has given me hope, healing, and strength I never thought possible. Through Him, I found freedom from the shame and guilt that weighed me down for so long. I'm no longer stuck in cycles of self-doubt and self-destruction. Jesus has shown me that I am redeemed and that my story isn't over. While I still face struggles, I am a believer and a work in progress. With Jesus by my side, I know I don't have to face anything alone. He is my Savior, my King, and my source of hope and peace.

Through this journey, I've learned that it's okay to be imperfect and to not have all the answers. I've come to understand that God's love doesn't depend on my performance but on His grace. Jesus is leading me toward a deeper understanding of His word, helping me grow spiritually, and giving me the strength to face life's challenges with confidence. He's showing me how to be patient with myself and others and how to trust Him even when life feels uncertain. I know that I am not alone on this journey. He is guiding me every step of the way, and with each day, I am becoming more of the person He created me to be.

GAIL MURAKAMI

LIFE BEFORE KNOWING CHRIST:

My life before Jesus Christ, I was in denial that I could live a better life.

HOW DID YOU COME TO BELIEVE IN JESUS?:

I didn't prioritize my life in believing Jesus was my rock and savior who died for my sins. I listened and prayed over the December 24 Service where I heard the words:

"Lead for inexperienced how to navigate the trail confidence to trust
His guidance

Shout wisdom to me

Comes near to give me counsel

Homeless and hungry knew what it was like for me to know Jesus Christ as Jesus knows what I am going through. Believing in Jesus Christ, I accepted Him as Savior and King to live a better life. I did not prioritize my life as accepting Jesus Christ as my rock and my sins are forgiven by Jesus Christ dying on the cross for my sins.

I was church homeless but found my home in South Bay Community Church. Wandering in church wilderness in six months. Jesus knows what's going on with me wandering without a home. Shouting wisdom to me as I wasn't listening to Jesus guiding me and has given me counsel to know I am home at SBCC. I have joined the Women's Ministry, serving a meal at the Wilmington Mission and I have been accepted to be a member of the very special LifeGroup.

LIFE BECAUSE OF JESUS:

I am homeless no more. Jesus Christ knows what I am going on with me. Shouting wisdom at me and has given me counsel. My sins are forgiven. Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins.

LANA (LANEY) YANG

Jesus was the part of my life that I never knew I was missing. I was not raised in church, so I did not know anything about who Jesus was. Though I was provided a wonderful life by my parents, I was not fulfilled with the life that I was making for myself.

4 years ago I was going through some hard years. Looking back, I see that I was living a very worldly life. It was a life full of sinful habits that I thought would help me feel happy in a time that felt like endless sadness. But the outcome that resulted from all that sin, only made that pain worse. Whether these sins were out in public, or behind closed doors. Whether I sinned midday or midnight. It got me nowhere. If anything I felt like I was falling backward, or creating this hole inside me. Eventually, I was tired of being consumed by the sins I committed, but I did not know what to do. I did not know to call it sin at the time, and I had only ever known this one way of living. Because of this, I felt hopeless not knowing what I was doing wrong in life. So, going into high school I was feeling lost, empty, lonely, and defeated. It was in this hard time when God revealed Himself to me.

One evening in January 2024, something just clicked; I looked for Jesus. In this moment I was filled with immense amounts of peace and excitement. Something inside me just told me so clearly to seek Jesus. That night changed everything. In my emptiness, and my hopelessness is where the Lord encountered me. He extended grace to me in my sin and imperfection. And it was then I knew all I wanted to do was follow Jesus. From then on, 2024 was only a year of growth.

The following year, Jesus showed me what I can only describe as pure joy. He taught me who He is. He granted me salvation from my sin through His death and resurrection, and revealed how much He loved me. He revealed to me that I was never by myself. He was always there guiding my steps so that I would one day end up at the foot of the cross. Every hardship, every hurt, every bit of sadness, and every hit, brought me here today by God's will. I consider that to be such a gift and wouldn't have had it any other way. By following Jesus, I can confidently say that I didn't lose anything, but instead, I gained someone who is now my everything. Now I know that His grace and love reach places that nothing of this world could even touch.

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Through ups and downs, He has never ceased to show me love, grace, mercy, and patience. I could never earn His gifts, but all I can offer is my thanks and my love. Life after believing in and following Jesus has been nothing short of amazing. I have been able to break some of these sinful habits and do not intend to stop trying to do so and I've never been more genuinely happy than I am when I'm in His presence.

