

*Note: If you have already read the first three chapters from my website or possibly heard me share my story in person, then continue reading at the start of chapter 4 —***God's Calling for Me: A Revealing of My Heart**

Have you ever experienced the Holy Spirit?
The joy, the peace, the power?

Have you ever grieved the Holy Spirit?
Being unforgiving and having no compassion or mercy towards others?

For a long period of time in my life I thought I was living for God, I thought I was doing His work. However, it was revealed to me the darkness I was actually blind to. His Spirit searched me out and in the depths of my soul He revealed the forgetfulness of pride I was living in. I was lukewarm and about to be vomited out.

Do you struggle against the flesh?
Are you able to speak up and share your heart with others, or are you ashamed?
Do you think no one else can relate to what you have done and gone through... or maybe you think no one has time for you or even cares?

Can I share of my heart with you, my pain, hurt, and shame?

In all things I want to lift up and glorify our almighty God and I want to inspire you of the mighty yet personal God we serve. I want to reassure you that He is real and alive! I want this message to be an encouragement for you to step up and speak out what is in your heart. To help battle the lies of fear with God's perfect love.

I have three stories to share of times the Holy Spirit moved in my life. A vision, an answer to prayer, and a time of heavy conviction. Then I want to share how God brought me back to Himself and changed my hardened heart of stone to a heart of flesh. From my ways of self-righteousness to His ways of compassion and understanding.

First Story: Why do I Believe?

"Fear is no good reason to believe in anything"
Sean McConnell

Why do you believe in God?

Do you believe because of fear?

Do you believe because of your reputation?
Do you believe because you feel obligated to?

At an early age I placed my faith in Christ and in Him alone, but didn't have any discipleship or a body of believers to grow with. Still, God showed Himself, guided me, and protected me many times. When I first started going to church on my own I wasn't necessarily seeking after God rather I was seeking after a young lady! Little did I know the path God was bringing me through in deepening the relationship with Him.

Yearly my youth group participated in a statewide competition called Extravaganza. Hundreds of teenagers entering into competitions of sports and talents. I decided to enter into the fine art competition but there was a problem, I didn't feel inspired to draw anything. So I quickly gave up.

A few days before the registration deadline I was encouraged to try again by my youth leader. So I went home praying and seeking God for inspiration but still nothing. I then remembered of a large old Bible I thought might be able to inspire me.

I opened it and the first page I saw brought a sudden rush of images appearing before me. I saw four sections of a picture with all the details being revealed to me. Then a rush of pure joy filled my entire body, overflowing my soul like water overflowing out of a vase. I was in a state of unstoppable fits of laughter that protruded from the warmth inside of me.

And this was the piece that I entered for the competition:



So at the award ceremony on the last day of the event, the third and second place winners were called up and awarded medals for their entrees. Then the first place was called and my good friend went up to accept. We all clapped and cheered. I was truly happy for him and always had been impressed with his talent.

But I had to wonder... why?

With such an intense and direct experience from God, why did my piece not place anything? As soon as my confused and prideful questions started scheming in my mind, my name was called for the best in show over all categories in the talent categories.

Looking back however, this experience wasn't just for me to be the "best" and win recognition. Rather It was God's timing in revealing Himself to me. That He is real and alive, just as He says in His Holy Word.

Second Story: Audible & Peace

For this next story as you read, Imagine yourself as the character in the following narrative...

*It's dark outside, the air around you is quiet and everything is still.
You're getting into your vehicle about to leave for work.
You sit down and turn the key.*

*The radio startles you as you fumble with the knob to turn down the volume.
The glow from the radio reads 4:00 am.*

*The air is crisp and cool as you drive down the road. You reminisce over the previous two weeks,
the start of your freshman year in college and boy has it been a blast! Every night has been one party after another, no rules, no limits.*

Freedom to drink what you want, smoke what you want and the opportunity to lay with whoever you want is all in your grasp.

The sudden squeal of your wheels tests your nerves as you attempt to waken your drowsiness with some slaps your cheeks as you continue down the highway.

*Soon you start thinking about the day ahead.
Finishing your morning route, heading to class, scrimmaging at football practice, getting some food with friends, then going out to another party.*

Ignoring your heavy eyes you tell yourself, "This is the LIFE!"

Suddenly a loud humming noise from the highway alerts you as the tires drift off the edge. You notice that you missed your exit and try to correct the truck. Turning too sharp, the loose gravel grabs your tires and your steering wheel locks up flipping your vehicle over.

You open your eyes to a feeling of pressure and sharp pain in your chest, you can't breathe. Are you underwater? You panic and struggle to get to the surface as you begin to hear muffled voices surrounding you.

Finally bursting through the surface of your unconscious you awake and gasp for air as you find yourself on your back on some grass. Slowly a dim light starts to glow brighter as your sight returns. You see unfamiliar faces standing above you.

"stay still"

"don't move"

"help is on the way"

Scared and not understanding who these people are or what they are saying, you try to stand up but a sharp hot blade pierces into your back setting your spine on fire.

You scream! Then black out again.

This story was an adaptation based on the accounts from what truly happened to my best friend when he wrecked his vehicle. Early one morning, heading to work he rolled his truck three times, was thrown out the window and stretched his spinal cord from the impact, paralyzing him.

I entered into a room that day at the ICU seeing him locked down, motionless. Tubes protruding from his skin, wires fastened to his body. In all the questions and emotions, I was told that he might not make it through the night because of internal bleeding. So as I left the hospital I started to pray.

