

Born Again?

This chapter taken from the book *When Faith Came* by Franklin Whittenburg © 1998-2006

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So you want to be born again? Do you fully understand what that means? The divorce rate in the church is just as high as in the world. With all the hypocrisy and denominational fighting in “the church” and financial obligations imposed by it, why would you want to even be a part of that? I know why, because there is a drawing in your spirit toward Jesus that will not go away. When you are alone, when you are lying in bed, or driving your car it’s always there. Those who are experiencing this know who they are and this book is for you. I was there at one time. **Congratulations, The Heavenly Father Himself is calling you.** He is now ready to teach you about Him and give you an inheritance, like any good father would!

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me (John 6:44,45 KJV).

And the good news is that what I described to you is not the true church, but religion. There is a big difference! What you have in religion is people acting like Christians instead of being Christians, which I will show you how to tell the difference later. You can “join” religion; you can’t decide to “join” the church. You have to be called. In fact the very word “church” in the Greek is *ecclesia*, which means “a called out assembly”. Many people that are not truly saved “join” the church everyday. The Bible speaks of “wheat and tares” and “wolves in sheep’s clothing” in the church. You are baptized into the true church when you are born again, but you can “join” a local congregation.

The reason I am writing these studies, is for the people that desperately want to please and obey God, but find themselves powerless to do it. For the people that are trying to turn from their sin and turn to Christ, but somehow always end up stumbling and falling. For the people that have come to the various religions and have still not found the peace they are looking for. For the people that life just doesn’t seem to ever come together. For the people that have spent hours in the scriptures only to find more questions than answers. For the people that wonder if they are actually saved or lost. For the people that wonder if they have been called into the divine service. For the Christians that have been driven and scattered from their congregations and are now worshiping alone in their homes, and to tell the world that there is so much more to the Christian new life than “thou shall not sin”. And the greatest reason of all, to bear witness to a lost and dying world of a resurrected from the dead, Son of God, and my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I want to first discuss the problem you may be facing with choosing a religion, before I discuss the solution. I will use many different scriptures to present my position. Please

read them when they are provided. I have underlined certain points to read carefully. Please read the whole verses (not just the underlined part) and any surrounding verses to keep the scripture in the proper context. I will also mark “**points to ponder**” in certain places to just give you something to think about that may not fit in any religion, but I just thought it is curious. Maybe you will enjoy pondering them also. As there are many different doctrines out there, all I can do is share what I found in my Bible studies and give you my testimony. Only the Holy Spirit can guide you into the truth. There are also “**religious traps**” that I fell into that I will expose in this study so you can be on the lookout for them also.

Where I believe the failure lays in most religions today, whether through discipleship, or ministry, the church is trying to create a Christian. There is one main problem with this approach. The church is not the Creator. Its purpose is to point the world to the Creator. You can teach people about Christianity (discipleship), but you cannot teach someone to be a Christian, because a true Christian is a creation of Jesus Christ working in them and through them with His Spirit and Word.

For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10 KJV).

Before we get started, let me stop here briefly and address something that many people have wasted much of their lives arguing about. As this verse plainly teaches the true Christian is “created in Christ Jesus”. So if you are “born again”, you were created. Many people have spent many hours arguing the difference between evolution and creation. How you got here is really irrelevant to me, it’s where you are going that I am more concerned about. If you are going with Jesus, you have to become his creation (Ephesians 2:10). In this book I am interested more in man’s eternal destiny than man’s origin. The argument of whether man was created or evolved doesn’t apply to this discussion because it is irrelevant to man’s death. I personally believe in the fact of creation because God through my parents created me and didn’t evolve me.

Many people in religion today have also missed a very important point. A local congregation, cell / small groups, or any other person or “spiritual leader”, is not the Creator. They, like you, were not created to be the Creator either; they are also the creation. Remember Jesus is the potter and we are the clay.

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (Colossians 1:16 KJV).

