

CALL UPON ME

***Call to Me and I will tell you great and unsearchable
things you do not know, (Jeremiah 33:3).***

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CALL UPON ME ...

Call upon Me when you're weary, call upon Me when you're low.

Call upon Me during trying times, My Child... Your heart shall I behold. Call upon Me for great wisdom, I'll give you strength to help endure... The times you feel alone, I'll take your hand, so rest secure.

Call upon Me when you're fearful, I will guide you to My Light. For I AM the Lord, your Banner, be courageous in My Might. I alone, am Holy. I alone, can make a way. I alone, dear child, will help you when there is no other way.



So much would've changed if I had known God in a personal way, back when I was a little girl. I would spend twenty four long and arduous years in search of His peace. I remember the day anger took hold of me. It was the day I stopped trying to believe that my life would one day, be different. It was the day I succumbed to oppression and gave up. It was the day I decided life would be easier to handle if I just stopped fighting the current and maintained the status quo. This was the day anger took hold of my hand and vowed to never let go. I was five years old.

Anger coddled me like one would coddle a kitten. Over time, it became my best friend. It was good to have a friend, even though it wasn't the healthiest of relationships to bond with. Still, as a little girl, it gave me an edge. I never externalized all that anger; that is, I never rebelled as a juvenile, never got into trouble with authorities, never took drugs, not even so much as a cigarette. What I did do, however, is hide every bit of my anger inside, for many years. I was angry that I was powerless, at such a young age, to do anything about what grieved my little spirit. I was angry at

the circumstances that surrounded all the fighting and arguing I witnessed in my midst. I was angry at all the people who took advantage of my father, of all the days and nights he would work his fingers raw, for nothing for people who enjoyed the lap of luxury he created for them. I was angry that my family struggled in poverty as a result and I wondered if hard work was even worth the effort. I was angry that my mother struggled with so much in trying to keep it altogether, and would inevitably find herself turning her emotions toward us; and when she did, I came to resent her for it. I was angry that there was so much injustice in my little world, of so much that should've turned out differently for my family. I was angry at a great deal, including God. As I grew older, more circumstances arose to fuel the fire; a disability I would struggle to overcome, along with a myriad of emotions that came tumbling in as a result of trying to make sense of it all. Eventually, that anger turned deeper inward, as my mind learned to compensate and rationalize my surroundings. I realized I was powerless to change most of them, and so I began to become angry with the only thing I could control: myself. And by the time I realized that anger toward myself

was an exercise in futility that only served to make things worse, it was too late. I had allowed anger to eat away at me and rob me of too much. I didn't know any other way. By the time I was old enough to dot all the psychological "i's" and cross all the emotional "t's", I had already witnessed and personally suffered more trauma than any child should. I was on a downward spiral to hell, carrying a very heavy hand-basket with all the emotions tucked neatly in little fabric napkins.

One of the deepest memories I have as a child is such a simple one, but it's sets the stage for so much in this book. I started out my life focusing on One Central Figure, and so it's only befitting that I share this memory. It was an old hand-made wooden crucifix my father had commissioned to be made for my mother during World War II. A German soldier, who my father befriended when he was stationed in Europe, carved it out of one piece of wood, with intricate and painstaking detail. It stood almost two feet high, and you could see every detail on Jesus face as He suffered on the Cross. It was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. It hung on the living room wall

for as long as I can remember, and I could see it at night, from my bedroom when the door was cracked open ever so slightly. It hung right above a great big 18th Century German Bible that sat on a shelf. It was loaded with colored lithographs, and it too, was from Europe, a gift given to my father before he was sent home from the war. Those were my two most favorite things growing up as a child, and I had hoped to inherit them one day.

Along with the crucifix, I remember hearing the incessant arguing between my parents that never seemed to end. And I remember my tears staining my pillow, as I gazed upon that crucifix... wondering if God was even listening.... wondering if He even cared. I didn't know what it was called back then, but I learned at the tender age of five, what hypocrisy was. I grew to hate it and vowed I would never entertain it when I got older. Little did I know what life would hold down the long and arduous road.

