Baptism

TESTIMONIES

FALL 2026

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

Abby Kay

Life before knowing Christ:

I am 11 years old and a student at Valor Christian Academy. I was born into a Christian family and raised knowing God. I have been going to a Christian school since I was 3 years old. I have been attending Kids Krew at SBCC for over 3 years. I accepted Jesus into my heart when I was in first grade.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

I came to believe in Jesus by learning about him from my family, teachers and by going to church. I believe that Jesus is real and He is true. He died on the cross for our sins. He was buried and rose on the third day. He saves me from my sin. I believe in Him so I get to go to heaven.

Life because of Jesus:

He changed me by giving me a desire to honor him in all that I do. When I go through difficult times I rely on God to help me face the situation. God has given me the words to say when I had to face a problem with a friend. I do feel good knowing that my future is in His hands. I feel like God is leading me to do something great and I have a purpose in this world.

Aleister Herrera

Life before knowing Christ:

Before Christ, I didn't really know what Christianity was or what the beliefs were, I didn't really know what it was to be kind to people, caring & loving.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

I came to believe in Jesus by learning about him from my family, teachers and by going to church. I believe that Jesus is real and He is true. He died on the cross for our sins. He was buried and rose on the third day. He saves me from my sin. I believe in Him so I get to go to heaven.

Life because of Jesus:

I have been attending church services learning the word of god. I have learned that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, giving us eternal life. I also learned what it means to be more like Jesus. Caring for others, Loving others and being kinder to others because of God's help in leading my way through life.

Amelia Yamauchi

Life before knowing Christ:

This church has been my home for all of my life, and my family still attends this church to this day. I grew up in a kidzcrew learning every Sunday about the stories of the bible and how God loved us so much that he sent his one and only Son down to us to die on the cross for our sins so that we could have eternal life with Him. I knew these things in my head and tried my best to be the "good" Christian girl. I refused to swear and curse at school and upheld the outward image of a "good Christian". But I couldn't really sense or feel Jesus' love or the presence of God and couldn't really understand the depth of love I needed. I knew who God was, but I didn't have a relationship with him. I still went with the flow of the world when it came to loving materialistic things like money, status, and comfort.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

The first revelation
My faith really developed when I entered the youth ministry here. Some of the most prominent moments where I could visibly see my faith grow were at youth retreats. Being away from all the distractions back at home, school, and life in general, I was able to focus solely on my relationship with God for the entire weekend. I recall a specific retreat during the summer after my freshman year, which was called "Deep Love". I remember how my face dropped from the disappointed in this theme because I felt like

I already knew about God's love and didn't feel the need to learn more. But it was at this retreat where God really opened my heart to him. At this retreat, our worship team wrote a song that was based on Ephesians 3:17-18, and it goes like this:

"Our sin and shame
Your love has washed it away
We don't deserve this love
Here at your feet we lay

Christ dwell in our hearts
Root us in **your love**
Ground us in **your love**

Show us the depths of **your love**
The power of your cross
The price you paid for us.

How deep,
How wide,
How long,
How high,
How great is **your love**"

I remember hearing this song for the first time and, at the truth of the lyrics, all of the emotions that were hidden away in my heart emerged from its depths and spilled out in sobs and tears. I realized that there was this love I was craving so badly and it couldn't be filled by the world but was instead filled by the love of Jesus Christ. I had been chasing material things like academic success at school and friends who didn't think the best for me, and I didn't realize I was chasing worldly desires that could never fill me.

I remember being so convicted, thinking to myself, "I am such a sinner, and I'm so undeserving of this love that has basically been given to me for free. Why would he show me so much grace and mercy when I am so far from worthy?" In a sense, after this retreat I did develop this craving to want to know more about this savior who–perfect in all ways–died in the most painful and possible way for me.

Back to the world

But I am by no means perfect. After this retreat, I quickly fell back into my habits of living in the ways of the world. Living apathetically, I would bury my emotions again and focus on more of what the world has to offer me, like academic achievements and success in my extracurriculars. Of course, I still went to church every weekend and attended youth group. At home, I would try to read my bible more and pray more diligently, and yes, I did gain more knowledge in scripture and grew in my maturity of faith. Yet I was still confused about my purpose and my calling from God.

The second revelation

Fast forward two years later, and I'm at another summer retreat. Much has grown in my faith and knowledge since then, but not the temptation to indulge in the temptations of the world. This time, the retreat was called "Belong," and the main message was that "We are chosen out of this world".

I was confused and had questions: "Where do I belong and who do I belong to?" Coming into this retreat, I was worried about my future and had doubts that I wouldn't make it in life. I questioned if my life would be easier if I just accepted the ways of the world. Even with some of my longtime friends, I felt like I was struggling

to fit in or even find a group of people where I belonged at school. It felt like my faith had made me so different from other people that it was no longer possible for me to blend in with them, which felt uncomfortable to me.

I remember being at this retreat and feeling so happy to be away from all of the worries and distractions back down the mountain. As I got to have fellowship with a lot of my friends, I remember this feeling of overwhelming joy that filled my heart with so much fulfilment. This joy filled me with contentment, and it felt so right to be in a Christ-centered community where the love of Christ prospered. I recall the first quiet time devotional we had, which was titled "Faith and friction" and it had this beautiful quote that stuck out to me and it said, "This retreat is the barest glimpse into the beautiful life to come". And honestly, that struck a chord in me. It made me realize that this joyful feeling I felt had more yet to come in the kingdom of God. That nothing in the world would give me the same level of joy as I would when I enter heaven. It finally felt like I had a reason, a purpose, to keep on moving forward towards whatever plan God would set in front of me. The stress and anxiety about my future that had called for my attention back and the worldly desires I had constantly craved back at home began to lose its grip on my heart. The fog of doubts and uncertainty in my heart faded away as I began to accept the joyful love he so desperately wanted me to receive. It felt like I could finally live freely in this world without worrying about being accepted because I was already accepted; in a place called heaven. That finally filled me with a purpose and contentment that I was so desperately looking for.

Life because of Jesus:

Don't worry, I'm not the perfect Christian still. I came down the mountain on retreat high and still got tempted by the world. But I no longer feel uncomfortable with my faith because knowing that God has such a deep love for me and that I belong to His kingdom and not to this world brings me so much fulfillment, purpose, joy, but most importantly, love. The intense love he continuously demonstrates to me has shown up so much in life through answered prayers, but most importantly, the people he has placed in my life. It is by no accident that God put all these amazing leaders and advisors in my life to guide me through my faith and show me Christ's love. I am constantly reminded of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 as a way to live my life in accordance with his purpose to make sure that my faith can be reflected through my actions: that the love he poured in me, can be poured out to others around me.

Cruz Lopez

Life before knowing Christ:

My name is Cruz and I am 16 years old. Ever since I was a kid I always knew who Christ was but never really "knew" who Christ was. I went to Church summer camps, I liked singing songs but I never Because I grew up in the church it was kinda of difficuly to find my own true relationship with christ really knew who Christ was. Throughout the years of me growing up during middle school I really drifted away from the church and honestly never even had a thought about Jesus and the church. My life was full of sin and

I was selfish in my own way of living. Jesus wasn't in the picture for my "reason" of life, it was just YOLO. But even though my life was filled with great parents, friends, and fun hobbies, there was always a piece of me that always felt missing and I couldn't place my finger on it. I would live life to the world's standards for my own good being.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

The first time I was re-introduced to Jesus was by my friend Jacksen who invited me to a youth group during my freshman year of high school, and it was a great experience seeing and learning new things. In the end that day all I wanted were the snacks and seeing my friends that day. But after this, going to youth group would start to become a routine to me every Sunday from 2-4, and I would come to realize how welcoming that community was and how Christ was moving in bringing me back to him. But what truly convicted me in wanting to pursue a relationship with him was my first winter retreat at SBCC. During this time the Holy Spirit was filling my heart with conviction and drive to gain a closer relationship with God, and this will lead me to start coming to Church almost every Sunday morning and not just to the Youth group. Now it wouldn't just be a "routine" that I would go through every Sunday but something that I want to do. This led me to a greater community of people who God has given me the chance to meet and let them be servants of God who show me what it's like to believe in the goodness of God. Then I would start to create a Christian community God has blessed me to have. I would now realize that there is only one person who could fill that emptiness in my heart. And that person is Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, the Son of God who came down from the heavens to live a perfect life with us. We are undeserving of his

love and he died on that rugged cross for OUR sins. To save us from our old life of sin before and renew us in life with Christ.

