

# REBUILT

TO LIVE A GREAT STORY

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# REBUILT

TO LIVE A GREAT STORY

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We're a global magazine with versions published in the USA, Southeast Asia, Amsterdam, and the Philippines.

Rebuilt Magazine is written, laid out, and printed by young adult who love Jesus and want to write about God, life, and college. We hope this magazine is helpful, challenging, and thought-provoking while also encouraging you to pursue a strong relationship with Jesus.

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WRITTEN BY ABIATHAR, A VOLUNTEER AT YFC



## ***3 Ways to Discover a Calling Worth Pursuing***

### ***WHY SETTLE?***

Katie Davis was just 18 when she traveled to Uganda for the first time. After expressing a desire to do missions work after high school, Katie made a deal with her parents that went something like this: She could go to Uganda for a year and then return to the U.S. to go to college. Katie spent that year abroad and fell in love with the culture of Uganda. When she headed back to the States she was certain that she would one day see that soil again. And sure enough, she returned to Uganda less than a year later. She eventually became a single mother to 13 adopted girls by the time she was 24.

I was 18 when I first heard Katie's story, and it was hard to not feel like my recent high school graduation, not to mention my life in general, was nothing but completely and utterly average in comparison. I had never left the country or dreamed of doing something so radical. Not that I wasn't

happy with my life; in general, I was, but I couldn't help feeling envious of a young woman who wasn't afraid to live differently than what people had expected of her. I found myself feeling the freedom that graduation brings while somehow also feeling like my life was already decided and planned out for me. In my mind, I had a vague image of myself attending a nearby university, studying feverishly for four years to prepare me for the career of my dreams. I would meet a guy along the way who was attractive and ambitious to do something that mattered. We'd settle down into a house and maybe have a couple kids. We'd save up and take vacations out west or down south to escape the jobs we worked so hard for. I'd be happy, and it would be a good life. Average, but good enough.

Katie Davis did something different. She was a Christian, felt a call from God into missions, and she obeyed. Katie fell in love with a country, more

importantly, the people in it, and she did something about it. Usually, we punch in and out of our days on autopilot. We assume that where we are now is good enough. And if we do dream, perhaps we think our dreams are too big, so we don't step forward at all. In general, the world has decided what is normal and defines for us a good way to live our lives. Unfortunately, we listen to it.

Why do we settle for a life others expect of us? Or for a life we expect of ourselves? Maybe we're feeling the pressure of providing for a family or we have a strong desire to please our parents or professors. Maybe we think that if we work really, *really* hard, we'll be happy. Maybe we feel unsatisfied because we've never really given ourselves time or permission to dream up big dreams. Maybe it's because you're not thinking or feeling much at all!

## GO HOME AND TELL GOD EVERYTHING

Oswald Chambers, who wrote the well-known devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*, once shared a story about a woman he met after preaching one day. After a service that particularly struck this woman, she approached Chambers to say, “I must tell you everything about myself!” Chambers replied by asking if she had ever told God everything about herself. When she said she hadn’t, Chambers encouraged her to do just that. He also said that if she still felt she wanted to tell him, she could.

One hundred years later, we could ask ourselves the same question Chambers proposed to that woman. Have you ever told God everything about yourself? If no one in the world has ever told you that the God of the Universe wants to hear from you, I would be honored to be the first. God wants to hear from you! He wants to hear about the things you’re passionate about and He wants to hear about the things you just can’t stand about the world. He wants to hear about what you want to do with your life, even though He already knows. More than anything, God wants to be close to you because He made you. Colossians 1:16 tells us, “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”

## GLORY & GARBAGE

You heard that right. God made you on purpose, for a purpose. We were made to be dreamers, but in reality, we like to be comfortable. We settle into our nice little lives, don’t take too many risks, and hope for the best. We do as closely to what we think the people around us would expect of us, not wanting to rock too many boats or break too many social norms. We look to the people around us to give us answers for how we should live our lives. *What is she wearing? What is he doing? What do they think I should do?* Why do we do that? Because we live in a world of insecurities, comfort, and unfortunately, we all have a knack for looking out for ourselves first and foremost.

As humans, we’re made in the image of God and yet we’re full of garbage. The Bible would call this garbage “sin.” The good news is that God did something about it by having Christ die on the cross for all of the things that make us fall short of God’s glory and goodness. Trusting in Jesus’ righteousness gives us the time and the passion to dream big because we aren’t tied to this world anymore.

If we were created by God and for God, then that means there is something God has planned for you to do in this life. Jeremiah 29:11 reads, “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” This means that God has laid out work for all of us who choose to follow Him. Those who are



Christians call this mission given by God a *calling*. Calling is what God wants you to do or become.<sup>1</sup> In his book *The Call*, Os Guinness writes, “As modern people we are all on a search for significance. We desire to make a difference. We long to leave a legacy. We yearn, as Ralph Waldo Emerson put it, ‘to leave the world a bit better.’ Our passion is to know that we are fulfilling the purpose for which we are here on earth...Answering the call of our Creator is ‘the ultimate why’ for living, the highest source of purpose in human existence.”<sup>2</sup> We can trust that God’s plans and dreams for our lives are better and more fulfilling than our own.

*continued on the next page...*

## DREAM BIG DREAMS

So, how can we do this? If God has created us with minds to think and given us a calling worth pursuing, how can we know what it is? First of all, a sure-fire way to not find it is to look at what everyone else is doing and imitate it. There is only one we are to imitate and that is Christ. Jesus came to do the will of God and Jesus is our example. In John chapter 4, Jesus is with His disciples when He talks about a kind of food they knew nothing about: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God." Jesus was fully satisfied knowing that He was doing all that His Father asked Him to do during His time on Earth. We, too, can know this kind of fulfillment and peace. There's no greater feeling than knowing you are exactly where God wants you to be. By looking to Jesus as our example, we see that Jesus frequently became quiet before God to listen and to commune with Him. In Mark 1:35, we read "very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up and left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed." In Matthew 14 and Luke 6, Jesus went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray. Jesus had faith that God had a plan for Him and desired to be obedient to it.

Secondly, it is through the surrender of your own plans and ambitions that you can find out what God has in store. While it may seem contradictory to give up your dreams to gain the best life possible, you can trust that God knows what He's doing here. Matthew 10:39 says "If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it." As long as your agenda is still full of your own hopes and dreams, it leaves God little room to guide you towards something great and for His kingdom. I learned this firsthand. God's plans are even better than our good plans. And He loves us enough not to force His purposes on us. Instead, He invites us into a life of dreaming and living for Him and alongside Him. Place your dreams on the proverbial table before God for Him to give and take as He pleases, and you might be surprised at what you see happen.

Third, be aware that it will not be easy. Because God's ways are above our ways (Isaiah 55:8), the decisions we make to follow God and His plan will not always make sense to the people around us. And sometimes, it can just be plain hard to trust God when you think you have a better idea in mind. God may ask you to start doing some things and stop doing others. God may lead you into places that are not always the most comfortable or situations that are not the most logical to your own mind. Even Jesus prayed that His suffering be taken away just before His death: "He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine" (Luke 22:42). Can we end our prayers to God in the same way? *Not my will, but yours be done...*

Now, I'm not saying that all Christians need to sell everything and move abroad to begin a ministry. We can't all be Katie Davis, nor should we want to be. Just like there is only one Katie Davis called to Africa to parent orphans who needed a home, there is only one *you* called by God for great things. God doesn't want you to live your life half-satisfied, afraid to dream and live large. We're made to be dreamers by a God who made us for an ultimate purpose. We can begin to understand God's plan for our lives by looking to Jesus as our example, surrendering the plans we have made for ourselves, and trusting God to follow through even when it isn't easy. Os Guinness defined calling as "the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service."<sup>3</sup> Now that's a life of big dreams. My hope for you, and for me, is that we settle for absolutely nothing less.