The main problem with mankind is that we have been taught our whole life that we are the Creator, that life is our creation; our life is what we make of it. I knew a woman once that was in “new age” religion. She would say, “We are all little gods, because we all have the power to create life”. Well if your reading this, my guess is that your life is a mixed up mess, like mine was, and you are sick and tired of being the “creator” of your messed up life. I have some good news there is hope, the reason why you failed at making life work, is because you were not designed to be the Creator either, but the creation. Just like you could not create a perfect natural life for yourself, you cannot

create a perfect spiritual life either. I have some very good news for you! When you have finally come to the end of yourself and are serious about totally giving up on making life work, the true Creator, Jesus Christ is right now waiting for you to totally surrender your messed up life to Him. Jesus will take away your life, but He will give you His! He will become the Creator of a new life for you. The true Christian no longer tries to create life, but they are content to just live life.

And having food (bread of life) and raiment (God's robe of righteousness) let us be therewith content (1 Timothy 6:8 KJV).

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: (Ephesians 3:9 KJV)

Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. (Luke 17:33 KJV)

This is the most vital part of answering that calling where I think “the church” has lost the gospel message. What happens usually when someone “gets saved” is “the church” starts trying to show him or her how to “act” like a Christian (discipleship) after they have said their “sinners prayer”. Many times the church is successful in this type of discipleship and ends up with a bunch of actors. The Greek word for actor is “hupokrites”. Which we translate “hypocrite”. What I have noticed when a person starts looking for peace with God the first thing they do is turn to a religion. When they do not find what they are looking for in doing Christian things, they will eventually truly surrender all to Jesus or give up. It just depends on what they heard in the Gospel message.

And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life (John 6:65-68 KJV).

I had not been in church for over eighteen years when Jesus called me and after my conversion, not confession (which my confession came after my conversion), it was still another six months before I went to a local congregation.

I want to stop here and address something I see many churches doing that I believe is in error. When someone has just been born again, many churches immediately try to put them in, or teach them, some sort of service or ministry in the church. The process of removing the flesh to walk in the Spirit is called “Circumcision”, which I will discuss, in greater detail later in the book.

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with

him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead (Colossians 2:11,12 KJV).

Instead of immediately trying to disciple or put a new believer into some service in the church or cell/small group training, they need to be given time to just rest in Jesus and the healing power of the cross (1 Peter 2:24,25). A tremendous burden has just been lifted off them. It is the bondage of this world (Egypt). Even the children of Israel were allowed to rest and heal when Joshua circumcised them, before they went into the promise land.

And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole. And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you (Joshua 5:8,9 KJV).

Now what I am more concerned about is your personal relationship with Jesus and not with organized religion or other believers or “cell/small groups”. Christian relationships are important and the Lord will send you where you are needed in the body, and He will establish those relationships.

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (2 Corinthians 1:21,22 KJV).

It is understood that pastors have to focus on ministry to the congregation as a whole. That is why this book is focused on the **individual** believer and their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and not on the church body as a whole. If each individual member knows who they are in Christ and are hearing from the head (Jesus), then the congregation will also be strengthened.

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21,22 KJV).

Notice this verse says that we are built together by the Spirit, not through an organizational cell church structure. The true church is a living organism, not an organization. What I am most concerned with is that you fully understand the Gospel of Peace and that you can walk with a smile and have peace with God and peace with yourself in a personal relationship with Jesus as you walk through the troubles and trials of this world. My wish is that everyone can have a relationship with Jesus, just as close as I have and I believe you can. This is why I am against a “cell or small group leader” or some other “spiritual leader” as a mediator between you and God. Talking with God and hearing from God today is being taught as we speak to God in prayer, God speaks back to us through the pastor, apostle, prophet, priest, etc. I will explain the “five fold ministry” in great detail later, because it is being grossly abused in the churches today. Please read

the chapter “A Word of Warning”. How come the clergy can hear from God directly and we supposedly can’t? That denies the priesthood of the believer (1 Peter 2:9,10 KJV).

Religious Trap!!! Many cell / small group churches also claim that they believe in the “priesthood of the believer” doctrine and that is why they claim they want to “equip” everyone in the church to minister to the world. What they fail to tell you is the same priesthood of the believer doctrine that makes everyone a minister to the world also goes the other way and secures everyone in the body of Christ direct access to the presence of God and not just the senior pastor or cell group leader! Jesus said His sheep hear His voice (John 10:3-5). When someone in the church comes to you and says, “the Lord told me to tell you”, they are at that point and time declaring that Jesus does not consider you worthy of fellowship with Him so they were sent to you instead. If your only relationship with God, comes through your pastor or small group, then your relationship with your heavenly Father can never be any closer than your spiritual leaders relationship with God. The job of the pastor is to make sure the congregation has a relationship with their heavenly Father, and not to become the relationship with the heavenly Father. The true pastor’s job is to point you to Jesus, not replace Jesus. Remember the sheep are God’s flock, not the pastor’s flock.