“God let him live... God let him live... God let him live!”

Over and over, the same four words fell off my tongue, crying as I drove home.

With the same prayer still on my lips as I entered my home and ran upstairs, I was suddenly stopped and unable to move at the top step. Then an audible voice spoke and told me;

“He will live.”

Why couldn't I move? Who just said that and who was this standing above me?

The image quickly vanished as soon as it appeared and I felt the rush again like so many years ago, the pure water inside of my body overflowing my soul and instantly filling me with such perfect joy that I couldn't contain my laughter.

During the next year, my friend and I became roommates.

Yes, he lived! His paralysis had moved from his neck down to his lower chest.

During this time, we had many discussions about life. Mostly in his depression they would consist of complaints, hardships and his desire for peace.

He was very angry and blamed God many times for taking the life he had before the accident. He would ask me what I thought, I would always answer with him the same thing... that Jesus was the only peace, but every time that would end the conversation.

One night after dinner with my friend, he brought up again his desire for peace. I replied the same as before with Jesus being the only way for that peace. Though this time, unlike before, he followed with a yearning and heartfelt question.

“How do I do that?”

So I shared the gospel and told him about believing that Jesus is the one true Son of the Living God. He said he would think about it more and so I left that to meet up with my bible study group.

A week later at the same study group we were interrupted in the middle of a verse, as my wife to be, came into the room. She said that everyone had been looking for me and that my best friend had been killed in car accident.

What? Another accident... and that's it?

The last time I saw him, we were eating chicken together and now... he's gone?

I bent over, buried my face into my hands and asked if we could pray as I began to weep. The voices and sounds around me were all muffled. My thoughts and emotions were a mess but a verse that we read earlier kept replaying in my mind.

It was an odd verse that I didn't recognize ever reading before.

"Why cry for those already in heaven?"

So I asked the group if we could read that verse again but I was told we didn't read it. I asked my friend who was reading that night what exact verses in the chapter where we at? I'll find it myself, I determined in my confused frustration. Page after page, nothing remotely close to what I heard was in what we just read. Then the leader of the study told me that what I heard was meant for me alone.

God lovingly was letting me know that my best friend was safe with Him, that he was finally at peace!

Third Story: Eyes of Purifying Fire

Third Story: Eyes of Purifying Fire

1 John 4:18 (HCSB)

There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears has not reached perfection in love.

Is love perfected in you?

Are you able to drive out your fear, or do you live in torment?

Are you afraid to speak up, to confess, to share with other believers?

Does your shame, regret, or heartache continually punish you with worry that someone might find out your secret?

I have had a lot of shame in my life but it was safe by keeping it under control behind my wall. Or so I thought I had control.

For the longest time I didn't think of it as a big deal, but the wall started stacking up. Higher and higher it grew from all the excuses and lies to keep feeding my denial, to justify my actions, to fill my needs. The worst part was when others would complement and encourage my wall. It then built a reputation I had to uphold, it was now defining who I was. So I would bury any hurt or rejection and continue to build to my wall. All the while... smiling and saying everything is ok.

I came to a breaking point though when the Spirit started tearing down my wall. God allowed this wall of control and pride to fall on me, but the whole time He never left my side.

One day, the weight had built up so much that I had to confess what I was hiding to the person closest to me. I had to confess to my wife... actually I was being forced to confess! I didn't want to for the fear of my shame being revealed, for what she might say and do. For the hurt I knew it would cause.

I was betraying her,
each and everyday betraying her with lies and scheming for my own self pleasure.
The more I put it off, the more pieces from the wall were laid on my back. It was getting hard to breath, hard to talk, hard to think. Finally one night I told her...

"Elizabeth...
I have been struggling with pornography."

Within the church we have a big issue with this problem,
but I believe this is just scratching the surface of the true, deeper issue inside of us all.

- 70% of Christians admitted to struggling with porn in their daily lives. From a non-scientific poll taken by XXXChurch, as reported by CNN.
- 50% of all Christian men and 20% of all Christian women are addicted to pornography. 60% of the women who answered the survey admitted to having significant struggles with lust; 40% admitted to being involved in sexual sin in the past year; and 20% of the church-going female participants struggle with looking at pornography on an ongoing basis. From the results of a ChristiaNet poll reported by Marketwire.com
- 34 percent of female readers of Today's Christian Woman's online newsletter admitted to intentionally accessing Internet porn in a recent poll.

It's not just a "guy" thing!

Addiction to porn is now rising at a faster rate for women than it has for men in past studies. At the same time, it will take men who are seeking after God's heart to start a real change.

- The National Coalition to Protect Children and Families surveyed 5 Christian Campuses to see how the next generation of believers were doing with sexual purity: 48% of males admitted to current porn use 68% of males said they intentionally viewed a sexually explicit site at the school
- Pastors.com website conducted a survey on porn use of 1351 pastors: 54% of the pastors had viewed Internet pornography within the last year, and 30% of these had visited within the last 30 days.
- In a survey of over 500 Christian men at a men's retreat, over 90% admitted that they were feeling disconnected from God because lust, porn, or fantasy had gained a foothold in their lives.

This has been a stronghold in my life and it started around the age of 10.

At that age, a bunch of my friends in the neighborhood would always play down the street around the library which was connected to a huge grass park. We would play football, climb trees and go on adventures in the spillways..