<sup>1</sup>Calling's Way, Pete Richardson, page 8

<sup>2</sup>The Call, Os Guinness, page 1

<sup>3</sup>The Call, Os Guinness, page 4

# One Guy's

# True Story

**"I ESSENTIALLY WORSHIPED LUCK AND ACCEPTED THAT AS THE TRUE NATURE OF REALITY, WITHOUT EVER CONSIDERING RELIGION DUE TO MY PRECEPTS OF THEIR INCONSISTENCY AND HYPOCRISY."**

**W**hen I was reborn, I was told that God brings people to Him in different ways. Before that, though, my life was—at least on the outside—generally okay. I was convinced of that. I knew I wasn't perfect, but I still thought I was doing okay. I'd been told a lot throughout my life that I was generally a wise, smart, and friendly person, with good looks, and a good sense of humor. I liked and cared about people, and I wanted to be loved and cared about. Yet, many failed relationships and toxic friendships shaped me to feel inadequate despite what people generally said to my face. There was a deep longing for a kind of love that I had never had before, something that would last, regardless of the circumstances and imperfections in myself and other people. I felt as if I deserved it, due to how I cared and empathized with other people, but I wasn't getting it. This confused and baffled me my whole life. Growing up fatherless affected me in very subtle ways that I am still uncovering to this day.

I've always loved the idea of the complexity of nature and biology, the vastness of space, and the mysteriousness of the mind. I've always questioned the nature of reality. That said, I'm not very studious when it comes to formal philosophy, so I simply pondered in my head how beautiful, ordered, and vastly complex reality was despite the seeming chaos/luck that I had been accustomed to believing was the true nature of reality. I essentially worshiped luck and accepted that as the true nature of reality, without ever considering religion due to my precepts of their inconsistency and hypocrisy.

God entered my life subtly but intentionally through a series of fortunate events that I slowly began to realize had a divine hand behind them. I had begun my journey in the summer of 2016, when I was invited to a college ministry hangout in the park. I had been distant friends/acquaintances with some members since then, but as I entered the despair of a breakup in the fall of 2016 of a relationship that I thought would finally last, those people gently reached out to me. That experience was short-lived, as I believed the only way to cure the pain was to smoke a lot of weed and be as hedonistic as possible. When I finally felt ready in the spring of 2017 to pursue another relationship with

intentionality, I fortuitously ended up at that same college ministry again and met someone who made me question reality once more. I had suddenly come to realize the validity of the Bible and Christ through a book that this person gave me to read. I was at a crossroads; I could either reject God and continue living in the pain that I had just come out of, wondering why I had to suffer, or I could accept Him and live the rest of my life in His peace, knowing that the pain I suffered was nothing compared to His glory.

I can truly say that I've experienced an immense transformation since that time. The beauty of God's creation and His majesty give me a greater sense of awe than I have ever felt before. Even though my emotions still tend to dirty the lens through which I view reality and God, I still feel His love for me. That said, I haven't felt any shortage of pain during this time, and I would say that my life has been somewhat of an emotional rollercoaster as I struggle every day to expose and throw out the residual, habitual sin that's built up over the course of my life. But God has been there next to me, in the car, the whole time. There is a much more acute sense of aliveness to the highs and lows of life with Him that I wouldn't give up for anything. It has certainly been humbling to realize that I don't deserve God, and yet His love for me shows up even when I don't *feel* it.



A black and white photograph of a glowing mushroom growing on a log. The mushroom's gills are illuminated from within, creating a bright, ethereal glow against the dark background of the log and surrounding forest.

# A GLOWING Mystery

Greek philosopher and scientist Aristotle discovered the “Glowing Mushroom” some 2,300 years ago. In an article published on March 19, 2015, Patrick J. Kiger explains that Aristotle referred to the “Glowing Mushrooms” as a “cold fire” on rotting wood in a forest. Some bioluminescent mushrooms can still be found in Brazil’s Coconut Forest. According to locals, as dusk approaches, a green glow can be seen coming from the mushrooms especially during humid nights after hot days with afternoon showers.

The glow leaves scientists searching for more information about these mushrooms. The quest to find out just what that green glow does for the mushrooms led researchers to debunk bioluminescence, the production and emission of light by a living organism. Research by Dr. Jay Dunlap and Dr. Cassius Stevani showed that a temperature-compensated circadian clock controls these glowing mushrooms. “It appears that fungi make light so they are noticed by insects that can help the fungus colonize new habitats,” says Dr. Cassius Stevani.<sup>1</sup> Light coming from the mushrooms attracts insects including beetles, flies, wasps, and ants. It was that discovery that led the researchers to suspect that the mushrooms’ light must serve some useful purpose. An article published in *Current Biology* by U.S. and Brazilian researchers made an interesting comparison: “Basically, these mushrooms turn themselves into a natural version of the neon sign in the local bar and grill, in order to attract insect visitors.”<sup>2</sup>

Evolutionary scientists are baffled by the green glow of these mushrooms. “Why, evolutionary scientists wonder,

**“BIOLUMINESCENCE, IN ITS MANY FORMS AND FUNCTIONS, IS A GRAND ILLUSTRATION OF GOD’S WISE DESIGN.”**

would some bacteria evolve to spend their energy making light? There seems to be no rhyme or reason why certain organisms produce light and others—even those similar in every other way—don’t.”<sup>3</sup>

Creationists believe God created the Earth and everything in it. Is that correct? Dr. Elizabeth Mitchell had this to say in an article titled “God’s Design for Bioluminescence:” “Random evolution, through natural processes, cannot account for the biodiversity of bioluminescence or the plethora of biochemical routes by which diverse organisms produce and regulate their light. But a wise Creator, who like a good engineer has designed many variations of this useful ability, can. Bioluminescence, in its many forms and functions, is a grand illustration of God’s wise design.”



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bioquicknews.com/node/2445>

<sup>2</sup> <https://answersingenesis.org/evidence-for-creation/design-in-nature/gods-design-for-bioluminescence/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.seeker.com/some-mushrooms-glow-and-heres-why-1769625277.html>



Every year, more than 5 million tourists visit Amsterdam. They come to visit the van Gogh museum or the Rijksmuseum (both more than 2 million visitors a year). Or to do a canal trip and see the more than 1200 bridges (over 3 million passengers).

# AMSTERDAM,

CITY OF FREEDOM



People like to have the feeling of freedom when visiting Amsterdam. Some of them perhaps mean the freedom of smoking a joint (there are almost 200 coffee shops in the center of Amsterdam) or to see or to visit a sex worker (there are 400 windows in the Red Light District). Perhaps they like the idea that everything seems to be possible in the city and that you can totally be yourself.

Amsterdam is the gay capital of Europe and the gay pride is famous. On King's Day and King's Night the city turns orange and whatever you do, it is never too weird. So Amsterdam, place to be, to feel free, to do what you want...

But are we talking about real freedom here?

A lot of the sex workers are exploited, in a process of being enslaved with no way out. Also, the visitors of these women are often prisoners of their desires. The use of (too much) space cake has brought many tourists in total panic, thinking that people were running after them or thinking that they could fly. It didn't bring freedom; it hurts.

In the middle of Amsterdam we run a hostel, a Christian hostel. A hostel with a no alcohol and no drugs policy. A hostel where we have separate dorms for boys and girls, and where we like to share our faith in God.