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand (1 Corinthians 1:21-24 KJV).

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock (1 Peter 5:2,3 KJV).

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase (1 Corinthians 3:5-7 KJV).

My prayer is that you would be “in Christ” first which already makes you a member of the true church, which is in heaven and also on earth as strangers and pilgrims!

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (Ephesians 3:14-18 KJV).

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and

church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel (Hebrews 12:22,23 KJV).

The reason that a personal relationship with Jesus is so vital, and I cannot stress this enough, is because one day someone could throw you into prison without access to your Bible, pastor, spiritual leader, TV evangelist, Christian radio, church, or cell/small group. The good news is even though the world can take away these things, they cannot take away a personal relationship with Jesus, because that is on the inside.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38,39 KJV).

The true Comforter and your Savior is not the church, cell groups, or any other group of believers, although other Christians play an important part in your Christian experience. As a body other Christians need your gifts and they have gifts you need. But as a child of God, you are complete in Him.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: (Colossians 2:6-10 KJV).

To understand true Christianity, you must first understand religion. What people in religion do is take their life (family, house, job, finances, car, boat, bills, and recreation) and add Jesus to that by giving him the Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday night or Sabbath day. The real relationship you are looking for is only found when you become a part of His life, and you release total control to the true Creator. If I could sum my whole testimony up in one sentence it would be this, "If you give your life to Jesus, He will give His life to you". Right now though as I will explain in my testimony, I believe He is the Creator of your circumstances that has drew you to Him. I believe God arranged the circumstances of my life so that I would eventually lay down everything for Him. You may have the freedom to make choices in your life, but God has control of whether your choices are blessed or cursed! Please read the study "Freewill vs. God's Sovereignty". When God chose me, He would not leave me alone until He had me. This is the meaning of biblical predestination. God decides He is going to do something with His creation and then He does it with or without our "permission".

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (Ephesians 1:11 KJV).

It was even God's will that I was born again!

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12,13 KJV)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures (James 1:17,18 KJV).

God determined that I was going to be His and obtain an inheritance, and arranged the events of my life to bring that to pass. The correct biblical term for this is election. I didn't deserve it, but I did accept it and rejoice in it, and my will had to be broken by Him many times for Him to accomplish this. Please read the chapter "Freewill vs. God's Sovereignty".

You also just cannot make Jesus a part of your life and experience the victory, because it would still be your life and you are still playing "creator" only this time with Jesus added. This is still religion and has no redeeming value. Jesus said:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing (John 15:4,5 KJV)

This is what kept me from enjoying a real relationship with Jesus for so long. By saying the "sinners' prayer" and asking Jesus into my life, I never truly had to give up any of my life. My life was still in the center, and my world still revolved around me. My only responsibility as I saw it back then was to believe in the Bible and try to quit doing the things that the Bible says are wrong (repentance) and start doing the things that the Bible says are right (obedience) to receive God's blessing and eternal life.

In my mind, the only reason that I needed Jesus then was to pray to for forgiveness when I failed at this Heavenly goal. Without a personal relationship with Jesus, I turned the Gospel from "Jesus is the way", to "Jesus showed the way", and my idea of Christianity was to keep God's commandments and to apply the spiritual principles in the Bible to my life. I didn't understand that the men of God in the Bible did the things they did because of the work of God in them, not to get God to do something for them! I was "purpose driven", instead of "Spirit led".