We would crawl up into the round metal spillways pretending to be ninja turtles. One day under the street, we were going up into one of those pitch black holes when we found something. Gathered around in a huddle, feet soaking wet from the shallow running water. We started going through this magazine we found, slowly, page by page. Viewing the images of a lady fully naked, doing things our young minds were never meant to see.

We decided to hide it rather than put it back... to "help" the one who originally hid it in the first place. So down alongside the creek we hid the magazine under a bunch of reeds and leaves. Then we all in unison decided we better go home.

On our way back to our neighborhood, we joked and talked about the magazine. So many images and questions were racing through our minds. Returning to our block we each started giving excuses to split ways and go home. When I entered my house from the back door, I went through the kitchen, through the living room and right back out the front door. Quickly walking down a parallel street and taking a narrow road back down to the creek. Back to where we hid the mysterious treasure.

Kneeling down in my muddy soaked jeans, I started to remove the leaves and sticks hiding the

magazine. I couldn't find it though! One of my friends already had come back and grabbed it before me. Just a bunch of boys ranging from 6 - 10 years old, and from the few pages we saw, we all started scheming and planning in our young minds to get that magazine for ourselves.

This and other stories in my life I shared with Elizabeth as she wept from feelings of rejection and betrayal. Comparing herself to the lies this world deems as sexy and attractive. This whole time of sharing I continued to try my best to comfort, reassure, and ask of forgiveness from her.

There was something else very present as we talked and cried together. Another experience inside me was going on at the same time. The eyes of Christ were aflame with His refining fire inside my body, I was burning up.

I was nervous beyond measure confessing this all to Elizabeth, but this heat I was experiencing was different, I had never felt it to this extreme before. It was similar to the times I experienced the pure overwhelming joy, but this time it was fire overflowing in me.

Jesus's eyes full of flames were gazing through me, deep into my soul.

This experience reminds me of Revelation 19:12, where scripture refers to the fiery eyes of Christ and their awesome power.

I was being cleansed, renewed in the kiln of my Messiah.
Desire, shame, selfishness, my will was burning away.

I was free!

The next week after that night and the intense experience, Elizabeth told me some exciting news, we were pregnant with our first child.

Please be aware, my three stories of experiencing God and His Son in the Spirit are not for my glory. There was nothing I did to earn them, no special prayer or tradition I was obeying. It was all God and His timing and His plan. It is all for His glory! These experiences have built my foundation. They helped me down the road with struggles of logic, evolution, and religion versus my faith in Jesus(Yeshua).

These and other experiences I had in the Spirit are rare. I greatly desire for God to give them to me again, but I do not want to become one who needs to see a sign to believe. For who am I? Rather these experiences are for me to move in obedience, not for me to reach a selfish state of bliss or enlightenment.

A much better way to see and experience the Spirit constantly in our lives is in the gathering of the body of our Messiah. Believers in the Jesus, gathered together and being truthful about the good and bad things in our lives, gives us Jesus's power in the Spirit. Opening up to each other

with needs, hurts, sorrows, shame, successes, praises, and passions, makes us aware and able to connect. It opens our hearts in compassion to serve each other and to be used by God in seeking the lost. Then when God acts in His will, we are all witnesses and glorify Him, instead of ourselves.

Knowing God and His Son is a never ending relationship, a continual walk He brings us through in sanctification. I will never reach a pinnacle or a goal of perfection in this current mind and body until the resurrection. As time went on from these events in my life, I would become blind in my own pride and forgot these experiences I had.

God's Calling for Me: A Revealing of My Heart

Whether you believe my experiences of the Holy Spirit or not. Whatever your views are of the Trinity and the interactions the Holy Ghost has or does not have with us today. Please do not take my testimony and hold me up. Rather, always trust, believe and lift up God's testimony! I am just a man. I had no special prayer or any tradition to receive these experiences. It is all for God's glory and His path He has me on. I am just trying my best to be obedient.

[1 John 5: 9-11 \(HCSB\)](#)

9 If we accept the testimony of men, God's testimony is greater, because it is God's testimony that He has given about His Son.

10 (The one who believes in the Son of God has this testimony within him. The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony God has given about His Son.)

11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

12 The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn't have the Son of God does not have life.

Let me now share the life I have and the compassion God has been growing in me.

2013, my wife and I have now four children and have been living in Georgia for a little over 6 years. Business was going good, our company's culture, intentionality, and development were growing. Unknowing to us though, the upcoming year would bring challenges of fully trusting and resting in God.

This seventh year of business was being shown to us that the whole company would be going through a Sabbath Year.

During the summer of this Sabbath year, God started opening my eyes to what I had been blind to in my life. He first started by revealing that I was stealing from Him. As I heard a message

preached out of the book of Malachi, specifically in chapter 3:8. It was brought into a conversation with God.

The Spirit moving in me said, "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me!"

But I asked back, 'In what way have I robbed You Lord?'

And He told me, "In tithes and offerings."

All my control came to mind of how I was determining what to do with our tithe. After confessing and surrendering my thieving heart, I was led into a 2 week fast. I had my own idea for this fast but God humbled me and revealed His plan. He told me where I had been blinded towards Him. He showed me I was sick and that I had forgotten my first Love.

My shallow questions and desires that I was bringing before Him faded away as He transitioned my focus to a simplistic time of being with the Bridegroom [Mark 2:18-20](#).

On the last day of this fast, God revealed to me a change that I was not comfortable with. He wanted me to share my stories with other believers.