What has that to do with freedom??

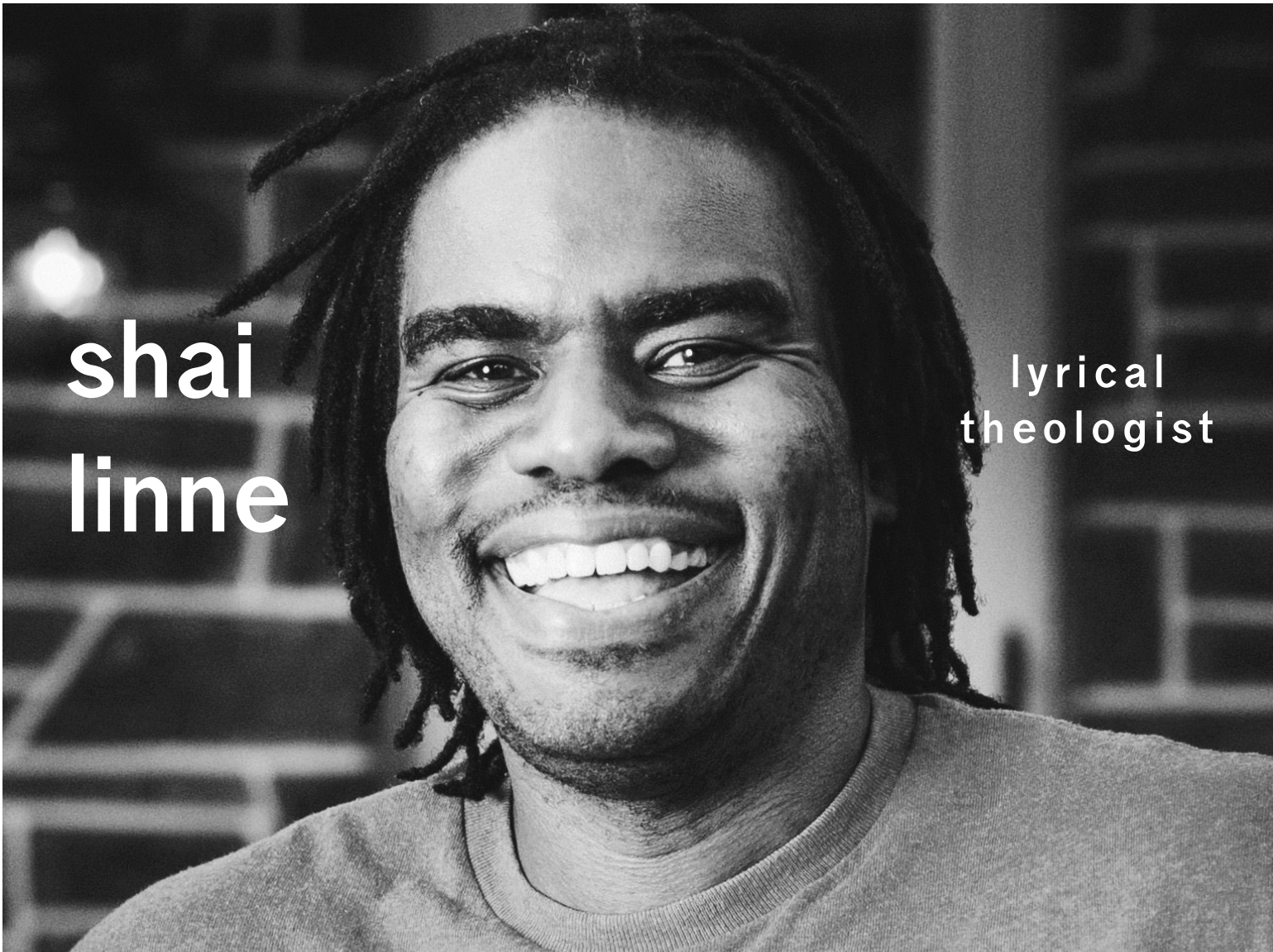
The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Where

the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." And if you read the Bible, then you discover that God wants to give freedom. He wants people to do what they want. The only thing is that He wants to work on [and maybe change] what we want. And He does this by love. Our freedom should not be limited by rules and laws (what a lot of people and churches like to do) but by love. The more we learn about love the more we can live in freedom and do what we want. So, I hope that in our Shelter people feel freedom and see the love. And because we are still learning, we limit ourselves also a little bit by rules. That helps a bit in living together in order and not in chaos.

Enjoy it and perhaps we'll welcome you once in our hostel!



- Corné Platschorre  
Supervisor Shelter City



shai  
linne

lyrical  
theologian

**S**hai Linne, who likes to be known as lowercase emcee, started his Christian hip-hop journey after his turn from atheism in 1999. Using his love of hip-hop music, he started pointing people to Jesus Christ through music. He released his first album, *The Solus Christus Project* back in 2005. He released his most recent album, *Still Jesus*, in the summer of 2017 after a three-year break where he planted a church in Philadelphia called Risen Christ Fellowship.

The question that long-time fans and new fans want to know is how does shai and *Still Jesus* fit into the genre of Christian hip-hop? On the opening track, he answers this with his intentions:

ayo I'm back, but nobody has been asking where I've been  
because Christ-centered music is no longer the hot trend

This is what shai does. The main focus of his music is Christ-centered, and the term "lyrical theology" originated him and his recording label, Lamp Mode.

This album is focused on Christ to its core, a topic that isn't at the forefront of the Christian hip-hop genre anymore. He addresses this in his song "Ichabod" where he says, "The book of Hebrews 2:1 - CHH (Christian hip-hop) really gotta heed this today. We gotta pay close attention to what we heard from the Word otherwise we gonna drift away. I think we're seeing that, look at the content, a lot of self-glory, a lot of nonsense."

It is obvious to shai that some artists in the genre have lost focus of what

Christian hip-hop should be about: Jesus.

shai excels by leading the listener to Jesus Christ, and states that Jesus should be our motivation: "We exist for the glory of Jesus" he says in the song "Ichabod." He communicates the gospel exceptionally well in "Startling Mystery:" "But through Christ, watch God's savin' hand flex, redeemed the people, north, south, east, and west. Glorious robes, in the Promised Land, dressed we stand blessed, all because of the Lamb's death." If you are new to Christian hip-hop, you should definitely check out this album along with shai's other albums: *The Atonement*, *The Attributes of God*, *Lyrical Theology Pt. 1 and 2*, and *Storeiz*. You can find shai linne on Spotify and the iTunes store.



## Unicorns, Gnomes, and Christians Without a Community Don't Exist

**P**eople at college will be against your faith in God and your faith will be tested. Seek out a Christian community on campus that is true to the Bible because there is no stand-alone Christian. As followers of Jesus Christ, we need other believers to help us. In Matthew 18:20, Jesus tells His followers "...where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." Likewise, in Proverbs 27:17, we learn that, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

Early on in my college years, I was only living for myself. I didn't really seek out any spiritual growth at that time. I also thought I could muster up my own strength to live out the Christian life, but that wasn't the case. I struggled along the way, and my relationship with God struggled. I figured out the hard way that you cannot isolate yourself and continue to grow spiritually. Once I started getting involved with a ministry on campus, I saw changes in my life. They encouraged me to deepen my relationship with God everyday by reading His word and expressing my thoughts to God through prayer. I cannot stress this enough: Christian communities on college campuses are important for your spiritual growth. You will be challenged along the way, but it is so worth it. Being involved and invested in a community opens the opportunities for finding mentors who can help you in areas where you struggle. These are people who love you and care enough to remind you the truths about who God is and what He has done for us.