In those days I only knew Jesus as just a "forgiver", but not a Savior. I thought that real Christianity was the result of me trying to conform to the image of Christ and He was only there to forgive me when I failed at this heavenly goal. This made me ask a question. Why did I even need any real personal relationship with Jesus since I had a Bible to take His place when He ascended up to Heaven? Religion teaches that God points out the sin in your life and then you then have to get rid of it. I didn't find out till later that Jesus could be my Savior and actually lift me out of the mess that I couldn't get

out of on my own and not to just keep forgiving me while I wallowed in my sin. So for a few years in religion, I had a personal relationship with my Bible and no other connection of any other kind to Jesus. My Christian relationship was with “the flesh made Word” and not with “the Word made flesh”. I knew a paper Jesus, not the person Jesus. I was worshipping the idea of Jesus, instead of the person Jesus. I also didn’t have any proof that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, except by what the Bible said, but I would try to witness and tell people that Jesus was alive. They would ask, “How do you know”? I would say, “because the Bible says so, and I believe that it is the inerrant, infallible, Word of God”. This would then usually lead to a problem. How do you convince somebody with the Bible that doesn’t believe in the Bible? This also would usually lead to an argument about the source of the scriptures and whether or not different translations were accurate. I also knew the scriptures where I could argue and fight with other denominations. I knew from experience that the Word of God carried tremendous power to condemn, but I didn’t find out till later that you could also edify, bless, and feed with it. I spent my early “Christian” years stuck in religion and swinging my cross instead of carrying it. The Word of God is a two-edged sword, if you are just as guilty as the person you are trying to condemn with the scripture, then that same word will cut you to the heart also, even if you are the one applying it to someone else. The Word of God is pure truth. It will reveal what is in your heart also.

If you were to take away my Bible and throw me in jail in those early religious days, you would have taken away my only contact with Jesus (except for any Bible verses that I memorized). I had always thought that the only Jesus I would ever know was through my Bible. I came to worship my Bible and not the one who the Bible was talking about. Without a very real personal relationship with a living God in this world, then the Bible becomes nothing more than a completely accurate, totally infallible, heavenly inspired history book.

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake (1 Thessalonians 1:5 KJV).

I never really knew Jesus back then, but through my Bible I knew everything about Jesus. My only relationship with Jesus was always through another man’s experience with Him (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul, etc.). I had some Mormons stop by my house one day and wanted to talk. At one point they were trying to explain to me about Joseph Smith’s experience with Jesus. My question to them is “how does Joseph Smith’s experience with Jesus change your life”? My desire for every Christian and the reason that I am sharing this is because I want every one to have a personal relationship with the person Jesus who rose from the dead, instead of only a relationship through people professing Jesus (cell / small group leaders, spiritual parents, priests, apostles, prophets, etc.)! Another Christian or group of Christians should point you to Jesus, not replace Jesus in your life.

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. Moreover I

call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand (2 Corinthians 1:21-24 KJV).

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase (1 Corinthians 3:5-7 KJV).

Do not ever let any “human being” or “spiritual being” act as a mediator between you and your heavenly Father. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ our true mediator, we all can come **BOLDLY** to the throne of grace to find help in time of need. Not when you are at your highest point of praise and worship in a church or celebration service, but when you are at home and at the lowest point in life! With a personal relationship with Jesus, you also can have a song at midnight! This is the personal relationship that I have with Jesus and I believe you can also.

And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them (Acts 16:23-25 KJV).

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16 KJV).

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:19-22 KJV).

The apostle’s experience with Jesus spoken of in the Bible also didn’t change my life. What finally changed my life is eventually meeting the one who the Gospel was talking about and having the witness of the Holy Spirit enter in and confirm the witness of the Word which I had heard through preaching and reading in the Bible! What I want to share with you is my testimony on how I came to know Jesus through a personal relationship through the Holy Ghost and not only through words in the Bible. Which also the Bible agrees with!

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake (1 Thessalonians 1:5 KJV).

For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power (1 Corinthians 4:20 KJV).

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 10:44,45 KJV)

I didn't know back then that one day on the road, coming home from work, I was to finally meet the very Jesus that I had loved to read about in my Bible, very much ALIVE! I was "caught away in the Spirit" and I was standing in the presence of Jesus and I had no awareness of anything else surrounding me. At that point I was judged not guilty of my sin. Then the love of God was so strong on me that I had to request the Lord to hold back His hand before he crushed me with the weight of His love. This love of God that I experienced that day was many times more intense than the love any woman could give. At that time a seed was planted in my heart and I finally "knew" Jesus instead of just knowing about Him. I will explain this in much more detail in the chapter "Marriage: Till death do us part". Also please read the chapter "The Christian Experience: From Seed to Saint". After this encounter, I now had my own relationship with Jesus instead of just building up my faith on Paul or Peter's experience. I also can now bear witness of His resurrection! In my experience, Jesus is very much ALIVE!

