

MARY'S TESTIMONY

by Mary Lu Jones

October 26, 2004

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is in John 9, where Jesus healed a man who was blind from birth. *"He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay."* (John 9:6). Then Jesus told him to wash in the pool of Siloam, which, after the man obeyed and did what Jesus told him to do, he was healed and *"came seeing."* (John 9:7). It seems somewhat primitive to have someone spit on the ground and mix the spit with the dirt to put on a person's eyes, but it was well worth it to be able to see afterwards. Sometimes, the things Jesus asks us to do are opposite of what we expect, but when followed...ah...then come the blessings!

After the man is healed, that is when the humor begins. The neighbors wondered if this was the same man. Some said, *"This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he."* (John 9:9). The man knew who he was! Then, as usual, the Pharisees had to get in the picture. They interrogated him as if he had committed a crime! They still could not reach a consensus that this man was telling the truth, so they called his parents and began questioning them. His parents acknowledged that, yes, this was their son; yes, he was born blind. They said they did not know who healed him, and, *"He is of age ask him."* (John 9:23). And the best line, *"He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."* (John 9:25). I also echo those words...I was blind, but now I see.

Looking back, I can now see why Jesus used the term *"born again,"* for one who has been converted or regenerated into God's kingdom. It seemed as if I was living most of my life in a fog, and like the blind man, I was blind... but spiritually blind, yet walking around in a daze without a sense of direction, drifting aimlessly, fueled by my emotions and feelings.

I remember scoffing at the term *"born again,"* when it was used as frequently as, *"How are you today?"* by former President Jimmy Carter. I scoffed because I was not truly born again myself. I thought I was, but nothing had changed in my life. I was looking for the real thing. I was restless, and it was evident that something was missing in my life. I did not understand all the preaching about *"Jesus can save you,"* or, *"you will have life more abundantly."* Where was it? I certainly did not see it in the churches or in the lives of professing Christians. If Jesus did so much, I reasoned to myself, then why are you gossiping, slandering, arguing, etc.? I thought Jesus would come to bring peace, love, joy, and abundant life!

I was so double-minded, and unstable in all my ways. (James 1:8). Let me begin at the beginning to tell you how I, once a scoffer, turned my life around when I became born again, the term no longer used in a cynical, sarcastic, and profane way, as one who was spiritually blind, but now spoken sacredly, in awe and reverential thankfulness to One who pulled me out of my spiritual blindness, and gave me new vision and insight into His marvelous grace and mercy.

I grew up in a Christian home. My great grandmother was one of the first Christians in her village in China. Missionaries spread the gospel and she accepted Jesus Christ in her life, evident by her destroying the idols in the house. You may recognize idols in many Chinese restaurants.

When a person is born again, he or she is transferred from the Kingdom of Darkness, ruled by Satan, into the Kingdom of Light, ruled by Almighty God. It is likened to moving to a foreign country. The laws are different than the country from which you came. When you are in the new country, you are expected to adhere to the laws of that country. In Hong Kong, people drive on the left hand side of the road. Here in the United States, we drive on the right hand side of the road. If you choose to disobey this law, you discover very quickly that you will either kill or be

killed if you continue to drive on the wrong side. If you are not killed, you will suffer the consequences of disobeying the law. In the Kingdom of Darkness, many things are permissible; you are just deceived because you think you can get away with sinning, and not pay for it. *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23). When you are born again, and become a citizen of Heaven, into the Kingdom of Light, the things that were permissible in the Kingdom of Darkness are no longer permissible in the Kingdom of Light. The difference is that people who are born again have the power of the Holy Spirit living inside to help them overcome the urge to get away with the laws they were used to when they were in the Kingdom of Darkness.

Some of us Christians may still have idols we have erected in our hearts that we have not destroyed, like my great grandmother's. Because of this, we are unable to live a life of victory. These idols can be anything in our life that we have given preeminence over God. They obscure God's image in our lives. Today's idols can be our possessions, careers, children, family, your image, greed for more, greed for the newest and latest, valuing others' opinions more than God's; anything in your life that you give a higher priority than God. In my great grandmother's day, idols were statues or images erected and placed in the most prominent place in the home and given daily offerings of the best food in the house, hoping that this act will allow the idol god to bless and prosper the household.

Eventually, my great grandmother led her family to God, which included my grandmother who became a Christian. My grandmother led her family to God, which led to my mother becoming a Christian. My father told me that his father was called, “the Jesus man.”

I was born in Hong Kong and my family consisted of my father, mother and five children who immigrated to the United States when I was five years old. We lived in Seattle, Washington, where I grew up and eventually graduated from High School. Our family grew larger until there were a total of nine children in my family.

Growing Up

I was a shy, quiet child who grew up without enough emotional support, love, or attention. I was full of fear and anxiety, but had no one I could turn to. With a large family of nine children, my parents were too busy with their fight for survival, like putting food on the table, to give me individualized care.

My father, a new immigrant, uprooted to a new country with five young children then, attended night school to learn English. During the day, he worked as a machinist, a new trade to him. Previously, in Hong Kong he had worked in a bank, and also as a clerk in a shipping company – a white collar worker.

My mother was a housewife and the babies just kept on coming. She appeared to always be tired, pregnant and depressed. My father did not want so many children because “How could he afford to support them all, as the only wage earner in the family?” He could barely speak English! My mother refused to “kill any babies” and continued getting pregnant.

When my family immigrated to the United States seemed to be when my troubles began. Even though I grew up in a home, which professed Christ, it was constantly filled with strife, discord, tension, arguing, fighting, yelling, shouting and slamming of doors. These sounds were etched into my memory for years to come. I promised myself that when I grew up and had a family of my own, it would not be an unhappy one.

When I was six years old, I was standing by the kitchen sink when my mother and father were arguing. I don't know what they were arguing about. I heard angry voices and the shouting and verbal abuse. Next thing I knew, my mother hurled glass dishes from the cupboard by me and threw the dishes into the sink to make her point. The dishes cracked, broke, and a sharp jagged piece sliced the skin close to my right eye and began to bleed. The scar is still there today. I think I was too afraid to cry. I just wanted them to stop. I did not understand why there was so much unhappiness at home. As a young child I always felt alone and was very lonely. I felt I had to

raise myself. I kept my thoughts to myself. I was quiet, shy and obedient. My older siblings would taunt “goody-goody,” to me because I always did what I was told in order to keep peace.

In my child’s mind, I would observe the arguing, the loud angry words, the yelling, and the fighting, and thought to myself, “If I were a good girl, mommy and daddy would stop fighting, and then our family would be happy and peaceful.” How I longed for that time! That was the hope I instilled in myself as a young girl.

I remember my mother would herd all the children (there were seven then) into the living room. She would tell us to kneel down in a row in front of the window and we would pray for my father to stop smoking. God heard our prayers, my father did stop smoking.

When my mother went to a revival meeting featuring Morris Cerullo, she met a man, who left his wife and family in another state, and decided to “adopt” himself to our family. He had a car and could chauffeur us to churches. He could speak English, and he knew things my parents, as immigrants, did not know or were not aware of. This older man would help my father find a job. He would chauffeur us to churches and revival meetings, tent meetings etc. We began going to different churches and different denominations. It seemed that there was a church service every night. This older man would bring my mother and all my siblings to church while my dad stayed home. We always came home very late, even on school nights! This old man would sometimes turn around from the driver’s seat to where I was in the back seat and touch my bare knees. Other times he would try to kiss me. I always felt uncomfortable, but did not dare tell anyone.

This man introduced Christmas into our family when I was six years old. I don’t believe we ever celebrated it before. A year or so later, my mother suddenly announced “No more celebrating Christmas.” Then she would slam the door on relatives and friends who would stop by with gifts for the children. Not only did she refuse to let us celebrate Christmas, she refused to let us celebrate birthdays. She also pulled the plug (she literally disconnected the fuse) of the TV. I was puzzled, traumatized and perplexed by what she did. “Everybody else” celebrated Christmas and received gifts. Everybody received cards or gifts on birthdays. I was always sad on my birthday because it was not acknowledged. Everybody else had a TV. I was embarrassed because in school we were asked to act out a commercial. I didn’t even know what a commercial was. I felt stupid!