Once you're involved with a community on campus, take steps out of your comfort zone, which can be tough (it was for me). Your campus community should have different ways that you can serve God and love others on your campus, and I encourage you to take

steps (no matter how small) toward growing your faith and putting it into action. If you don't know what to do, consider asking older Christians in your community to get helpful insight because they may see something in you that you don't see in yourself!

A college ministry is a good place to start, but it isn't a church. A college ministry is a bridge for discovering more about Jesus and getting invested into the lives of other Christian college students, but it is temporary and ends after a few years. God is calling us to a body of believers, and a college community is not up to the standards of this; there is no pastor, elders, families, or worship. Find a church while you are in college that teaches the Bible and is alive and full of Jesus with people who are loving and serving their community. He has a specific place for you in His plan! God wants us to be a part of a college campus ministry and church to outreach into the campus and begin forming relationships with other students and drawing them into the family of God.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "Some Christians try to go to heaven alone, in solitude. But believers are not compared to bears or lions or other animals that wander alone. Those who belong to Christ are sheep in this respect, that they love to get together. Sheep go in flocks, and so do God's people."<sup>1</sup> We are relational beings. This means that we learn best when we learn from and love one another. What Spurgeon said still holds true today. We aren't supposed to go through the Christian walk alone. We need the accountability, love, and effort of being invested in other's lives to draw us closer to Jesus every day.

<sup>1</sup>Spurgeon at His Best: Over 2200 Striking Quotations from the World's Most Exhaustive and Widely-read Sermon Series. Written by Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Compiled by Tom Carter



# FROM CAPTIVE TO CAPTIVATED

HOW JESUS BRINGS TRUE FREEDOM

In March of 1998, ten-year-old Natascha was taken by a man to live in a cellar under his garage.<sup>1</sup> She was locked away, forced to work for him, beaten, raped, and threatened with death. She and her captor also enjoyed many breakfast meals together. He bought her gifts and allowed her some freedoms as long as she stayed with him. Finally, after eight years of torture, Natascha escaped. Realizing he would be found out and taken to prison, her captor killed himself. When asked her thoughts on this, she replied, "I mourn for him." It was a classic example of Stockholm Syndrome, which is when the victim paradoxically supports, loves, and even defends their abuser.

I've never been locked in a cellar, nor do I pretend to understand what those who have gone through traumatic events like this are dealing with. However, I have been held captive before. It was a captivity of the mind, body, and soul. My mind was

chained up to depression, a sense of worthlessness, and an overwhelming desire to be perfect in everything I did. My body was controlled by what I craved - attention, affection, and acceptance, which ultimately led to being manipulated by others in abusive ways. And more than all that, my soul was depraved. Some days I knew I was trapped and that something was terribly wrong, but no matter how hard I tried I could never fix it on my own. Other days, I decided things were not so bad, but these fleeting moments of pleasure were mixed into overall unrest. Even when I felt all right, I was still chained up with the keys just out of reach. The only way my captors would let me go was if I died. That was their ransom price.

As a former captive, let me introduce you to the captor, and how it's possible to be held captive, in the hopes of helping you gain your freedom.

## PROFILE OF THE CAPTOR

Just by watching the evening news, you can glimpse some of what the captor is up to, but he

also works in ways that are subtler than school shootings and car bombers. He can turn a human heart so proud that the person will never look to God for help out of their captivity. He opens wide the door to absolute and devastating slavery, all the while making his captive believe they are free. This enemy, the captor, is the devil (Satan). He prowls the world like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, and the entire world is under the weight of his scheme. His goal is simple: death and destruction of the human race. His sway over the world first began when he deceived Adam and Eve into believing they could be like God by knowing both good and evil, if they would just ignore God in a "small" area. They completely fell for it, and because they listened to his lie, sin entered the world, which brought with it all sorts of pain, death, and disorder. The once perfect relationship Adam and Eve had enjoyed with God and each other was ripped apart, like a child kidnapped from their loving parents. You would think that what the devil was up to then would have been obvious, but the truth is that he is continuing his same exact method today, partly

because we simply don't believe he exists, and partly because he doesn't need to be creative when we keep falling for his same old tricks.

## PROFILE OF THE CAPTIVE

**MENTALLY CAPTIVE** - a slave to emotions, thoughts, and fears (Jeremiah 17:9, Ephesians 4:14, Romans 8:6)

Your own mind is a deep, dark place that holds you captive to the thoughts that come from within. It deceives you into believing all sorts of things, which determine how you live your life. When you're controlled by thoughts and emotions, life is like a rollercoaster full of sudden twists and abrupt decisions. Sometimes it's exciting and you're even applauded for living large, but in reality you are plummeting on a downward spiral. Or, perhaps you're not making much progress in life at all. You are anxious and fearful as you turn over multiple scenarios in your head. What if you fail? What if you look like a fool? What will they think of you? This mentally captive state quickly defaults to paralysis, which leaves you floating along in life until you reach the end having done nothing of lasting significance.

**PHYSICALLY CAPTIVE** - a slave to addictions and lusts (Romans 1:25)

You'll most likely never be kidnapped and chained to a basement floor, but if you're a part of the 33% of students who have binged on alcohol in the last two weeks, chances are you'll be chained to the consequences of that for a very long time. We all know on the outset that a lifetime of addiction to alcohol or something similar probably isn't the best route to take in life, but this isn't just to pick on those who struggle with alcohol. You might be the soberest person you know, but how about that

**"THE SOUL THAT IS CAPTIVE TO SIN IS OFTEN STRIVING FOR FREEDOM BY PURSUING EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE VERY ONE WHO COULD CLEANSE YOU..."**

phone you've checked ten times since you picked up this magazine? Do I dare mention caffeine? How about your appetite? You see, anything you desire because it gives you a temporary high, makes you ignore the reality that it will cost you everything in the end. Sounds like chains to me. It's so dangerous because for a short time, it is very pleasant. It does give you some momentary satisfaction. But then, like a great movie that's finished and you have to leave the theater and go back to real life, the feeling of emptiness comes back. But, since it worked for a while, you try it again and again. You're trapped in a vicious cycle of pleasure and disappointment. Watch this short video for a vivid illustration: [bit.ly/2tuxv2g](http://bit.ly/2tuxv2g).

**SPIRITUALLY CAPTIVE** - a slave to the god of this world, unable to free yourself (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

This one is about your very soul. Maybe it's tempting to skip this one or scoff at it because it seems old fashioned to consider your soul, or at least immaterial to this discussion, but listen up. Though a human captor can torture you mentally and physically, they have no control over your soul because it's not a material thing like your body is. Though your soul possesses no weight, it carries the most weight in this conversation because it's not something you can clean up yourself, unlike cleaning up after a house party. You're not able to clean it up because it is tainted by sin. Because of the sin you've willfully entered, the Bible says you "love the darkness" (John 3:19). You are held captive to it because you love your captivity. Without God opening your eyes to this reality, your soul remains chained to sin. Ironically, the soul that is captive to sin is often striving for freedom by pursuing everything except the very One who could cleanse you and open your eyes to true life. But you can never free yourself from this captivity because only a rescuer outside of yourself can do it. There's no amount of words or logic in the world that can convince you of that truth except the Holy Spirit Himself, so I pray that He will open your eyes like He did for me.