After this encounter with Jesus, which I had while driving alone in my car, and not in any secret church retreat or "encounter" with other believers or "cell / small groups". I was left in stunned amazement. The only words that would come out of my mouth were, "Jesus is ALIVE! Jesus is ALIVE!" I couldn't wait to tell people. The first thing I did was went and told two other people, "Jesus is ALIVE! Jesus is ALIVE!" Since they thought that I had been saved at twelve years old when I said my "sinners prayer" at Camp Joy, they looked at each other perplexed. They calmly said "we know Jesus is alive because the Bible says so". I was so excited; I said you don't understand, "Jesus is ALIVE! Jesus is ALIVE!" After being "caught away in the Spirit" and meeting Jesus on Mount Zion, I now possessed something that I never really could grasp before just reading about Jesus in the Bible. Because of this experience, I now had the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for and the EVIDENCE of things not seen! I now had FAITH!

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1 KJV).

The Bible also confirmed this experience!!!

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel (Hebrews 12:22-24 KJV).

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God: (Ephesians 2:19 KJV).

The whole experience was like a big welcome home! I didn't want to leave. I now knew Jesus in a way that before, I could only imagine when I read my Bible! Christianity is not just a belief, but an experience also. I finally had something of substance to grab hold of in this world. At this point, my faith in the Jesus of the Bible was transformed into reality for me. I never dreamed that the relationship with Jesus that I read about in the Bible was so powerful until I had actually experienced it. As I was pondering this event the next few days, another thought hit me like a ton of bricks. If meeting the Jesus of the Bible was this real, then that means that the rest of what the Bible says should be just as real! That's one reason why I love my Bible. Even if I hadn't experienced the things that the Bible said I should, the Bible would still be true. The Bible isn't based on my experience. And my experience isn't needed to justify the Bible. On the other hand, it takes the Bible to justify my experience. If my experience did not line up with the Bible, then I would be forced to rethink my experience.

Instantly the Bible became a whole new book. All of a sudden it was like the Bible had been sealed and the bands burst off. The same verses that would curse me and condemn me before were now blessing me and feeding me. A whole new spiritual world had been opened up to me. I started to see things in the Bible, I had never seen before. I also found myself experiencing the very things that I use to read about the other disciples experiencing in the Bible.

When I was in religion, I would read about what Christian behavior is supposed to be like in the Bible. As I understood it back then, for me to be a good Christian, I needed to follow its' instructions. Now the very things that I would try to do to be a good Christian, was being done in me by someone else (Holy Spirit) (for we are His workmanship, created in Christ unto good works). I suddenly started hearing Jesus' voice in the words. I now understood what Jesus meant when he said, "My sheep hear my voice".

But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers (John 10:2-5 KJV).

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, AND NOW IS, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live (John 5: 25 KJV).

I was "dead" in trespasses and sins, but now that I had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, I was finally able to hear those beautiful "words of life".

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life (John 6:63-68 KJV).

The Bible says that Jesus called us out of darkness (shadow of death (Luke 1:79) unto His marvelous light (light of life (John 8:12). By this time, I realized I had been chosen to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ himself would disciple me (“cell / small group” equipping teams were not needed). I also could understand things I couldn’t understand before. I now KNOW Jesus instead of just knowing about Him. After meeting Jesus, I can now stand side by side with my brother John because we share the very same testimony!

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life (1 John 5:20 KJV)

I always had faith in eternal life because the Bible said so. Now I also have faith in eternal life, because when I totally surrendered all to Jesus, I got to touch the source of eternal life and feel the power of the world to come. Jesus gave this somber warning:

Search the scriptures; for in them ye THINK ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life (John 5: 39, 40 KJV).