He wanted me to testify a message that He was revealing in my own heart.

On the last day of the fast, the Lord revealed to me the following scriptures.

[Mark 7:6-23 \(NLT\)](#)

6 Jesus replied,

"You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote,
'These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

7 Their worship is a farce,

for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.

8 For you ignore God's law and substitute your own tradition."

9 Then he said,

"You **skillfully sidestep God's law** in order to hold on to **your own tradition**.

10 For instance, Moses gave you this law from God:

'Honor your father and mother,

and 'Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.

11 But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents,

'Sorry, I can't help you.

For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.'

12 In this way, you let them disregard their needy parents.

13 And so you cancel the **word of God** in order to hand down **your own tradition**.

And this is only one example among many others.”

14 Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear.

“All of you listen,” he said, “and try to understand.

15 It’s not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart.”

16 (NLT omits, [HCSB](#) has) [If anyone has ears to hear, he should listen!]”

17 Then Jesus went into a house to get away from the crowd, and his disciples asked him what he meant by the parable he had just used.

18 “Don’t you understand either?” he asked. “Can’t you see that the food you put into your body cannot defile you?

19 Food doesn’t go into your heart, but only passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer.”

20 And then he added, “It is what comes from inside that defiles you.

21 For from within, out of a person’s heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder,

22 adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness

23 All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you.”

Wow... I was being shown and convicted of my hypocrisy, placing my ways before God’s ways and before His grace! I started to groan as I thought of the hurt I was causing to others, myself, and to God.

He then brought me to more scripture:

[Revelation 3:14-22\(NKJV\)](#)

(For this reading, let’s place “America” in the location of “Laodicea” to help us relate better)

14 “Write to the angel of the church in ~~Laodicea~~: “America”

“The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Originator of God’s creation says:

15 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot.

16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of My mouth.

17 Because you say,
'I'm rich; I have become wealthy and need nothing,'
and you don't know that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked,

Pulling my eyes away from my Bible, I confessed...
I was wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.
I was prideful and had forgotten my first Love.

18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire so that you may be rich,
white clothes so that you may be dressed and your shameful nakedness not be
exposed, and ointment to spread on your eyes so that you may see.

19 As many as I love,
I rebuke and discipline.
So be committed and repent.

20 Listen! I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears My voice and opens the door,
I will come in to him and have dinner with him, and he with Me.

21 The victor: I will give him the right to sit with Me on My throne,
just as I also won the victory and sat down with My Father on His throne.

22 "Anyone who has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches."."

I was shown that I was desensitized and judgemental.
I was shown by the Spirit where I was blind to the truth.
Christ revealed that I was lukewarm and about to be vomited out.

I had forgotten where my satisfaction comes from.
I had all my needs and desires conveniently at my fingertips.
I had forgotten the provisions of God our Father and truly believed I was **entitled** to any
pleasure I so wanted.

I forgot that "He" desires to provide for me.
"He" knows and desires the best for me.

I was fooling myself with my own self-deceptions so I could feel good about the works I
performed. So I could be in control of my religion! So I could justify and feel secure in the
convenience of being "saved".

Who really needs God?
Who even is this One True God, This LORD of hosts?

I had made myself, my own god!

[Pro 30:8,9 \(HCSB\)](#)

8 Keep falsehood and deceitful words far from me.

Give me neither poverty nor wealth;
feed me with the food I need.

9 Otherwise, I might have too much
and deny You, saying, "Who is the LORD? "
or I might have nothing and steal,
profaning the name of my God.

This is what I see as the real core issue that we all have...

Who is God?

It's nothing new, we hear messages of this week after week.
This same message is reiterated time and again in the Bible.
All of our stories are the same, we all repeat it, even the "best" of us.

What do I turn to when I'm hurting, sad, or in distress?
Who gets my attention in times of joy and happiness?

Do I turn to God and remember His ways,
or do I turn to my own ways so I can build my fame, forgetting God?

Do I trust in the fulfillment of Jesus for life abundantly,
or do I trust in my traditions and idols to achieve fleeting satisfactions?

It's either the Straight and Narrow Road or the wide road!

It's either the Spirit or the flesh!

It's either God's way or my way!

Why do we forget our first Love?
How do we forget the good that God does?
Where do we end up after forgetting the two above?

Forgetting Him?

To answer those three questions above, let's look into the Holy Word.

Satisfaction:

Let's look at when we are satisfied in God.

[Psalm 22:26\(HCSB\)](#)

The humble will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the LORD will praise Him.
May your hearts live forever!

Now let's look at being satisfied in the world.

[Proverbs 27:20\(HCSB\)](#)

Sheol(the grave) and Abaddon(destruction) are never satisfied, and people's eyes are never satisfied.

[Ecclesiastes 6:7\(NKJV\)](#)

All the labor of man is for his mouth,
and yet the soul is not satisfied.

Pride:

Let's look at pride next:

[Pro 16:18\(NKJV\)](#)

Pride goes before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before a fall.

[1 John 2:16\(HCSB\)](#)

For everything that belongs to the world --
the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's lifestyle --
is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Pride builds self-righteousness which slowly desensitizes us to the point where we will justify anything to acquire our wants and desires.

Forgetfulness:

We have these warnings not to forget:

[Deuteronomy 8:14\(HCSB\)](#)

be careful that your heart doesn't become proud and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.

[Psalm 103:2\(HCSB\)](#)

My soul, praise the LORD, and do not forget all His benefits.