Our family was so strange. We weren’t like the others. I always felt different and ostracized, because we were not like the others. I wanted to fit in. My mother would not allow us to have friends over, nor go to other classmates’ houses. She didn’t want us to pick up bad habits or be badly influenced. I didn’t really mind because I did not have very many friends and I was embarrassed because with all the babies and children, the house was messy.

I don’t remember much about my father when I was growing up, except that he was angry and yelled a lot. I don’t remember him ever kissing me (as fathers do), hugging me, or showing any display of affection. I don’t remember my mother hugging me either. Even though we had a large family, I was a lonely child. I would seek solace in books for I loved to read. We could not watch TV, so I would escape from the pandemonium chaotic mess at home and bury myself in stories about other people who had happy families and peaceful days. I remember going to the library and checking out stacks of books at a time. Then I would come home, curl up in a corner away from the uproar and tune myself out.

As I grew older, my vision began deteriorating. I don’t know if it was due to lack of a nutritious diet, or because I read so voraciously. I could not see the blackboard at school. I couldn’t understand some of the concepts I was taught. I could not see the music when I played my violin in the orchestra. We had no healthcare at all, my mother did not believe in doctors.

In order to get through school, I worked on memorizing. One day I found a piece of broken glass from a pair of prescription glasses that was buried in the back of a cupboard. I took the broken piece of glass and taped the sharp edge of this tiny piece of glass (maybe one inch by one fourth of an inch). I hid this piece in my pocket and during classes at school, I would stealthily cup my hands with this piece of glass and tried to read the blackboard. This was how I got through

school, unable to see clearly, not only physically, but spiritually as well. Life for me was truly a fog. I felt even more alone.

My maternal grandfather was the head deacon at the Baptist church. They wanted him to be their pastor, when the head pastor died, but he declined. He died shortly after and my maternal grandmother married an Assemblies of God minister. When my grandfather died, everything began to change. My uncle, a captain in the Salvation Army, San Francisco, came up for the funeral. I remembered he sang a love song to me at age six. No one had noticed me like that before. I was captivated even at that young age.

My grandmother and her new husband herded several of my siblings, twelve or older, to be baptized. We all went to the lake and wore white robes. I had no understanding of what was going on. I just knew that we all had to be baptized because we were "of age." It was like an insurance policy that guaranteed a place in Heaven for the person being baptized. I'm sure they explained it but I had no comprehension. It was like communion - you partook of it because it was expected of you.

For a while, we attended a predominantly Black Pentecostal church with a Caucasian pastor. There was dancing in the aisles and speaking in tongues. They would lay hands on me and I fell backwards "slain under the power." The deacons would run around with blankets covering the bare knees of the females. To be accepted, I adopted the attitude of "when in Rome, do as the Romans do." I did my little pretend dancing in the aisle like everyone else. I raised my hands making sure my eyes were shut and pretended to "speak in tongues." I made up sounds that sounded like the sounds I heard others use. I tried to keep a straight face and not bump into anyone when I was "dancing in the spirit" with my eyes shut. At nine years old I didn't want people to think I wasn't saved. This was the church where I kept the quarters for offering in my pocket and not in the basket. This was also the time when the traveling evangelist threatened that if anyone left the building while he was preaching, the person would be killed by God!

Then my father got fed up with the incessant demands for money, hypocrisy, special offerings, sacrificial offerings and so on. He stopped going to church. He thought the preachers were always greedy and asking for money.

"If you can't win 'em, join 'em" was the motto my mother took. Since my dad refused to go to church, she brought the church to him! We then converted our living room and dining room by knocking down the wall of partition that divided them, so that it would accommodate up to fifty people. Many people came to our house to preach or share their testimony. On Sundays, I taught Sunday school to the neighborhood children and my younger siblings. I basically read the curriculum to them. I don't think I really taught, because I didn't really understand it myself. After Sunday school, we had church, and in the afternoon, a new group of people would arrive and we had church again. Every evening we would have church. I played the piano and other instruments for the services. I learned to say all the right things, that were expected of me, and at the right times. I could memorize verses, sing all the hymns by heart, knew all the Bible stories, and knew all about God, but I did not know Him intimately and personally. This was how I grew up - saturated with God on every level.

As we grew older, my mother sent us out to help other churches. My parents would not go with us, but sent my siblings and I to help other people's churches where we would take care of the music by playing piano, organ, drums etc, and teach Sunday school, sing in the choir, and help out in Vacation Bible Schools.

I had so many adult responsibilities at a young age. I was taking care of my many younger siblings when I wasn't able to take care of myself. I was like their second mother as my mother at times was too depressed to take on that responsibility.

How I longed for someone to take care of me, protect me, talk to me, love me, and approve of me. "Where was that someone God?" I would cry from the depths of my little girls' heart. I had a need for parents. In my heart I was aching and crying out for a father and mother who would hug me and tell me they loved me. I wanted to be held in their arms when I scraped my knee or hurt

myself. I wanted them to be interested in my school work and ask about my personal life, to give advice and to guide me.

My mom would preach to us constantly. She wanted all her daughters to marry ministers. She thought by doing so, we would be guaranteed a trouble free marriage and we would be serving God. My father, on the other hand, wanted all his sons to be doctors and all his daughters to marry doctors, so his daughters would be well cared for. I was torn because of their disunity. My mother was the “preacher” in the family. She made all the children read many chapters in the Bible every day when we returned home from school. We could not play, eat, or do any activities or homework until we read the Bible; not only in English, but in Chinese as well. She did not care if we mumbled, stuttered, grumbled or made fun while reading it. It had to be done. The end justified the means.

I remember one of my brothers would read the beatitudes from Matthew, chapter five, like this: “BA BA BA BA BA, LA LA LA LA LA , EH EH EH EH EH, SID SID SID SID SID, AH AH AH AH AH, RAH RAH RAH RAH RAH, THE THE THE THE THE, Poor in spirit (Blessed are the poor in spirit). My mom allowed him to disrespect the reading just as long as he read it.

She would sprinkle baptize old people in the nursing homes because they were unable to get up out of their beds. She would make us partake of communion frequently amid much resistance. She thought she was likened to Job, who offered sacrifices for his children in case they’d sinned. I ached inside. I didn’t want a preacher, I wanted a mother who would talk to me about everyday things!

In school, one of the requirements was to write a journal every day. I developed a regular habit of writing some of my thoughts down on paper. Since then, writing was a way for me to put my thoughts on paper. I could say anything I wanted on paper and the paper would be accepting of my words. It would not put me down, yell at me, or disapprove of me! Since I did not have a relationship with my parents, as they were too engrossed in their lives, I talked to the paper I was writing on. The paper knew all my thoughts, what I did all day and it helped to release my inner tension and turmoil that had begun to build up like a volcano.

The backdrop for this period of my young life was the reason my mother was depressed. My mother suddenly developed psoriasis over her whole body, including her face and scalp. For someone who was once ravishingly beautiful, one who was asked to be a movie star; psoriasis was like her death sentence. My mother at times seemed to be emotionally unbalanced. She did not seem to have any moral support, neither was she emotionally nurtured. How would a man who married a ravishing beauty with beautiful skin react to the same woman who now had red scales which covered her whole body and face? How could he bear to be near this woman whose skin would be peeling off constantly? My mother refused to see the doctor (remember she did not believe in them). She would take cold showers frequently when the itchiness of her skin became too much to bear. Then she tried showering in burning hot water.

She would cut up huge quantities of raw garlic cloves, so that it was like a paste. She made me spread this concoction all over her naked body with a butter knife and then cover the paste which was on her itchy skin with saran wrap. This alleviated the itchiness for a while and she thought it would be potent enough to kill any bacteria from her sores. My father did not help her. I don’t think he could handle it. I rarely saw any displays of affection between them.

I felt repulsed with my little girl’s eyes, looking at my mother, who had fresh sores with pus oozing out of her skin, reeking of raw garlic. She was like a leper. I wanted to stay away, but how could I? She was my mother! I felt like I was the mother since she seemed so helpless.