Religious Trap!! I need to stop here and explain something that happened to me after my conversion experience. I pray that you do not have to experience this, but you must still be warned. When I was in the Baptist religion, I was taught that if you gave your life to Jesus, He would take away your sin, you would have peace with God, you could have liberty, power over Satan, you would receive the Holy Ghost, and you should experience the love of God, fruits of the Spirit, and at least some joy. When I finally totally surrendered my life to Jesus, everything the Baptist doctrine said would happen, did happen! Jesus actually took away my sin, I experienced for the first time ever, the peace and love of God, I no longer felt under condemnation (Romans 8:1 KJV), I felt the Holy Ghost actually enter from the outside into my body and seal my heart, and actually I did experience the agape love of God and much joy. I thought that I had now finally caught up to where all other Christians already were. It was a good day to finally be alive....

The next thing that happened was the religious “brethren” totally flipped the doctrine around and were suddenly declaring that I can not possibly be experiencing the things that I was, and the Bible said I should be experiencing. I used to believe I had forgiveness even though I still had condemnation, but now I walk in the reality of that forgiveness and a clear conscience and no condemnation (Romans 8:1 KJV). When I said that Jesus took away my sin and I had for the first time, actually experienced a clear conscience and peace with God, then they immediately hit me with the scripture 1 John 1:8 KJV.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8 KJV).

Now all of a sudden, according to this scripture, I became a liar by declaring that Jesus actually did take away my sin. What I finally realized are the people quoting this verse to

me actually didn't care if I was deceiving myself; they were using this scripture to justify the sin that was in their life. I was standing on scripture also.

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29 KJV).

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; (Hebrews 1:3 KJV).

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins (Hebrews 10:2 KJV).

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered ONE sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by ONE offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Hebrews 10:11-14 KJV).

If I agreed with the scripture 1 John 1:8 and said that I still had sin even though I was saved, then the same religious ones would then flip the doctrine around again and quote me the scripture 1 John 3:5,6.

And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him (1 John 3:5,6 KJV).

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he CANNOT sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (1 John 3:9,10 KJV).

These verses presented to me with no explanation, left a "no win" situation and seem to stand in direct contradiction! At that time, I did not fully understand "the seed" that was planted in me.

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1:23 KJV).

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ (Galatians 3:16 KJV).

If you do not rightly divide the word of truth these verses will run you around in circles with much torment trying to figure it out. Be careful!!

At that time I was a new Christian and I did not have the knowledge or understood the difference between the inward spiritual man and the outward man of flesh. 1 John 1:8

was talking about the outward man, which came from Adam and 1 John 3:5-10 was describing the new inward man, which is Jesus Christ in you who cannot sin.

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1:23 KJV).

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: (1 John 3:25-28 KJV).

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; (2 Corinthians 4:16,17 KJV).

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (Ephesians 4:13 KJV).

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God (Ephesians 3:14-19 KJV).

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image (Colossians 3: 10) of the heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:47-49 KJV).

Let me try to explain this another way. A woman that is pregnant with child has two different “beings” dwelling in one body. The child in her womb is a totally new creation and a new life with a new future, separate from the mother, but for a time is dependant on the mother. The child carries half the father’s nature! Please read the chapter “Marriage, Till Death Do Us Part?” for a deeper study of this union. The same Holy Spirit that placed the seed in Mary for Christ to be birthed is the same Holy Spirit that places the seed in our hearts for Christ to be birthed in us. Paul said:

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, (Galatians 4:16 KJV).

The new inward man that is growing in the Christian is Christ himself who cannot sin. The whole Christian experience is Christ growing in us. Please read the chapter “The Christian Experience: From Seed to Saint” for a more in-depth explanation of the new birth process. How is Christ growing in us? Jesus was the Word made flesh!

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all (Colossians 3:9-11 KJV).

Since the Christian is “renewed in knowledge” of the Word (Jesus Christ) it is very vital for the new Christian to study and understand sound doctrine. The emotional hugging and crying of a cell / small group and “accountability partners” cannot replace the study of sound doctrine in the Christian's life. In many churches today, the cell / small groups have replaced the Holy Spirit as the “comforter” of the Christian. It is in cell groups that I first heard the term “discussing doctrine causes division”. Please read the chapter “A Word of Warning”. Remember the “dark ages” when the Catholic Church withheld the doctrine from every one, but the clergy. The new “Christian” today could soon find themselves having to send their prayer request with money to some TV preacher or evangelist so God will bless them and answer their prayer. What is the next step from that, “indulgences”? A wise man once said, “If we do not learn from history then we are doomed to repeat it”.

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: (1 Peter 2:2 KJV).

