

WHY WE NEED A SAVIOR

MAN

GOD

IN THE BEGINNING . . . The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were created by God and enjoyed perfect fellowship with Him. They were without sin and lived peacefully in a beautiful garden that supplied all their needs. God gave them only one rule, which was not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. However, Satan tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit by saying it would benefit them. They ate it, and that act of disobedience against God was the first sin. It severed Adam's and Eve's relationships with God because He is holy and cannot have fellowship with evil.

MAN

SIN

GOD

OUR CONDITION TODAY . . . Since we are all Adam's descendants, every child in the world has been born with his fallen nature. Instead of coming into the world desiring to do right, we are all born with an inclination toward sin and evil. Proof of this natural downward tendency is abundantly evident anywhere human beings are found. Our sin results in tremendous pain, sorrow, and suffering. The consequences of sin reach far beyond this life because those who reject God and die in a sinful state will go to Hell and be separated from God eternally.

MAN

JESUS

GOD

GOD'S PLAN . . . God wants to remove sin from our lives so that we can have a relationship with Him and spend eternity in Heaven. However, the penalty for sin is death, and that penalty must be paid. Out of His great love for us, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior. Jesus lived as a man and died in our place for our sins. Because of that, if we follow the steps that God has laid out in the Bible, our sins can be forgiven. God will change our desires and give us power to live without sin so we can enjoy eternal life with Him in Heaven one day.

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OVERWHELMED BY THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS



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What Melanie had learned in Sunday school became real in her heart one Easter Sunday.

By Melanie Ewers

Growing up, I could clearly see the destructive power of sin. Grace and salvation, however, were not introduced to me until I learned about them in Sunday school. When I was about five years old, one of my neighbors began riding the Sunday school bus to the Apostolic Faith Church. I started attending with her and continued even after she moved away a short time later. For many years I learned Bible stories from kind, faithful Sunday school teachers and bus drivers. Most importantly, God's plan of salvation was presented and planted in my heart. I'm thankful that the Gospel is simple; from my earliest



remembrance it made sense to me and I believed it. The contrast between the lives of people who lived for God and those who didn't made an impression on me. The difference was dramatic and I wanted what God's people had.

As I grew older, even though I wanted to be a Christian, I struggled with the thought of not fitting in. I knew living a Christian life was different and would separate me from my family and friends. Since I only attended Sunday school and not other church activities, my interaction with Christians was limited. Still, the Lord spoke to my heart. I had trouble going to sleep at night because of the fear I felt about not being right with Him. I would lie awake trying to negotiate with God. I would ask for His help, and in exchange, I would make a list of things I would try to do better. These prayers would give me a measure of peace, but when morning came, nothing had truly changed.

VICTORY WON ON EASTER DAY

By the time I was fourteen years old and in my first year of high school, my decisions were getting worse. My grades were very poor, my friends and I were participating in wrongful activities, and I was failing in many ways. I continued to hear God's voice, but I was getting further and further away from Him. I had gradually stopped attending Sunday school, but one Easter Sunday everything changed. I went to Sunday school that day, listened to a recording of the Easter message, and the Lord spoke to me directly. I considered the sacrifice Jesus made on the Cross and it overwhelmed me. I knew I would never find love or acceptance anywhere that would match what He offered. That day, I knelt at an altar of prayer, asked the Lord to forgive me, and gave my life to Him.

The change God made in my life was instant and dramatic. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 it says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." I do not have any words that could better describe what happened that day. Even my desires were changed. Living God's way was no longer a struggle; it was all I wanted to do. And, to my surprise, my fears of not fitting in gave way to the greatest sense of acceptance and belonging I had ever known.

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That night my mind went back to all of the nighttime prayers I had previously prayed, and I hoped that this wonderful change was real and permanent. I didn't want morning to come and find myself back to life as usual. I was not disappointed! The salvation of the Lord was genuine and lasting.

After I was saved there was a lot to learn about growing in the Lord. He was faithful to direct my steps and provide what I needed, when I needed it. I am extremely grateful that the Lord directed me to a church that values and encourages prayer. A special room for prayer is open before church services and the altar of prayer is open following the meetings. During the days, months, and years that have followed, I have found that spending time there has been an anchor for my soul and essential for spiritual survival. The Lord has met me there often and has always provided the strength, guidance, joy, and peace to move forward in my walk with Him.

COMFORT IN TRAGEDY

As I continued to consecrate decisions to the Lord, He provided guidance and blessed my life. He opened doors for me to complete a college education in nursing, and gave me a wonderful boyfriend who later became my husband. However, challenges came during my first year in college that really shook my faith.

As I finished my first semester, I planned to visit family for Christmas break. I was looking forward to spending time and sharing gifts with them. I especially looked forward to visiting an uncle whom I had not seen for some time. I did not have any siblings and he was only a few years older than me, so we had grown up together. I had been praying for him and was hopeful that he would be moved to get saved himself.

As Christmas morning arrived, we gathered and waited for the time of celebration to begin. When my uncle did not come out of his room to join us immediately, we delayed awhile longer. As more time went by, we impatiently called out for him. Our impatience soon turned to concern. Our concern turned to tragedy when a family member entered his room to find that he had died.

The grief and turmoil I felt was intense. I turned to God for answers, but I was also feeling angry and a sense of betrayal that He had allowed this tragedy to happen. As the days passed, my confusion seemed to grow. I was taking a required religious studies class at the time, and a project in that same class unexpectedly offered much-needed clarity. I was required to interview a religious leader of a faith different from my own. When I met that person, one thing became very clear: this man was more confused

than I was! I was anxious for the interview to end and I left with great appreciation for the living, mighty God that I serve. I recognized the need to stop questioning Him and trust His sovereignty and perfect plan for my life. Through the grief and pain, I began to find His comfort and strength priceless.

Romans 8:28 states, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," and I have found that to be true. I am now a hospice nurse, working with terminally ill patients and their families, and I can see how the Lord has used my uncle's death and other painful experiences to allow me to reach others who are going through difficult circumstances. I can relate to their sense of loss. It is my constant prayer that God can use me in this role to be an extension of His kindness and compassion.

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Many years have gone by and the privilege of serving the Lord has only grown more precious to me. I reflect on His work in my life with amazement and gratitude. God gave me a wonderful husband and blessed us with two children. He has filled our home with joy. There is a great feeling of peace and security knowing that He holds my future and it is with excitement that I anticipate meeting Him in Heaven one day. ■

STEPS TO DELIVERANCE

ACKNOWLEDGE

Admit that you have sinned and need God's help.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

CONFESS AND REPENT

Be genuinely sorry for the sins you have committed and ask God to forgive you.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3)

FORSAKE

Determine that with God's help you are going to turn away from all sin in your life.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him . . . for he will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:7)

BELIEVE

When you have honestly and sincerely taken the steps above, then believe that God will hear your prayer and save you.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

RECEIVE

God will let you know that the work is done in your heart.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:16)