Life because of Jesus:

After receiving Christ into my life, I can honestly say that things have gotten better and better as time has gone on. Following Christ was not like flipping a switch and suddenly becoming a completely different person. Instead, He has gradually changed my heart, my actions, and the way I view life. Through that process, I have started to find my purpose and understand what I am called to do, which is to serve Christ.

Living this way has changed me for the better and has taught me how to become a better friend, brother, son, and person overall .One thing I have struggled with for a long time is forgiveness. Forgiving people who have hurt me or done something wrong to me or even another person has never been easy, and it is still something I struggle with today.

One area that i struggled with and still struggle with today is forgivness, remembering what Jesus says in Matthew 6:14-15 truly convicts me to forgive others. Jesus has forgiven me for the things I have done, so I know that I am called to show that same forgiveness to others. Even though I have given my life to Christ, I still live an imperfect life and continue to sin almost every day. But still, Every day, I pray, repent, and ask Him to change my heart and my ways so that I can continue growing in my faith and live a life that honors Christ.

Daniel Chu

Life before knowing Christ:

I grew up in a Christian household, raised to go to church on Sunday, taught to pray throughout the day, learning all the Bible stories and who Jesus is. These were all really great things and what you would expect a Christian to do, but for me I just saw them as good. It's good to follow Jesus, not to steal, not to cheat, to obey my father and mother, but it was never about faith or love in Christ that brought me to do those things. I saw it most strongly in my parents, they loved me and my brothers so much and I saw that following Jesus was a way of living that could bless the people around me well, it was respectable and was something I wanted to do. So I did, I followed my parents example, granted I still sinned, I lied, I cheated, and fell short of God's standards, never really realizing how much I needed Jesus.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

It wasn't until I started at UC Irvine and joined a Christian Fellowship on campus, Asian American Christian Fellowship, that those questions got answered. I was very blessed to be surrounded by a great group of freshman guys in our small group, the first group of Christians I got to meet that were my age. I got to live with them, see how they live a life changed by Christ and more importantly hear about their faith, what God has taught them and who Jesus is to them. One guy in particular, another Daniel, really cared for

me and my salvation. He encouraged me, I can learn everything but faith is taking that extra step, beyond the things I don't know and committing to Christ as my Lord and Savior. Now I can look back seeing that he described to me the definition of faith found in the book of Hebrews, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1 (ESV). And also that no matter how small, how little I sin, even if I think I'm a good person, I am immediately separated from the holiness of God. But only through Christ could that separation be mended (Ephesians 2:4-6). Later one night, after chatting with Daniel, I decided that I believe that I'm a sinner, Jesus the Son of God died on the cross for my sins, he was buried and rose on the third day.

Life because of Jesus:

By believing in him, my sins are washed clean and I can have eternity with him in heaven. Coming out of that night, I was excited to learn more about Christ, now that I put my faith in him, I want to better know who my Lord is. I was encouraged by my parents to start reading the book of Luke, a Gospel, or book about the life of Jesus, whose intended audience was Gentile Christians which I now was! That was a huge jump start to my faith, getting to read the stories of Jesus for myself and who he is continues to amaze me. And now I continue to see him where ever I go, whether in the wonderful weather we get here in SoCal, the friends he put in my life at school and at SBCC, and more recently the grace he's shown me each and every day no matter how far I fall short from Jesus's holiness. I still have a lot to learn about God, and I'll keep falling short, but our faith is in a loving, gracious, almighty God that will never fail, never waiver. To declare this faith, that Jesus is my Lord and Savior, I want to get baptized, just as he commands in the Bible. Thanks for reading!

Danny Manai

Life before knowing Christ:

I was born and raised to parents that were Christian believers from the island of Samoa. I was an alcoholic with many broken promises to my family. I felt that paying the bills and providing food & shelter for my family that I was a good dad. Wasted money & time at bars thinking I had lots of friends but realizing later I was just a fool and it was the alcohol that I bought them is what they liked not me.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

Got tired of being tired and the incarceration of one of my sons being charged for 3 attempted murders. Seeing the disappointments in my wife and daughter's eyes when promises were not fulfilled. A friend came to my work and ended up sharing about Jesus Christ and invited me to church. I went the following Sunday accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior and asked him to take away my desire for alcohol. I've been sober over 25 years. I asked God if he would give me my son back that I would serve him all the days of my life and he did. I believe Jesus saved my family and I through my sobriety and living with right priorities according to the Word of God. Showing me the importance of being in the Word and the power of prayer. I believe Jesus saved me because He loved me enough to give His life for me. I believe Jesus has saved me from the guilt and burden of my past and from living

without God at the center of my life. I know I am not perfect, but I now have a Savior who loves me, forgives me, and continues to change me.

Life because of Jesus:

He has changed me to lead by example that my talk and walk are driven to be more Christ-like. Being baptized is my outward expression of choosing to follow Jesus Christ and to be an example to my family at the age of 63 years old it's never too late. He's leading me to share the Gospel wherever the opportunity presents itself and to love everyone regardless of the circumstance. My mom had a saying "Give them a chance" whenever issues arose in the family. Today, I am married to Pila, my loving wife of 34 years. Blessed with 7 awesome children 8 beautiful grandkids 3 son and 2 daughter in laws and our dog Queenie.

Ella Chang

Life before knowing Christ:

On September 6, 2025, I accepted Jesus Christ into my heart and completely surrendered to God for the first time. That day, God ceased to be just an idea I'd been exploring for ten months; His presence became real, and what I believed in before perished.

Jesus Christ was my grandmother's thing. I wasn't born into a religion and was hardly motivated to look into it. Instead, I

thought of it as an excuse for "bad" people to continue doing bad things. I thought Christians were supposed to be perfect, so whenever I noticed imperfection, I would comment, "That wasn't very Christian of you."

Hypocrisy, however, is funny, because even though I continued judging others for being imperfect, I knew I was too. I felt insignificant, and the only significant thing about me seemed to be my sin and my trauma.

In 7th grade, I was about 12, and I was exposed to concepts I wasn't ready for. It took me a while to figure out what had actually happened, and when I did, the beginning of my journey with depression, or really, immense sadness, began. Obviously, depression is a severe term, but that was almost all I felt, along with shame and anxiety and so much pain. I blamed myself more than anything; "if only I knew."

Entering high school made me realize I had more reasons to dislike myself. It was like being both alone and lonely, all the time. A repeated cycle of joyful highs and deranged meltdowns went on for nearly five years. One little mistake could set off a thousand hate comments inside my head. Being perceptive was only a curse; any tiny judgment made towards me was just another add-on to the reasons I should stop trying. Worst of all were the constant reminders of the sin I was struggling with, and the shame that came along with it. I developed powerful emotions of anger, bitterness, condemnation, and so much hate for the person I've become. What's the point? I was either too much or not enough. Little did I know, I didn't have to handle everything by myself; I had someone ready to take it all—someone who had already paid the price.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

This brings me back to September 6, 2025. I was at Tapestry LA church for the Send Nights, and I stood directly in front of the singers. I sang, but my heart wasn't really in it.

Then, I closed my eyes and focused on God; everything I was thinking, all my feelings that I once kept bottled up, I gave it all to Him, and He took it so willingly.

To this day, I think one of the bravest things I ever did was go to God and admit my brokenness to Him. But it also revealed how much more I needed Him. I finally began to understand that Jesus wasn't just someone I was supposed to believe in or a God I was supposed to be good enough for. He saved me. I believe that He is the Son of God, that He died on the cross for my sins, and that He rose again. He took the punishment I could never take for myself, not because I had earned it, but because He loved me enough to do it anyway.

It wasn't anything like me saving myself by finally getting my life together; it was admitting that I couldn't. I placed all my trust in Jesus and gave my life to Him, His sacrifice being more than enough for me. And, for the first time, I wasn't trying to carry my sin, shame, and pain by myself anymore. I was giving it to the One who had already paid the price.

As I ugly cried through Holy Forever, I hugged myself, trying to keep myself from collapsing, but then I felt this light that I've never felt before hugging me back, and I broke down. The sounds of the music blurred out, and I could only hear His voice, calming me, reassuring me, and putting my mind to rest.