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; (Colossians 1:9,10 KJV).

The Bible says that Jesus is the author (written Word) and finisher (Living Word) of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). The Christian's growth experience is simply the Word made flesh. Please read the chapters “Perfecting of the Saints” and “The Christian Experience From Seed to Saint”.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect MAN, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (Ephesians 4:11-13 KJV).

Religious Trap!!! I also experienced a dramatic life change that was being done in me by the Holy Spirit and I was excited and joyous about this great liberty that I finally found in Jesus. Here came the religious ones again. I had one in the Baptist religion say to me, “you are walking around here thinking you are holier than everybody else, I can’t wait till the Lord pulls the rug out from under you”. I lost count of how many times the verse 1 Corinthians 10:12 was quoted me:

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12 KJV).

I could not make them understand that the changes that were being made in me, were not being made by me. I wasn’t standing on my own anymore.

Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand (Romans 14:4 KJV).

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand (Psalms 37:23,24 KJV).

They didn’t understand that what I was experiencing couldn’t be turned off by me, because I wasn’t the one that turned it on! Righteousness was a gift given to me by God for true faith in Jesus Christ. It was imputed to me by God, not earned and kept by me through perpetual good works (Romans 4:1-8 KJV).

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Romans 8:33,34 KJV).

What happened to me could best be explained by a story in the Old Testament. My righteousness was, as “filthy rags” that could not be cleaned so I exchanged it for His righteousness that could not get dirty.

And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment (Zechariah 3:1-4 KJV).

All the wicked one (Jeremiah 17:9) can do is accuse the Christian, it cannot condemn you because there is no condemnation to them who are in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:1). He can cause you to condemn yourself though.

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God (1 John 3:19-21 KJV).

But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself (Titus 3:9-11).

Many people wear their righteousness like a robe that can be put on and taken off at will, according to their actions as judged by the law. In the law of Moses, they were not allowed to kill any man. That is why they brought Jesus to the Romans to crucify him instead of doing that themselves.

Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die (John 18:31,32 KJV).

Before the Jews could stone Stephen, they first had to remove their religious clothes (self-righteousness) that forbid them to kill. They could put it back on later after the deed was done.

Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul (Acts 7:57,58 KJV).

If you wanted to stone someone according to the law, all you had to do was accuse them and then that persons own conscience will condemn them to death. You do not have to do any more.

For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me (Romans 7:9-11 KJV).

Concerning true conversion, I hear many Pentecostals refer to the Baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. I believe that the correct phrase is the Baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of a changed life! When another Baptist saw the joy and peace I was finally walking in, they took it upon themselves to tell me "you may be on the mountain top now, but don't ever forget there is a valley on the other side". I experienced other persecution, but it mainly came from the religious ones. My unsaved friends saw some amazing changes being made in me and would pull me to the

side and sincerely ask me questions about my experience with Jesus. They were happier for me than the “Christian” brethren! Be careful and don’t get caught in this trap!

Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you (Acts 13:40,41 KJV).

On that day, I received a deeper spiritual understanding of the Bible than I had ever had before. I will explain this more in the chapter on “(WHO ARE YOU?) Spiritual Wisdom, Knowledge, and Understanding”. Paul also knew that there was a deeper spiritual wisdom that was hidden from the natural man and revealed only to a spiritual man (born of the Spirit). Paul called it “spiritual understanding”.

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; (Colossians 1:10 KJV).

I will explain later in great detail this spiritual understanding, because the Bible says in 1 John 5:20 that we cannot know Jesus without this spiritual understanding.

I kept asking myself another question. If there is only one truth, why are there so many different denominations? How can so many pastors get so many “visions” out of one simple gospel of peace? What I have come to find out in my experience is, to truly understand the Bible; you have to have an interpreter, which can be none other than the Holy Spirit. You do not need special stones, crystals, golden plates, or computer codes, etc. to understand the gospel.

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3 KJV).

The Word of God brings the truth to light then the Spirit of God brings the truth to pass in the believer’s life. The same Holy Spirit that gave the apostles and prophets the knowledge to write the Bible is the same Holy Spirit that gives us the knowledge to understand the Bible. Jesus said:

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures (Luke 24:44,45 KJV).

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20,21 KJV).

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