Now let's tie all three together, a foretelling of mankind throughout history.

[Hosea 13:4-6\(NKJV\)](#)

4 I have been Yahweh your God ever since the land of Egypt; you know no God but Me, and no Savior exists besides Me.

5 I knew(fed) you in the wilderness, in the land of drought(need).

6 When they had pasture, they **became satisfied**; they were satisfied, and their **hearts became proud**.

Therefore they **forgot Me**.

When Israel was all moved into the Promised Land, they had all their towns, homes, farms, and vineyards already built and flourishing from the previous nations that lived there. Within three generations they had forgotten the LORD their God. All their needs were in abundance and it fed their pride. Which made them unaware of where it all truly came from.

Satisfaction leads to > Pride leads to > Forgetfulness

Q: Why do we forget our first Love?

A: We are impatient and want satisfaction now, our way.

Q: How do we forget the good that God does?

A: Living in the pride that grows from that impatient satisfaction.

Q: Where do we end up after experiencing satisfaction and pride?

A: We end up in a lifestyle of forgetfulness.

When we become prideful from satisfaction, we forget our origins.

Pride builds upon itself from each opportunity to satisfy our desires.

When our flesh or spirit has an opportunity to become satisfied, we enter into battle.

Either our pride wins feeding our self-preservation, or our spirit wins feeding our self-control allowing our soul to remember Yahweh in thankfulness and praise.

Repeated self-preservation results in numbness and blindness, popularly coined as, "the slow fade". The danger is we get to the point where our pride will justify anything just to feed our self-preservation. This is the fall... the lie that comes from our heart saying:

You have earned "it"...

You deserve "it"...

You have the power to control "it" ...
So we believe the lie and act upon the temptation leading to sin.

Return to Him?

So how do we return to our first Love?
How do we even know there is an issue we need to address?
If we are already saved, does it even make sense to return to Him?

Eternal life is knowing and being known by God, it is a relationship we enter into when we believe that Jesus(Yeshua Hamashiach) is God's Son! As in any relationship when trust is broken it has to be earned back. Below are the stages God brought me through, and in doing so I also saw the same process repeated over and over in the Bible.

1. First, God draws us back, not of ourselves so no one can boast.

[1John 4:19](#) We love Him because He first loved us.

2. Remember the Lord your God, read, listen, and pray.

Remember The Lord's mighty works and His ways.
Remember what He has done in your life.

[Psalm 143:5 \(HCSB\)](#)

I remember the days of old;
I meditate on all You have done;
I reflect on the work of Your hands.

[Isa 53:5-7 \(HCSB\)](#)

5 But He was pierced because of our transgressions,
crushed because of our iniquities;
punishment for our peace was on Him,
and we are healed by His wounds.
6 We all went astray like sheep;
we all have turned to our own way;
and the LORD has punished Him(Jesus)
for the iniquity of us all.
7 He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet He did not open His mouth.
Like a lamb led to the slaughter
and like a sheep silent before her shearers,

He did not open His mouth.

3. Reconciliation

God brings us the gift of repentance so that we can repent.

[Luke 5:32 \(NKJV\)](#)

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

[Acts 5:31 \(NKJV\)](#)

"Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

[Acts 11:18 \(NKJV\)](#)

When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

When a relationship has a break in trust, we have to:

1) Ask - Become aware of the trespass by **asking** of the violation.

- Read the Bible
- Ask and seek Him in prayer
- Listen to others who share testimonies and teach messages

When you read or hear the Holy Word, do any trespasses or sins in your lifestyle and traditions come to mind? If not, then ask God to reveal what violations you may be blind to.

Whether the sin seems too insignificant or even too big, whether it's something you think you can handle or something you don't want to deal with. Whatever He brings to your mind, right now in this moment. Don't deny it... lean into it. Recognize it for what it is, call it out and surrender it to Him.

[Job 13:23\(HCSB\)](#)

How many iniquities and sins have I committed?
Reveal to me my transgression and sin.

[Psalm 139:23,24\(NKJV\)](#)

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
24 And see if *there is any* wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

2) Humble yourself - be ready to listen and stay quiet as the Holy Spirit reveals truth and depravity within yourself.

- Don't allow excuses of our culture to deceive you.
- Don't let your feelings guide your spirit into lies and self-deception.
- Don't hold on to men's traditions.

Let go of it all by speaking out loud, seek and recognize God's holiness and power. Remembering your sin for what it is. Lift up the name of Jesus by what He accomplished, because He loves you. Bring yourself low before Him, quiet your voice and mind. Listen to what is being said. Don't get distracted with thinking of a response, that is not listening.

[Proverbs 11:2\(HCSB\)](#)

When pride comes, disgrace follows,
but with humility comes wisdom.

[Matthew 11:28-30 \(HCSB\)](#)

28 "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
29 All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves.
30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

[James 4:6 & 10 \(HCSB\)](#)

6 But He gives greater grace. Therefore He says:
God resists the proud,
but gives grace to the humble.

&10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

3) Conviction - let your heart be burdened by the truth.

Listen to God as His Holy Spirit speaks and reveals the truth about you. Do not reject or bury the discerning of your heart and thoughts.

[Proverbs 20:27 \(NKJV\)](#)

The spirit of a man *is* the lamp of the LORD,
Searching all the inner depths of his heart.