Each time my mother got up from where she was sitting or lying, the floor and places her body contacted would be littered with tiny white flakes of dried, dead skin. Her long black hair was covered with baby oil, which the dead flakes adhered to. Her face was slathered with vaseline, which kept the sores moistened. Sometimes I would see her sitting down scraping her body with a butter knife. She likened herself to Job in the Bible. Many times at night, I would hear her wail loudly because of her pain and her loneliness with this disease, which no one could understand. Other times my mother would seek solace in singing hymns. She had the most beautiful soprano

voice. Her ethereal voice would make me stop what I was doing to listen. The sadness, pain, and anguish, all merged together into her melody and transformed it into a haunting, yet beautiful song which drove me to tears when she sang. I could feel her longing to be loved as well.

Once in her depression, she shaved off all her beautiful long black hair, which was interspersed with dried, dead skin, because of her itchiness. Now my mother was bald. Again I felt repulsed. Not only that, she also cut up her drivers license and flushed it down the toilet. Her actions revealed behavior which was confusing to my young mind. It was laced with the fighting, tension, babies and diapers which became like a madhouse at home.

High School

High School was not any better. I was traumatized when I had to give a speech in front of the class. I stuttered and quivered like a leaf shaking in the wind. I had absolutely no confidence nor self esteem. I thought I was stupid compared to all my brothers who were geniuses.

My mother had forbidden any of us to date, let alone kiss anyone. A kiss was something very sacred. "If you kiss someone it should be the one you married." Unfortunately, it was impossible for me to curb my emotional passions. How could I not fall in love with a boy whom I thought loved me, cared for me, and gave me the emotional support I was lacking, yet craving? My life of deception began. I would talk to my boyfriend on the phone secretly. My mother caught me one time, she was listening on the other line, and promptly had the phone disconnected. We would write letters to each other. My mother would open my mail. My boyfriend who was a few years older knew I was forbidden to date, but our passions were too strong. I would sneak out through the basement at night. He invited me to the senior prom. I was flattered – me going to the prom with a senior? But how was I to pull this one off? I knew my mother would not allow it. Dancing was a sin. I had to lie. I flattered my mother and I told her I was going to a Bible study. I didn't want to continue lying, so I did bring my Bible with me. I made sure we read a chapter together. It was Psalm 121– especially verse seven and eight. You can understand the deception I was covered in. How could I think that the Lord would protect someone who was deliberately disobeying Him?

So much for my Bible study. When I came back late, my boyfriend would always circle the block several times to make sure no one was awake and the coast was clear. As he circled around the block making sure he could drop me off without anyone knowing, I nearly had a nervous breakdown. The time was after midnight and standing right in front of the picture window directly facing us was my mom. Instinctively I tried to crawl down and hide in the car, but too late, she had already seen us!

When I eventually came home that night she didn't say anything. She had her giant Chinese Bible opened on the kitchen table. The silence and tension was so heavy you could cut it with a butter knife. Later she used chopsticks and whipped me on my thighs so hard, it formed heavy red welts. My resentment and anger began to grow. I was embarrassed and humiliated. Embarrassed because I was caught with my hand in the cookie jar. I was humiliated because I was beaten at age seventeen. "*A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go into the wise.*" (Proverbs 15:12). I never asked my mother for forgiveness, instead I became bitter. When I graduated from High School my mom bought a one way ticket for me to go to a Bible school in Hong Kong. I knew this was it – revenge!

I hid my feelings and pretended everything was all right. The day I left, my boyfriend and his friends were at the airport. My mother walked directly behind me and that boy as we neared the gate. "Don't you dare kiss her good-bye." Not only was he not a Christian, he was not of the same race. I was heartbroken, but, as usual, I hid it and stuffed my feelings. I didn't want to embarrass myself and create a scene at the airport. On the plane, my older brother (who became a doctor later) who was with me, said, "I can't believe you didn't get angry at mom." I had stuffed my feelings of anger inside of me. I was nice and pleasant on the outside, but inside my resentment grew. The once obedient child, who became disobedient and rebellious, was on her way to a Bible school in a foreign (foreign to me) country against her will. I think my mother was trying to send me there hoping Bible school would reform me.

My father was livid. He said to me, "If you go to Hong Kong, I will never support you." I was torn. I didn't know what to do. I did not feel close to my father. I didn't even know him. We'd never talked or spent time together. He wanted me to go to the university and I did take the entrance exams, but then my mother bought the non refundable one way ticket.

Up to this point in my life, I'd had no direction. I'd always felt alone, as if I was responsible for raising myself. My parents never really talked to me about what I was to do after I'd graduated from high school, and lo and behold, my mother handed me the plane ticket. A note to parents who are reading this: it is imperative that you both agree on issues as long as it is according to God's will. It's extremely difficult on your children when you disagree with each other. The children will not know what to do. They are torn between parental loyalties.

In my mind I thought, if I didn't go to Bible school God's wrath would be upon me and I would go to hell. My mother told me that God told her it was His will that I go to Bible school. God never told me. I didn't want to go and leave my boyfriend, but I had no choice.

Bible School

Even though I was born in Hong Kong, I had no recollection of it. To me, as an American citizen, it was a foreign country. Bible School was very regimented. I didn't learn much about the Bible because I couldn't understand the language. For someone who wanted to talk, I learned quickly by making many major gaffes. It was somewhat humiliating, but learn it I did.

Even in Bible school, I was rebellious. First of all, I didn't want to be there. The female students were gossips and flirts who were looking for husbands. During the required prayer meetings many fell asleep. I shortened the hem of my school uniform so it wouldn't be so old fashioned. When asked by the Dean of Women, I lied and refused to admit I had shortened it, which was forbidden. My brother and I would leave the campus at night and return after curfew when the metal gates were locked and chained. My brother would scale the wall and climb over the barbed wire alongside the top of the wall, jump over and let me in. We were fearless, and did whatever we wanted, and with a smile and a bit of flattery, all was forgiven.

Dating classmates was forbidden, but again, I disobeyed the rules and began a secret relationship with a male classmate who could speak English. We would write notes to each other and hid the notes in an old butter dish inside an abandoned refrigerator. In the middle of the school year he had to move to Australia. I never saw him again.

Billy Graham came to Hong Kong. During one of the mandatory meetings I stood up to dedicate my life to the Lord. I began to feel somewhat bad about my disobedience and rebelliousness. I decided to start being "good again." But I still did not repent.

My older sister was the first one to attend this Bible school. She had already graduated and was married. She had a male classmate whom she really liked. In fact, they were so close that the principal of the Bible school suggested they marry. She married someone else of another race though. She told my mother about this male classmate how great he was and what a good Christian he was etc. This classmate eventually became my brother's roommate and best friend. He was also my foreign (Chinese) language tutor.

When my brother went home for the summer, I was left by myself in Hong Kong, because, remember, I only had a one way ticket. My brother asked his roommate to be my guardian while he was gone and to keep an eye on his sister. This roommate was like my guardian, my father, and he kept asking me to marry him. I kept refusing him saying I was too young. Actually, he wasn't my type. I was not physically attracted to him. My heart did not throb for him.

My brothers' roommate and I worked together at a roof top church, of which he was in charge. The members consisted of mainly local young people, ages five to about age thirty. I had my hands full in the summer teaching Sunday school, playing piano and taking care of other activities. One shameful memory I had was, as I was playing the piano for the offertory, a teenage member of the class I'd taught observed that I'd never given any money into the offerings. "Why should I give any offering or tithes for that matter?" I would muse, "They barely pay me a salary." I

gave them so much of my time and talents. They owe me, I reasoned. I resented the question by the inquisitive teenager. The answer I gave him seemed to satisfy him. "Oh," I said, "I'm offering my music and my hands to the Lord. That is my offering". Talk about the blind leading the blind!

Working together regularly with my brother's roommate and sister's close friend caused me to know him better. Eventually, I reasoned to myself, "If I married this man, my parents would be delighted with him because he is a Christian, he could speak my parents' language, and he knew how to cook!" I did not know how to cook and I was thinking of my basic survival!

I remember how, when I was in high school, I'd volunteered at the Veterans Administration Hospital. Because for my volunteer services, they would give me a free delicious dinner! Thinking of the meager meals in a large family disgusted me. I was greedy for good, appetizing food, as my mother's cooking did not encourage me to have second helpings. I longed for good food, so the cooking skills were high on the list that made me think twice about his marriage proposals.