Birthdays were always the hardest for me. I had always been the brunt of jokes on that day, because my birthday falls on December 7 - Pearl Harbor

Day. *"It is the day that will live in infamy"*, as my father always said with a smile. Every year, he'd say the same thing. On the outside, I laughed, but on the inside, I felt totally worthless. My birthday was hardly ever celebrated as a child because money was tight and I was told it was too close to Christmas. As a little girl, of course I didn't understand, so I would continue, like any child, to hope that they would change their minds. When I got too frustrating for them, my parents always added, with sarcasm, that my birthday was a reminder to people of the horrible war that occurred some 20 years before, and no one wanted to remember. Being told that, from parents that I loved and trusted, was devastating. Shame and rejection were busy behind the scenes, and mixed to toxic levels in my psyche like a chemical bomb. My seventh birthday marked the start on the timing mechanism. I was so young, I didn't have the life experience behind me to be able to filter comments like they made. They probably thought they were harmless, we were brought up with the old saying: "sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me". That is so unbiblical, just the opposite is true, I knew it in my heart, yet I would repeat

that phrase in my head anytime words hurt me. On an unconscious level, I did what any child would do, I took it personally, though I tried very hard not to. I knew I had no control over the day I was born, but in my little mind, it was just one more thing I was powerless against. As I grew older, old enough to know better, the psychological impact of their inference was too late. It had already made it's indelible impression, and like a cancer, it ate away at the very fibers of my being.

As a result of having very little positive reinforcement, and in the midst of so much family anxiety, I grew to hate myself at an early age, just for being born. I seemed to be in the way constantly. My birth sent my parents into bankruptcy, or so I was led to believe. So much I held on my little shoulders, without uttering a word, except to God. But when He wouldn't answer, I grew to hate Him for not only creating me, but hand picking the day of my birth. There was really no religious teaching in our home. I'm sure there was a Sovereign Hand over my family, because we survived so much, but I never once heard them utter a prayer in my presence, except

for the occasional saying of “grace” at the dinner table on Holidays. My dad would talk to me about God whenever I asked, but that wasn’t very often. We would sit together and watch *The Ten Commandments* every Easter. I would get my Bible out and try to follow along, and he would do the best he could to answer my questions. I remember him driving me to church to take Catechism classes. I don’t remember my mother being too big on God. She went to church with my dad and the rest of the family, but there was never much conversation afterward. We called ourselves Lutheran, but most of the time, God’s Name wasn’t spoken aloud in our house, unless it was followed by the word “dammit”. I thought that was God’s last name, up until I turned six. The Pastor of the church we sometimes went to, knelt down to me after service one Sunday, and asked if I knew God’s Name, so I told him. I can still see the look of shock and horror on my father’s face, as he shunned me out of the sanctuary in utter embarrassment. Later in life, my father became absorbed in church, serving as an usher, and then on the Board of Trustees. He formed friendships, but my mother never seemed to fit in, bless her heart. She

pretty much kept to herself and apparently liked it that way. Image, and the way people saw her, was very important to her. She had zero self-esteem, as I think back. She was self-conscious about everything. One thing was clear, she was masterful in her use of shame, wielding it like a sword to cut anyone down that she saw as a threat or when she was backed into a corner. I suppose it was her way of guarding her heart, but I often wondered if she would've had a softer side, had she only opened up to people. I think that's what made her seem so cold, as I saw her through a little girl's eyes. As I got older, I realized the reason she never seemed to let anyone close, the reason she never reached out like my father did; she was afraid of being rejected. Fear stole everything from my mother, including her life.

Kids notice everything a parent does, even if it seems trivial to us. If we could only realize, as parents, how instrumental we are in forming our children's emotional makeup by the seemingly insignificant things we do, and understand that they are like little digital camcorders. They pick up

everything we say, and sometimes hear what we're afraid to utter. I learned by first-hand experience that the way a child perceives themselves during important events in their life, follows them into adulthood. If the experience is a good one, they become confident and happy; conversely, if the experience happens to be negative, it doesn't matter how much knowledge to the contrary they accumulate.... that memory sticks like super glue and its next to impossible to dissolve without scarring the surface. For years, my birthday represented a powerfully painful image in my head: a hemp rope that dangled a heavy dead weight; one that had been slowly gnawed away and frayed to the point of having only a single thread. The thread represented my psyche; the dead weight represented the rest of me. Having begun the cycle of worthlessness at such a young age, I was the perfect mock up for one disaster after the other. One of the most life changing events in my short little life would occur just before I reached the ripe old age of seven. It was when I first met the spirit of Fear.

My father was a self-employed carpenter by trade. A business associate of

my father's had given him a set of used encyclopedias in exchange for some remodeling work, along with a 'special history book' the man thought 'daddy's little girl' might enjoy. I had overheard them having a conversation from the other room, so I was naturally excited to see what would become my birthday present. I felt special because, in my little mind, I felt my dad had traded work, just so I could get a birthday present. I'm sure that wasn't entirely true, it was just an added blessing, but I felt special this year, nonetheless. I loved presents because they came so few and far between for all of us. We knew they were a sacrifice for our parents, and when they came, they were treasured like bouillons of gold. I couldn't wait until my birthday, I was too excited. My dad saw my head tucked around the corner of the room, winked at me and said he had something very special for me. I believed him. I trusted my father implicitly. I knew that anything he had for me would be special and filled with love. Patience was not one of my virtues, and as any curious, excited child would do in anticipation of a great present, I snuck a peak in the closet I saw him hide it in.

