

AWAKENING

I WAS A FORTY-SEVEN YEAR OLD grown woman, living with my mom. It was New Year's Day 2007. Everyone had plans and I was alone and feeling very lonely in her house. It was like walking in a one-hundred-and-eighty-degree desert that was so dry that I felt even a drink of water could cut my throat. In my sorrow I thought to myself, I'll just do what I do on every day this year, I'll be alone. I popped in a CD and started taking down the Christmas tree ornaments one by one, singing along with the music as I was working. A sweet little noise was coming out of me from deep inside, emanating from a place near my heart, but I was alone.

I climbed up a ladder to take down the ornaments at the top of the tree. On the third step I suddenly felt a volcanic eruption from the deepest part of me forcing its way through me. Tears began to flood down my face as a range of emotions spilled out of me, out of my heart, out of my eyes. I

felt like a leaf blowing in the wind. So I stepped down the ladder, moved over and sat down in Momma's comfy chair.

Something was happening in this moment. **THE MOMENT.**

I felt completely empty deep inside me, not just within my heart, but throughout my whole body. It was like a huge broken space was engulfing me. I was breaking into pieces and I didn't think I was going to make it through to the other side. At the same time, I felt like a huge spotlight was glaring on my life. I cried out to God. I yelled to God. I literally yelled out to God to save me.

In this moment, by some miracle perhaps, I realized that the way I was living my life wasn't working. It was a mess, I was a mess and it was my own fault. I was continuing to make terrible choices, and I had been so ignorant that I wasn't even aware I was on the wrong path. I fell to my knees and I begged, "God, I can't do this anymore, I can't do this life thing anymore. I need You! Please! Show me how to live."

And then, it was as if the One I had been looking for all my life, but could not find, appeared as the curtain suddenly lifted. It was much like the blinding light Paul experienced when on the Damascus road, but not the same. I knew this was from God. It was as if I was given an inside look at my life and saw all the ways I had lived opposed to the divine plan for my life. Every decision I made before was on my own, never thinking about consequences or how it might affect my children in those moments, or in the long run. It didn't cross my mind to consider the next generation. My eyes were opened to all the wrong I had done in my life. In that moment, nothing mattered except for telling God how deeply pained I felt for my past. Pained and sorrowful because I had hurt Him so deeply, "God!" I screamed, "Please forgive me, I have been living so opposed to you. I can't imagine how much I've hurt you. I know you have been with me all these years, watching me, longing for me to come back."

I realized something major was happening in my life. My offenders, parents and husbands and the anger I held against them all those years

were suddenly insignificant. I realized that the pain I experienced from all of my choices was nothing compared to the pain and suffering that Jesus experienced during His time on earth and through death on the Cross. The pain I caused Him by having to take all my wrongs on His shoulders hurt me deeply and caused great sorrow. Have you ever said something that crushed someone? It was like I took the hammer and pounded the nails into His hands and feet. I was a part of his execution team.

I'd spent years trying to analyze my life and understand why I felt so messed up. Finally, I realized I didn't have the human capacity to make good choices. I had to let go of control of my life. I realized the only way I could live differently was with Him in control. I could not do it without Him. I needed HIM more than anything, anyone or anyplace. I became fully and deeply aware that without Him leading my life, I would continue to leave destruction behind me and live in chaos. I knew in that moment that without surrendering, I would continue to be an empty shell of a woman.

And then I realized He was present. I felt Him touching me and loving me in a way I'd never experienced. The love that was pouring into me was overflowing. He was filling me with love that brought a sense of peace I had never experienced before. I knew it was something huge, far beyond my control. I wanted to keep it at all costs. I had this incredible conviction that with Him, I could do all things. I did nothing to deserve this rescue, this revelation of God's love for me, and His grace that overshadowed my past. I knew in those moments, I was a new creation. I wanted Him to teach me, to show me how to live. I had proven I could not do it without Him. I had lived a life without ever knowing love in its purest form. I had made decisions that were perilous to others and me. The delay in my surrender had come at the high cost of years of self-destructive behavior and abuse affecting my children and me.

On the living room floor, amidst the Christmas ornaments, I asked with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, that God lead me, and I made

the decision to follow Him. I wanted to live my life for His purposes, not mine. Then I received the greatest gift of all, the empowerment to seek Him with all my heart, drink in every Word written in scripture and spend time getting to know Him. It wasn't anything I did. He did it all. His whole desire was to reconcile me to relationship with Him ... and He did it with His overwhelming love and revelation of the truth. It was through His *love* for all—every individual—that He chose to die on the cross. He denied His own life that we might be forgiven and live a new life. That is a *powerful* kind of love.

I received it and immediately wanted to pour it out to others. I didn't understand it all, but I now knew the One who did. I turned any lack of understanding over to Jesus Christ. Who better to be in charge than the One I cried out to, the Creator of the universe and every living being? In that moment in my Momma's house, I realized whose child I really was.

This was THE REVELATION that was the turning point in my life. Everything in my past crumbled into ashes. I knew that Jesus Christ is the *living* Savior, not a cliché or just a historical figure. I was awakened to the truth of a *real, living God*, who works miracles in ordinary peoples messed up and painful lives. The light that shone into my life that day was an encounter with the living Jesus Christ that I will carry with me throughout eternity. His floodlight of love left me with complete assurance that He is alive, that I am His child and that His Almighty Power had begun a work of changing me from the inside out and healing my pain.

I recalled the story in the Bible that resonated so deeply with my heart. This shunned woman went to the well in the center of town midday, when the sun was hottest, to avoid others and their condescending looks. There was a man that knew she was going to be there. He purposely put himself in her path and spoke to her at the well about water that can quench thirst forever. He told her He knew things about her, her pain, her five marriages and her current live-in boyfriend. This man was Jesus, the King of Kings, and He made time to be with her, talk with her and offer her a better way of life.

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This woman left the well that day with a new heart and she found it incredibly difficult to contain herself. She told everyone about Him.