[Heb 4:12,13 \(NKJV\)](#)

12 For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.

4) Admit - Confess your trespasses and violations to our Heavenly Father. Find others of the same sex you can trust, confess to them and give them the authority to keep you accountable.

[Psalm 32:5 \(NKJV\)](#)

I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I have not hidden.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

[James 5:16 \(NKJV\)](#)

Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

5) Ask for Forgiveness!

Because of Jesus's life and resurrection, we have a direct relationship with our Abba Father. We can come to Him not only in asking for forgiveness but also in asking for power.

[Psalm 51:1-3 \(NKJV\)](#)

1 To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin *is* always before me.

[Acts 5:31\(NKJV\)](#)

"Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

[2 Peter 1:10, 11 \(NKJV\)](#)

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

a) What is forgiveness?

Forgiveness is the knowledge of salvation.

Salvation is the protecting of our souls by God through our faith in the resurrection of Christ who conquered the law of sin.

[Hebrews 5:9 \(HCSB\)](#)

After He was perfected, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him,

[1 Peter 1:5 \(HCSB\)](#)

You are being protected by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

[Ephesians 1:13 \(HCSB\)](#)

When you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed in Him, you were also sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

6) Accept Forgiveness

Take the freedom and power available to you from the everlasting kingdom for the shame of sin and for the battle against your flesh.

[1 John 1:9 \(NKJV\)](#)

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[1 John 3:18-21 \(HNV\)](#)

18 My little children, let's not love in word only, neither with the tongue only, but in deed and truth.

19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and persuade our hearts before him,

20 because if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

21 Beloved, if our hearts don't condemn us, we have boldness toward God;

7) Adoration - pour out your love and praise.

Pour out admiration and benevolence toward Jesus, Yeshua Messiah.
Proclaim Yahweh as the One True God and praise Him above all others. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. Turn away from deception, let go of the control and strongholds you have admitted to.

Remember and glean from what God has done for you in your life.
Remember what our mighty Father has done for all of us, for His people; delivering Israel out of Egypt, His mighty works, commandments, and feasts.

Quiet... remember His love and His victory in faith.

[Psalm 16:11\(HCSB\)](#)

You reveal the path of life to me;
in Your presence is abundant joy;
in Your right hand are eternal pleasures.

[John 1:10-13\(NKJV\)](#)

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

[John 17:1-3\(NKJV\)](#)

1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,

2 "as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

[1John 5:10-13\(NKJV\)](#)

10 He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God.

So what is the result when we return to God?

Good News!

“Take heart! I have overcome the world”

-Jesus

The Parable of the Lost Son

[Luk 15:11-24](#)

11 He also said: “A man had two sons.

12 The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.’ So he distributed the assets to them.

13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living.

14 After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing.

15 Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

16 He longed to eat his fill from the carob pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him any.

17 When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger!

18 I’ll get up, go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.

19 I’m no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired hands.’

20 So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him.

21 The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I’m no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father told his slaves, ‘Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a

ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

23 Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast,

24 because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found! ' So they began to celebrate.

This covenant and relationship we have with the Father and His Son is a journey of sanctification made possible by His love and power. Being sanctified by our Lord Jesus is God's will for each of us to be living in, [1 Thessalonians 4:3,4](#).

1 Thessalonians 4:3,4 (HCSB)

3 For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality,

4 so that each of you knows how to control his own body in sanctification and honor,

I am still being shown where I am sick and blind but I use what He reveals in my heart to be able to see the poor and needy. To have heartache and compassion on others just like me. I'm no longer ashamed when He reveals my heart to me rather it excites and feeds me [John 4:34](#). I am so amazed at how well He really knows me. How He lovingly corrects me so easily in His Holy Word.

John 4:34 (HCSB)

34 "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work," Jesus told them.

35 "Don't you say, 'There are still four more months, then comes the harvest'? Listen to what I'm telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ready for harvest.

So are you a prodigal son or daughter? Is God drawing you back to Himself?

Well, let me challenge your pride a little and read the rest of the parable.

[Luk 15:25-32](#)

25 "Now his older son was in the field; as he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 So he summoned one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

27 'Your brother is here,' he told him, 'and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

28 "Then he became angry and didn't want to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him.

29 But he replied to his father, 'Look, I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.'

31 “ ‘Child,’ he said to him, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.
32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is
alive again; he was lost and is found.’

Is God pleading with you, just as the father was pleading with his son in the parable?

Are you stuck in your hardened heart?

Are you angry or grudging over your obligations and sacrifices you perform every week,
coveting recognition and better position?

I see the angry brother as more of an accurate picture of who we are in the “American church”.
We are children of God who believe in His Son but have contempt towards others who are
different, who are struggling or even towards others who are close to God and thriving in life.
Over time we covet over our duties and obligations, so we become arrogant and blind to what
God wants to do in us for His glory. We unknowingly grieve the Holy Spirit while we wonder
where God’s revival is!

We don’t have time for longsuffering. Just as Abraham and Sarah in Genesis couldn't wait for
God’s promise of an heir, so to that selfishness down to their grandson Jacob and his mother
who couldn’t wait for the blessing of the first born. We all try to take God’s promises into our own
hands and timing. The outcome is a blind division that happens in the body of believers. We
become deaf and unaware of the struggles and pain each of us is going through.

We also are afraid to share. We think no one will care about my hurt and issues but our
thoughts have truth based on past experiences. Our lifestyles are so full already that we don’t
really want to add the sorrow and problems of others to our list. This ignorance is a tactic to
keep our focus on staying “positive” minded only, pushing away and ignoring anything negative.