That night, I remember my parents arguing. It was close to the Holidays and money was once again, the subject. As I sat shivering on the cold and clammy hardwood floor, I found myself on a mission to find my special birthday present. When I think about that night, even now as an adult, I can still feel my knees knock together. I had my trusty flashlight to keep me “safe” and warm, and I was oblivious to everything except the expedition I was embarking on. I dug through the bottom of the closet and I found the box that housed a pile of books. I realized that it was a glorious set of Encyclopedia Britannica’s. The pages were a little worn but I knew they were filled with knowledge. And even at that young age, I inherently knew knowledge held the key to power. Knowledge would be the very thing that would get me out of where I was, and I was bound and determined to soak it up like a sponge.

As I peered through page after page in book after book, I swallowed up all the pictures I saw in awe and wonder. It was getting hard to see with my little flashlight because the batteries were weak, but I was content to try

and keep quiet and learn as much as I could. It didn't matter to me that I couldn't read much of it, but I was fascinated with the images I saw. It took me to many worlds beyond my wildest imaginations. Then I came across a book toward the end of the stack, tucked between the last few letters of the alphabet, icky cobwebs and rotting, moldy cardboard. That book would come to hold more meaning for me, than the entire set of encyclopedias put together, and it would forever change the course of my life.

I couldn't help myself from paging through it, even though when I touched it, it gave me the creeps. Suddenly, an ominous presence filled the closet, and I felt fear wrap around me so tightly, I could barely grasp a breath. But there was something about that book. The pictures were so seductive and so alluring to me... something pulled on me, and I couldn't stop looking through them. On the cover, there was an encircled, inverted 5-pointed star and I recognized the word Encyclopedia. I had no idea what the other two words meant. I didn't know at the time that the weird looking star was

called a pentagram - this understanding would almost come too late - but the image of the star never left my memory. When school started again, I copied the words I saw on a piece of paper and I brought it to my teacher. As it turned out, the book I was enthralled with was a book on demonology, an encyclopedia of the occult. I remember the book having too many big words that I could neither read nor understand at the age of seven, but I remember the pictures that were alongside the incantations and spells. Because I loved magic and illusion, I quickly became particularly interested in ESP, extra-sensory perception, once I discovered what it was. Every opportunity I would get to go to my school's library, I would look up new words I was learning. I would ask my teacher or the librarian, and they were all too happy to show me books my age that talked about witchcraft. I discovered a world of wonder. For me, it was an escape into world where I didn't have to deal with reality. I was finally embarking on knowledge that would feed my soul; knowledge that would help my already vivid imagination escape to some wonderful fantasy island where I could pretend I was safe. I was mesmerized by the fact that other people could seem to

read other people's minds. I thought, in my seven year old little mind, that I could save myself from all the pain I saw around me. And I reasoned that if I could read minds, I could insure that no one else could hurt me. It was my own little shield of protection, a helmet that would stop the emotional arrows of shame and rejection that constantly bombarded my head. If I could actually read minds, I would know people's intentions and I would be able to thwart any plans that would cause me unhappiness. Surely this powerful gift had to be from God, and He was hearing my prayers every night I cried myself to sleep. I was excited. God would help me become smart, and I would be wise. I was seven and I had a plan. My heart leapt for joy the day I found the key of knowledge, rotting in the middle of that moldy cardboard box, with my trusty little flashlight in the middle of that cold, clammy closet. God was real after all, and He took time out to talk to me!

With every page I turned, the pictures of the scary demons didn't seem so scary anymore. By the time I got half-way through the book, the fear that I

had initially felt wrap me up so tightly, began to feel warm and cozy, like a security blanket. I stopped shedding tears because I'd finally found the answer. And I was certain I could fix my parents with it. I could fix the money problems they had, and I would be the heroine. Funny what your mind thinks of when you're seven.

After repeated attempts to solve my little world's problems, things only got worse, and I became increasingly frustrated. I turned that frustration inward and figured that it must've been because I didn't study hard enough, or I was doing it wrong. From the book on demonology, I was driven to play with other things that would send me deeper into the occult. I became an artist, tracing all the intricacies I saw in every book on mythology and magic that I could get my hands on. Oddly enough, I thanked God for allowing me the opportunity to learn such "cool" things. Little did I know which god I was communicating with. I gravitated toward astrology and numerology, and played with a deck of tarot cards as a young child and into my teens. I craved anything that dealt in the supernatural. I soaked it up like a dry

sponge that just found a pool of deep water, and I saturated myself into darkness, thinking it was the truth that would finally set me free.