Remember when I said the ransom for my life was death? When God revealed that I had been held captive for 19 years, He also showed me the deep effects of living with my captor. My life was

# "THERE IS NO NEED TO FEAR ANYMORE BECAUSE YOU UNDERSTAND THE ONLY OPINION THAT MATTERS IS GOD'S."

entrenched with sin, which meant I was doomed to die because God requires the punishment of death for one sin. God the Father cannot be in the presence of sin because He demands perfection and holiness. I deserved to die in my chains unless someone else paid my ransom for me, but who would be willing? For a while it seemed hopeless, but suddenly like a stroke of a match, light. Hope. There was One who was willing to die for my ransom. In fact, He already had.

**"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to... proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed."** - Jesus (Luke 4:18)

## PROFILE OF THE PERFECT MASTER (Jesus)

So who is this Jesus who would come to set people free? Jesus came into the world and lived a perfect life in a human body. Since He was absolutely perfect and never even once sinned, He didn't have to pay the price for sin (death). However, He didn't come to earth just to prove His own awesomeness - He came to pay the price for everyone else. Jesus came to die the death we deserve so that we could go free and get the eternal life He bought for us. He was resurrected from death and came back to earth after He died so we could believe in Him and what He did for us. Then He went back to be with God the Father in heaven and sent everyone who believed in Him His Holy Spirit. This is the same way He changes people today from being captive to sin and the things in this world to being captivated by the wonderfulness of God. This enables people to live differently - to live to glorify God because He is totally worthy.

## PROFILE OF THE CAPTIVATED

**MENTALLY FREE** - to escape your own desperate mind and know the truth (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Imagine walking through a room you don't know in the dark. You stumble through the best you can, but you're

stubbing your toes, falling over, and making a mess of things. Now, walk through that same room in broad daylight. Since you can clearly see the layout of the room and all of its obstacles, you can now navigate the space smoothly and confidently. This is what it's like living with the mental freedom that Jesus provides. You will still have awful thoughts float through your mind, but now you have the power through God's Holy Spirit to step around them and not listen to or act on them. Instead of skulking around in your own dark, deceptive mind, God reveals the truth to you through the Bible so you can base your life on that and not your own fleeting emotions. Your life will be marked by love, joy, and peace, and not the pervasive anxiety that tagged along with captivity. There is no need to fear anymore because you understand the only opinion that matters is God's, and He already proved He loves you because He died to rescue you. Now, you are free to joyfully and confidently enjoy more of who God is, and how He designed you to live. He also commands and enables you to get out of your own selfish mind and love others. That alone is incredibly freeing.

**PHYSICALLY FREE** - to break the cycle of addictions (Romans 6:12-14)

Did you know that even in the most horrendous of circumstances you can be content, without needing anything physical to comfort you or numb your pain? When you are free, you will be able to see past the temporary pleasure physical things attempt to fulfill, and can instead be so captivated and satisfied in God that everything else seems lackluster. This is not to say you cannot enjoy nice things like coffee, sex, and even the occasional beer (once it's legal for you). God actually does want you to enjoy these things because He created them all and said it was all very good. But since He created them, He has a specific way that He wants you to enjoy them. A way that does not bring pain or addiction, but a way that actually brings you joy and Him glory.

**SPIRITUALLY FREE** - to know and worship the only God

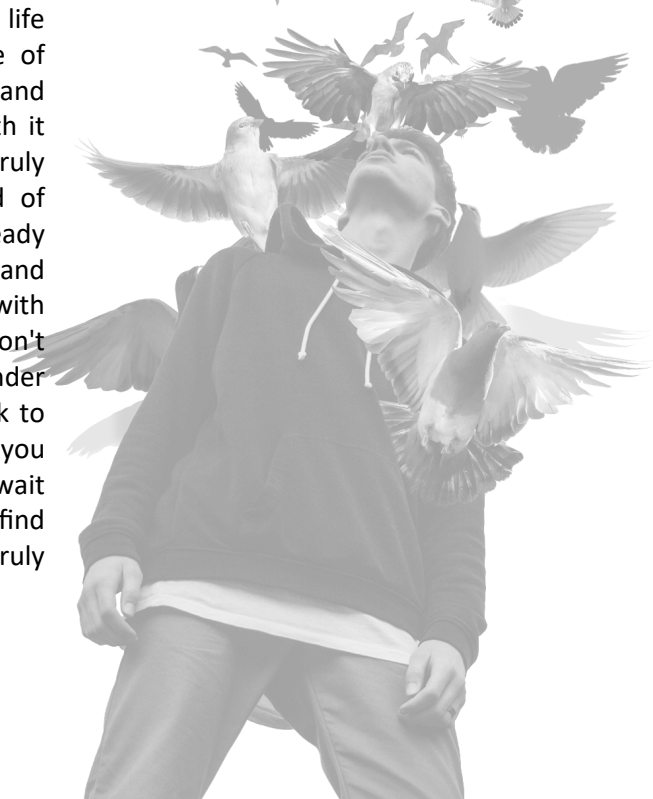
<sup>1</sup>Harding, Nick "Kidnap victim Natascha Kampusch: 'When it's quiet and I'm by myself - then the flashbacks come' telegraph.co.uk/women/life/kidnap-victim-natascha-kampusch-quiet-flashbacks-come/

who is worthy (Romans 8:14-17)  
This is above all the most outstanding way in which you can be free. Before Jesus came to pay the price of your ransom (death), you were bound under the law (think all the rules of the Old Testament) and unless you could do them all perfectly, God would punish you eternally. But because of what Jesus accomplished through His death and resurrection, you now have an open door to God. You actually get to be in a relationship with Him. And this relationship is not just a flighty “on again off again” deal. No, this is forever - adopted as sons and daughters. That means a lot of freedom. You can mess up and make mistakes (and you will), but no matter what, God will look after you with love and grace. And that’s where you find total freedom, not only in this life, but life eternal. This means you’ll get to live truly free to be captivated by God, the perfect

master, forever.  
So, are you being held captive? Or are you free?  
Remember, the captor is crafty - it might feel like freedom even when you are living in complete captivity. If at the end of your life you end up paying the price of your ransom yourself (death and the punishment that goes with it for eternity) you were not truly free. However, if at the end of your life Jesus declares He already paid the ransom for you and welcomes you into eternity with Him, you are indeed free. So don't let another minute go by under the sway of your captor - look to the only One who can make you free. Do not be deceived and wait until the end of your life to find out the truth! You can be truly free in Him, today.

*“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free... so if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.”*

**- Jesus (John 8:32,36)**



## Sick of Only Kind of Knowing Some Scripture?



**Fighter Verses**

A DESIRING GOD APP REVIEW

**Ever seen someone recall Bible verses for just the right situation in a matter of seconds?** How do they do that? If you’re wanting to build your skill in this, John Piper and his team at Desiring God have made a mobile app called “Fighter Verses” that can help with Bible verse memorization.

“Fighter Verses” has multiple quizzes to help aid in Bible verse memorization, artwork that can be saved for home screens, and the ability to set personal memorization goals.

Having specific verses memorized can aid us in multiple circumstances. Try using “Fighter Verses” to bring the truths about God with you wherever you go. Compatible with both Apple and Android systems, the app can be purchased at \$2.99.



### *3 Lessons on Finding Your Life Partner*

**R**elationships play a huge part in our lives. Our thoughts, words, and actions are guided by them, from our parents and siblings, to our friends and teachers. But we care about and desire another kind of relationship, too, even though it can sometimes be a terrifying thing. The idea of having a life partner can seem daunting; after all, many of the relationships that we see around us seem to fall apart, cause pain, or are fake. Few things on this Earth have the potential to be more devastating than a marriage that is not good. So, is there any hope? God has a very specific design for how you choose your life partner and what a marriage should look like. If you follow His plan, it has the potential of bringing more joy than you'd ever think possible.