My mother then wrote me a letter in Chinese. In this letter (which I could not read), she wrote how she had prayed and asked God whom I should marry – "that boy" or this man? She said God gave her two different verses. If I were to marry "that boy" (who'd never asked me to marry him, by the way) this was the verse God gave. If on the other hand, I were to marry this man, (this roommate of my brother, and close friend of my sister), there was another verse she had written down. Of course the verse my mother wrote down from my brother's roommate was much better than the verse for "that boy." I didn't know how to read the letter because it was not in English, so I had to ask my foreign language teacher to read it for me. I was embarrassed to say the least when I found out what my mother had written. It seemed very manipulative and controlling. Out of my naivete and fear of God if I disobeyed my mom, I thought I should marry my brother's roommate, because the Bible verse given for him was much better. It seemed as if my mother was using these Bible verses from God to tell me whom to marry. So I finally agreed to marry him.

We planned to get married in Hong Kong after I graduated from Bible school. My older sister said "Before you get married, you should go back to visit your father whom you haven't seen for three years, because he's old and might die and you'll never see him again, if you marry and stay in Hong Kong." So I listened to her.

When I graduated from Bible school, next to my photo in the yearbook were the lyrics to a song I'd learned and sung when I was younger. I don't know who wrote it but I wanted the words to be true to my life: "To be used of God – to sing, to speak, to pray. To be used of God to show someone the way. I long so much to feel the touch of His consuming fire, To be used of God is my desire.

I then bought a round trip ticket back to the United States after I graduated, thinking, "I will visit my father first, and then return back to Hong Kong to get married."

On the way, I stopped off in San Francisco to visit my uncle, a pastor in the Salvation Army. This is the uncle who'd captivated me when I was six years old, who had sung a love song to me. The one who paid attention to me when no one else would. We had a good visit and when I left to go back to Seattle, where my family was, my uncle, aunt and cousins all came to the airport to see me off.

What happened next was another path to my downward spiral. Before I entered the gate at the airport, my uncle kissed me on the lips in front of his wife and children. I was shocked, puzzled and confused. I thought that was wrong. But yet, if he was kissing me openly and he's a respectable pastor it must be OK. How deceived I was!

When I arrived at my home, my mother prayed again and said "God told me you can't go back to Hong Kong. Your fiancé has to come to the United States if he wants to marry you!" Well my fiancé did not want to come to the United States. He was doing very well teaching school in Hong Kong, but he did want to marry me, so after one year he flew to the United States to marry me. I lost money because my round trip ticket was non-refundable.

In the interim, I got a job at a place owned by another relative whom I'd called "uncle." I think he was my mother's relative. This man was a millionaire, having inherited his father's business. He really liked me a lot and I thought I would try to win him to Christ. I liked the attention he gave me. Besides, he was very wealthy. My greed began to increase.

After a year my fiancé arrived. When I went to pick him up at the airport, after not seeing him for over a year, my heart sank within me. I had no feelings or attraction for the fatherly man I was to marry. In fact, I felt disgusted and repelled by him. I saw him, said "Hi" and ran to the bathroom, almost throwing up and sick to my stomach. I was scared. How do I go through with this wedding? Again, I was afraid to create a scene. I had no choice but to go through with the wedding. Besides, he bought a one way ticket and he was staying. Another reason was, another classmate at the Bible school I had attended, called me long distance to tell me he had a dream that God told him he was to marry me so we could "serve the Lord together." I didn't even know this person except that he was very odd. I was scared that he would come after me so I thought I'd better go through with this wedding.

My uncle (the one who kissed me) was to officiate at our wedding, since he was a licensed minister, so we didn't have to pay him because he was a relative. For some reason he changed his mind (I found out years later my aunt, his wife, detected something between us and put her foot down and refused to allow him to officiate at our wedding) so my mom asked my grandmother's new husband, the Assemblies of God minister, to officiate at our wedding. Of course to save money, the wedding was in our living room "church" in front of the fire place. I wore my sister's homemade wedding gown which was too large for me. I had no joy as a normal bride would. I had to say the vows in Chinese which didn't mean anything to me (I didn't understand it). My sister interpreted the ceremony (in English). My father walked down the narrow aisle with me.

After the wedding ceremony, my new husband wanted to stay in a nice hotel in the city. He did not want us to stay in the guest bedroom that had a broken lock. I was even more fearful. I did not want to go alone with him to a hotel somewhere. I wanted to stay at home. He insisted and the wedding night at the hotel turned into a nightmare for me. Here I was married to a man who was like a father to me. I was not physically attracted to him, nor had any emotional feelings for him. I didn't even love him. What was love anyway? I don't know if I really knew. Worse yet, we didn't even speak the same language. My Chinese was limited and his English was unintelligible. It was like a chicken talking to a duck. My heart dropped within me. My walls of resistance grew thicker.

We lived at my parent's home in the guest room (with the broken lock) for about a year. One time as I came out of the bathroom after taking a shower. I saw my mother standing outside the door. Her face was like stone, "I'm going to kill you" she said. I was stunned. I had no idea why she would say that to me out of the blue. I could feel my anger and resentment rise up in my throat. I knew we could not stay here any longer. So my husband and I decided to move out. My older sister and her husband were assistant pastors at an Assemblies of God church. There was a basement apartment we could rent at low cost, but there was a prerequisite: we had to help out at the church with no salary.

So we moved to the basement apartment of the church. My responsibilities grew as I became more familiar with the huge building. In the winter I had to turn on the furnace so it would be warmed when the congregation arrived a few hours later. I locked and unlocked all the doors. I turned the lights on and off. I answered all the phones and worked in the office making the bulletins. This worked well as my daughter was born and she could be with me while I worked. Eventually my husband and I began a children's choir. We taught Sunday school and attended all the services and Bible studies. We were at all the activities. We didn't have far to walk.

My husband, new to the country, went to the university and also had two jobs. I rarely saw him. I saw the pastor of the church where we lived more than I saw him. An emotional attachment began to form between us. He would frequently bring us large bags full of groceries (Reader, this is a smokescreen of hidden real motives, beware).

What began innocently and chaste ended in an affair. After the one night stand, he gave me fifty dollars. I went and bought a King James Bible, thinking it would erase my sin. The pastor resigned shortly thereafter and left the country. He made me promise I would not tell anyone what happened and he would never divorce his wife to marry me. Another thread in the spider's web was woven – another lie. He called me several times afterward asking to see me, but I refused. I was deeply disturbed and frightened that I had committed this horrible sin of adultery.

I began to be lethargic and lost energy. I had a miscarriage and discovered I had a lump growing in my throat. The doctor said I had to be on medication for the rest of my life. I, who had never seen a doctor, was pronounced with the disease of hypothyroidism. That was causing the lack of energy. (Dear reader I have since learned that it manifested itself as the result of fear, anxiety and stress, of which I was full, when living in sin. The major root comes from self-hatred, self-rejection and guilt. I am praying God will heal me of this disease).

I didn't want to take any medication, but my husband insisted I did. Since then I began having nightmares and was paralyzed with fear. *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."* I John 4:18. I was tormented by fear of being found out.

Eventually he graduated from the university. He wanted to return to Hong Kong where he felt more comfortable, because he could speak the language and it would be much easier for him to find better jobs. I was devastated. I would have to leave my family. We decided he would leave first to find a job in Hong Kong and a house for us. I was to follow six months later.

The weekend before he left, I attempted to confess to him about my affair with the pastor. But it never materialized. I was petrified with fear. After he left, back to his country, my cousin asked me to be in her wedding. Her father was the one who had kissed me before. My daughter and I went to San Francisco. At the wedding, my uncle became very close to me and spent a lot of time with me. He treated me like a queen and showered me with money and gifts. He began to write letters to me. He would hug and touch me a lot. I longed to be held. I needed to be emotionally supported. I longed to hear nice, sweet words. I was tired of being criticized, put down and yelled at by my husband and parents. I wanted someone to build me up; to let me know I was worthy and I was special to them.