Though I still have my struggles and I mess up sometimes, I am proud to say that I will be working on them with God by my side. Through every stumble that left me guilty and discouraged, it is by His grace that I am here today, washed clean by His blood. Continuing my walk with Him is my great joy and my great honor and I am so thankful to be in this position today.

LINDSEY OSTENDORFF

God is what I've been looking for my entire life. I grew up in church, hearing about bible stories, always knowing about what he's done, but not who he is. My whole life there's always been a part of me that felt like I was unlovable. I knew I was loved, but it didn't feel like it. I spent so many years looking for that love in the wrong places, trying to find value and fulfillment in things that only left me more empty. I chased after the comforts of the world which led to temporary pleasures that satisfied my flesh in the moment, but just left me more broken than before. I got stuck in this pattern of sin that I didn't know how to break. I hated it. I hated how I found comfort in something that left me feeling so dirty and guilty. I hated how I knew I hated it but kept coming back to it time and time again. I didn't know how to break this cycle. I was so desperate for comfort that even if it was only for a moment, it was the only thing I knew. The more I tried to fill this void with worldly pleasures the emptier I became. I was drowning in my sin and I knew I was too far gone to save myself, and that's when He showed up.

Everything changed when I came to Christ. During one of our Youth Summer Retreats, Deep Love, He revealed to me the truth of his love, a love I've never known before. A love that wasn't temporary or empty, but unconditional and fulfilling. He showed me that I wasn't defined by my past. Every sin I had ever committed, every temptation I had ever fallen to, every time I had cursed His name or turned away from Him, was all washed away by Jesus' blood through His sacrifice on the cross. He knew everything I've ever done and still loved me. He loved me not because of what I had done, but because of who I am in Him. He called me his own, a daughter of the King.

For the first time in my life, I truly felt loved. Not by any human standard, but by my Father in heaven. He didn't need me to perform or put on a face to be loved, He wanted me for who I am. He wanted all of me, even in all of my sin and shame. It was in my brokenness that He showed up the most. He didn't ask me to clean myself up first. He loved me exactly as I was, broken and flawed. Suddenly it was right in front of me. The love I have been looking for my entire life. He is what I've been searching for. No longer did I feel like I had to perform or be perfect to be loved. I was loved just because I was His. He has filled the empty

spaces in my heart that I spent so long trying to fill with everything else. Now, I can truly say that I am loved because I found Him, and He is love.

As I look back on everything God has brought me through, I know that He's not done with me yet. My journey hasn't been easy, but I thank God for every challenge and trial because I know that nothing was lost if Christ was gained. I can see now that even the hardest moments were part of His plan, and through it all, He was with me, guiding me, and teaching me.

Though I know I will continue to sin and fall short, I know that he is continuing to work on me and renewing me daily. I trust that he is continuing to shape me into the person he has called me to be. May my life be a testimony of His grace.

ENIKO OH

I grew up in Hungary in an atheist family. Even though Hungary has rich Christian traditions, I didn't find God there. I did believe there was a God, but I didn't know Him until after my daughter was born. That's when I found myself in a very difficult place. I was alone with my baby, didn't have any help. She was born in 2020, I was completely isolated, and I also had to face the reality that I actually didn't have a marriage. My marriage was just an illusion. I became desperate. My world collapsed and I didn't know the way out. I felt like I was in a pit and I couldn't get out of that. I was drowning and I struggled with the guilt that I already failed my child as a mom. I cried out, I needed a Savior, and the Lord heard me.

After watching an interview with a popular pastor, I read her book which spoke to me deeply. I wanted to know more. I started to follow her church services where I heard her quoting from the Bible, and those words penetrated my heart so deeply, I knew it was the Truth. Things started to make sense to me. I realized I believed so many lies. I was lost before, now I'm found. I started to understand how I got where I was. I was thirsty for God, finally, I found Him, I wanted to know Him. I realized that Jesus was not only the Son of God, but He is God, and He made a way for me to leave behind my past and have a new life with Him. He died for me so I can be forgiven and have eternal life with Him, and He gave me the Holy Spirit to guide me.

It was the most difficult trial in my life to go through a divorce but I was not alone anymore. God was with me every step of the way. He strengthened me and gave me hope. He was my refuge and my fortress. Thanks to Jesus I have a new life now. The old has passed away. He is constantly renewing my mind and changing me. My identity is in Christ now, and I'm raising my daughter in faith. I'm very thankful for our church community and for the people God blessed me with. He brought great new friends into my life. I lived my life for so long without God, and I'm so grateful to have Him now and have an intimate relationship with Him. I want to stay under his umbrella and be faithful to Him till the end. I trust His plans for my life and my daughter's life, and I want to stay on that path.

