

My Faith Story

-- by Minu J

I was born in South part of India in a state called 'Kerala', where St. Thomas, one of the Apostles visited in the 1st century with the gospel of Jesus Christ. I was born to parents who come from families of different religious backgrounds. My mother was a devout Syrian Orthodox Christian. She used to read bible and say prayers at home. Her family was very religious and had strong Christian beliefs. My father was not a Christian, though he came from a family, where the previous generations were practicing Christians. I have one elder brother. During my growing years, we never went to church, except for occasions like Good Friday/Christmas or while visiting my grand parents on my mother's side during our vacations. When we were with them, long prayers were a daily thing and we went to church very often with mom on Sundays, but still God was never a significant part of my life during my childhood. My mother did get my brother and myself to read bible and say prayers before going to bed. My father never believed in expressing his love towards us children and used to be strict. Mom was loving, but that part from my father was missing. And so this along, with other problems at home created some kind of emptiness and sadness in me.

From my childhood, I was consistently reminded that I had to excel in my studies and it was expected that I had to come first in the class, there was no place for second or third positions. I did excel until the 7th grade. In my 8th grade, my father had me change schools, as he wanted me to go to one of the best schools in the city that we lived in. The school was a convent exclusively for girls, run by catholic nuns. They followed a tough curriculum and I still remember that in one of the English papers in the beginning, I had got very low marks. I remember going home and telling mom- 'I don't think I will make it through my 8th grade'. The convent had a chapel adjacent to it and I remember going to the chapel after the school daily and desperately praying to God to help me through with this tough curriculum. Around this same time, a family friend brought two students from a bible college to our home and they expressed their interest to teach 'Sunday school' in one of our friend's home. My mom did not want to let go off this opportunity, as we never went regularly to church and wanted us to go. So, we started going to classes during the Sunday afternoons. In one of the classes, they spoke about Jesus and that he died for me and shared the verses, John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish but have eternal life, Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord, Romans 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God). I was asked whether I wanted to accept Jesus as my personal savior" which I did, as they led me through a prayer. One of the reasons that I accepted Jesus was because, I felt here is a God who loves me so much and I felt that love which was missing from my earthly father was being filled in by the Heavenly Father. I started reading the Bible, praying daily and on my own started going to a church on Sundays. My brother did not accept JESUS at that time and dropped out of the classes, but he did ask me a question on the day when I accepted Jesus - as to whether I understood what Salvation really meant? I really believe, as I look behind to that point in life, that God gave me a child like faith to accept Him with no questions asked, whereas my brother was more of the intellectual type who had a lot of questions unanswered at that point of time.

I continued going to these classes until my 9th grade. When it came to the 10th grade, my father wanted me to stop going to Sunday school, because he wanted me to completely focus on my studies. Moreover, 10th grade was supposed to be a major turning point and one had to really get very good marks to secure a place in the top college and universities in the country. So, for the next three years, I could not attend any Sunday school classes, but whenever I was permitted by my parents, I continued going to church on Sundays. Thanks be to God, for I got through the 10th grade, college and made it to the one of the top universities in the country.

The university, which I attended was in the North West part of India and my home was in the south part of the country. So I had to live away from home for the next four years. There was no church, or any Christian gathering in the area around the university. So, some of us Christian students gathered in an open park in the campus area and started off with Christian meetings on Saturday afternoons after our classes. We started our own Sunday Worship Services with each of us taking turns worshipping and giving short sermons on Sundays. It was actually on one of these Sunday services when one of my friends, David talked about Salvation, that I fully understood what Jesus had done for me and what salvation really meant. When Adam and Eve fell, a rupture occurred between humanity and God. And Jesus bridged that gap between us and God by dying for you and me. I was free from the bondage of sin. I re-dedicated myself to God that day.

In the later years, as I passed out of university and worked in India and abroad in Singapore as a software Engineer, God brought along people and opportunities to deepen my faith and to be part of a ministry to the students in universities and support them. My marriage to Maju and coming to Canada is a

separate story by itself and I had to go through some very tough times with my parents, because of my stand to get married to a born-again believer.

Life in Canada after marriage wasn't easy either, as I initially felt, I had missed God's best plan and sometimes felt there was no direction in my life. Maju was very patient and was very clear that I was God's gift to him. I was angry with my parents, the way they dealt with me w.r.t my marriage. The company that I was working in 2002, closed down and I took a break from my work. I was seeking God w.r.t to his Will for us in the area of having children. Day after day, I spent crying before God spending a whole lot of time in his Word, listening to Church Swindoll's messages and God was faithful every time, showing me that He loved me through His Word. He provided just what was needed to get through each day. Somewhere, I had forgotten that God was perfectly in control of my life no matter what. During those times, some of the scripture verses that became very relevant:

"Romans 8:28 - And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

"Ps 23:6 - Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

"Joshua 1:9 - Be strong and courageous; Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go;"

And in 2006, he blessed us with Naomi. Through the help of Holy Spirit, I was able to get over the anger that had and was truly able to forgive. So, all the glory goes to God. Life has not ceased to be tough. There are questions some times, lots of them. We have been seeking his direction as a family w.r.t His calling to serve HIM and our careers.

In closing, I am reminded of the verse- Hebrews 10: 23 - Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful!

You can receive Christ right now by faith through prayer. Praying is simply talking to God. God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words, as He is with the attitude of your heart. Here is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, I want to know you personally. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life to you and ask you to come in as my Savior and Lord. Take control of my life. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Make me the kind of person you want me to be.

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? You can pray it right now, and Jesus Christ will come into your life, just as He promised.