A few months after my seventh birthday, I played the Ouija board with some of my siblings. We were just having fun. It was just another board game to us. Our parents went out for the evening, which was rare, and so we decided to hold what one might consider a séance, by all intents and purposes. We never thought that any of that stuff was real, so we just made fun of it and mocked others who believed in such things. It was just pretend to us. I remember it was stormy, lots of thunder, and the electricity went out, so we had to play by candle-light and the light coming from the fireplace just added to the atmosphere. We were having fun asking the board questions, until something happened that freaked everybody out. When it was my turn, I asked the board what my name was, and it spelled out C-Y-N-6-6-6. A cold chill went through my spine. And I recognized that presence that enveloped my body. It was the same one I felt in the closet, before I opened up the book on demonology. But I got scared and

confused, and I knew that thing couldn't be God. I was done playing from that point forward. It totally freaked me out, because the next question that was asked, "is that the truth?", and it answered "yes" all by itself. The triangular pointer moved on its own. Every one of us saw it. And nobody helped it along, it was guided by an invisible hand.

I remember screaming because the fireplace kicked back an ember at that precise moment with a loud pop, and I was the one sitting closest to the fire. It didn't help to hear a roaring thunder clap that shook the house a split second later. I assumed *that* was God. We were terrified. Somehow the game ended up in the fireplace, but it wouldn't burn. None of the cardboard would burn! Only the edges charred, and we left it in the fire, stoking it for a good hour. It was only cardboard and plastic, yet it wouldn't burn.

It took me another 20 years to discover why the board wouldn't burn. We had opened a door to the spirit realm and tampered with the supernatural.

After I got “saved”, I asked one of my sisters and a brother who had participated that night, if they would share their memories with me. We were estranged at the time, and unfortunately to this day, we still are. I was pretty much a zealot - “radically saved” as they say – and my sincere attempt to communicate my thoughts and solve some deep-seeded problems that occurred in my life as a result of that night, were met with contempt and utter denial. For years, I was tormented by every detail of what transpired that night. It could’ve been that I was only seven, and there was a seven year gap between me and my next oldest sister, or perhaps to them, it really did have no seeming impact, and they simply forgot about that night. Only God knows the truth. I learned that even in our ignorance, even when we think something is a harmless game, it can cause our demise, and if we choose to harden our hearts to the truth, the very memory of what plagues us can be consumed in the proverbial Valley of Denial. After the Ouija board said that I was a child of Satan and not a child of God, I was terrified to pray. I thought I’d sold my soul to the devil with a stupid board game. I thought it was only a toy. I had no one to

explain anything to me, so I suffered for years in silence, just hoping God would forgive me. I never felt so lost in my life.

At the age of ten, I had a very close call. We didn't have insurance, so we had to tough out the dents and dings of childhood. My father always said what didn't kill us would make us strong. That one event was another pivotal moment in my emotional development, and I will never forget it.

I remember helping my brother-in-law wash his car in the blistering heat of summer. We lived in the upper Midwest in Minnesota, in the country. We had big yard and a dog, and I remember him barking incessantly. Timber, a German Shepherd - Wolf mix, was a beautiful dog. I loved that dog. Timber was my best friend as a child, and without Timber, I probably wouldn't be alive today. I remember being barefoot, my feet squishing in a grassy puddle of water. I had just run through the sprinklers that were on full blast watering the lawn, and the ground was completely saturated. I was told by my mother to turn off the sprinklers and then my brother-in-law, a man in

his late twenties, asked me to take the extension cord to the outside outlet and plug in the vacuum cleaner. The faucet to the water was right next to the AC outlet, so I thought I'd kill two birds with one stone. I had no idea what was about to happen. The minute the plug touched the outlet, 110 volts of electricity surged through my body for at a good minute. I know that, because that's how much time it would take to go through all the motions to rescue me, based on the circumstance and distance I was from anyone else. My hand clenched, my body froze up and I shook furiously, standing in that pool of water, completely barefoot. The soles of my feet became numb and all I could feel were a million pins and needles ripping through the bottom of my feet. I couldn't move, not even to scream. My brother-in-law was at the end of a very long driveway, the vacuum at his car, was attached to a 100 foot extension cord. The faucet, where I was standing, was around the other side of the house. No one else was around, except my dog, Timber. He was never allowed to run loose in the yard, but was caged in a metal fenced in pen so he wouldn't bother the neighbors. The second before I touched the outlet, Timber whined and barked at me. I

waved at him, and told him I'd come to play with him when I was done. I plugged in the cord, and the dog went crazy, barking incessantly, racing about his cage, and trying to jump the six foot fence.