YOEL SEGOVIANO

1. Life Before Knowing Christ?

When I was a baby, I went to church and got a little water on my head. That's called being baptized! Then, when I got bigger, we went to a different church, and liked singing songs about Jesus. It made me feel happy! I'm learning about Jesus as I get bigger.

2. How did you come to believe in Jesus?

We go to church every Sunday, and my mom reads us Bible stories every night. Plus, my teachers, Ms. Mee and Teacher Allen, make church really fun, and I love being there. I believe in Jesus because he is my savior and he always protects me and my family. I know that my sin is so wrong and so hurtful to God that I deserve to die for my sin. I know that Jesus died on the cross so that God would forgive me for our sin? And I believe that because Jesus died and came back to life, I don't have to die for my sins, but I can live with God forever. That's how Jesus forgave me, saved me, and showed me that He loves me; and that's why I want to live like He did.

3. How has he changed you since you placed your faith in him? Where is he leading you?

Jesus takes care of me! Like, that night, I was really, really injured from the car accident and I thought I wasn't gonna wake up. But I did! I woke up in the hospital, and my mom was crying, but she said God is big! That's when I knew Jesus was helping me. He's showing me to trust him, and that he'll keep me safe. He's leading me to know that God is bigger than anything scary.

BROOKE OTO

Growing up, I didn't have a religion that I identified with. My family came from Buddhist and Christian backgrounds, but we never went to temple or church, nor did we practice any particular faith. My understanding of God was very limited, and I thought of Him as a mystical white-haired man in the clouds, watching over the world. I didn't really understand what praying was for, but I got the impression that if you closed your eyes, held your hands together, and talked to this man in the sky, He would keep you safe or grant your wishes. I thought of God like a genie. Occasionally, I would pray for things like good grades or a dog, but then I would forget about it the next day. Since I didn't have faith, I was very self-reliant, doing what I thought was best for me and what was expected of me. But that quickly became tiring.

I come from a family of four girls, and I'm the oldest. Like many older siblings, I felt a deep responsibility to have everything figured out and to be a good role model. No one asked me to do this, but I appointed myself to be the example for my sisters and to do everything "right." In high school, I joined a bunch of clubs, took on leadership roles, joined sports, and got involved in various extracurriculars. I started to identify as someone who was always busy. I would feel good when others praised me for all that I did, and I craved more of that recognition. But as you might expect, this eventually led to burnout. I realized living a life of busyness for the sake of others' approval wasn't sustainable, but at that time, it was all I knew. It was during this period of uncertainty and seeking fulfillment that a friend invited me to her church, something I never imagined I'd be exploring.

At first, I was hesitant. I wasn't sure what to expect, especially because of how the world often perceives Christians. But I've always believed in giving things a chance before passing judgment. The first time I went, I was overwhelmed with emotion. I cried during worship, confused as to why I was so moved by a song I'd never heard before. The youth director told me that it was the Holy Spirit working through me, and I found myself intrigued by the experience. I continued attending the youth group for a while, even helping out with VBS and going to the women's Bible study. But I didn't fully open my heart to Jesus. I struggled because I saw people who identified as Christians, but their lives outside of church didn't reflect the love and power of God. This made it difficult for me to understand the depth of God's love. Eventually, I stopped attending due to other priorities.

Later in high school, I found myself interested in a boy who was a Christian. I shared my past church experiences with him, and he encouraged me to check out the youth group at his church, South Bay Community Church. Although I was hesitant, I went, and I enjoyed it. I kept going back and even started

attending the main service. It was refreshing to hear about God's love again and to be in a space that felt encouraging and loving, and that kept me coming back.

Eventually, the boy and I broke up, and that's when I realized something important: most of my faith had been tied to him. I tried to continue attending church and develop a relationship with God on my own, but when the world went into lockdown, it became harder to stay connected, especially online. I attended less and less and eventually stopped altogether.

During my time away from church, I began to realize how empty a life without God really is. There's a saying, "You don't know what you have until it's gone," and that was true for me. At first, I felt fine, but soon life started feeling dull. Something was missing. I tried to go back to my old ways of self-sufficiency, but I quickly became exhausted and directionless. I realized that what was missing was Jesus. Now that I knew who He was, life without Him didn't feel complete. That's when I decided to return to church, not for anyone else, but for myself. I was determined to build my own relationship with God and to seek Him for the right reasons.

Coming back to church allowed me to grow my faith in a deeper way. I started helping with the Youth Ministry and joined a life group, and that was the catalyst for me. Being surrounded by a community that points me back to Jesus has been incredibly healing. And having the opportunity to serve God's children reminds me of the immense love He has for all of us. God constantly pursues us, and all He's waiting for is for us to open the door and start a relationship with Him.