Lord, thank you for holding me.

Life because of Jesus:

For nearly five years, I focused more on the pain instead of how I could get out of it. I thought my sin and my trauma were the most significant things about me, and sometimes I still catch myself thinking that way. I thought my problems were too little for others and too big for God. I don't have to spend every day trying to prove that I'm enough, or punish myself when I'm not. I can mess up and still go back to Him. I can be angry and still talk to Him. I can be ashamed and still let Him love me. I used to think that surrender meant giving up, but now I think it means finally confessing that I was never meant to do it all alone.

I used to think I had to fix myself before I could come to Him, as if I had to become good enough to deserve His love. But I could never do that on my own. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, He knew every sin I would commit, every mistake I would make, and every part of me I would be ashamed of, and He still chose to give His life for me. He didn't wait for me to become worthy of His sacrifice; He sacrificed Himself knowing I never could. I don't think I'll ever understand why He loves me that much, but I know I don't want to take that love for granted.

I used to look at reading the Bible and praying to God as this huge sacrifice of my time. In truth, they were what brought me to know Him more. A relationship with God was no longer in the back of my mind, but rather in the palm of my unclean hands.
All those times I thought, "When would someone love me above all else?" I didn't realize that He was there the whole time: through all my nights of crying, my heartbreak, my sadness, my sin;

He was there for it all.

Although I wouldn't wish my experiences on anyone, I know God used those trials to bring me closer to Him. My faith wouldn't be where it is now without Him carrying me through all of it. And just like that night when I finally surrendered myself to Him, I know I will stumble again. But I also know He's holding me through it. Jesus Christ is no longer just my grandmother's thing; He's my reason why I am still here today.

Erik Naranjo

Life before knowing Christ:

I have known of Jesus since I was young. My grandparents taught me a bit about God when I was young. I used to go to church with them as a child, when my siblings and I would stay the night. But my parents were not regular churchgoers.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

In junior high, a friend invited me to attend his youth group. I began to attend youth group meetings and church services regularly. At the time, church was just a fun place to hang out with friends and do fun activities. I felt as if I was walking behind God and not really with him or listening to his word. As I grew older and entered into relationships where God wasn't in the center, I stopped going to church. I stepped away for almost 20 years. In 2023, I was at a crossroads in life where I didn't know where my

life was headed. January 2024 came and I prayed and just gave it all to God. I prayed to him and told him that I didn't know what his plan was for me, but I trust him, and I know he's got me. A month later I was introduced to an amazing woman, Genesis Rendon who eventually invited me to attend service at SBCC. So I believe my prayer was answered and know he wanted me to return to him. I realized Jesus died for my sins and I was living in sin. Now that I accepted him into my live, I live to praise and spread him word so that I can have eternal life with him.

Life because of Jesus:

Since placing my faith in Jesus, I can see how he makes every day more special. I wake up and thank him for each day. I attend church regularly and serve on mission trips to Mexico. I keep him in my relationship and know he makes us stronger. I talk about him at work with my coworkers and some of them have started attending church also. Having Jesus at the center of everything just makes things easier because I know he loves me and want me to become more like him.

Erin Lee

Life before knowing Christ:

My dad has been a Christian his entire life. For me, I never really believed in Jesus until after a while without him, and came to realize that He is a literal therapist, comforter, and supporter. I wouldn't be the person I am today without Jesus.

Before coming to church, my life was decently happy. I had parents who loved me, even though they'd divorced a few years before. Sometimes, I'd have to repeat to myself that it wasn't my or my brother's fault.

The people I hung out with at school were mostly nice. I played with my best friend the most, though. She was fun and energetic, but could be pretty rude to me and others, criticizing things we did like artwork and writing. She wasn't Christian—she was an atheist, she said, but I didn't know what that was at the time—so I found myself mimicking her non-religious personality. I think a lot of people did, since she was easily likable; a quick runner and sarcastic. But I'm pretty sure I wasn't the only one who got pretty hurt by her.

We were friends for an extremely long time, but the friendship quickly ended after an explosion of a fight. I eventually got fed up with something she and other friends had done to one of my closer peers, and gave her an angry text on my iPad about how awful that was, didn't she care about the girl too? She replied with

some really rotten stuff, but I'm not going to put that here because it's not the most important. The significance was how hurt I was about it.

I told my dad, sadly, about what had happened. After he told me to block her (which I did), he gave me a bit of space. After lying awake in bed for a little, though, I felt a sense of relief. I didn't have to embarrass myself in front of her anymore.

I also confided in my mom, who helped me think about things I hadn't before. She told me she loved me and that she'd always support me throughout my relationship with my old best friend. Even though this helped (a lot, don't get me wrong!), as well as my dad's kindness, I felt like I needed a different connection to someone. Soon that opportunity came.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

My dad started taking us to church. Not South Bay Community Church, but a Korean one. I was always in awe listening to how Jesus overcame all His struggles. How He'd let insults wash right over Him, and stopped terrible things from progressing. I wanted to learn how to be like Him.

I eventually found out that the person who gave my dad the idea of going to church was his new girlfriend Karen. At first, I didn't really connect with her. I guess I was sad because my mom had broken up with her boyfriend pretty recently, and I felt like the tides had abruptly turned. (The boyfriend wasn't all that good for my mom, my brother, and me, though. So I'm betting God helped us through that.) But I grew closer to Karen, who married my dad and brought a whole new wave of family and friends for my

brother and me. She became my stepmom—we call her Saeumma now—and now is a very close figure of mine. She's probably my #1 confidant about questions about Jesus.

Jesus has helped me through so many things. As a 7th grader, I'm required to take the elective Health for one trimester, which covers things like hygiene, mental health, and physical well-being. When I got my new seating arrangement, I was terrified; my old best friend had become my seat partner.

But it's surprisingly good between us now. We talk and laugh and make jokes. Neither of us has mentioned that fight from before, but I'm pretty sure we both realized that it wasn't very relevant now and that we could be just fine as friendly peers. Just like Jesus, we've learned to love our neighbors, even neighbors who blew up at each other over an iPad screen.

Jesus has led me to create a world on my computer about a girl who discovers God like I have. Whenever I feel sad or overwhelmed, I tend to work on it and use my former confusion to help shape the story. I also pray to Jesus. Not even in a formal way; just pouring out my feelings or frustrations to Him, and He listens. A lot of the time, I feel a sense of peace settle inside of me, and that's how I know that Jesus loves me.

Life because of Jesus:

I know God will continue to support me throughout the rest of my lifetime, channeling His Word through my art and writing. He's going to help me spread His love for people like my mom, who still hasn't discovered Him yet. Through baptism, I hope that my declaration of love for Jesus will inspire others to find Him, too.

I believe that Jesus saved us from our sins, as well as ourselves. We were the ones who abandoned Him and believed we were better than God, no matter how amazing He is. Even today, people constantly mock Christianity online and in public.

Our sins would've never been cleansed if Jesus hadn't died for us. He had to die the terrible death on the cross, beaten and nailed onto that slab of wood for crimes he hadn't even committed (or were even provable). But by that death, the one we all deserved and deserve to die, he washed us from the awful things humanity has done as well as the awful things we're still doing today. In a way, it's actually a good thing that life is unfair. Because if it was fair, every person on the planet would be nailed to that cross.

God is my Lord and Savior. Without Him or His sacrifice, we would all be suffering the way we should have. But through His love and grace for us, He sent His only Son to die for us on the cross, which is an image of that very love. I hope that we can all find Him sometime in our lives, because it's a literal lifesaver. Figuratively and literally.

Genesis Rendon

Life before knowing Christ:

Before I truly knew Christ, life was simply… life.

