

It occurred to me recently that I have now been a Christian longer than I haven't been. This is almost hard for me to believe, because time seems to have flown by. It doesn't feel like that long ago when I was what I refer to as "that other person." It isn't hard to remember how my life was growing up, since I still bear many emotional scars from that time.

What is hard to remember is how I felt and acted toward Christians back then. I forget that I was terrible about what I thought of 'religious' people. I remember making fun of Billy Graham and his crusades on TV. I remember hiding if anyone with bibles came to our door. Since my parents divorced when I was thirteen, I can't remember much about religion from my dad, other than the off-color joke now and then. My mother came from a Catholic background, but not devout. We were what the church often refers to as Chreasters... People who attend church at Christmas and Easter. And even that was sporadic at best. I do remember my mom loved telling people a joke that she thought was so funny. "Jesus is coming, and boy is he p#ssed!" Knowing what I know now, this joke isn't funny at all.

It wasn't until I was a young adult that I started believing there was something more. When I was around sixteen, still in high school, a very dear friend died in a tragic car accident. Moved by the outpouring of care, and I guess to share a bit of him with all of us, his parents made his journal available to his many friends. In the journal, my friend Russ often referred to his faith in God, so that was probably the first moment to spark my curiosity.

There have been many such occasions like this in my life. One event that really hit home for me was when Pope John Paul was the standing pontiff over the Catholic Church. He must have been in the news, and I remember my coworkers and I making silly jokes about him while at lunch. That very night I had a crazy dream about the Pope. In the dream, I could hear what I believed to be God's voice telling me, "No more disrespecting this man. He is mine." Laugh if you will, but I took that dream to heart. From that time, I watched the news about the Pope with greater interest and found myself reading more about him. I came to understand that he was a genuine soul and had a faithful heart toward his beloved God. I was starting to 'get it'.

I share this to say that I do understand why people make fun of what they don't understand. References to the blood of Christ washing away our sins can sound like something out of a cult. Just to be clear, it was the shedding of Christ's blood while on the cross, where he willingly died as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. It is because of his sacrifice that we can be forgiven of our sins, and they are 'wiped clean' because he paid the penalty we all deserve.

I also understand as a non-believer, that the Bible can be controversial. I don't have enough time or space to address that debate here, but all I can say is that the Bible is God's love letter to us. It is HIS STORY (history), and there is so much to be gained by being familiar with its teachings. If you are willing, just ask God to open your mind and your heart as you read the scriptures. He will reveal something new. I guarantee it. If it is your first time reading the Bible, I suggest you start with the book of John in the New Testament. A great place to begin.

It is a fallacy to believe that Christians don't struggle or have heartaches. On the contrary, like everyone else in this fallen world, Christians are just like those who don't believe. The only difference is that we know we're not alone in this battle. I would even dare say we get hit between the eyes in added circumstances. Belonging to the God of the universe means knowing what is good and lovely, but it also means there is a great evil that despises who and what God loves, so the devil is constantly doing all he can to take us down.

There's an old saying, "If you don't feel any heat from the devil, you're probably not doing anything for him to be concerned about." The devil loves nothing more than to see families broken through divorce, to see young people addicted to drugs, to see families destroyed through alcoholism or adultery. If he can tear a family apart, then he has done his job well. His favorite trick is to make we who believe in God, doubt our faith. Trust me, I have doubted, and I have been afraid.

I have lost many friends in my life, old and new, simply because I love Jesus. Many of my older friends knew me before, and don't want to let me to forget it. My own mother, brothers, and my sister tolerated me because of my faith, but I was an outcast to them as well. Again, they knew the person I used to be. I think they thought I was just going through a phase. I may hear about this later, but I attribute the demise of my 31-year marriage to my husband having lost his faith. He lost the will to fight for me, if he ever had the will at all.

Today, I am watching as my grown children make choices that I know will only hurt them, but that's what we parents must do sometimes. My three kids were in church since they were in my womb. Not one of them is in church today. The Bible says we are to train up a child in the way they should go, and when they are old, they will not depart from what they have learned. (Proverbs 22:6). Well, I did that... I remain in constant prayer that they will all return. I often feel as if I've lost my children to the world. It is so hard to stand back and allow them to choose their own free will. I can imagine how God must feel.

For some reason, God has seen fit for me to raise my two grandsons. I will never understand this, feeling like I failed my own kids somehow. But I do know I'm the only person in their lives who is willing to stand in the gap for them, and to teach them how much God loves them. If I have nothing else, I hope to always have a faithful heart and will do what I believe God is telling me to do.

Forgive this Bible loving, Jesus adoring, God worshipping woman, but folks, Jesus really is coming, and I wouldn't doubt if he really does feel how my mother said he might in her joke. I do know he is coming with a great purpose, and my question for you is, "Are you ready?" Now is the time to do your own heart check. If you don't like me or what I am saying here, I don't mind. I don't have to answer to you. But I hope you don't mind if I pray for you.

Jesus has always known there would be scoffers, and jokesters, and people would downright hate him, and those of us who follow him, including our own family members.

From Matthew 10:34-39:

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and a 'man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

After re-reading my thoughts today, looking for typos or corrections, it occurred to me that if you're reading this, you may want to ask, "Why? Why would I forsake my family, my friends, things of this world, to believe in a person or deity that I have never met?" Such a good question...

Before I knew of God's love for me, I was completely alone, in a home void of love where there was constant fighting and yelling. I was full of hurt, shame, regret, and hated life itself. It's a long process coming out of a past like that, but if it weren't for the love of God, I don't know that I would have come out of it at all. I'm not even sure I would be alive today. I can say with all honesty that even when I'm going through the tough times, I still have a deep peace and joy within my heart, because I know this is not my home. I am just a stranger passing through, and with all my heart, I hope to meet you on the other side. Thanks for visiting my site.