Looking back, I can see how intentional and timely God has been in every season of my life. If I hadn't gone to my friend's youth group, I wouldn't have cried during that worship song, which sparked my curiosity. If I hadn't started dating that boy, I wouldn't have come to South Bay Community Church. If we hadn't broken up, I wouldn't have realized that my faith was relying on someone else. If I hadn't stepped away from church, I wouldn't have understood how much I truly needed Jesus. And if I hadn't returned to church, I wouldn't have connected with the Youth Ministry and my life group. I know now that my life could have taken a much different path if I hadn't had a community to always point me to God. I thank God for His perfect timing.

I know I'll never be perfect, and I'll make mistakes, but what gives me hope is knowing there's a Heavenly Father who loves me unconditionally and will continue to pursue me, even when I mess up. Jesus's sacrifice has already paid the price, and because of Him, I am saved. My life is no longer for myself but for God—for Him to use me as a vessel to shine His love and light to those around me. As Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

MICHAEL CHU

Life Before Knowing Christ

I was born in a Christian household and I knew about Jesus but I did not have a deep relationship with him. I used to struggle with pornography until one day I felt a conviction to read my Bible. I opened my Bible and it was John 3:16. I decided to put my faith in Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I felt released from that sin and experienced peace in my heart and hope in eternal life with Jesus Christ. That was the end of pornography in my life and started my new life. I wanted to know God and do his work. But I became ambitious for money and getting strong. I had God running through my mind but I felt like I wanted to keep my other desires. I wanted the respect from others. I wanted to be the fastest, strongest and have lots of money, but I told myself it was okay because I was saved by Jesus. But I would not be willing to let God into my heart since I was trying to keep that life. I would tell him to forgive my sins in my prayers but I did not want to repent deep in my heart. My relationship with God lacked sincerity of my sin and I didn't have a desire to know the love of Christ that saved me. I was trying to mold my faith with the life I had, which was centered on being liked by others including their respect and their praise. Then this lifestyle failed to please me in moments where I would be feeling down when I am not receiving the attention of others and now I felt like it was time to turn more to God. I thought to read the Bible more often, reading with the lens of how can this be used to gain the glory of others? I acted only when I thought it would be beneficial to me and in my convenience. Then the time came where I became exhausted from having dual desires and so I gave up my desire to receive love from others. I told myself, "Now God is all I have left" but in the back of my mind I wanted to trust my thoughts which for me acted sort of as a safety net. So I responded with a desire to gain understanding and think logically through everything. I wanted to know the words of God before I really put my trust in Him. I treated God like a math problem where I could be the solution. Or at least I thought so. At this time I wasn't acknowledging Jesus in the fact he paid the price for all my sins. I was attempting to do God's work without relying on him to do the work. I became unable to give God a genuine thanksgiving and praise because my thoughts and logic were my guidance daily. I would try to remember thoughts that led me to do something that was "good" and with patterns of thinking that led to the "right" way of doing God's work. And I felt life was a real burden, without grace, often acting out of compulsion, and I had little to zero compassion for people. My trust and all my energy was focused on my thinking. If the Bible could describe me it would be puffed up like a Pharisee. I would not care about people I did not agree with or feel emotionally cared by. I did not know God personally, because I did not care to put my trust in him and I only wanted to be led by my thinking. I lived at the mercy of my logic. My thinking would be my safety net. By knowing as much as possible about the

Word I thought I was going to be a more effective follower of God but in reality I was a follower of my own thinking. If I didn't agree with someone, it felt very difficult to connect with them and I didn't want to. I would try to correct other people's thinking as respectful as possible, so I could get my point across. Days that I couldn't think straight, it would be hard to do "God's will" and I would look forward to thinking clearly the next day. I would feel guilty of thinking the wrong ideas. And this I contribute to the fact I had little to zero reliance on God in my life. Or I rather say little to negative reliance on God. I wanted to feel the power of doing things on my own, with everything under my control, in my own ways, and in my own head.

How did you come to believe in Jesus?