I grew up Catholic and was even baptized in a Catholic church. As a child, I would go to church with different friends some were Christian, some Jehovah's Witnesses, some Baptist. I was simply trying to find my way. I knew God was someone I was supposed to believe in. I was taught to pray to Him every night, and I always knew He was there, but I didn't truly know Him. As I got older, I would go to church here and there with my mom and stepdad. They always taught me that God was good and had so much faith in Him. Even when my stepdad was fighting cancer, his faith never wavered. But I was angry with God. I couldn't understand why He would allow something so painful to happen to such a good man. Eventually, I started attending SBCC with my father, Tony, and my sister, Daya. I would go on Sundays because, to me, that was what you did—you went to church, prayed, and then went home. But deep down, I didn't feel God in my life. I carried this belief that I simply wasn't worthy of His love. I had spent so much of my life feeling like I wasn't worthy of being loved by anyone. My parents divorced when I was very young, and throughout my life, I found myself in relationships where men would leave me, choose not to love me, or make me feel like I wasn't enough. So I began to believe that if they didn't love me if they left me why would God? And I blamed him for everything. But, I would still go to church. I would still pray. I would still talk about God because that's just

what you do. But in my heart, I felt like He wasn't there for me. I convinced myself that He didn't love me. As time passed, I kept trying. I kept going to church. I kept praying. But I still couldn't see Him, feel Trust Him, or trust that His love for me was real. I remember once standing in our outside parking lot, watching a baptism, and thinking to myself how lucky they were to have God in their lives. When a member, Karne, came up to me and started to talk to me, she learned about my depression and invited me to join her Wednesday Bible class via Zoom. I found myself trying again, praying a lot for my depression, my toxic relationships, and my relationship with God, but still I didn't know God, and I was not worthy of him or his love. He didn't love me.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

After many years of living the same repetitive life—bad relationships, working, going to church, and simply trying to get through life I reached a place I can only describe as the darkest valley I had ever been in. I had been through many dark moments in my life, but this one was different. This time, I was done. I remember standing in my kitchen with a knife in my hand, telling God, "You wasted a human when You made me. No one loves me. You keep taking people from me." Once again, I was blaming God for the pain I was feeling, believing that because someone I loved had left me, I must not have been worthy of love. I was ready to leave this life. But then my mom walked through the door. She fought me to get that knife out of my hand. She didn't give up on me. She brought me to church, and I sat between her and my dad. I was still struggling, still hurting, and still trying to understand why I was here. I eventually shared what had happened with a friend from my Bible study group, and she took me to Pastor Dan. I told him everything. He went above and beyond to help me find the

support I needed. He checked on me, texted me, and made sure I wasn't walking through that darkness alone .By the grace of God, I accepted help. And I am still here. Time passed. I continued coming to church and slowly began committing more of myself to Him. I was trying. I was praying. I was learning. But I was still struggling. I remember Pastor Greg giving a sermon about the moments when God shows up in our lives—when we finally feel Him and know He is there. I had been longing for that moment for so long. In my mind, I imagined something dramatic: the clouds opening, a lightning bolt striking But during that sermon, Pastor Greg told the story of a woman who was about to take her own life, and how God showed up through a phone call from her friend the phone call that saved her life. And honestly, I was angry. I remember thinking, "Pastor Greg, when is it my turn? When will I feel God? When will I see Him?" The following Sunday, I saw that there was a women's retreat, and I registered for it. What's the worst that can happen? Again, still trying. So I registered. I drove to Malibu, walked in, and saw so many women I recognized from church. But there were so many moments when I wanted to leave. I almost did. Then we gathered in a room and began to worship. I sat next to a woman I had never met before. Her name was Ruth. During one of the worship songs, I sat down and began to cry. Not just cry I broke down. Ruth sat beside me, gave me tissues, held me, and prayed for me. I told her, "God doesn't love me. I'm not worthy. What I meant wasn't that I thought I was better or worse than anyone else. Deep down, I meant, "I'm not worth loving." But Ruth held me and prayed for me. The next day, our guest speaker invited anyone who needed prayer to come outside and meet her and the other prayer warriors. It took me a while. But eventually, I stood up. I walked outside and told her about my struggles, my depression, and the belief I had carried for so long that God didn't love me. She began

to pray for me. And when she finished, I opened my eyes. But it wasn't just her anymore. Five women surrounded me, holding me, praying over me, and loving me. And in that moment, I knew. I finally knew that God loved me. There were no clouds opening. There was no lightning bolt striking the sky. There was no dramatic sign. There was simply a room full of women who barely knew me, holding me and praying for me. and that's when I knew God loves me That was God. He had been there all along. He took the toxic people out of my life to protect me, He was there when my mom walked through that door. He was there when my friend took me to Pastor Dan. He was there when Pastor Dan helped me find a way through the darkness. He was there when Karen invited me to the bible study group. He was there when my family supported me. He was there when Pastor Greg gave his sermon about God shows up. He was there when Ruth sat next to me. He was there in every prayer I thought He wasn't hearing. And He was there in Malibu, surrounding me with five women who reminded me that I was loved. For the first time in my life, I didn't just believe in God.I felt Him. And I feel him every time I worship; I feel the Holy Spirit. And I finally understood that I had never been unworthy of His love. I had just been searching for His love in places that could never give it to me. But God never left me. Not even in my darkest valley. And I'm here today because He loved me enough to find me there. He was always there even when he was silent, and that is when he was working the hardest.

Life because of Jesus:

I know now that following Christ is so much more than simply going to church on Sundays. It takes commitment. It takes doing the work. It takes opening your heart, seeking Him, and most importantly, having faith that He is there even when He is silent.

Since I committed myself to coming to church more seriously, my eyes and my heart have opened in ways I never imagined. I began to recognize the prayers He had already answered the blessings I had overlooked because I was so focused on the things I was still waiting for. God even brought an amazing man into my life and he attends church with me. Erik is truly an answered prayer, and my Bible study group and my family can absolutely vouch for that. I'm grateful he has become a man of faith with me. We love serving together. We love going on missions and doing God's work. We love being able to show others that God is good, that He listens, and that He answers prayers even if the answer doesn't always come in the way or at the time we expect. I know now that God is everywhere. And I am so grateful that He never gave up on me, even during the years when I had given up on Him. I understand now that all I needed was faith. Looking back, I am even grateful for those dark valleys. I never thought I would say that. Those were the moments that brought me closer to God. Those were the moments that taught me to trust Him. Those were the moments that allowed me to finally understand something I had struggled to believe for most of my life I am loved by God. Completely. Unconditionally. I know now that if I hadn't walked through those valleys, I wouldn't be where I am today. I wouldn't be the believer I am today. I wouldn't have the relationship with God that I have today, and I wouldn't understand His love the way I do now. I know life will continue to happen. I know there will be storms. I know I am not perfect, and I know there will still be prayers that haven't been answered. But now I look at those unanswered prayers differently. I trust that God will show me the way. I don't need to understand everything. I just need to have faith. And to anyone struggling with depression, feeling forgotten, or believing that God doesn't hear your prayers, I want you to know this: I am a walking testimony that He is real. He does listen. He does hear

you. I am here because God came to me when I couldn't find my way to Him. I finally saw that He loved me. And I learned that sometimes we don't need a sign in the sky. Sometimes God shows up through a person, a prayer, a hug, a conversation, a church family, or a moment when we finally open our hearts enough to recognize that He has been there all along. We just have to have faith. Keep praying. Keep seeking Him. And be thankful even in the valleys. One of the things I feel called to do now is to remind young women of something I spent so many years believing wasn't true: God's love is the only love we will ever need to know that we are worthy. His love is unconditional and we are absolutely, without a doubt, worthy of His love. So whatever storm comes next, I know I don't have to face it alone. I will face every storm with God by my side. I am forever grateful for this church, my family and Christ and because of that this next chapter of my life is for him, I'm getting baptized for him because he is worthy and he deserves it God sent his son to die on the cross for me and I want to give my unconditional love to him.