I wish I had known what Pastor John Torell taught. One phrase I enjoy is, "The knife comes after the butter." I wish I had known. He also taught that evil spirits are in people to whom you are attracted to illicitly to lure you into sin. No matter how nice, rich, good looking or good the person may be, it is really an evil spirit inside that person pulling you in, beckoning to you. If this happens to you, run immediately. *"Flee also youthful lusts."* (2 Timothy 2:22).

Looking back, I wish I had known this truth. (Be careful Reader). Watch out for flattery. It will get you into trouble. Like Pastor John says, "The knife comes after the butter." *"Open rebuke is better than secret love."* (Proverbs 27:5).

Emotionally deprived, lacking touch and warmth from my family and husband, I responded and succumbed to my relative's advances; my sins began to grow – I had fallen into the pothole of sin and in my case, a manhole.

My relative wrote to me regularly and even called me long distance after my departure from the United States to Hong Kong. I hated Hong Kong the minute I stepped off the plane. The apartment my husband rented was too small. I didn't like the furniture he picked out or the way my husband decorated the apartment. I was a chronic complainer. I hated the weather too, hot and humid. I detested the smells, I loathed the crowds of people that bumped into me. How I longed for quiet reflection away from all these "foreigners."

My husband found several jobs by the time my daughter and I arrived, so eventually I forced myself to settle in as much as possible. I got pregnant right away, so that kept me busy; now away from my family, and in a foreign country, we began to become somewhat closer. As a result, one night, I told my husband about my affair with the pastor. He was shocked, but he forgave me. This pastor who had evidently left the country, somehow found out where I was and

would call me incessantly. I never talked to him, nor picked up the phone, out of fear. Eventually he called my husband and asked for forgiveness. My husband forgave him and we decided to begin anew and put the past behind us, now that we had two children.

He kept busy in his five different jobs teaching music, helping out in churches etc. I basically raised the children by myself, a lonely housewife. I had no friends. I didn't like it there, so when my uncle in San Francisco continued to write to me, an emotional relationship began to slowly develop. I would tell him all my problems and in turn he would tell me all of his. His relationship with his wife was not good either. We had a symbiotic relationship.

During the years I lived overseas, my uncle would take business trips and would visit me in between our letter writings. Our relationship began to change from uncle-niece to lovers. He even asked me what I thought about incest. It was like a dirty word to me. I said "its not right." He said "some things just can't be explained," like our relationship. (Dear reader, I'm not trying to justify my reason for sinning, but when something is lacking, as it was in my life, I would look for something to fill that lack, that void. My lack was love, but I filled it with the wrong kind of love. I was looking for a father in every man I'd encounter and a mother in every woman I'd meet to fill the void I'd had. In truth, this void can only be totally filled by God).

I respected my uncle. He listened to me. He encouraged me. He told me I was somebody special. He told me I was beautiful; no one had ever told me that, not even my father, or my husband. Our hearts began to knit together and connect. My uncle was like a father, older and wiser, I thought to myself, "and not only that, he was highly respected in the community, his church, and even around the world." He was a minister and he would write Bible verses in the letters he sent regularly to comfort me in a strange land. I would tell him how busy my husband was, that I rarely saw him because he was so busy in the churches and helping other people. When he came to visit me, my innocence turned into sin. I loved being held. I was never held by my father and rarely by my busy husband. He was like my father and he said what we were doing was "not wrong." He even told me to not call him uncle, but to call him by his name. I thought in my naiveté and justification, "How could this be wrong? He's a minister, a man of God. He would know it if this was wrong."

"He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favor than he that flattereth with the tongue." Proverbs 28:23. So our affair expanded through the years. He was my "father," my uncle, my friend, my pastor, my lover, all rolled into one. I felt like I was tied into the spider's web that pulled me tighter with every sinful encounter.

I had such an emotional chasm in my life which was not filled by my father, nor my husband. All I knew were criticisms, put downs, you could have done better. I was ripe for trouble, from anyone who could fill that empty chasm of emotional void in my life.

At the same time another uncle came to visit. This was the wealthy uncle I had worked for after I'd returned from Hong Kong, the very one whom I'd wanted to share the gospel with when I was eighteen. He was somewhat of mystery to me and I felt honored and proud that he noticed "little ol' me."

The times I went back to visit my family in the United States by myself, he would ask me to visit him and would take care of the hotel expenses, making reservations for me. He also knew where I was, so he would come to me and I, unable to say "no," became caught up into another web of incest. He too, told me to not call him uncle, but call him by his name. One sin leads to another, if there is no repentance and change in direction. I was greedy and accepted the money he gave me. It's like a spiral downhill, one lie begets another. You have to lie another time to get yourself out of the first lie. Eventually, my whole life became one BIG FAT LIE.

My husband was very busy holding five different jobs at various churches. I had my own secret life to which he was totally oblivious. He was too busy and too involved in his church work and multiple jobs. Too tired to spend time with his family. Our parallel lives had begun. My uncle's letters were the only source of emotional support I received at that time.

My husband would help out at his father's church. His father was a minister. He would hang out with the members after church to eat lunch or socialize. I never felt like I was a part of his group of friends, so I would leave after church and go home by myself. I was, oh, so lonely in a city filled with wall to wall inhabitants. On one visit, my uncle came to ask my husband and I to join the Salvation Army. He said "It will be better for your children to be raised in the States. You'll have a place to live and a better paying job." I was ecstatic. I hated living in Hong Kong. I was lonely. Everyone spoke a foreign language, had a foreign way of life and I didn't fit in. My skin was covered with mosquito bites. I flattered my husband by saying, "We can serve God together." You couldn't argue with that logic. He bit it. I wanted to leave Hong Kong. I was so homesick for a family I didn't really know or understand. My uncle, now a colonel, knew all the right people and got us through all the red tape. We were on our way. My uncle was retiring and he wanted to "pass the baton" to us. He was highly successful and wanted us to be as well.

I called my mother and father. This was big news. My mother said "you should stay in Hong Kong. You're too beautiful. If you come back, something bad might happen." It sounded like a curse. She had never complimented me before either. "Besides, she continued, "The Salvation Army does not believe in communion and water baptism." I didn't heed her warning. I still harbored bitterness against her. Besides this would be my ticket of freedom to leave Hong Kong.

Back to the United States again after about seven years overseas. This time I went six months earlier than my husband, who would come later, as he tied up loose ends, finishing his teaching jobs, etc.

My aunt, my uncle's wife, had since died of cancer. How very convenient to move in with my children and live with my uncle. He did not miss his deceased wife. He had no physical attraction to her. His was a marriage of convenience, a way of escape out of China. It was now "safe" and convenient for us to carry on our affair. No one would ever suspect our relationship.

So, my life of deception, lies, secrecy, clandestine meetings and sin continued. I was pulled into something too great for me to escape; an affair is like a drug, an addiction, once you begin, you have to have more. It overpowers you and there is no real escape except through Jesus Christ.

I did not miss my husband at all. When he finally arrived after six months, he was like the fifth wheel. He didn't fit. I began to despise him and disrespect him. I looked down on him because he had a poor command of the English language.

We eventually moved to the Salvation Army School for Officer's training in Rancho Palos Verdes. It was like boot camp – two years of intense training. I lied on the psychological tests I was given. When asked if I ever had an affair, I replied "no," without blinking an eye. My heart was hardened to sin. I didn't know what would happen if anyone found out (what if we were sent back to Hong Kong?). Our campus was breathtaking. It overlooked the Pacific Ocean. We were given first-class treatment. I learned to believe what I was doing was "just a job." I didn't have to believe in what they taught. I was just so glad to be back in the United States.

The Salvation Army pushed me out to the front. I was given many opportunities to speak in front of crowds numbering in the thousands. I spoke in front of the commissioner and all the high ranking officials. I began to be bolder and more confident, unlike the shy teenager who had been quivering in front of my class.

The emotional support I had received from my uncle throughout the years built me up. He said I was somebody special to him. Now I was finally somebody. It didn't matter that they didn't observe communion and water baptism. What did that matter? We all served the same God of love and harmony.

My uncle, since he was a high ranking official and world renown, would visit me frequently while I was in school. And again, our secret affair continued. I was addicted to his praise and adulation. He was addicted to my body. He called me every night at school to talk. As usual I talked to him more than I would talk to my husband. When he visited me, He would shower me with expensive gifts like a camera, a stereo set, money, jewelry, clothes, and flowers. I greedily accepted it all.