Gradually my thoughts wore me out and I decided something had to change. While I would be examining my thoughts when opportunities came to serve someone humbly in love and hear about someone's life and their interests it felt impossible. It was not until I judged myself and I looked back on some times I shared the gospel and every time I would try to give them the truth, I'd tell them my perspective on God. And the other person would be asking questions about theology rather than the possibility of believing in Christ. I would speak about Jesus' sacrifice but not actually serve them as Jesus sacrificed for me; further, I was not as focused on their response to the gospel, I was concerned with speaking the truth. I was driven by compulsion to do God's will, and I feared not saying the right things, and I was putting my trust in my judgement of these situations. I realized it was impossible to turn hearts to Jesus without actually trusting God in my own heart. Further, I realized I couldn't have love, nor be a follower of Jesus without trusting God in my heart and putting my faith in Jesus Christ and not my own thoughts. That day I decided to put my trust in Him and not in my own thoughts. To do God's work I needed his work in me and not my work because my work will be my work but God's work will be God's work. And that requires faith and trust, which I had not submitted to yet. I realized my best could never be enough, but I need Jesus to do righteous works of faith. I had deep sorrow for possibly turning people away from Jesus. Then I repented to God admitting Jesus Christ saved me from my sins in the past, present, and future sins paid by his blood on the cross and am in need of his righteousness.

Life because of Jesus

Jesus has given me a hope, an eternal investment that can never be destroyed or taken from me. I am able to live for the goodness of Jesus Christ who satisfied the desires of my soul. He gives me peace, grants me thankfulness, makes me content, and joyful. My aim is no longer to love with the love people show me, but love as the love Jesus loved me. If I make a mistake I can be okay with it if it's not a sin. And while I do sin, I know it is not from God and I cling to the righteousness of Jesus by turning from my sin and he gives me peace and brings

me closer to him. Whenever I play basketball I do not have to fear my coach, or do it for my coach, but I do it to the Lord's glory. I am content with praising God with my game and whether the shot will go in or not no longer matters to me. Whenever I do homework, my effort is praise to God and I trust it will be glory to him with a good or bad grade. Whenever I am training in the weight room the glory of God is everything that matters to me, he is the God who gave up his life for me and who I strive to lay down my life daily. Now I judge my heart to reveal whether I was putting my trust in God in daily situations. To conclude my testimony, Christ has enabled me to strive for the eternal crown of glory whilst being content and thankful for all present situations because it is Christ my Lord's will for me.

LEAH KEM

Life before knowing Christ-

I grew up in church, I always knew Christ was real, I just thought knowing him would automatically save me. Once I even threatened not to love him anymore if he didn't give me this or that. Like most people, I would lie a lot and forget about it. I thought that Christ would just forgive me and leave it in the past.

How did you come to believe in Christ-

In 5th grade, my elementary school got the privilege to go to a camp called Camp High hill. I decided to go for the week that we got to go (we were there for only 4 days). I ended up not liking it there, I would spend the whole day crying and staying up the whole night crying too. Jesus was the only person there for me and I realized that he was all that I needed for me to have a nice time the next day. He knew what I needed and helped me have a good time.

He was also there when I needed him the most in my life too. During the start of middle school, my brother had some rough times. And we didn't enjoy the middle school that we were sent to. During this time, my mom's colleague mentioned a charter school called IVA (Intellectual Virtues Academy). My mom had looked into the school and applied. The next day, my mom had gotten an email saying that we got into the school! We weren't sure if we wanted to transfer so we went back to school night. We really liked it there and it was so welcoming. We prayed and prayed and God told us that we were to transfer to that school.

Life because of Jesus-

Since that time I knew that everything happened for a reason because it was God's plan. Christ helped me realize what sin is! Sin is not listening to God (disobeying). Sin is also turning away from Christ and only thinking about yourself. Ever since he helped me realize that, he has put me in a new school that has a great community. Christ also helped me find a group of friends to hang out with when I transferred. He has led me to become a student leader at my school. I do believe that Jesus is my Lord and Savior. I believe Jesus died for me because he loves us and wanted to have eternal life with us.

VYANNAH KEM

LIFE BEFORE KNOWING CHRIST:

I grew up in a Christian household so I always believed that Jesus was real, but I never really accepted him as my Lord and Savior until 8th grade. 2 years ago, when I was in 7th grade, I fell into depression. I had mean friends who always made me upset and insecure and all I wanted to do was be on my phone. I would isolated myself and I looked for worldly things to comfort me instead of praying for help and turning to Jesus. I didn't want to live life anymore and I was just unhappy. That all changed in 8th grade though.

HOW DID YOU COME TO BELIEVE IN JESUS?:

In 8th grade I started to actually pay attention in church service and the middle school youth group services. Paying attention to the services helped me understand who God really is, how great he is, and how the Christian life is so worth it. That led me to start to actually pray and talk to God instead of mindlessly saying the same words to him everyday. I also started to listen to worship music, and read my Bible. Now I am in 9th grade and I go to a different high school than my mean friends and Jesus gave me amazing Christian friends that I can laugh with and worship God with and that's all because of Jesus.