Jaden Cho

Life before knowing Christ:

Growing up, I knew who Jesus was, but I saw him as sort of a wishing well or person to pray to when I needed something. My mom's side of the family is catholic and my dad's Christian, but we stopped going to church when I was in 3rd grade. So I had a narrow and scattered understanding of Jesus and Christianity. I knew that Jesus would help you in times of need and thought that

being a good person got you into heaven. I also thought that if you did good, good would happen to you, and if you did bad, bad could come upon you. And so growing up I would fall back on prayer here and there if I thought I needed it. If I was scared after I got a concussion, if I was scared after smoking too much weed, even if I wanted to say sorry for making certain bad choices later in my life. But really my life was all about pleasure. I wanted to have as much fun as I could, experience the most things, and fulfill my life with worldly pleasures while still being the best person I could be. Yes, drugs and alcohol and women, but also just camping and friendships and having a good time. But God has worked many times in my life to show me that nothing of this world can satisfy me, and no amount of being a good person can earn me eternity.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

In high school I was friends with some believers who would invite me to a Christian club and to youth group. There I started to feel God's presence and love through community, and I started to learn a little bit more about Christianity and prayer. And after I graduated I started to attend SBCC and even go on missions trips and I believed that Jesus lived and died and resurrected and that I should listen to the Bible, just because of my upbringing. I very slowly began to learn more and more about Christianity in these years of my life. God surrounded me with people who could teach and and grow me, and I truly did believe and try to walk with God as I started to learn and grow more and more.. But really I continued to try and have as much pleasure from the world while having as much morality from Jesus as I could. I wanted to fill my worldly desires and justify them or balance them or even supplement them with going to church and reading the Bible and praying at times. As much as I knew Jesus was moral and real and

just and as much as I wanted to follow Him, I wanted my worldly desires of fun and happiness and experiences more. I continued to idolize the world. But when I transferred to UCSB God revealed to me that no pleasure of this world could ever satisfy me. At the time I had just broken up with my ex who I was fully codependent on and who I put all my hope and happiness in. Up until this point there were different things I'd always put my hope in and idolize depending on my season. At one point sports another parties and friends, another drugs, and during this season her. So when we broke up I felt like I had nothing and fell into a season of depression and hopelessness. And at UCSB, the #1 public university for partying, I should have fell into the same cycle I was used to. Drugs, alcohol, partying, status, relationships, and women were all temptations that are so prevalent at this school and I was so comfortable with turning to those things for happiness. But I knew in my heart of hearts that these things wouldn't really give me contentment or fill the longing of my heart. I had cycled through everything and nothing worked. And in this season God graciously gave me Epic, a campus ministry. And he just showered me with love and His joy and his peace through that community. And I began to learn and was flooded with truths of what a real relationship with Jesus looks like and how he is the only one who can fulfill my life. So I fully gave my life to Jesus and wanted to walk with Him and repent of my old ways. In the two years I was at UCSB God Worked so mightily through the Epic community in continuous love and grace and support and He just showed me all of who He really is in this time all of His loving character he just showered me with in this season. I fell in love with Jesus.

Life because of Jesus:

But even after falling in love with Jesus I still had an agreement in my heart that if I read my Bible and trust in him and go to church and be in fellowship and do all the right things, then he would bless me with happiness and peace and community. And he does give us divine peace and joy, but He doesn't promise happiness or that we won't go through hardships. So I had to deal with that a lot as I continued to struggle with loneliness , depression, and hopelessness through different seasons of my life and wonder why God had stopped blessing me even though I was doing the right things. But he didn't he was right there with me through it all. He used these seasons to refine me and purify me and humble me to the point of nothing. Where no deed I can do no righteous act I can commit can earn me blessing or happiness. Where I feel like I've done everything I can in my own power but still haven't reaped the benefits. He brought me to my lowest most meek place to realize that He is all I need. That without anything even simply happiness or enjoyment of life, I was so depressed that I couldn't enjoy life, God has given me a hope and peace that transcends all reality and all worldly truths. I have a hope in a future eternal Glory that will last forever. I can truly say that I've realized that without any worldly desires, even without the simple and pure longing in my heart of happiness, I can find joy and contentment in Jesus Christ in knowing that his death and resurrection have given me new eternal life in heaven with our Father, experiencing the eternal joy and happiness that will last forever. Any happiness or joy or contentment I have experienced in this world in nature, in community, in worship, or even in partying and worldly pleasures are just a glimpse of an eternity in heaven that I can only imagine.

Juliet Ho

Life before knowing Christ:

I grew up in a Christian household, so from an early age, I learned about Jesus. When I was younger, I never really paid attention to what we were learning about at Sunday school. My parents and leaders always talked about how prayer was important because it was a way to connect with Jesus. Gradually, over prayer and time, I formed a relationship with God.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

I often have a hard time sleeping and during those times, I have a long time to think. When I am up late at night, thinking about everything I have, I realize how lucky and blessed I am. During those nights, Jesus opened my eyes to how everything I have is from him. My Grandmother gave me a prayer journal many years ago and about a year ago, I started to actually use the journal. I logged my prayers and after looking back on those prayers, I realized that most of them had been answered! For example, getting better sleep, my fathers arm healing, as well as many other prayers. He saved me through prayer and reading the bible.

Life because of Jesus:

I realize that Jesus has made me a better friend, sister, and daughter and I am more aware of the grace that has been bestowed on

me. He has also made me less stressed and worried about school and sports. He saved me from a life of sin and bad decisions. Overall, I feel like I have less to worry about because I know that he is watching over me.

Kristofer Youker

Life before knowing Christ:

Before I realised who he is and what he did for me, for us, I always felt a strong connection to something. Like something was guiding me, showing me right from wrong and sewing a moral code within me. But there were times that I would turn away from that connection and feel alone like a sheep that has wandered away from its herd.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

There was a season where I was living in my own way and I came to see the beauty in nature that God had designed. That's when I stopped running and gave my life to him. He has given his life and taken up my sins for me so that I am able to be in his presence because I am not worthy of it alone. He has saved me from an eternity of separation from God.

Life because of Jesus:

Because of Jesus I know I'm not alone anymore, life isn't just about me, I know the way, the truth, and the life.

Luke Cabahug

Life before knowing Christ:

Growing up, life was hard in ways that I didn't always know how to explain. When I think back to the first time I was introduced to God, I remember the old church I attended in Long Beach for most of my childhood. I heard about him all the time. I learned about the amazing things he had done, the miracles He performed, and the love he had for his people. I knew the stories. I knew the answers. But somehow, I never really knew him. I think that was the hardest part. I could see how much God meant to everyone around me, but I couldn't understand why I didn't feel the same way. Everyone seemed to have this connection with him that I couldn't find within myself. I knew about God, but he never felt real or personal to me. No matter how much I learned, there was always this emptiness that I couldn't quite put into words.

Looking back at who I was before I truly knew God, I can see how much I struggled with wanting to be noticed. In elementary school, I was a really big show off. I loved the attention I got from other people, especially when they praised me for something I was good at. I remember one strangely specific thing I used to do was when I would turn over my test paper as loudly as I could, just so everyone would know I was already finished. Looking back, it seems dumb, but looking back I realized I loved when people noticed me because being noticed made me feel important. I

carried that part of myself with me for years.

Then middle school came, and around that same time, I started attending a new church, SBCC. At first, I hated it. I hated everything about having to start over. Friday night youth group was something I dreaded every week. I didn't know anyone. I didn't want to talk to anyone. I didn't want to make new friends. More than anything, I was still angry that I had been moved to a different church in the first place.

I remember feeling like I had been taken away from everything I knew and placed somewhere I didn't belong. I felt alone, and I didn't understand why I had to go through all of that change. But I didn't know it then. I didn't know that the place I wanted so badly to leave would become the place where I would finally begin to understand God.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

Moving to SBCC changed my life forever. It was the first time I began to truly learn about God, not just hearing stories about Him or knowing facts about Him, but slowly discovering what it meant to actually know Him. And for the first time, God started becoming more than someone I had heard about. He started becoming someone I could call my own. Although, that was hard to remember in middle school.

Middle school was the worst time of my life, especially eighth grade. At the time, I surrounded myself with people who I thought were my friends, but the truth was, they never really liked me. Looking back, I think I was so desperate to be accepted that I ignored every sign that I didn't belong with them. I had always

loved being praised, and in middle school, that turned into something else. I started chasing popularity. I wanted people to know me, and I wanted people to think I was important. Eventually, I got what I wanted. I was hanging out with some of the most popular people in my school, but they were terrible. They were cruel to other people, constantly gossiped, and some of them were doing things I knew weren't right. Somehow, the people they treated the worst were my actual friends, the people who had been there for me before I ever became popular.

I hate admitting this, but I chose the popular people over them. I abandoned the people who actually cared about me just because I wanted to be noticed, and it is one of my biggest regrets. Eventually, I trusted one of those people with something embarrassing that I had done. I thought I could trust them, and I thought they were my friends, but I was wrong. The next day, I walked into my first class, and my heart immediately dropped. Somehow, the thing I had been so terrified of people finding out was now something everyone knew about me, and just like that, I was out of the friend group. I desperately looked around for the only people I thought I had left, my old friends, the people I had abandoned. I looked at them, hoping that maybe they would still be there for me, but they looked away. And honestly, I understood why.