#### *Don't begin before you are ready.*

**1** Many people believe that they "have" to find a life partner if they are to be seen as normal. It is as if life cannot be survived if they do not have another person intimately involved. We find ourselves believing a lie that it is a necessary ingredient to the good life, and any life that is lacking a life partner after a certain age is lacking purpose, is lonely, and incomplete. We think that the fullness of life, ultimate pleasure and joy, are found in a relationship with a husband or wife. Now, it is true that ultimate pleasure and fullness of life is found in a relationship, but that relationship is with Jesus Christ. Any other relationship will disappoint. Do not believe the lie that you must have a life partner to be happy. I had no business to

begin pursuing a life partner when I did. I was selfish, financially irresponsible, prideful, lustful, and harsh. I had nothing to offer and everything to take. There was no way that anyone should have been with me, let alone have God lead one of His children to enter into a relationship with me. I foolishly sought a life partner and it did not go well; it only led to pain and disappointment. God will never lead you into a deep and intimate relationship with someone before you have a deep and intimate relationship with Him. If you are not dynamically following God, don't lie to yourself that God is leading you into a marriage relationship. You should be becoming someone of upright character, devotion, and sacrificial love before you even begin to think you are prepared to date.

**"GOD HAS A VERY SPECIFIC DESIGN FOR HOW YOU CHOOSE YOUR LIFE PARTNER AND WHAT A MARRIAGE SHOULD LOOK LIKE. IF YOU FOLLOW HIS PLAN, IT HAS THE POTENTIAL OF BRINGING MORE JOY THAN YOU'D EVER THINK POSSIBLE."**

# "CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS SHOULD INVOLVE COMMITMENT AND CLARITY WHICH IS SEVERELY LACKING IN THE REST OF THE WORLD."

## 2 *God has chosen your life partner*

Once you have it settled that God does indeed desire for you to choose a life partner, how do you figure out who it is that you are supposed to pursue? God has a lot to say about what to look for in a possible partner. One of the most basic criteria, though often overlooked, is to find a Christian (2 Cor. 6:14). If you are a believer, you should only find a fellow believer, no exceptions, and no hoping that they may eventually be saved. Men are warned throughout the book of Proverbs to avoid women who are disgraceful and contentious (Proverbs 12:4) and told that a noble woman is worth more than rubies (Proverbs 31:10). Both men and women should be looking for someone of godly character who fears God and is obedient to His word even when it goes against their desires. Most importantly, this is not as simple as just going and finding the first Christian of the opposite sex that appeals to you. God has predetermined acts for you to walk in and you need to find the person He has for you. Don't settle for anything less. Many people scoff at the idea of finding their own true love, but our God is in control of every aspect of our life and He has a perfect plan for it. It may seem daunting now that God has a person chosen for you, just one single person out of billions on this earth, but you don't have to panic. The same God who has a perfect plan for your life is sovereign over all of His creation. You simply need to follow and obey Him, and He will make your path clear to you. If you try to forge your own way, choosing whoever you desire, it will only lead to eventual pain and disappointment.

## 3 *Pursue them the way God intends*

The Bible has very little to say directly about the actual process of what a relationship with a life partner looks like before you are married. Search the Bible from start to finish and you will not find a step-by-step manual anywhere. However, this does not mean that there is no guidance on how it should be done. The Bible has much to say about our personal holiness and our interactions with other people all of which can and should be pulled into the context of the beginning of such an important relationship. The relationship between two Christians should look drastically different than the average

relationship. The most obvious difference is seen in physical boundaries; God demands purity. There should be real love, love that is serving the other person, not using for selfish pleasure. Love that seeks their needs above their own. Christian relationships should involve commitment and clarity which is severely lacking in the rest of the world. Actually knowing where you stand and intend to go is necessary for a healthy and godly relationship.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5). You will not truly love anyone else if you do not love God first and most. And no one will truly love you if they do not love God more than they love you. Your relationship should image the relationship of God with His people. A godly relationship will be noticed by others, will strengthen those involved in it, and will have an impact on the furthering of God's Kingdom. Some relationships are completely one-sided. They are selfishly motivated. These relationships do not show the beauty of the relationship God has with His people. There is a way that leads to your own enjoyment and satisfaction, but it leaves the other person feeling used, neglected, and hurt. God's love is serving and sacrificial; He is committed to His people. He doesn't take His relationships lightly. If we want to glorify God, we will love each other sacrificially. We will be loyal and committed.

Unfortunately, you can't just follow some simple list of steps and automatically have a better-than-fairytale love story. There's no app, no shortcut, and no magic tricks to help you along in this process. But, if you learn what God intends for you in your pursuit of a life partner, and earnestly seek His will in this area of your life, I guarantee you will discover a joy that you'd never thought possible before, no matter what your relationship status currently says.

# A STORY OF GOD'S GRACE



It was a gloomy evening; the sun was setting, giving the night a grand welcome. I was drowning only deeper into the miry pit I dug for myself years before this. Sitting down in the office building of Hyderabad Youth for Christ (where I stayed as a bachelor/staff of YFC for years), my heart was filled with guilt for the sinful life I was living, frustration for my inability to bring myself out of the mess I was in, brokenness for I knew what a wretched man I was, fear for the fact that I would go to hell if I were to die and total confusion for I saw no hope. I called out to the Lord in desperation. What happened that night was eternity defining. For the sun set and the night began, but the Son rose in my heart and so did His glorious light. What you are about to read is the story of the extraordinary work of a glorious God in an insignificant man's life.

I'm the youngest of the four boys my parents had. My parents decided to dedicate all of us to serve the Lord. For reasons known only to the Lord, their decision didn't go down well with anyone of us. All my childhood I saw things that wouldn't train a child to walk in godly ways. It took me 24 years to realize that I'd grown up in a broken family. My vivid memories about childhood were all about fear, unruly sibling rivalry, jealousy, substance abuse and other ungodly and unhealthy practices. The only source of godliness I had was my mother who stood firm through hard times. The only thing I

knew about her was her God, who seemed to keep her going through it all.

Growing up I knew what I was gifted with, hence academics were never difficult. But since relational chords were flimsy in my family, I needed to also know who I was, and where I belonged. These emotional and relational gaps made me a vagabond pursuing pleasure.

Like with all my older brothers, my parents decided to send me to a Bible Seminary hoping I'd be serving the Lord in some Christian organization or Church. So right after my school, I was sent to Bangalore to pursue a Bachelor of Theology. I did pretty well with academics, but my real nature started showing up for the first time since I was free from any familial authority. I filled myself with filth. Watching porn had become second nature to me while my struggle to discover my identity continued. I became a hardcore addict to this sin and continued in it all the days of my college life. I graduated with a Bachelors and moved on to a Masters degree, during which I got into another sinful habit - stealing money from the church offering bags. Pornography slowly led me to fornication, all of which was funded by my new hobby - stealing. This lifestyle continued until I quit college just two months before I would have graduated with a Master of Divinity. What irony it is that I almost had a Master of Divinity, yet I had become a master in

sin, but little did I realize at the time how much it was that sin had mastered me.