LIFE BECAUSE OF JESUS:

Jesus saved me from my depression and I enjoy life now. I stopped idolizing worldly things and started turning to God. He changed my life for the better. What I believe Jesus has accomplished on the cross for me is he died for our sins so we could come to the Father. He didn't die for us to throw him aside, he died so we can have a wonderful personal relationship with him. What the role of resurrection plays in my life is that Jesus is so powerful and nothing can stop him, not even death, and it also shows how we can always turn to God and it's never too late to "resurrect" as a better person and Christian. Thank you Jesus!

SONNY LOBATTO

Before knowing Christ

I didn't live a "bad" life before knowing Christ. When I was very young, I especially felt no difference. It's not that I didn't believe in God or Jesus, I was just uneducated. But that gap in my knowledge led to me being nervous about religion and scared of messing up in the eyes of the lord.

How did you come to know Christ

A new friend I made last year almost mentored me and allowed me to ask questions I couldn't ask before. She taught me Christianity is more than a set of rules, Christianity is a relationship you create with a God that loves you. I saw this love through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for me, and have hope in the resurrection as he rose again. My relationship with God brings an outlet for all my worries and someone I can trust through all my struggles. Just like any of my other relationships, I want to grow closer to Him that leads to obedience and even making boundaries in my life. This far away scary God became a father, leader, and family member as I have accepted him the way he wanted to accept me.

Life after accepting Christ

When I have a problem, rather than holding it in I can share it with someone who works not for me, but rather with me as He gives me all that I need. I have someone who supports me through things I don't want to share with anyone else and I have become more comfortable with being myself as the only person I wish to impress and have validation from is our Lord. And the best part is eventually I will meet him and get to see the smile on his face as he knows me and has made the way to heaven. He doesn't care how long I waited to come to him. His timing was perfect, and I'm happy to be with Him. We can come to God as we are, as we seek to grow in our relationship with Him. I've had to make sacrifices, but God has given me this peace I can only find in Him.

PRESLEY BERGESEN

Life before knowing Christ:

My Mom and Dad took me to “South Bay Community Church” when I was a baby, and I was dedicated there. Since then, I have been raised while going to SBCC.

How did you come to believe in Jesus?

Please be sure to include what you believe about Jesus, what he did for you, and how he saved you: I believe in Jesus because the more I learned about him and heard about him, I started to believe in him. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and I believe that he is God. He takes care of me and loves me. He saved me because I have trust in him.

Life because of Jesus:

He changed me by being nicer to people, and to tell the truth more. He is leading me to spread the word.

JEREMIAH CHUNG

This is the story of how Jesus changed my life.

I was born into a Christian household, and my parents were very, very involved at church. While growing up, my dad became a deacon, then an elder, and then a missionary. It was for this reason that I actually really disliked church. My younger sister and I were always the first ones at church and the last ones to leave. We were at church more days out of the week than we weren't. When my school friends invited me to play, I'd have to tell them I had to go to church most nights. The invites to play became more and more sparse, until they stopped coming altogether. My friends knew I wouldn't be able to come anyway.

I knew all the right answers in Bible study, and I was the student all the teachers knew they could count on if no one volunteered to answer the questions. I grew up well-mannered and knew how to act at church so people would think my parents raised me well. Pretty soon, I began to believe it myself. I was good at school, I was good at sports, and I was well-liked by peers and teachers at church and at school. I had friends in many different circles, I had just gotten accepted to UCLA, and my life seemed set.

However, I remember one night during Youth Group Bible study, our pastor started off the study by asking everyone what they thought would happen if, after this study, on the way home, a car were to hit and end our lives tragically. What would we say to God when we got to heaven's gates and He asked why we should be allowed in? I froze. I knew the right answer was because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. But I froze because, in my heart, I wasn't quite sure I really believed it for myself.

I spent the next few weeks, months, losing sleep at night, imagining what happens after death. I just imagined a dark void of nothingness, and I experienced real and terrible fear for the first time in my life. Surely, I had been good enough? I knew the right answers, I knew Jesus was the way, and that should surely be enough? I continued to wrestle with this doubt.

Then, an opportunity to go on a mission trip with my church came the summer before I headed off to college. I signed up, excited to go on a trip

with some of my youth group friends and experience a part of the world I had never seen. I also wanted to spread the name of Jesus, but if I was being honest with myself, that wasn't my top priority. But God had something else in store. Then, an opportunity to go on a mission trip with my church came the summer before I headed off to college. I signed up, excited to go on a trip with some of my youth group friends and experience a part of the world I had never seen. I also wanted to spread the name of Jesus, but if I was being honest with myself, that wasn't my top priority. But God had something else in store.

