

My Salvation Testimony

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I was born in Paris, France. My father was a New York Jew and my mother a French Roman Catholic, and I grew up living in both Europe and the United States. Early on, my parents settled the question of my religion by intentionally raising me with no religion. Consequently, when I was growing up, I never attended synagogue or church and never read either the Old or New Testament. Instead, I grew up as a secular and rebellious teenager of the 1960s and, like many of my generation, I became disillusioned with the shallowness and materialism of our society.

When I was twenty, I dropped out of college on the East Coast and backpacked around the Western United States and Canada. For the first time in my life, I began to think about God and to want to know Him. I thought I might be able to find God by immersing myself in nature. I trekked into the Rockies, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and Alaska, but in the end I still did not know God. I then turned to Eastern religions and visited a number of well-known New Age “spiritual” communities, but once again I was disappointed. I found that none of them knew God. Eventually, I ended up living in a communal house in the San Francisco Bay area. I taught yoga and became one of the leaders of a New Age counterculture gathering of ten thousand people from across the United States. Although many people thought I was some kind of “guru,” I would tell them I was not and that I was still searching for God.

Then one day, a complete stranger unexpectedly paid for two dozen of us from our Bay Area communal house to fly to Honolulu. Although the others all soon returned to California, I had become disillusioned with the shallowness and corruption of the counterculture scene. I realized that I would never be able to find God through any group. I decided to intensify my individual spiritual search and backpacked into a remote and uninhabited wilderness valley on one of the outer Hawaiian islands. I spent nearly a year living there as a hermit in a cave trying to find God through fasting, yoga and meditation. I thought if I could purify my body and soul, I could come into union with God, who I thought must be absolutely pure. By the end of that time, I had lost thirty pounds from my already thin frame but I was no closer to finding God. However, during those long months of solitude and silence, I had become acutely aware of my inner sinful nature. I realized the root of the problem was not with others, but with sin that indwelled me. I sadly resigned myself to the fact that I would never be able to purify myself from sin enough to know God. I then heard God speak to me (in my heart) for the first time in my life. He said I would never know Him by working to become pure, because the harder I worked to outwardly control my behavior, the more I would inwardly develop secret pride, which would always

separate me from Him. He told me that I needed to surrender to Him. I realized this was profoundly true but I did not know how it was possible for me, a small finite and sinful man, to surrender to a vast, infinite and holy God. Very soon after this, Jesus appeared to me in a vision. His face and clothing were radiant with brilliant white light. The moment I saw Him, He revealed to me that He was Jesus; He had risen from the dead; He was God; and He had all authority in heaven and earth. I was astonished when I saw Him because I had been teaching others a New Age philosophy that Jesus was a dead prophet just like Buddha and Mohammed.

Jesus then showed me a "movie" of my life beginning from my youth in Europe, continuing up to the present time, and concluding with my future plans to start a New Age yoga community. When the "movie" ended, Jesus told me that if I wanted to know Him, I had to give up all my plans, surrender my life to Him and begin to follow Him like a little child. For me, there was no question or hesitation. The love and glory of God that I saw in Jesus Christ was priceless and everything I had ever desired and hoped for. Although all I owned was my old backpack, I would have given a million dollars to the poor if I had it and Jesus had asked me in order to follow Him. On my knees, I gladly gave my life to Jesus Christ and He immediately baptized (immersed) me in His Holy Spirit. At that moment, I saw the heavy chains of sin that had bound my soul in darkness completely removed from me. I was set free from sin to know God and have His Holy Spirit live in me. During Jesus's ministry on earth, He said, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved... I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me... I tell you the truth, anyone who does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it (John 10:9; 14:6; Mark 10:15)." That day (September 28, 1972), Jesus Christ became my door to know God. I had thought I was seeking God when the truth was that God had sought me and found me.

Postscript: Seven months after I was saved, I met my wife-to-be who had been saved two years earlier. We have now been married nearly forty-seven years and have two grown children and five grandchildren. Eleven months after I was saved, I returned to the East Coast to complete my university education. I would also learn the life-long lesson in the School of the Spirit that salvation is only the beginning of God's sanctifying and transforming work in us, so that we might fully know Him and serve Him.

Endnote: I believe my salvation testimony answers the traditional question that skeptics ask: "What about the indigenous peoples in remote areas who have never heard the gospel or read the Bible?" The answer is Jesus Christ will personally reveal Himself to anyone who truly wants to know God.

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