I heard my mother, in frustration, tell the dog to stop barking, and I tried to scream but nothing came out. I heard my brother-in-law yell at me three times to plug in the vacuum, and then he finally walked over to do it himself. I saw everything in slow motion. My heart was racing so hard I thought it would explode. My head hurt, I couldn't see straight, and the needles I felt penetrate the bottom of my feet drove themselves up my legs and into my arms. I saw my brother-in-law run to me when he saw my hand sealed to the outlet, with current ripping through my body. He grabbed his belt from his waist, yelled for someone in the house to cut the circuit breaker to the house, and then he wrapped his belt around me, scooping me up to carry me inside the house. I nearly lost consciousness. I remember the kitchen sink, and my mother filling it with warm water. The bottom of my feet felt badly burned, and so was my right hand, but my

mother just wrapped them up in ace bandages. I can still smell the odor. It smelled just like a strand of hair had been singed with a match.

I couldn't walk without numbness in my legs for several days after that. I never received medical attention, but I came to understand later in life, that I suffered the equivalent of a grand mal seizure from electric shock. From that day forward, I had trouble either remembering things... or having my mind go a million miles a minute. So much so that I thought I was going crazy. It went in cycles. I would have racing thoughts and hundreds of ideas run through my head, (like somebody had wound up a rubber band too tight and then let it loose), or the flipside of the coin; the rubber band would break and I couldn't remember if I'd brushed my teeth that morning. Sometimes I'd find my toothbrush in the refrigerator. To this day, I can't tell you why I would do that. I think that's where my ADHD came from, an electrical disruption. I was never officially diagnosed with that as a child, but thinking back, I had all the symptoms that read like a textbook case of Attention Deficit. If it hadn't been for my dog, I may not have lived to tell

the story. Someone poisoned him with hamburger laced with rat poison a few weeks later. A neighbor found out he was half wolf, and they didn't want one in the neighborhood. My friend, my confidant, was gone. I felt so alone.

By the time I was 13, I graduated my Lutheran Catechism class, and I was given my very first Bible. The very first scripture I opened that Bible up to was Revelation 13:18. ***“This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man’s number. His number is 666.”*** This is a reference to the mark of the Antichrist. And when I read that verse, the most gripping fear, one could imagine, consumed me and followed me around like a second skin, until I was in my twenties. I had good reason to be fearful. I had betrayed God. The Ouija board I had experimented with told me who I was, C-Y-N-6-6-6. I couldn't shake it. Every time I picked up my Bible, I would seize up and begin to shake all over. I was literally paralyzed by gripping fear. I couldn't escape it, unless I was looking through books on the supernatural or watching

magic. I would be so anxiety stricken every time I tried to pray, that I finally gave up. Over time, and as I grew a little older, I got a little braver to fight the demons in my head, and I would pray for God to forgive me. I prayed, I cried, and even though I wasn't Catholic, I begged for absolution. I remember thinking that God probably felt I wasn't good enough for heaven, so He resigned me to a life of living hell as punishment for having betrayed Him at such an early age. I didn't know any better, and nobody bothered to tell me otherwise, so I convinced myself that it was the truth. The Pastor of my Lutheran church wouldn't give me any answers. On the few occasions we would go to church, every time I got up the courage to ask, he'd always tell me that God's grace was sufficient. I had no idea what that meant. I felt it was a cop out because he didn't have answers either, and one day, I just stopped asking questions.

A few years later, at the age of 16, I was given six months to live. I thought that was God's way of answering my prayers to take me Home. It was my ticket out of this world, only it didn't fare well for me. My scoliosis was

discovered during a school screening when I was 13, but my parents didn't take me to the doctor until I was a few months shy of 15. We still had no medical insurance. My mother kept writing notes to the school nurse saying that they took me in for an evaluation, but they never did. My mother's family doctor was a practicing Shaman from Afghanistan. Because of the spiritual ignorance my gene pool obviously suffered from, we had no idea that a Shaman was basically a high priest in the Occult practice of Voodoo. My parents called themselves Christians, but all they new about God, from what they told me, was that God was three people in one, and they called it the Trinity. I couldn't wrap my mind around such a concept. How could a person be three, all at once? Made no sensible sense to me. I remember this Shaman doctor's office. He had all these freakish shrunken skull heads decorating his desk and wall. I had no idea what they were, but I recognized some of the other pictures on his wall, as some I had seen earlier in my life, in the book of demonology. I was too young and inexperienced to have it register intellectually. In reality, I was being set up for my own spiritual and natural death, and I didn't even know it. Worse

yet, I had no one to protect me, or so I thought.