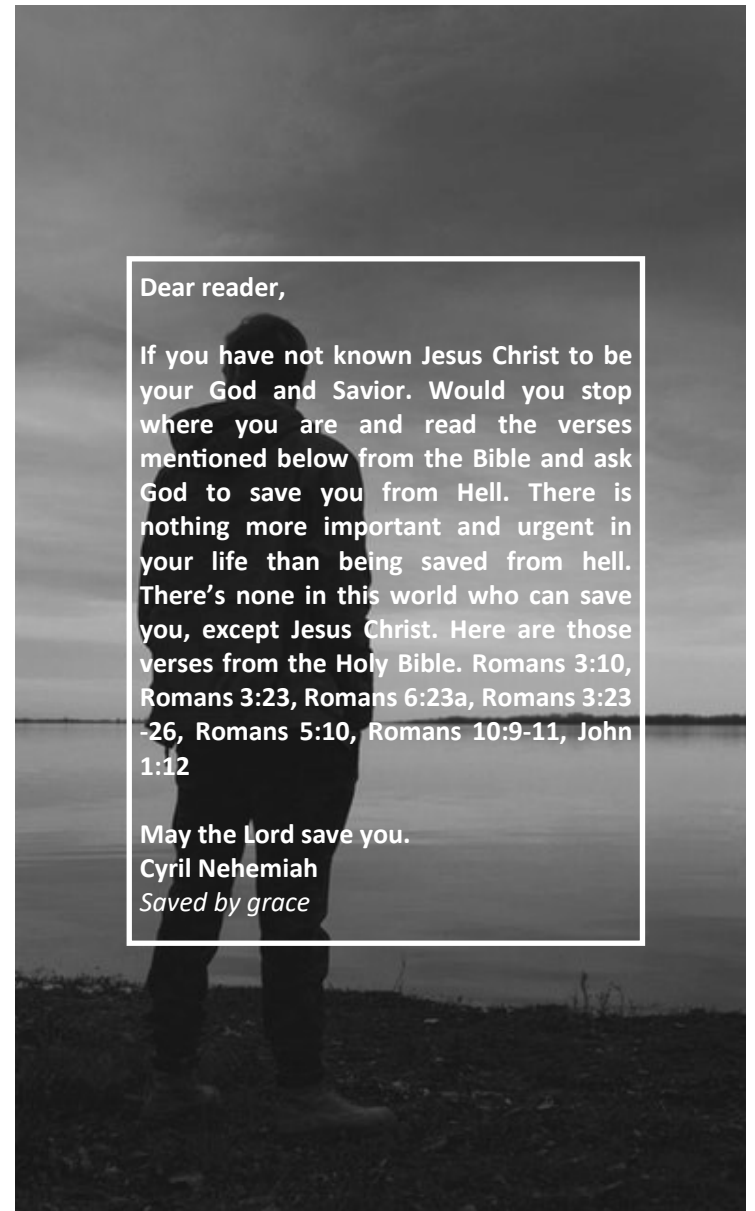
I quit my course to join Hyderabad Youth for Christ because I thought it would give me a fresh start for my life. With my head filled with academic theological knowledge, I thought I could secure a place in this organization. I called up the Director, Mr. Ebenezer Devaraj, to see if there was any vacancy for a youth worker. They had been praying for a new staff for a while then, so my call was seen as an answer to their prayer. In my ignorance I could not see that the Sovereign hand of the Lord was leading me to this place. In 2008 March 3<sup>rd</sup>, I joined this organization. As vile as I was, no one knew who I really was since I had also developed the art of hypocrisy by then. For three years I continued to live in sin: stealing, fornicating and lying. On the inside I was hurting, hating my life, guilty and frustrated. I was a perpetual thief, which badly affected the finances of our organization since we depended only on local sponsors who knew the work done through this organization.

Living in sin, I never expected to see a bit of change in my life. Frankly I didn't know what change to expect. In my mind I constantly blamed my parents, my siblings, the wrong influences and other things for my condition.

In March of 2011, I was weeping after one of the episodes of my repetitive sinful habit. I cried in desperation, saying, "Lord Jesus, if you don't help, I have no other help." I knew that if I'd believe in Jesus for who He is and what He did for me on the cross, I would be saved. Hence I cried my heart out to the Lord. I thought I'd experience some dramatic transformation to take place. Nothing like that happened that night, but what happened after that was eternity defining. Slowly I started to see the power of sin lose its control over my life. I had to fight against sin, but I now I found the strength to fight it. I caught myself having new hungers and desires; I began to have an voracious desire to read the Word and prayer soon followed. I completed reading the whole Bible three to four times a year for the next year or so. The more I read, the more I understood the Gospel in its entirety. The root issue with my life was not my broken family or the entrapments that followed. It was not even my sinful habits and my inability to overcome them. All these were only evidences of the root issue, that I was a born sinner, with sin and death ruling me (Romans 5:17-21). I was under three influences, old nature (sinful self), value system of the world, which is controlled by the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Satan). I also came to know from the Bible that God is holy and sinning against Him brought His condemnation upon me and I'm justly condemned to hell (a place of eternal separation from God and eternal punishment). Nothing, absolutely nothing I tried would save me from this state. But the Gospel states that God sent His Son Jesus Christ to die in my place as a substitute, to take my hell upon Himself and give His righteousness to me. The truth that I'm saved from Hell since Jesus died in my place, would've kept me happy for the

rest of my life. But the inexplicable joy is this, that God in His glorious grace has given me Himself in Christ Jesus. This is the greatest eternal truth I discovered in the pages of the Word of God. God has forgiven me forever, I'm His child forever and He is my everlasting pleasure and treasure in Christ Jesus. Those things that controlled me have no power over me now, unless I choose to allow them to control me. Through His Holy Spirit, God guides me each day through the Bible. My life is a testimony of God's sovereign mercy, grace and love.

It's been a decade now since I joined YFC Hyderabad, I still work with them. From a porn addict and a thief, the Lord transformed me as His instrument to break the shackles of those who are in sin through the proclamation of His Gospel. God has brought His choicest blessing into my life, my wife, and ever since then His love, grace and mercy have begun to become clearer in my life. We are blessed with a boy, who is our joy in the Lord. My life is God's story – a story of God's grace.



Dear reader,

If you have not known Jesus Christ to be your God and Savior. Would you stop where you are and read the verses mentioned below from the Bible and ask God to save you from Hell. There is nothing more important and urgent in your life than being saved from hell. There's none in this world who can save you, except Jesus Christ. Here are those verses from the Holy Bible. Romans 3:10, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23a, Romans 3:23-26, Romans 5:10, Romans 10:9-11, John 1:12

May the Lord save you.

Cyril Nehemiah  
*Saved by grace*

# Where God Leads

*An interview with the founder of Everlasting Hope, A Kid's Cancer Center in Cebu City, Philippines*

We recently had the opportunity to interview Kristina Andersen, the Executive Director of Everlasting HOPE, a non-profit pediatric cancer facility in Cebu City, Philippines. Read her story about how God slowly but surely called her to full-time missions work.

## **What was your life back in the United States like?**

When I first came to the Philippines, I was still in nursing school in the United States. After I graduated, I worked for about one and a half years as a nurse in America, but I travelled back and forth between the Philippines and the United States. Eventually I felt the leading to quit my job, sell my things, and move permanently to the Philippines.

## **How did God prepare you to be a missionary in the Philippines?**

He had to work in my heart to be willing to let go of the things that were comforts in America and give me an urgency and passion for the Philippines. Taking multiple trips also helped prepare me to stay here long-term. The first time I came I thought I was going to be a labor and delivery nurse, and so my goal was to bring skills I learned in Cebu back to America. However, the next time I came for six months and that is when He started working in my heart with street kids and poor communities.

## **How did you receive your missionary call?**

The very first time I came to the Philippines, I had no clue where it was on the map! I didn't even own a passport and had never travelled overseas. Because of my past, I didn't think I was qualified to be a missionary, but God kept giving me opportunities and growing me. He showed me He could use all of my brokenness and all the things I went through for His good as a missionary. So, when I was in a missions training course, they talked about how Abraham was called to go to a land that he didn't know where he was going and God would prepare it for him. That was when I really felt that I was supposed to go!