(Reader, beware – nothing is free. When someone gives you something, you will be paying for it sooner or later. There's always a catch, unless the person is a true, genuine, repentant, born again Christian giving out of genuine love from God. Beware also, reader, when someone you're not married to, unloads personal problems on you. This information should stay confidential between a husband and wife, unless it's a matter of a prayer burden, otherwise, let it be a red flag to run, to flee!)

My marriage was now on the rocks. My husband began to suspect something but he couldn't place his finger on it. At our commissioning and graduation, I stayed away from him as much as possible. We were commissioned as ministers and officers of the Salvation Army. I was a female minister! How strange this concept was to me! Our marching orders were to... San Francisco, where my uncle lived. How convenient! We moved to a huge house. We were sent to one of the best corps in San Francisco. Our marriage now was cracking and crumbling into smithereens.

Since my uncle was living in the same city, it was very convenient to see him, now that he was retired. At the same time, he was involved with two other "Christian" women and would proceed to tell me in detail what he did with them. I felt "jealous" because I'd thought I was his "one and only". At least that was what he told me. He would visit me when my husband was not home or have me visit him. He invited me to see x-rated movies with him and watch soft pornography with him on his television. He tried to help my husband and me at our church since he had so many years' experience and background in the organization. My uncle even became a member and attended our church.

Eventually the toll began on me. Two years of intensive, fierce, training and school, including a lack of sleep finally caught up with me. The work never stopped. There was never any rest. Even when I went home, the phone would not cease ringing with people calling to talk about their problems. I was worn out before I'd begun! I performed a wedding and some funerals. I attended many social functions. It was always "God's work!"

As I worked with my husband as commanding officers, he began to snap at me. He would argue and fight openly with me. He would criticize me during public meetings. I was openly humiliated. It drove me further and further away from him. We even had separate bedrooms.

At this time, my uncle was sent to another country and I did not see him. I was addicted to emotional connection, so I met a younger man who began writing letters to me. I was somewhat stronger emotionally so I began another relationship. This one ended abruptly. We were not intimate physically. I felt horrible and met another man, and another, who would give me the emotional drug I craved but when they asked for their sexual favors, I dropped them like hot cakes. That was never what I wanted in the first place. All I originally wanted was to be loved and held.

(Dear Reader, I read somewhere that Satan brings temptations to you when you are the most vulnerable; when you are extremely hungry, extremely angry, extremely lonely, or extremely tired. Watch out! When you are in these situations, beware! He's there. That spells H-A-L-T. So halt when you are feeling those weaknesses. I wish I'd known about that then.)

I needed to get out! I finally exploded and decided to get a divorce, a word that was never in my vocabulary! I was so unhappy with my life! I had no one to turn to I could trust, who could nurture me. I had been giving and giving and giving to everyone who wanted my handouts, but this was it! My emotional bank account was empty. I had nothing left to give anybody. Not only that, I was not receiving any. I secretly planned my resignation from the Salvation Army. My resignation began on my vacation so it would be less noticeable.

I told my commanding officer at territorial headquarters how my husband was treating me, putting me down openly and publicly in front of the congregation etc. I painted a negative picture of him. I told how he would hit me when he got angry. I made out that I was the victim and he was the abuser.

In actuality, I was dying a slow death inside. How could I stand at the pulpit and preach when I was living in sin, living a lie? I was the biggest hypocrite of them all! I was falling apart inside and no one even suspected!

Many times I would find myself sitting in my car, parked in a parking lot, or in front of the ocean someplace. I needed that quiet time to reflect, to think, to pull myself together. I was so used to covering up; so used to keeping my thoughts to myself, keeping my anger and resentments bottled up. I did not want to fight and argue like my parents did. I became bold. It was imperative that I leave or else I would surely die a slow death inside of me. I'd lost myself. I don't even know if I'd ever known myself to begin with! My pretenses and false life were wearing me down. I couldn't keep up with my lies. "If I don't leave now, someone will find out about my affairs, my sins!"

I told my husband I was resigning from the Salvation Army. Not only that, I was going to divorce him. He didn't get it! He thought of course I was joking! That's how "out of touch" he was with my life. We were strangers.

When he finally realized I was telling the truth, he hit the roof! He tried to humiliate me into changing my mind and stay with him by telling my relatives. At an advisory board meeting with high city officials, he openly begged me to stay with him. He stood in front the group at the meeting and read a card he'd written to me out loud. I was horrified! That made me detest him even more, and urged me to get away sooner. I told my wealthy uncle, who sent me money so I could move out.

When my husband finally accepted my decision, he asked my nine year old son, "Whom do you want to live with, mom or dad?" I was stunned that he would go so low. I didn't see how low I had already become! My husband told me my son "picked" him, because he bought him a lot of toys. I was the strict parent. I was the one who told them to do their chores, go to bed, brush their teeth etc. He, being an absentee father for the most part, lavished them with gifts to make up for his absence. (Parents beware: things can never be substituted for the love and time you spend with your children, never substitute "things" for "time").

I, who once decided to have a happy family of my own, did not heed my own advice. I, who wanted my parents to be united in direction, did not heed my own advice.

I moved out with my daughter. She chose to stay with me. My husband thought if we each took one child, neither of us would have to pay each other child support. I applied for my divorce and resigned from the Salvation Army. I found a few odd jobs while still picking up my son every day from school so I could see him.

I hid for about six months. I did not tell anyone where I was, except my commissioning officer. I wanted – needed to hide, to run away, to escape from what I was afraid of most – facing the truth, telling the truth. I didn't want anyone to ever know what I did. I would lose face. I would lose my reputation. What would everyone think? When a person sins, he hides. That's what I did.

When word leaked out as it always does, family and relatives began trying to contact me and telling – no, commanding me to go back to my husband. My mother would leave messages of wrath on my answering machine which I was terrified to answer. Her messages were bible verses about divorce, how God hates it, how wrong it is, etc. She was incessant and would not stop. My sisters would write scathing letters or emails to me telling me how great my husband was and that I'm sinning against God by divorcing him. I had racked up so many sins in my life that one more sin didn't matter.

My father wrote me a letter, the first, and told me to go back to my husband, and signed it, "from your white haired father." Nothing worked. I was determined to divorce him and when I make up my mind, even though I tend to be indecisive, I never change back. My divorce was finalized.

My ex-husband bought me a diamond ring. He said, "It's okay if you divorce me, just marry me again." Now he was beginning to treat me nicely. Too late! I gave the ring back to him. My heart was hardened like petrified wood.

When my uncle returned to the United States he tried to resume our sinful relationship. I, on the other hand began to grow cold towards him when I began to realize how wrong and sinful our relationship had been all these years. I didn't need him any longer.

I went back to school to get a degree, so I could get a better paying job with which to support myself, now that I was single and was out of the Salvation Army that had provided for me.

I attended San Francisco State University in the morning after I dropped my children off to school. Then I would rush back to pick them up, make dinner and went to work at night. When I returned home after midnight, I would continue to stay up doing my homework. My health began to deteriorate. I was always sick, not only physically, but emotionally and spiritually. These are all tied together, I have since learned.

My money began to run out. My rent kept escalating astronomically. I had nowhere to go, no one to turn to. I was fighting to physically survive.

I saw my son begin to change for the worse. He became sullen and very distant towards me. He was always left alone at home by himself at night because my ex-husband would come back late from doing "God's work." My heart was broken as I saw my children falling apart, as the family fell apart. Now, my son became like I was when I was younger – emotionally starved with no parents around emotionally or physically.

I had to do something quickly to save my children. My daughter graduated from high school and moved to New York. I quit school after three years to take my son out of his school when I saw him become a stranger to me. I had a bright idea! I would home school him. It would kill two birds with one stone. Not only would I be able to see him and spend needed time with him, I could teach him the Bible. My heart began to soften towards God. I was like the prodigal daughter who woke up and came to her senses after eating and sleeping with the swine.

My rent tripled and I was forced to buy a boat. I called it "the Ark." It was there that I began my way home to my Heavenly Father and eventually my earthly father.