This “doctor” told me I would grow out of my scoliosis, and that I shouldn’t worry about it. He assured my parents that the school nurse was just over-reacting. When the school got the doctor’s note, it took another 3 months for social services to intervene and I finally got to see a doctor that specialized in spinal deformities. The waiting list just to get an initial appointment took a couple of months, but by that time, my curvature had progressed to the point where minimal intervention would do no good. I was put on observation for 6 months, and within that six month period, my body had twisted and contorted at record speed, according to the experts, and at my next 6 month evaluation, I was given 6 months to live. Surgery was scheduled within weeks of that appointment, and at 17 years old, my life, as I knew it, was forever altered.

My primary problem was that my ribcage nearly punctured my left lung, and there is a protective sac that surrounds your heart, and mine almost

perforated by a rib that was twisting inward. Once that sac punctures, you're toast. I had half the lung capacity that I do now, I grew two and half inches during 10 hours of surgery, and it's a miracle that I am walking. You would never know, to look at me today, that I was severely deformed as a child. The rehab was horrific, but I made it through. But keeping my ability to function without the aid of a wheelchair was another miracle I didn't come to appreciate until I was much older and a little wiser. All I could think of, through my emotional tunnel vision, was the permanent prosthetics that would remain with me for a lifetime, and the agony of being confined to a twelve-pound plaster body cast for the next seven and a half months of my life. I was out of school, in my junior year in high school, for an entire semester. School was a nightmare for me anyway, but having to go to school in a body cast, only made things much worse than I ever could imagine. My surgery took place back in the early eighties, when the procedure was still in its pioneering stages. Mine was one of the first of its kind, and I was written up in a couple of medical journals. Today, the procedure is relatively common place. It's still considered major surgery,

but the screening, bio-technology, and new medical procedures that are employed nowadays, dictates less hospitalization and patients leave the hospital in a lighter (removable) cast. Things sure change with technology, but memories tend to last forever.

To my mother's credit, she worked tirelessly through state agencies to obtain medical insurance that would pay for my entire procedure, rehab and after-care until I turned 24; the cost was a quarter million dollars and change. When I was given such a bleak diagnosis, things became better between my mother and I for a little while. She faithfully brought me back to health, and made sure I was well cared for, but I always wondered when the other shoe would drop. That day happened after I finished a novel, an auto-biography before I turned seventeen. I was so proud of myself. One hundred and fifty pages of heart-felt emotion went into that thing; I had typed the whole thing out, it took me months to complete. Back then, there were no computers, everything was done on the old type-writers. I even drew the cover, a self-portrait, and named the book after my mother, I

thought it would make her proud. I asked her to read it, but she never would. Inside that book were my dreams and my hopes, and my fears; many questions directed toward my mother as to why she remained so distant from me, and I tried to convey, through that book, the love I had for her and my father, and the love and affirmation that I so desperately wanted from them. She told me she didn't want to read anything I wrote, that *it wasn't a real book and she had no interest in reading it*. I took that pretty hard; it was pretty clear to me, that not only did she lack interest in what I wrote, she didn't care enough to read what was in my heart. That was the day I knew I was just an inconvenience to her. She did her duty, but it was clear she took no joy in me whatsoever, at least that's how it felt. I never tried to connect with her again. There was no point in hoping for something that would never happen. I was just tormenting myself by believing in a fantasy.

When I got saved back in 1989, nearly two decades after I'd tempted fate with the Ouija board at the age of 7, a man named Harvey and his wife

(Alice), came to me, after noticing me at the Pentecostal church I stumbled upon. Harvey was a strange looking soul, but he seemed kind, and his wife was very meek and quiet. They were my parent's age, and seemed like a nice couple. There was something different about Harvey; it was his eyes that spoke volumes. They were very deep and penetrating, like they could see straight through your soul. I had never seen that in anyone before. Harvey said something that captured my attention. He said that God had heard me call out to him throughout various points in my life, and then he said that God had a message for me. They asked for an invitation to come over to my apartment. I thought that was a little strange, but I was curious. I had, indeed, been crying out to God, and I wondered what the personal message was. I invited them for coffee and cake that following Sunday afternoon. I was about to experience my first encounter with the prophetic.