During the commissioning service, I had a chance to pray with my family. Somehow, I found myself there with my dad, alone in the sanctuary as the service had already ended, and everyone had already left. He had wanted to continue praying with me, and so he asked if he could pray. Something in his prayer stuck with me. He prayed, "God, I pray that my son would love You with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength. Then I would be the proudest father in the world. I don't care what he does in this life for his career, or how successful he is, I will be the proudest father if Jeremy loves You with all he has."

In that moment, the Holy Spirit made known to me that I did not love God with my whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. There was a part of me still holding me back from giving God all of me. In my sinful pride, I felt I had built my life myself with my own sweat and effort, that there were so many things I had left to do, to build my own kingdom and success. I prayed that God would humble me from my pride during my trip to Cambodia.

Towards the end of the mission trip, we visited a historical site that would change my life forever. But this wasn't your typical tourist destination; it was one of the most horrific places in human history—the Killing Fields. Cambodia had gone through a genocide in the late 1970s, where nearly 25% of the population was killed. The Killing Fields was a place where members of the Khmer Rouge party executed their victims in the name of revolution. Countrymen had turned against countrymen. Not even 40 years had passed since these heinous crimes, and we could see the remnants of the horror. Bones, clothing, and accessories of the victims, still not decayed by the passage of time, still remained at the site.

I saw firsthand what the depths of sin looked like during that tour. I was

filled with righteous anger for the first time in my life—angry that people had been able to do something so unfathomable, so depraved, so monstrous. And then it hit me. In the eyes of God, I was no better than any of these murderers. Our God, in His perfect holiness, demanded perfect obedience, and even one sin would make us deserving of His justice. I knew in that moment that I was not good enough and would never be good enough. That I was a sinner, justly deserving of God's punishment for my sins of pride, envy, lust, selfishness, idolatry, greed, and so much more. I knew I needed Jesus, and that He was the only way.

And so I repented of my pride, of thinking I could do things of my own accord. I prayed that Jesus would forgive me for my sins and that I would live my life for Him. I surrendered my selfish plans and ambitions and asked that He would use me in whatever way He desired.

Since then, yes, I've continued to fall and sin. But since then, I've no longer feared death. I know where I'm going, and who I'm going to. My heart has been changed to pursue holiness and the eternal things that matter, like my relationship with Jesus, the faith of those who don't yet know Him, and serving His church. I've experienced peace beyond understanding, in situations that should know no peace, and continue to experience His faithfulness renewed each and every morning. I've traded my kingdom for His Kingdom and continue to live in His amazing love.

NIPA (AMIE) LIMPRASERT

God has called me. I was lost and I have been found!

I was a Buddhist from birth, just as my parents always have been. Being from Thailand, the majority of people there are Buddhist because that is the default primary religion of the country. I never really looked for God, but I did have my own idea or concept of Him - and my point of view was that, "God could be the same as all gods," but I was so wrong. I was totally confused for 41 years until one day in 2023 my boyfriend gave me a special Bible as a gift. I took it and said, "Thanks," and I was scratching my head like, "Don't you know I'm a Buddhist?" (Lol!) The book sat on my shelf for a while until I decided to open it last year around September 2024 and my heart started to hear the words of God through Jesus Christ.

Over the past three years, I had been struggling with anxiety, depression, loneliness inside, suffering with bad health, ADHD, and bad car accidents. All of those things started to affect my life, but I covered it very well so all my friends or people around me wouldn't even notice. I was acting like I didn't need help, and I just tried to have a little bit of faith here and there. I also used to be insecure and I had unhealthy relationships with my loved ones until I decided to look for help by seeking God in the Bible and genuinely wondered, "Who's Jesus Christ?! I need help!!!"

One day I showed up at SBCC with my friend (sister in Christ), and around that time, I started my own research about Jesus by watching a movie, archeology video, listening to the radio, and Christianity podcast. I even went camping alone in Big Sur just to see if God was talking to me, and although it sounds kind of crazy, I feel like I received a sign from Him and sensed that something good was about to happen.

The first time I heard a message from Pastor Greg, it was about being lost and found. It was like Jesus was talking to me and welcoming me to find rest in Him and to listen to the words of God: "I had been lost, but I have been found!" I was like, "That's ME?!" From that point on, I kept coming back to hear more and more messages from Jesus Christ, and in so many ways, I felt it all related to me. I was crying from hearing 1 Thessalonians 2:17- 3:13, and since then I accepted Jesus Christ into my life, I believe He is my savior, He is the Son of God, and He has died on the cross for my sins. I can't disagree anymore.