After that, things were never the same. Things that I had trusted people with were now being used against me, and every day felt like another reminder that I had no one to blame but myself. The worst part was that even my old friends didn't care anymore, and honestly, I couldn't blame them. I had left them behind because I wanted attention. I had chosen people who never truly cared about me over the people who had always believed in me. After

school, I would leave as quickly as I could because I hated being there. I would walk to a bench at a nearby park and sit there alone, trying to comfort myself because I didn't know who else to turn to.

I stopped trusting people. I was scared of everyone, scared of being embarrassed again, and scared that if I told someone what I was feeling, they would just use it against me too. Eventually, it got worse. I started having panic attacks and I was constantly anxious. I was so overwhelmed by the fear, shame, and embarrassment. I felt trapped inside a life I didn't recognize. Even now, years later, I still carry scars from that time. I still remember what it felt like to walk into a classroom and feel like everyone was looking at me. I still remember what it felt like to sit alone, and I still remember what it felt like to have nowhere to go.

But then, one Friday night, I decided to talk to one of my youth leaders. It was late that night when I finally opened up and told them everything. I told them about the people I had trusted, how the people I never even wanted to know had somehow become the only people I had left, how scared I was, how much I regretted everything, and how I didn't know how to talk to anyone about what I was going through. I barely talked to my family about it because I didn't know how. I felt like I had nowhere to go except to my small group. Then my leader told me something I will never forget. Psalm 23:4 says, "Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me." That was the first time I had ever truly opened my Bible, and I think that verse found me at exactly the moment I needed. And for the first time, someone was telling me that I wasn't walking through it alone.

A couple of days later, I went on my eighth grade winter retreat, and for the first time in what felt like forever, I was happy. I felt loved, I felt safe, and I felt like I could finally breathe. My small group became some of the most important people in my life, and at the time, they were exactly what I needed. I laughed harder than I had in months, and I remember realizing that I was genuinely smiling again. Honestly, I had almost forgotten what that felt like. Then came the last message of the retreat on Saturday night. As usual, the worship team began to sing, but something felt different. The lights turned off, and everyone around me stood up, but I stayed in my chair. For once, I wasn't worried about what everyone else was doing. I just listened.

As I listened to the words, I started thinking about everything. I thought about my school, my family, my friends, my mistakes, my regrets, my future, my faith, and my entire life. I thought about the person I had been, the person who desperately wanted to be noticed, the person who traded real friendships for popularity, the person who had hurt people and then ended up completely alone. Then I thought about God, and about how, even when I couldn't see Him, He had never left. That night, I got down on my knees and lowered my head. For the first time in my life, I finally stopped trying to control everything, and that night, I gave my life to Christ.

I believe that Jesus saved me from my sins, and my separation from God. He saved me by providing me a place of protection from trying to live life on my own. He gave me forgiveness and a relationship that I can truly put my all into. One that can stick around with me wherever I go. Having something to lean on is what saved me, because that was ultimately when I realized that all that time I always had a friend. Even when it didn't seem like it.

With a new perspective, I can truly say the words that I know Jesus saved me by dying on the cross for my sins and rising again. And this time, I know that it is something that I believe wholeheartedly. Not just something that I would hear in church. Knowing how he took the punishment that I deserved just so that I could be forgiven, and be able to have a relationship with him was something I could never fully comprehend. Despite that, I know now with everything I am that I am saved by his grace, not because I was able to earn it on my own.

Looking back, I wish I could say everything immediately became perfect, but it didn't. My life didn't magically become easier the next morning. My anxiety didn't disappear, my past didn't disappear, and my scars didn't disappear. But something inside of me changed. My perspective changed. Jesus gave me a reason to keep going. He gave me people who loved me when I didn't know how to love myself. He gave me my family, my friends, and people who stayed beside me when I was walking through the darkest valley. Now, I have people all around me who I genuinely love and care about. I have amazing friends, and I even get the opportunity to help other people at school get to know Jesus. Looking back, I realize how different my life is now.

Life because of Jesus:

I used to think my worth came from being noticed, from being popular, from being good at something, from being praised, and from what other people thought about me. But Jesus taught me that my identity isn't built on any of those things. My identity is that I am loved by God, and that changes everything. The truth is, I still struggle. I'm still scarred by what happened, I still overthink, I still have moments where I'm afraid, and I still have

moments of doubt. Sometimes, the memories from middle school still come back, and I remember exactly how alone I felt. But now, I don't have to face those moments alone. Jesus taught me that scars don't mean you're broken forever. They are reminders of the places you've been and the things you've survived.

I'm still learning, I'm still failing, and I'm still trying to understand my faith. But I'm also learning that faith isn't about never falling. It's about knowing where to turn when you do. Every time I fall, I'm learning to turn my head back toward Jesus. When I look back now, I realize that maybe God was with me through all of it. Even when I was sitting alone on that bench, even when I thought nobody cared, he was always there. I couldn't see Him then, and I couldn't understand why I was going through it, but now I can look back and see that I was never truly walking alone.

I don't know where my life is going next. Maybe the road ahead will be difficult, and maybe I'll face things that hurt even more than what I've already been through. I don't know what the future holds, but this time, I'm not as afraid of the unknown because even if I have to walk through another dark valley, I know who will be walking beside me. God was there when I didn't know Him. He was there when I ran from Him. He was there when I was hurting, and he'll be there wherever I go next. After everything I've been through, after all the times I felt alone and all the times I thought I had nobody, I know now that I never truly had to walk alone. And for the first time in my life, that's enough for me.

Mateo Cusi

Life before knowing Christ:

I don't remember my life before Christ. When I was very little, my mom would bring me to South Bay Community Church and I enjoyed it.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

I don't remember exactly how, but I was with Jesus when I was little. I went to a Christian pre-k and went to church since I was in my moms belly. I pray to him daily and he helps me calm down in hard situations. Jesus saved me by dying on the cross for my sins because he loves me and he saved me from my sins.

Life because of Jesus:

Jesus has changed me into a better man. He helps me make better decisions, he calms me down, he helps me with a lit of stuff. He is leading me into a better life and I can't wait to get baptized and learn more about him.

Nicole Matsumoto

Life before knowing Christ:

I was raised Catholic with a clear knowledge of who Jesus was, but without a personal connection to Him. In middle school, friends brought me to SBCC's Evolution ministry, where my faith first began to grow. Church camps throughout high school taught the foundation of Jesus, but college brought a period where my priorities drifted. Even though I always knew God was with me, I wasn't actively growing closer to Him.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

A couple of years ago after college, Jesus drew me back to church. I felt Jesus tugging at my heart to build a relationship with Him as He knew my relationship at the time was going in the wrong direction and not Christ centered. As I reconnected, everything I had learned in the past came alive through firsthand experience of His faith, forgiveness, and love. Even when my priorities were misplaced, Jesus met me with grace, saved me from my sin, and showed me what unconditional love truly means.

Life because of Jesus:

Jesus has changed me by revealing the power of forgiveness, love and the ultimate sacrifice He made on the cross. Placing my faith in Him, I've made Christ the center of my life. He is leading me

into a true relationship grounded in complete trust rather than just knowing who He is. Even when I fall short, His grace meets me every time.

Olivia Cha

Life before knowing Christ:

Before knowing Christ I kind of forgot because I was raised in Presbyterian and Catholic churches when growing up. But I didn't really understand what everything actually meant. I think I was just very reckless, mean, and lost. Lost meaning that I didn't have someone to lead me. (Like help me when I was upset or angry).

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

One time I saw a video about Jesus online and then I started paying attention in church more often. I believe he is the son of God and my Lord and Savior, the only one who can save me. He died for my sins and he filled my life with guidance and a new reason to live. No more fear, guilt, and anger.

Life because of Jesus:

Since then, I feel a stronger need for prayer or reading my bible which I've never felt before. I don't think I have the desire for revenge or ragebait but instead of letting go of grudges and forgiving. I think he is leading me to become a righteous person and purify my heart.