I home schooled my sixteen year old son for one year. I began teaching him from the Bible, and as I taught him the living words from the King James Bible, it began to prick at my spirit – my conscience.

I knew I had sinned drastically against God, the God I was taught growing up, the God I was trying to teach my son about, but the God whom I did not really know. "Where are you God?" I began to cry...

After one year of home schooling, my ex-husband did not want me to teach my son anymore, so I had to stop.

God wonderfully engineers and orchestrates our lives so beautifully once we are on the long trek home. God had his way. I rarely saw my son after that year. I spent the time I normally spent home schooling my son, reading the Bible.

Slowly my heart began to soften. I also used that time to go through my belongings and throw out or destroy almost everything I owned. Things I'd kept since I was young: papers, books, which were sent from one country to another, one state to another. I had lugged all the "stuff" around like a burden all my life. It took up so much space, which I had little of. I didn't have time to read all my books. Books that were good, but not the best. These other books took away my precious time I could have spent in the Bible all these years. These books held me back and held me down so I could not focus on "The Book," The King James Bible.

I began throwing away personal papers, letters, files, old cards and any item which gave me a negative feeling. It was extremely difficult to get rid of my things, but things had to change.

I stopped looking for a man to fulfill my emotional needs, and that's when I met my husband to whom I'm married now. I fell in love with him. We became good friends and eventually planned to get married. Within my family, divorce was evil, but remarriage? That would definitely send me to hell! Soon the judgement calls on the phone began. Scathing emails and letters resumed again

from my sisters and mother. Wow! I didn't understand it. I was not about to give up what I worked for all my life – emotional love.

My sisters all boycotted my wedding. They refused to acknowledge it. All my brothers attended to support me. My dad supported me, but he did not come "I've walked you down the aisle once already," he said.

Two days before the wedding, I came home to find my answering machine full of messages. It was from my mother. She'd arrived in town, looking for me. I was the terrified little girl again. I quickly called my brother so he could call her. I was in no mood to talk to her. I refused to have her ruin my wedding, the happiest day of my life. My older brother called her and told her to go home.

I could bear it no longer, I fell prostrate to the floor sobbing, sobbing, and sobbing! My daughter was beside me, comforting me. I told her, for the first time, that I was terrified to death of my mother. I cried out to God, a stranger to me, coming to help me. (Much later when we reconciled, my mother would admit that she had come down to kill me).

With my mother gone back home to Seattle, we had a beautiful simple wedding on the boat. Our honeymoon was in Seattle. I felt so ashamed and annihilated from my family on the happiest day of my life. It was not shared by all my family. In Seattle, my new husband and I drove around the neighborhood where I'd grown up.

I saw my mother sitting by the back door, the same door I'd entered that night, long ago, when she'd seen me in the car with my boyfriend. I think she was reading her Bible when we drove by. She had no idea that her daughter was driving by. That's how estranged we had become.

I loved my new husband. I was emotionally connected to him and physically attracted to him. I began to emerge from my shell. True love changes a person – It changed me! I finally felt legally connected to someone I loved dearly. Finally, after all these years my relationship was legitimate. I began to heal emotionally, now that I belonged to someone who truly loved me, I began to have a desire to make things right. I've worked in many, many churches, playing piano, teaching, choir, Sunday school, leading songs, preaching, leading the services. Everything that you need to know about working in a church, I learned and did. You would think that with all this religious background and training, I would be a pretty good Christian! Not so! Saying the right things, quoting the correct Bible verses, or working in a church does not make you a good Christian. Going through the motions, as I was, does not make you a Christian. Believing there is one God does not make you a Christian. Even the devils believe and tremble. *"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."* (James 2:19).

My whole life up to this point was caught up in busy work "for God." I was like a Pharisee, a white washed sepulchre; the outside looked fine, but inside, I was full of dead men's bones. *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisee, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."* (Matthew 23:27-28). I was a hypocrite. I was blind, leading the blind, and worse yet, I didn't even know it. I thought I was holy and righteous because I was doing God's work. I always thought I was right and everyone else was wrong. I was looking at the speck in others' eyes when I was blinded by the two by four plank in my eye. *"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."* (Matthew 7:3-5).

I was so spiritual, or so I thought, telling others things about God, keeping busy in church work, but was so busy that I did not spend any time with Him. I was so caught up in the business of "doing", that I neglected to spend time with the One whom I was busy doing things for. My idol was church work. I placed that above God. It sounds ironic. How can that be? In Acts, Paul (previously known as "Saul") was busy doing religious works...creating havoc in the church, consenting to the death of Stephen, a martyr for Jesus Christ. He really believed that he was

doing God's work, like I believed of myself. Paul was on his way to get permission to do more harm to Christians when Jesus Christ blinded him for three days.

When God wants to draw a person to him, if the love doesn't work, he will allow pain and other hurtful things to happen in a person's life, in order to get the person's attention. That is what He allowed in my life. All the pressures, busyness, and stresses in my life eventually spiraled down and my life began to crumble...sin always has a paycheck...sin always has consequences.

I got tired of living a pretense, living a lie. Externally, I was doing all the right things, saying all of the right phrases, smiling, and nodding. Internally, I was a mess. Internally, I really meant "no", when outwardly I said "yes". I was lying, and being dishonest with myself and others. I pretended that I had such a picture-perfect life, but that was just a cover up, a facade at the misery I was living. *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."* (Proverbs 28:13).

You can pretend for only so long before it eventually catches up with you. *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."* (Galatians 6:7-8).

My whole life fell apart. Everything dear to me was taken away. I was left with nothing, nothing but my paycheck of torment, anguish, if only's and regrets.

One day, October 26, 2001, I was so tormented in my mind, that I knelt down, sobbing to God and eventually prostrate before God. In my mind's eye, a video tape of my life appeared before me. I could not see it physically, but in my mind's eye, it was very vivid and very real.

All the sins I had committed from the time I was a child to the present day appeared in front of me, in my mind's eye... from the time when I was given money for the offering from my father, which I dutifully marched up to the front of the church to deposit, in actuality, it did not end up in the offering basket, but ended up in my pocket. I started robbing God at a young age. And I am ashamed of that fact. *"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts."* (Malachi 3:8-12).

My sins continued to appear before my mind's eyes, and the scene would not disappear until I acknowledged to God that, yes, I did commit this sin. I humbly and tearfully confessed the sin and renounced and repented of it, asking God for his forgiveness. It was then that the next sinful scene in my life would appear, and again, I acknowledged and confessed it. If you don't admit it, you cannot be helped. I confessed, repented and renounced to God my sins of fornication, adultery, lying, greed, divorce, remarriage, fear, deception, rebelliousness, disobedience, disrespect, stubbornness, dishonesty, not paying tithes, stealing, unforgiveness, self-hatred, pride, anger, bitterness, resentments, indifference to Him, jealousy, envy, self-centeredness, self-bitterness and on and on. Before, I was grieving and sorrowful, but it was the wrong kind. I was grieving and sorrowful out of self-pity for myself, for fear of being caught. Then I would look bad. I was selfish, thinking only of my self preservation. This time the grieving and sorrow was of a different kind. I felt grief and shame because I had sinned against God. The sorrow I'd felt now was Godly sorrow. *"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."* (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

You have to get out of denial and justifying your sin before God will forgive you. Then I repented of that action and asked God for forgiveness, and the next scene would appear. This went on for

a long time. I had committed so many sins. *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23).

After all the scenes of my life disappeared, I asked Jesus to come into my life, cleanse me, and make me clean. The pride was gone. The "I know it all" was gone. The "I know I am right" was gone. *"I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah."* (Psalm 32:5). This was my born-again experience! I was healed of my spiritual blindness to my sin. I could now see how I had grieved my Heavenly Father. *"Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat of the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."* (Isaiah 1:18-20).

I knew without a shadow of doubt that a change had taken place inside me. I had just had a heart transplant. God had taken my old, sinful, stony heart and given me a new heart of flesh. *"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."* (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

I began writing letters to people I had offended, and asked for their forgiveness. I made peace with the people I had offended or sinned against. The ones who lived nearby received a visit from me so I could ask them for their forgiveness face to face. It was a very humbling experience.

(Dear reader, I have since made peace with everyone I'd sinned against: my father, my mother, my sisters and my uncles etc.).