The Three Ships

I heard a quick message by Ron Hutchcraft on the radio talking about the tragedy of the ship
Titanic. He titles it The Three Ships [Click here to listen](#). Three ships were traveling in the
dangerous North Atlantic sea. The Titanic went down taking 1,500 lives. There were remaining
700 survivors waiting for someone to save them.

The closest ship was the SS Californian, but the captain said it was too risky to help. The third
ship, the Carpathia, was over 58 miles away when they saw the flares but Captain Rostron gave
his order, "Mr. Dean, turn this ship around." They navigated through the deadly sea, doing what
they could to get there as fast as possible. Arriving at the scene, the mighty ship was gone and
the survivors were in great trauma from the freezing waters.

What ship of the three are you?

Are you signaling for help, are you ignoring the signs, or are you risking your life for others?

At my local church, we have had two member suicides over the last year. One was a selfless servant, who never complained, loved her family and friends. Always looking for how she could help others. From what I was told, she never spoke up for herself and how she was feeling inside. Looking back her husband remembered she did mention that she was not happy. Or were we too busy to actually hear her?

I am amazed how God uses all things for his glory. Who could have imagined that the life of this mother, wife, and precious daughter of God; would make such an impact for so many women to start boldly speaking of how they were feeling deep inside!

At the same time, I am equally amazed by one lady who was still too scared to let others know her hurts. She didn't think anyone really cared and even worse, that she would be rejected if she did open up. I can relate all too well actually. For there is something that becomes twisted in us when we hold these sorrows in, and they slowly seep out into two harmful forms in an attempt to make us feel better. We become critical towards others and controlling of others.

The second suicide was a man. Almost every Sunday service he would go down to the front steps in the sanctuary during the altar call. From the balcony he would swagger down the stairs, kneel down along the side of the front stag. Say a prayer, then walk back up to the balcony. I have a confession to tell you. It's hard admit, but I want to show you an example of coming to the body of Christ, to confess to each other. So I come to you now, whoever is reading this. I judged and criticized him...

"Why does he keep coming down to pray every week?"

"What's wrong with him, can't he get his life right?"

"Who is he trying to impress?"

Week after week I would pass him in our church building, just part of the process in walking where I needed to be. I can remember so clearly... his smile, his face, his daughter by his side. We would both nod and say hello, but never once did I step out of my comfort zone to ask...

"Brother, I noticed you have been going down to the altar quite a lot, are you ok? Can I pray for you? What is hurting you or what are you struggling with?"

Now I have to assume that he must have had others he could confide in. Our church is such a great place that reaches out, serves and loves each other. As I'm sure your congregation does as well. I also do not want to assume that I would have been the deterrent from him taking his life, but it's more of a matter of where my compassion truly is. Where is your compassion for your brothers and sisters?

God was again changing my heart. This man was one of the bravest men I'll ever know. Brave, for him to come and humble himself in front of a sea of prideful, glaring eyes. He was there to kneel and lay down all his burdens before our Heavenly Father, and I was there in this journey of God always changing my heart.

When Jesus saw multitudes of people, he was always deeply moved with compassion... down to each individual. I want my heart to be made aware and moved in same compassion that Jesus has. Heavenly Father, open my eyes to your Spirit, push me to engage with Your children, with Your beloved.

The Disciples Hardened Hearts

A specific time Jesus sent out His disciples to preach and heal. On their return, He said that they all need to go into the wilderness to rest. Wow... finally, time for them to be alone with the Teacher. Just them, to share stories from their trip, maybe a miracle or two only for them to see... who knows. Their imaginations and expectations were probably getting the best of them. Imagine for yourself, you face to face with the One you look up to the most, and He is making specific time for you!

As they arrived to the wilderness though, there was again a multitude of hurting people waiting for Jesus. He asked His disciples to feed the multitude for the journey was long. They responded with excuses because their hearts had been hardened from being let down. These people wrecked their personal "Jesus time"... they wrecked any time of singing and praise. They wrecked the well deserved time of rest. Then to top it all off, Jesus wanted them to serve the multitude even more! The disciples only wanted all these needy people to leave. The constant crying for Jesus was ringing in their ears as their hearts plunged further into stone towards Jesus.

Read the story for yourself, [Mark 6:7-13](#) & [Mark 6:30-52](#)

Do you have a hardened heart? I ask of you to take time right now with our Heavenly Father. He is drawing you back, revealing your blindness. He wants you to be free from burdens, to take on His easy yoke, to be love to others as He is love. He longs for you to come to Him as His child, to simply ask of Him:

Am I denying You?

Am I blind to You?

Have I forgotten You?

Do I resent You?

Am I... lukewarm?

[Luk 2:34,35](#) (HCSB)

Then Simeon blessed them and told His mother Mary: “Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed — and a sword will pierce your own soul — that the **thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.**”

Has your heart been revealed to you?

Remember you were bought with a price,
you are a child of God, drafted into the Vine!
Make a stand, right now!

Allow Him to make you into whom you were always meant to be.
Surrender your control, let Him remake you little by little.

My old testimony used to sound like this...

“Hi, my name is Len and I was saved at a young age... and ever since then I have followed Jesus. I pray and read my bible while trying to love others around me!”

That was it!