Before Harvey gave me the message, he asked me, what I thought was the weirdest question at the time. He wondered if I had ever suffered brain damage. He said he "saw" little lights flickering in the middle of my

forehead, and the word from the Lord was very simple: *“God was restoring all the years the canker worm had eaten, and He was “re-wiring my circuits”.*

Harvey told me over coffee that God had given him a picture of my brain, like one would look anatomically at a musculoskeletal view one’s head. He said that the lights he saw represented the nerve endings in the frontal lobe of my brain. I didn’t think anything of it at the time. I hadn’t a clue what he was talking about. I just didn’t want to be rude so I continued to listen to him. There was just something about him that commanded my undivided attention. Harvey told me many things that afternoon in the two hours they spent visiting, but one thing, in particular, I remember vividly. He said that God saw me searching for Him, and the Lord grieved for me every time I stepped into the wrong side of the supernatural realm. He said I survived ***“because there was a war raging over my head, and that the Lord had commanded His angels concerning me, to guard me in all my ways. That they had lifted me up in their hands, lest I struck my foot against***

a stone.” He was quoting from Psalm 91.

That verse brought a flood of memories back to my mind and I started to weep uncontrollably. It was the very verse that God would use to deliver me from death just a few short years prior to my meeting this couple. I had never told a soul about what had happened, I was too ashamed. I had reached the end of my rope. I had been raped, by several different men, and never told anyone. Harvey looked at me with tears in his eyes and said he knew, by the Spirit of God, that I didn't have to tell him anything. When he looked into my eyes... I knew he was telling the truth. I couldn't stop crying, and we wept together.

The first rape occurred when I was 20, and it was by a cop who was 45, and he worked undercover in vice for the local Sheriff's Department, but worked part-time as an officer with a major drug enforcement agency in Minnesota. I would soon find myself in a world of social nightmares, seeing a side of law enforcement that would forever change my opinion of the

words “*to protect and serve*“. My virginity was stolen in the vilest ways one could ever imagine being violated. My mind shut down a couple of years after that, and I attempted suicide by a prescription drug overdose.

Everybody loved RJ, even though this upstanding public servant would end up taking my virginity and black-mailing me into silence. He could do nothing wrong in my family’s eyes; they were too blinded by his political connections and street savvy charisma. He worked in the same Sherriff’s Department that one of my brothers was working at, so I had no choice but to keep my mouth shut. I knew telling my brother would only bring further shame and condemnation my way, and RJ said he would get him fired. To protect my brother and the job he loved, I chose to bury the secret I held, deep in my soul, hoping the memory of it would vanish over time. I often wondered what my brother’s reaction to this man would’ve been if I had told the truth about the first rape, and let him know he liked to play Russian Roulette with his personal play-toy, a department issue 9mm semi-automatic. I often wondered, every time I heard my brother speak so highly

of him, what he would've said had he known the man forced himself on me while watching porn tapes that had been confiscated by his FBI buddies. I wondered what he would've said if he knew details about the poker parties RJ would host, or how he set me up, as an informant, during a drug bust gone awry so I would never tell anyone what he was really like, namely my brother.

RJ was a closet alcoholic. One night I witnessed him drink almost an entire bottle of scotch like it was a bottle of water. He brushed his teeth, popped a couple of mints in his mouth and went to work. He told me he needed alcohol to numb the pain of his partner who'd been gunned down while on duty some ten years prior. He said he never got over it. Shocking to me was the fact that RJ never got caught, or if he did, somebody would always cover for him. Because I knew too much, and he constantly held my brother's job over my head, I felt I had no choice but to carry out a casual, decidedly forced relationship with him. I had to keep face at any cost. The parties were pretty raw at RJ's apartment, conveniently two floors above

where I lived. It was a very large complex, a good 10 minute brisk walk from one end to the other; I used to jog the halls to warm up before I got to the racquetball court. It was where I took my frustrations out. I would exhaust myself, just beating that ball against the wall as hard as I could, until I was too sore to continue. Warm baths afterward in the community whirlpool served to drown out the rest of my sorrows and for a time, I used this exercise routine as a “healthy” coping mechanism. Unfortunately, it would prove to be too physically strenuous to keep it going long enough to see any real benefit. RJ was divorced twice by the time he reached the age of 45, and he displayed all the characteristics of a playboy out for one thing: a good time, no matter the expense, or the price other people had to pay. RJ liked his women young. Apparently, I was suitable eye-candy, some 25 years younger than him. Nobody really touched “his girls”, unless RJ deemed it was in his best interest. One night, in the middle of a party I should’ve never attended, I discovered the “loyalty of the brotherhood”. After that night, I had zero self esteem. One didn’t dare bring any shame to the family; that was clearly understood by all of my siblings. If we should

find ourselves in trouble of any kind, we were told, “*you make your mess, you sleep in it*”. Indeed, my life was a mess, and since I couldn’t go to my parents or my brothers, I escaped the only way I could. I rebelled by frequenting dangerous places where all the seedy men hung out; looking for love and protection in all the wrong places. I knew I was damaged goods and I was reminded every time I looked in the mirror. My hope of having a normal, loving relationship with a descent guy seemed impossible, so in my mind, I had nothing to lose. If I ever hoped to have the affection of a man, I’d have to do whatever it took. Even though I wasn’t one, I saw myself as no more than a common street hooker. Sadly, I allowed men to treat me with blatant disrespect because I felt that was all I was worth. I loathed every second of anything resembling “intimacy” after that fateful night.