The night before I confessed my affair with my uncle to my cousins (his children) I had a nightmare in which I woke up screaming. In my nightmare I saw a snake, it was small, but it began to grow and grow, coming up from my feet. It began moving towards me so close I could see the pink fleshy undersides. I could see the head and tail becoming larger at my feet. In my dream, I screamed and kicked it because it was coming straight at me. I woke up realizing I had screamed out loud and moved my feet in real life in my action of kicking the snake in my dream. My husband woke up from hearing me scream and comforted me. Even in my dreams, Satan is trying to attack me. He was trying to prevent me from confessing and renouncing my sin that I had with my uncle. I went to tell my cousins about what happened. I asked for their forgiveness. One forgave me right away, another cousin had much anxiety about it and as a result of this anxiety, I believe it may have contributed to her cancer diagnosis. Then the third cousin refused to talk or see me for two years. Finally, she too, forgave me. A few days after my confession someone broke into my car, drilled a hole on the driver's side where the key is supposed to fit. They stole my stereo and other items. I know Satan was angry with me, but God is greater. Today I am driving a very sleek beautiful Cadillac. God's reward!

I have talked to my ex-husband many times since telling him the whole truth of my deception and affairs. I have asked him for forgiveness and he has graciously given it. My older sister who refused to talk to me for years because of my divorce/remarriage came around just this year when I called her and told her I was getting baptized the next day. Because of that she knew something real had changed inside of me.

I also began reading the Bible, like a starved person. I was like a dried sponge, soaking up the Living Water of the Word of God. Reading the Bible changed my old sinful way of thinking and renewed my mind. The more I read, the more my thoughts began to change, transformed to the Truth of God's Word...*"but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,"* (Romans 12:2). I had such an insatiable hunger for God's teaching and truth. I needed guidance, so I would listen to my little radio, under the covers at night, when my husband was asleep, using my earphones. I have heard hundreds of preachers in my life, but many like to tickle the ears of the audience. I began searching and searching, all the while praying for discernment that I would not listen to

someone who is a good speaker, but not teaching the Bible. I was looking for the Truth. Along the way, I did encounter some phonies, but thank God for the Holy Spirit, who prompted me to see that not everything that sounds good is good. *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world.”* (1 John 4:1-3).

One morning at 6:30 am, as I was listening to my radio in bed with my earphones, I heard the deep voice of Pastor John S. Torell. The reception had a lot of static, and it was difficult to hear. But what little I heard captured my attention, because it made me angry and uncomfortable. I did not like what he was saying.

He was saying that Christmas was a pagan tradition. I did not want to stop celebrating it. How dare he claim that! It brought back bad memories of when I was six years old when my mom refused to allow us to celebrate Christmas. My mom can't be right can she? But driven by a strong curiosity, I asked for the free booklet, "The Truth about Christmas." I was very angry when I read it, then eventually became convicted. It took about a year to turn the conviction into action. This year I have sent copies to friends and families and am currently in the process of finishing this "project." I even sent one to my daughter in New York. She called me and said she supported me because she can hear the difference in my voice. She said I sounded like a "new person."

She, of all people, knew how depressed and stressed I was. She said she did not agree with my beliefs, but wanted to learn more. I told her about Pastor John's no nonsense talk, "He tells you like it is. He sure was not trying to impress the radio audience." In time I contacted him, and he told me about a book called "[Biblical Foundations of Freedom](#), Destroying Satan's Lies with God's Truth", by Art Mathias, and another one called, "[A More Excellent Way](#)," by Pastor Henry Wright. Next to the Bible, these books have changed my life.

I had so much accumulated bitterness in my life. It took me over two months to break those curses in my life. Not only was there bitterness, there was also resentment, unforgiveness, jealousy, envy, fear, accusing spirits, rejection, unloving spirits and self bitterness. Such freedom emerged after that.

In the past, I had wanted to be baptized by water immersion. Two churches that I had attended had many stipulations before they would baptize a candidate. Some requirements were mandatory attendance for a year, classes and programs. I filled out a form to be baptized once, and they sent me a form letter saying I had to attend classes, etc. They made it very frustrating and difficult to become baptized.

I asked Pastor John if he would baptize me. Without skipping a beat, he said, "Yes, just give me two weeks notice." On September 26, 2004, I finally became baptized by immersion in water at Resurrection Life of Jesus Church in Sacramento, which was a miracle in itself. *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”* (Acts 2:38). *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* (Mark 16:16). Baptism now has meaning for me. This is my choice. No one is forcing me to be baptized.

I want to be blessed of God. I want to not only read His Word, the Bible, but I want to obey what it teaches. I no longer want to only hear the Word, but let it go in one ear and out the other. I want God's Word to go in both ears, penetrate and saturate my spirit so that I will submit to God and receive life and health in my body, soul and spirit.

As my husband and I drove the two and a half hour trip to Sacramento the night before I was to be baptized, the trip turned into a four hour trip as the highway was congested, gridlocked and included a fatality. My husband saw a motorcyclist speed by on his left. Thirty minutes later, the motorcyclist was dead – the corpse covered by the policeman's yellow jacket. God is calling you to come to Him, do not delay. You may not get a second chance to respond to His voice. *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”* (Hebrews 9:27). Don't hesitate.

Do it to day. *"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts..."* (Hebrews 3:7-8).

I am glad that I listened to God's voice. I am thankful that I have been born again. Now I understand what it means to be born again, because I have experienced it first hand. I know who I am. I know Whose I am. And like the man that was born blind, I too can say, I was blind, but now I see!

"And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized." (Acts 9:18). *"how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God:"* (I Thessalonians 1:9). In a few weeks from this writing, I will be going to Sacramento to be delivered of all my demons of bondage. I want to be freed totally. I want to be a Godly woman, one who will courageously stand firm on God's Word, obey God and not compromise. *"Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."* (Proverbs 31:30).

TO GOD BE ALL THE GLORY!

POSTSCRIPT:

On December 6, 2004, Aina Torell and JoAnne Christou patiently, lovingly, yet powerfully prayed for my deliverance and I was set free!! Pastor John's definition of Deliverance is "spiritual surgery." How aptly defined.

I used to think that the name, "Resurrection Life of Jesus Church" was really weird. I thought, "What kind of person would name a church like that, let alone attend the services?" I no longer think the name of the church is strange. In fact, it is rather unique, now that I have had first hand experience of the power of God in this church.

Pastor John said that Resurrection Life of Jesus Church is like a "body shop." Broken down vehicles come in and are taken apart, sanded, fixed, and given a nice paint job. That made total sense to me! He said my deliverance was like a paint job. The body work was done. The semi-high gloss pain job was the deliverance part.

After being delivered, I'm a new vehicle. I realize that my premium is priceless. It cost the death and the blood of my Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to protect my "car" from the potholes and mud puddles of life. I want my "car" to be driving on the right side of the road of life. I want to obey all the traffic lights and stop signs from God. I'm moving on and heading in a new direction; using my Map and Guidebook - the King James Bible.

An experienced Driver is at my steering wheel now, gripping it with His nail -pierced hands. I have nothing to fear when He is in control of my life.

On December 6, 2004, the day of my deliverance, I stopped taking the thyroid medicine that I have been taking for the last nineteen years and seven days! Doctors call this an incurable disease. They told me I would have to take this medicine for the rest of my life. Well, I have! That old life of mine is now dead! This is the beginning of a resurrected new life for me! Thanks be to God, the Great Physician – I am totally healed! In fact, I feel better now than when I was taking medicine all those years! It is the healing power of God! Not only that, but my voice has changed and improved.

My husband and I were singing one night shortly after I was delivered, and suddenly, incredibly, something broke through my weak, timid, quiet voice piercing the night air. My singing voice was amplified with stronger lung capacity!!

"Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." (Luke 13:12)

If God can save me, deliver me, set me free, and heal me, He can do the same for you, for *"God is no respecter of persons."* (Acts 10:34)

I thank God for this faithful, powerful ministry. I now have the resurrected life of Jesus Christ throbbing and living inside of me.

“They brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick”. . . “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. . .”
(Matthew 8:16, 17)

TO GOD BE ALL THE GLORY!!