Ruthie Quan

Life before knowing Christ:

I think I always knew who God was and knew what role Jesus played in the Bible. I grew up around faith, I went to church every Sunday, did Bible study, and prayed every night. On the outside I think I looked like I knew what I was doing, it looked like I had it all together. When the doors were closed and no one was around I was falling apart. I would always have a hard time getting along with my family, but when I was outside of my house I was a totally different person. I would have a lot of friends and spend a lot of time with them, but there still was this lingering feeling that stayed no matter what I was doing. Even though I was surrounded by people I still felt alone, still felt like no one would understand. There was a point in my life where I just gave up on trying to get help, I stopped going school, kept to myself in my room, stopped caring about things that used to matter so much to me. During that time I just wanted to escape from it all, I would sleep all day because I thought sleeping was better than being awake with all my thoughts I couldn't escape.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

It took time but my mindset started to shift. Healing takes effort, the results are far better than carrying that burden all by myself. The messages in church I once dreaded started to sink in deeper. The retreats I went on chipped away at my closed heart. I started

to accept the help from people who want to see me feeling better, no longer living in fear of not being understood. Small groups became a special time to discuss and to dive deeper into the word of God, this gave me more understanding of what I went though and answers that I've been looking for. Going to retreats became something I looked for forward to every year. Having that support system outside of home really helped me get through my struggles at home.

Life because of Jesus:

Knowing that I have a God that truly cares about me helps me to not feel so alone in life. I've started praying more often, even if it's a short random prayer. I think praying just helps me feel more at peace and feel more gratitude for things I would usually overlook. I think as a person I've grown to be more optimistic about life, something I didn't exactly have during my hardest times. To me it seems almost crazy that someone would love me, a broken sinful person, and still have mercy and redeem me into a new life. Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice of His own life just for us, because he did that for me I do want to take up that offer of building a relationship with him. Having a relationship with Jesus saves me from my own weight and consequence of my sin, without him I'd still be drowning in my sin having no way out. With him I've grown in my confidence in myself, I'm not that quiet kid that I used to be. But on the spiritual side I've strengthened my trust in God, I now remind myself that God has a plan for me and I do actually have a purpose being on this planet. I don't exactly know where God is leading me next. All I do right now is to be in the present, pray, and just enjoy the life God has given me.

Sara Nguyen

Life before knowing Christ:

I grew up in the church, so God was never a stranger to me. I knew His name. I knew the stories. I knew the verses. I knew what it meant to go to church and to call myself a Christian. But for a long time, I think my faith was something I participated in more than something I truly understood.

And looking back, I don't think that means God wasn't there. I think He was there the entire time. I just didn't know how to recognize Him yet.

One of the moments that deeply changed the way I saw life, faith, and God was losing my sister, Samantha. I was 15 years old, and she was 24 when she suddenly suffered a stroke. Seven days later after she got admitted, she passed away.

There are certain moments in life that divide everything into a "before" and an "after," and losing Samantha was one of those moments for my family. She wasn't just my sister. She was someone's best friend, someone's daughter, someone's partner, and a person who was deeply loved by all of us. I watched my family lose someone who meant something different and irreplaceable to each of us. And I was fifteen. I knew I was sad. I knew I missed her. But I don't think I understood grief yet. I don't think I understood how someone could be here one moment and suddenly not

be here anymore. I didn't know what to do with the questions that came with that kind of loss. And, honestly, I didn't know what to do with God either.

I wasn't necessarily angry with Him. I didn't stop believing that He existed. I just didn't know where He belonged in my grief.
I remember looking at my family and wondering how they were going to keep going. Especially my parents. They had lost their daughter, their child. And yet, somehow, underneath their grief, there was still faith.

My mom grew up Catholic, and my dad grew up Buddhist. Before they were married, they both came to know Christ and became believers together. At the time, I don't think I understood the significance of that.

But now I look back and realize that the faith I saw in my family wasn't something that suddenly appeared when life became difficult. It had been planted long before I understood it.

I saw it in my parents. I saw it in my older sister, who had been so close to Samantha. I saw it in my twin sister and in the rest of my family as we tried to navigate a loss none of us were prepared for. And although I couldn't see it then, I think God was quietly showing me something: Faith doesn't mean you don't hurt. It means you don't have to hurt alone.

For a while after that, my relationship with God became even more distant. I knew He was there, but I didn't know how to reach for Him. Then, in 2018, I went through another season that challenged me in a completely different way. I began experiencing seizures and severe anxiety. Suddenly, I was spending so much of

my life trying to understand what was happening to me. I went through various hospital visits, therapy sessions, neurological testing, a spinal tap; I even had wires attached to my head while doctors tried to figure out what was going on. There were periods when I was experiencing multiple seizures a day. And I became afraid.

Not just of having another seizure, but of myself. I began to believe that there was always something wrong with me. I was too anxious. Too sensitive. Too overwhelmed. I felt like I was constantly trying to fix something about myself. I started putting so much of my identity into the things I was struggling with. And I think that was another place where God began gently pulling me back toward Him.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

My story of coming to Christ isn't really a story about one dramatic moment. It's more like realizing that God had been writing a story in my life long before I knew how to read it. When I was young, I thought faith was something you were supposed to have. As I got older, I began realizing that faith is something you have to surrender yourself to. I started looking back at the things I had experienced and seeing them differently. I started seeing God in the faith of my parents. I started seeing Him in the way my family continued loving each other through losing Samantha. I started seeing Him in the moments when I was scared and somehow still made it through. And I started realizing that maybe God wasn't asking me to understand every painful thing that had happened to me. Maybe He was asking me to trust Him even when I didn't understand. And that was a really difficult thing for me to learn. Because I wanted answers. I wanted to know why Samantha

had to die. I wanted to know why I struggled with anxiety. I wanted to know why my life couldn't just feel simple sometimes. But slowly, I began realizing that knowing God isn't the same thing as having every answer. And that changed my relationship with Him. I stopped seeing God as someone I needed to figure out and started seeing Him as someone I could actually know.

I learned that His love for me wasn't dependent on how well I was doing. It wasn't dependent on whether I was having a good day or a bad day. It wasn't dependent on whether I was strong, confident, healthy, or perfect. It was grace. And the more I understood grace, the more I understood Jesus. I didn't have to earn His love. I didn't have to become a perfect version of myself before coming to Him. I could come to Him exactly as I was. And somehow, that was the thing that made me want to know Him more.

Life because of Jesus:

Following Jesus hasn't made my life perfect. I still struggle. I still get anxious. I still have fears. I still have moments where I wonder, "What if something happens?" I still have thoughts and struggles that I wish I didn't have.

But the difference now is that I don't believe those things get the final word.I have somewhere to take them. I have someone to trust when I don't understand. But one of the things God has been teaching me is that I can't use my struggles as an excuse to decide who I am. For a long time, I think I used my mental health as a crutch. I let the things I was struggling with become an explanation for everything I couldn't do, everything I was afraid of, and sometimes even the way I treated people.

And underneath that, there was something deeper. I genuinely didn't believe I deserved very much. I would look at my mistakes, my sin, the times I've lied, the ways I've hurt people, the thoughts I've had, and all the things I knew weren't pleasing to God, and I would use them as evidence against myself. I thought, "Why would God want someone like me?"

Sometimes I didn't just think I had done something wrong. I thought I was wrong. I thought I was too broken, too difficult, too sinful, or simply not good enough to deserve the things God had given me. But God has slowly been teaching me the difference between conviction and condemnation. Conviction says, "Come back to Me." Condemnation says, "You are hopeless."
And Jesus never asked me to sit in shame and decide that I'm worthless. He asked me to come to Him. The truth is, I am a sinner. I do mess up. I do lie. I do things I wish I hadn't done. I am not a perfect person, and I never will be. But that's exactly why I need Jesus. My salvation isn't dependent on me being good enough. It's dependent on His grace. And I think that is one of the most humbling things I have ever realized. God doesn't love me because I have earned it. He doesn't love me because I always make the right choice. He doesn't love me because I am a good person.

He loves me because He is God, and He is good! So now, when I struggle, I don't want my struggles to become my identity anymore. I don't want to say, "I'm anxious, therefore I'm weak." I don't want to say, "I've sinned, therefore I'm worthless." I don't want to say, "I've messed up, therefore I don't deserve God's love." Instead, I want to be able to say: "I messed up. I sinned. I am imperfect. And I still have God." And somehow, that sentence has become one of the most freeing things I've ever learned.