## **Why did you leave your former life to serve kids with cancer in the Philippines?**

In 2014, as I was working with street kids, I started encountering a lot of them who were experiencing medical crises. They weren't kids with cancer, but their families were unable to afford their medicines and hospital bills. During that time, I met the first child here with cancer. As we were working with him and his family, we saw that there was a huge need for emotional support, spiritual support, and advocacy for them to access resources from the community and government agencies. Within four months' time, that child passed away. I thought about opening a hospice center, but soon discovered the need for a home or center for kids from other islands or the province

to receive medical care while in Cebu. These kids and their families came from so far away and didn't have anywhere to live or a network of people to support them. This first child's life, even though he just lived to 10, has impacted many lives to come. He inspired our mission. If I hadn't met him, I still wouldn't have known fully what I was called to do here. God used his life to affirm my calling.

## **Any advice for someone headed for cross-cultural service?**

Don't bring your entire culture to another country, but be open and willing to adjust to the culture you're in. Try to understand what they are doing and why their culture is the way that it is. It would be helpful to know the language. Also, have a support system - a group of people who help you process things and check in on you as you go. I have a sending church in the United States that gave their blessing and sent me. Be willing to make yourself vulnerable and have an accountability system.

## **Any humorous incident involving the Pinoy culture or language?**

People still tease me about using the proper way to say things. I say "walay pasayan" (no shrimp) instead of "walay sapayan" (you're welcome)!

Thanks, Kristina, for your continued service and dedication to God's work in Cebu. Find out more about the ministry at [everlastinghope.org](http://everlastinghope.org) or on Facebook at Everlasting HOPE Cebu.



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## POEM

### DEMONS

When the sun goes down,  
they come out to play.  
My demons, they're fun,  
they know what to say  
to keep me coming back for  
more.  
I'm not very strong.

People have always said,  
"There's a light at the end  
of the tunnel of the dark,"  
but I couldn't find a friend.  
No, I couldn't find a friend.  
There wasn't anyone left.

These voices, they're  
cunning.  
They'll tell you you're  
worthless, and  
then lie with you in bed.  
They're sweet for a second  
and sour in the next.  
I guess I just can't tell what's  
best.

I have found there's a deep,  
deep water  
in my chest.  
It's swallowing me whole,  
and I can't reach the surface.  
It's cold. My hands have  
become stiff.

I've cried and collected my  
tears  
waiting for someone  
to swallow them, salty and  
black.

My demons are fun,  
but they're killing me.  
My demons are fun,  
but they're choking me.  
My demons are fun,  
but they've killed me.

I gasp, and I cough up my  
pride from the slough  
of death overcoming my  
throat.

A gentle hand places itself on  
my cheek,  
and I feel hope.

I felt my lungs fill with clean  
air,  
and I heard my heart beat  
for the first time.  
I felt the blood in this vessel  
warming.

I close my eyes. I let the  
tears flow.

My demons they're fun,  
but they're dead now.  
They're dead now.  
They're dead.

My life is scary.  
Near death, then plucked  
from the mud.  
I owe it.  
Oh, do I owe it.





# DEAD BUTTERFLIES

## CHASING THE NEXT QUICK FIX

“I know I’ve been here before.” “How exactly did this happen?” As he lifted himself off the ground and leaned against what felt like sharp rock, his only thoughts were on the darkness.

“Hello?” he called out, only to hear his voice reverberate against the cave walls.

“Hello?” Again, no response. In a daze he began slowly moving forward, using the crumbling rock wall as his guide. Straining to recall what he was doing, he began spouting out words. “Trees...green grass...I remember falling. Brilliant, blue sky and a pond, the warmth of the spring bubbling up near the cliff’s edge. The cliff!” A mix of panic and excitement rushed through his head as he remembered how good it felt when plummeting into the water below. “Oh the rush... That high excitement, that brief, joyful feeling you get... I guess I must’ve slipped into this place near the pond.”

“Grotto,” a startling voice rang out. Frozen in fear he shrunk down, back against the rocks, trying to make himself as small as he could.

“Grotto?” he whispered under his breath.

“Don’t be afraid!” the confident voice boomed deeply. “I overheard you. You’re in a rock cave and there’s really only one way out of here.”

“How did you get down here?” he choked out, fear beginning to surge through him. “Don’t worry about that

right now. What you need to know is how you got yourself down here.” The voice was assertive and bold, yet calm and somehow comforting.

Heart pounding in his chest, he rose up and began going over how he woke up in this cave. “Well...” Fear still gripped him as he nervously began speaking, unsure of who, or what he was actually talking to. “I guess I was jumping into the lake below... and I must’ve slipped near some rocks.”

“Why jump in the first place?”

“Well, I guess... it’s fun. What’s wrong with that?” he answered.

“Nothing wrong with fun, or even jumping off into water, but think about what really drove you. That rush? That thrill for the next exciting thing? You’re chasing your emotions, those feelings, and those don’t last.”

“So I’m here because of feelings?” Confusion, panic, and disbelief quivered in his voice.

“It’s like chasing butterflies,” the voice began to whisper now. “They’re never satisfying, these feelings. Even if you’ve captured one, they, in time, die, and you’re left wanting more. Only ever happy when you think you’ve got it...just in time to watch it slip through your fingers altogether, leaving you more empty than when you began. Eventually the feelings change, the butterflies in your stomach die, and you’re left alone in the dark. Searching for that next quick

fix, looking for something to chase with no regard for anything, or anyone else. Much like here and now. Chasing that feeling lead you to this casket of rocks.”

“So, just stop chasing what feels good in the moment?” he said with pompous disbelief.

## Silence.

“Hello?” He was uncomfortably alone in the void and he knew it. A sense of urgency marked his tone as he could hear the echoing words of the shadow’s voice trailing off into dead noiselessness. The blackness of the cave began to swallow him up and his head was drowning in a toxic pool of anxious thoughts and fears. He squeezed his eyes shut and screamed.

Suddenly, he opened his eyes and saw swirling white puffs strewn lazily across a canvas of blue. His heart still pounding in his chest, he sat up, took a deep breath, and saw a group of butterflies flutter past his nose. Their colors caught his eyes and his head followed their path. They flew further along and farther away, closer and closer to the edge of the cliff where they traveled until they could no longer be seen in the vast distance. 🦋



# The Desire to Excel

When jobs are scarce and education costs a ton;  
When trends are changing and peer pressure is a gun;  
When classes become boring and all you want to do is run;  
When books become heavy and bags come undone;  
Why excel?

When there is so much to learn and so little time;  
When all I can think of is food and when the bell will chime;  
When exams are round the corner and my brain goes offline;  
When I walk out of the exam hall and feel so asinine;  
Why excel?

When you can pursue your interests to change the course of history;  
When you can help friends learn and explain at length with glee;  
When you can feel the joy of learning something new and help ignorance flee;  
When you can wait your turn for an interview and come out smiling exuberantly  
Why not excel?

When I can see my family flush with joy and silently exult in being salaried;  
When I can earn to meet my expenses and help a poor neighbour in need;  
When I can add practice to knowledge and use experience to make the unjust concede;  
When I can widen my horizons and help others take heed;  
Why not excel?

All our lives we are taught that without education man is nought;  
But the desire to learn and the desire to excel can't be bought;  
And though classrooms, teachers, universities and libraries are actively sought;  
The purpose of education, to build character is just an afterthought;  
So desire to learn and desire to excel for it can't be taught.

Written by Abiathar (Volunteer at YFC)



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