Sure, I believed Jesus is the Son of God and knew I would be with Him for ever in the New Jerusalem, but I was not being used here in my life because I was ashamed of my flesh. I was ashamed of what I was hiding but that is where God's best work is revealed, in our weakness He is strong. For He uses the weak to do His work, to glorify Him, and to share His good news. If we look like, sound like, act like the world in our own strength, no one will care. If you make a stand and stand out, like a odd people, separated for the Bridegroom. Then people are going to start seeing something so different that they are going to start flocking to you. This is God using you in His process of drawing the broken to His Son.

Is your testimony also short and sweet?

My friend, you have great hidden potential that our Father desires to draw out and use for His glory. Brother and sister... you are worth it all. He loves you, why else would He give His life for you! We all have pain, joy, struggles, freedoms... it's a part of life and we all have a story but if we hide the truth we will never be healed and God wants to heal you. We will just continue in our own pride, living in a blind lifestyle where our satisfactions come from our own god that we can control...

Or does it really control us?

[Ecclesiastes 7:3,4](#) (NKJV)

3 Sorrow is better than laughter,
For by a sad countenance the heart is made better.
4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,
But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth(Amusement/Pleasure).

The power we think we have to control our issues are really just bandages we use in attempting to covering up and hide our core problem. "I" want to stay in power to control the flow of "my" blood. I want to prove myself to everyone, that "I" can make "myself" righteous and acceptable.

If I rip off the bandage letting the shame flow out, then God in His pure love, compassion, and empathy can truly heal. He then uses my story to testify of His glory, to draw others to Him.

The Room

"Knock... Knock... knock"

A knocking at my door startled me,
I awoke to see flames and smoke filling the empty space in my room.

I was scared, I couldn't answer it.

What might others think of this mess in my room?
What hurt would I cause to those around me if I let them in?
What embarrassment might I cause to myself, if I go out?

Then a solution came to mind,
the one I had used before many times.

I can cover the flames with all my junk.
I can determine the amount needed to die down the flames.
It's familiar, comforting even... and way easier.
I have the power to stay warm and forgetful.
No, I have the right to be comfortable!

Out of the corner of my eye, I was made aware of the thick piles of ashes building up. Heaps of them from over the many years of pushing them aside. Some piles still hot with coals which were melting through the floor. The fuel of pride and lies corroding my foundation.

A knocking again was at the door.

I knew Who it was, I understand His truth and my faith is in Him but would I take action and open the door this time?

I will, and I did, I answered the door letting the Shepherd back inside.

Like a vacuum, the flames and clutter were all sucked out. It hurt a little at first not being able to breathe. The sharp pain of uncertainty in my lungs but He then lifted me up and brought me to dine with Him and His Father at the table.

I feel safe now and as He reveals the truth of my room, I asked if I can return to Him?

I surrendered to His answer and allowed Him to change me where I failed countless times. He then held up a framed mirror reminding me that I was His reflection and He showed me His plan!

Not of my will but of His.

To God be the glory and power for ever and ever... Amen!

Closing

I love and want to share one last scripture from Isaiah with you.
Yahweh is giving Isaiah a message to tell Israel:

[Isa 57:15](#) (HCSB)

For the High and Exalted One
who lives forever, whose name is Holy says this:

"I live in a high and holy place,
and with the oppressed and lowly of spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly
and revive the heart of the oppressed.

[Isa 57:16](#) For I will not accuse you forever,
and I will not always be angry;

for then the spirit would grow weak before Me,
even the breath of man, which I have made.

[Isa 57:17](#) Because of his sinful greed I was angry,
so I struck him; I was angry and hid;
but he went on turning back to the desires of his heart.

[Isa 57:18](#) I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;
I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners,

[Isa 57:19](#) creating words of praise.”

The LORD says,

“Peace, peace to the one who is far or near,
and I will heal him.

[Isa 57:20](#) But the wicked are like the storm-tossed sea,
for it cannot be still,
and its waters churn up mire and muck.

[Isa 57:21](#) There is no peace for the wicked,”

says my *Elohiym*.

Ending Prayer

Prayer based on [Daniel 2:20-23](#)

Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
For wisdom and might are Yours

And You change the times and the seasons;
You remove kings and raise up kings;
You give wisdom to the wise
And knowledge to those who have understanding.

You reveal deep and secret things;
You know what is in the darkness,
And light dwells with You.

I thank You and praise You,
O God our Father in heaven;
You have given us wisdom and might,
And have now made known to us what we ask of You.
Amen!

**Thank you for spending your time and energy in
reading my story!**

My vision is that no matter where you are at with God, I hope it inspires you to start reflecting on your own journey and life with your Savior. For us to wake up in the church to the burdens we hold and the fear of letting others in.

My purpose is to be obedient in this new calling Yahweh has called me and my family into. Please pray for us as I am fearful and pray for when I wrestle against the Spirit. I have received great advice from a mentor that if I'm nervous about sharing then I'm making it about "me" when it's truly about God.

My mission is to share this with every brother and sister that the Spirit leads me to.

Please help in sharing the website www.return2Him.com with others.

Share your own stories of "Returning to Him" on your social media using #return2Him.

I would love to share this in person with your church. I have targeted versions of my story in development for marriage events, men only, youth groups, next gen/college & young professionals. I love to focus on sharing in small groups like Bible Fellowships, Sunday School, Bible Study classes. Also, pray as we are trusting and seeking opportunities to make this a way to financially support my family.

Please contact me using the simple form at the bottom of my website.

www.return2him.com

My Twitter @LenWikberg