Because having God doesn't mean I suddenly became someone who doesn't struggle. It means I finally have somewhere to go when I do. When fear tells me I'm alone, I can remember that God is with me. When shame tells me I'm not worthy, I can remember that Jesus already paid the price I could never pay for myself. When I start thinking that I have to earn the good things in my life, I can remember grace. And when I look at my life now, I see grace everywhere. I see it in my beautiful, strong family. I see it in the wonderful people God has placed around me. I see it in the amazing love I have been given. I see it in the things I once prayed for and in the things I didn't even know I needed. And I even see grace when I look back at the hardest parts of my story. I still miss Samantha.I always will.

But now, when I think about the faith I saw in my family after she passed, I understand it differently. At fifteen, I thought I was watching my family survive something impossible. Now I think I was watching God carry us. And maybe that's one of the biggest things I have learned about Him: God doesn't always remove the weight. Sometimes He shows us that we were never meant to carry it alone. That's why I want to be baptized. I'm not being baptized because I have everything figured out. I'm being baptized because I finally understand that I don't have to. I want my life to belong to Jesus, not just the parts of my life that are easy, not just the parts that look good, but all of it. The grief, the fear, the gratitude, the uncertainty, the joy, the future. All of it! I want to keep learning what it means to trust Him, to follow Him, and to let Him shape who I am becoming. And when I look back at my life, I don't want the most important part of my story to be the things I went through. I want it to be God who stayed.

He was there before I knew how to look for Him.

He was there when I couldn't understand why I was hurting. He was there when I was afraid. He gave me grace when I didn't know how badly I needed it. For so long, I thought my story was about me trying to find my way back to God. Now I think I see it differently. I wasn't the one who found Him. He was the One who never stopped finding me. And maybe that's what faith means to me now, not knowing exactly where the road leads, but knowing Who is walking beside me.I may not understand everything God has allowed in my story. But I know who He is. And for the first time, I don't need every answer to trust Him. I just want to keep walking with Him.

Tara Diego

Life before knowing Christ:

I grew up in a Christian home, believing in God, and in having a relationship with Jesus. He's always been someone I could talk to at any time. I don't remember ever doubting He was real. But for a long time, my faith was tied to other people. In my teens I prayed when my heart was broken, and in my twenties I leaned on support from Bible study groups and women's huddles through dark seasons. In relationships, I romanticized being the one to bring a partner to Jesus and introduce them to my church community. It never happened in those relationships, and I came to see I was placing my faith in that hope rather than in my own walk with the Lord.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

It started in childhood. Once, waiting in the car with my sister

while our mom ran into a store, rain started coming through the cracked windows. I got scared and asked my sister to pray with me that Mom would come back, and she came right back. It's a small memory, but it's when prayer became real to me. As I grew, scripture confirmed what I'd always felt, especially Philippians 4:6 and 4:13 and Psalms 34:18. Faith-based support and community always felt like home.

Jesus saved my soul by committing the greatest act of love, giving his life for mine and rising again so we can be with Him forever. He has saved me from my sins involved with lacking physical boundaries outside of marriage and the idolatry that comes with putting a person before God. I believe Jesus has forgiven me over and over again. I want to stop falling back into that unhealthy cycle, and to live a life that honors my Savior above all.

Life because of Jesus:

I know I can't do this life alone. I have felt the Holy Spirit pull me out of dark places and struggles with loneliness and suicidal thoughts. In my prayers and quiet time, God has always drawn me toward Him and reminded me that he will never let me go. Earlier this year, through lots of prayer, therapy sessions, and a lot of self reflection, I accepted that my relationships failed because we weren't equally walking with Jesus, and that my focus needs to be my own relationship with the Lord. This summer, the sermon on "Good Grief" really struck a cord that gave me a different perspective on grieving my relationship(s) and also moving on from it/them. I'm choosing to prioritize my relationship with Jesus and trusting in his timing for my life. Knowing this also makes me feel like if now's not the right time to be baptized, I can accept that I still have work to do.

Tony Rendon

Life before knowing Christ:

I was raised by very traditional Catholic parents. I went to church every Sunday, I was baptized when I was a baby, did my first communion, and I learned the endless rituals, confessions, and rosary. But I never felt close to God as I always wished to, I never felt like I had a personal connection with Him.

How did you come to beliieve in Jesus?

I found out about SBCC through my nephew George who was a member of this church while attending medical school. Before he moved to Texas, he brought my wife and me to a Sunday service. That marked the start of my path with South Bay Community Church. I always believed in Jesus, but I felt like I was missing something. One thing for sure is that I wanted to learn more tools to get closer to God. I was very curious and as I got older, my desire to learn more about the bible and about Jesus grew. The very first time I came to South Bay Community Church, I enjoyed the service very much and from that very moment I decided to keep coming back to learn more and more from our pastors. As I continue to read the bible and learn, I am more convinced that salvation is a free gift given to us by God. I now have absolute faith in Him, I trust Him even more, and I have absolute confidence he exists and that he will make his promises real.

Life because of Jesus:

My prayers now are much easier and more direct to Him, and I do not worship saints like I was taught in the Catholic church. I feel like I have a more personal relationship with Him. I don't recite the same prayers over and over. I feel joy when I talk to him and I feel a deep connection. I am more at peace just knowing I have God's unconditional love. The Lord will guide me toward a path of rectitude and goodness. With the Lord's guidance I will continue to grow spiritually and in faith. He will always be in front of me, in my home, in my mind, and in my heart.

Tyler Cheung

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

I believed in Jesus because my mom believes in Jesus and because my friend Theo invited me to church which helped me believe in Jesus. I believe that Jesus is my savior. And Jesus died on the cross to take away my sins so I can live. And Jesus is God's son. My mom reads the bible and bible stories to me. This helps me know God and that God made me for a purpose.

Life because of Jesus:

If Jesus did not die on the cross to take our sins then I would not have anything because sin would break my relationship with God. Because Jesus is in my life I pray to God every day. I have many questions about God and I like to read the bible because I want to learn more about God and Jesus. I get to listen to worship music.

I enjoy going to Kidz Crew because it is really fun to learn about Jesus. Believing in Jesus helps and makes me become a better person. By believing in Jesus I will have eternal life in heaven. I am grateful that Jesus always protects me. And I am grateful that Jesus gave me the best mom and dad and little brother.

Tyler Wagner

Life before knowing Christ:

I remember always knowing about God but never being a true follower and always having the belief that everyone goes to heaven no matter what. It wasn't until my grandma died when I started having bad anxiety and had to go to therapy and this is also the time when I started to question my beliefs but I never fully went into it. When I reached middle school I started to act worse and hang out with the wrong people and started to try and fit in. In seventh grade I found a new group of people who were better and I hang out with to this day but still I never even thought about religion but I remember that many of my friends would talk about religion but again they never really followed fully. Before Christ I know I was very anxious and angry and I would try to fit in but I remember I was always a shy person and had trouble talking to new people. I also remember I would cuss a lot and talk bad to others.

How did I come to believe in Jesus?

Even though it is kind of a dumb reason, I remember it was one late night where I was having anxiety and I saw a tiktok video

about Christianity and it made me realize that I wasn't truly following Christ and I would be going to hell if I stayed with the life that I had. In the video it had the prayer that people do when they first believe admitting that you are a sinner which I prayed and is when I first came to following Christ. After this point I remember there wasn't a major change but I started to grow closer slowly and then started to go to youth group after being invited by my friends like Cruz, Rossi and Jacksen who go here. Because my family does not believe, I would watch church online sometimes with my mom who actually went to the church before. I also remember my first retreat at the church which really changed me and had me feel great joy and helped me deepen my faith. I realized that because Jesus died for our sins we had eternal life and it wasn't because of anything I did which is what I believed before that as long as you didn't do anything too bad, you would go to heaven. I also realized though how much sin was in my life and following Jesus made it clear that I had to repent of this sin and turn away if I truly wanted to follow Him.

Life because of Jesus:

Because of Jesus I have a lot more joy and do not struggle with anxiety. I also came to the realization that a lot of people will go to hell which is why I now try to spread the gospel and show God's love to everyone.



Service Times:
SATURDAY 5:00 PM
SUNDAY 8:30AM, 10AM, 11:45PM

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