He's my protection and strength, both mentally and physically, right now and forever.

Jesus Christ showed me how to trust in God and have more faith. I received His love and gentle kindness that makes me like one of His sheep, and I commit to follow Him everywhere. Thank you!

JENNIFER PIERRE

Life before knowing Christ:

I was focused on worldly desires and I was making choices that didn't serve me or those around me. I had unhealthy habits that I used to cope with depression.

How did you come to believe in Jesus:

I've always believed in Jesus. As I came into adulthood, I came to the realization that Jesus was the only way. The things I was placing before Him were not worth it. I needed to acknowledge my sin and the direction my life was going, and turn to Jesus. Jesus saved me in moments when I was at my lowest. I had strayed too far and He came and brought me back home. And for that I am forever indebted to Him. I know that Jesus has already died for our sins, however I felt like He died again for me personally and delivered me from the wrong path.

Life because of Jesus:

Since I placed my faith in Jesus, He has placed me on the right path by renewing my spirit and giving me a chance to get it right. Jesus is leading me towards my faith in Him and my commitment to my journey with Him through SBCC.

I now have hope of eternal life because of the resurrection of Jesus.

IRENE YOUNG

I first learned about Christ in the 4th grade when a friend from school invited me to Vacation Bible School. I didn't grow up in a Christian home, so this was my first real introduction to God. As I got older, I joined the Christian club in junior high and high school, and I would attend youth group with friends. But because my parents weren't Christian, I never had a home church where I worshipped regularly.

After meeting my husband, Brent, I started attending Evergreen SGV in 2014. For the past 10 years, I've gone to church consistently, but at times, it felt like I was just going through the motions—attending on Sundays because that's what I was supposed to do. I knew I was blessed, but I don't think my faith was truly strong. That was put to the test in 2022.

That year, Brent started fainting—completely out of nowhere. It happened 12 times in a single year. Each time, it left me scared and caused a lot of PTSD. We saw cardiologists and neurologists and went through every test imaginable—EKGs, EEGs, MRIs, CT scans—but every result came back normal. I felt helpless. I kept asking, God, where are You? My faith started to crumble. I genuinely thought Brent was going to die.

The stress of it all took a severe toll on me. I stopped sleeping entirely for a full month, and eventually, I fell into clinical depression. Everyday life became overwhelming. Simple tasks—brushing my teeth, getting dressed, sending a text—felt impossible. I couldn't even think anymore at work and had to take a leave of absence for a year.

In an effort to heal, I started therapy in early 2024, but it only helped slightly. My therapist, who rarely recommended medication, told me I absolutely needed it. I started on antidepressants, gradually increasing the dose to the maximum, but even then, I only felt about 25% better. It wasn't enough.

Then, I learned about TMS therapy—Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation. It's a non-invasive treatment that uses magnetic pulses to stimulate areas of the brain affected by depression. I went five days a week for four weeks, and after just one week, I began to feel different. I had the energy to go to the gym again. I felt like life had meaning again. That same week,

my son Landon attended VBS for the first time. Watching his excitement about Jesus and seeing his faith grow was part of my own healing. Looking back, I believe God was working in my heart all along, leading me toward true healing.

If you're wondering whether prayer works, I can tell you firsthand that it does. I've experienced it in my life twice in undeniable ways. God healed Brent from his fainting spells in 2023—without any medication. And when I was struggling with depression, many people prayed for me—friends, family, and even people I didn't know. Even the receptionist at my workplace had her entire church pray for me. Brent also submitted a prayer request to SBCC. And in August 2024, God answered. He healed me. I returned to work in October, exactly one year later.

Through it all, God was teaching me to trust Him. I can't fully explain it, but I know He met me exactly where I needed Him most. His goodness is overwhelming. He has worked countless miracles in my life, and because of His faithfulness, I am committed to following Him for the rest of my days. I believe Jesus died on the cross for my sins so that I could be saved, and it's my hope that by sharing my story, others will also come to know His love and faithfulness.

Thank you to all of
the Baptism Candidates.

Thank you for your
vulnerability in sharing your
stories of your faith in
Jesus Christ.

He is so worthy to be
PRAISED!!

SOUTH BAY COMMUNITY CHURCH

SERVICE TIMES

SATURDAY 5:00PM

SUNDAY 9:00AM & 11:00AM

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