At the age of 24, I had sunk so deep into the sea of depression; I had no desire to even try to fight for survival. I was tired of trying, and inevitably failing, tired beyond imagination or sound comprehension. There was a

Physicians Desk Reference in the house, so I decided to take advantage, out of sheer convenience, of the prescription meds I was taking to make my heart beat in sync. I lived with an abnormal arrhythmia since I was a child, but it became increasingly difficult to manage once I became an adult. I figured if one pill could make it beat right, 10 or 20 pills could make it stop... permanently. I often wondered if the electric shock I'd suffered as a kid had anything to do with disrupting the rhythm of my heart; probably so.

After a couple of hours of contemplation, I wrote a letter to explain why I couldn't bare to breathe another breath. I wrote the letter to God because I knew that no one else would care. Obviously, I didn't succeed in the attempt to end my life. I woke up, stupefied that I wasn't dead. There was a Bible in my lap opened to Psalm 91, and to this day, I don't know where it came from, because I was home alone. While I had knowledge that there was a "God", I wasn't saved by any biblical standards. In fact, the Bible was the last thing I would've thought to pick up, much less read. The only God I knew, in my mind, had given up on me, and the best I could hope for

was His understanding when I drifted into eternity, if He even existed at all. I didn't know anymore. My prayers were never answered, or so I thought; and the God I believed in as a child had turned a deaf ear, or so it seemed. Instead of resting quietly inside a morgue, I awoke to the same side of hell I'd hoped to escape from, with no ill-effects. I was strangely energized, and I kept feeling the sensation of a gentle breeze sweep over my body. I should've died. I didn't realize that what happened that day was nothing short of a miracle straight from the Throne of Grace...not until I met Harvey and Alice.

As Harvey cried with me that day, while memories flooded my mind, I heard the deepest tears and groaning I had ever seen any man utter. He explained to me that sometimes when a person is so deeply wounded and shattered, so much so that they can't grieve for themselves, God provides prayerful intercession so that they can break free. He told me that sometimes intercession manifests in deep groans and utterances, and even with tears that only God can understand. As he wept, he began to

He spoke in an unknown tongue to me, while Alice held me to her bosom. I felt so much peace overwhelm me, like a warm blanket had been wrapped around me. A couple of minutes later, Harvey continued to minister to me in a language I could understand, plain English.

He told me that God sent His only Son to die so that I might live, (*John 3:16*). That what I experienced in my childhood was not my fault, I was just a trusting child, and because I thought I was calling on the God of all Creation, He could read the thoughts and intents of my heart long before I thought them, and he knew there was no malice in my heart, (*Hebrews 4:12*). That even though I felt forsaken and abandoned in my childhood, He never left me, (*Hebrews 13:5*). That God delighted in me, and though I stumbled, He had made my steps firm, and He would not allow me to fall, (*Psalms 37:23-25*). He told me I was held securely in the hollow of God's hand, and nothing could remove me from it, (*John 10:28*).

During the times I was violated on the deepest levels, God was watching,

and He would surely avenge me and make recompense in His due time, (*Luke 18:7*). That I was to forget the former things and not dwell on the past, (*Isaiah 43:18*), because He was doing a new thing and He had called me to be His witness, a servant that He had chosen for Himself, (*Isaiah 43:10*). That the devil was a liar, incapable of telling the truth, (*John 8:44*), and the devil was the one who came to rob, steal, and destroy, but that Jesus came to give me abundant life, (*John 10:10*). That I was *not* a child of Satan, that I did *not* sell my soul at the age of 7, but the strongholds that bound me out of guilt caused me to think I had, and God was in the process of breaking those chains, (*Luke 4:18*).

Harvey said that God saw me as an over-comer, and whatever is born of God, overcomes the things of this world (*1 John 5:4*). I was to be strong and courageous, (*Joshua 1:7*), and let the joy of the Lord be my strength, when I had no strength of my own, (*Nehemiah 8:10*). During times I was weak, God would show Himself strong, (*2 Corinthians 12:9*); and I survived because God knew my heart, and even with all the anger I held in my

heart, He understood (*Hebrews 4:14*). He knew that my anger stemmed from lack of knowledge of Who God was, (*Hosea 4:6*). I was to come to Him without fear, (*Hebrews 4:16*), and call upon Him, so He could tell me of things to come, (*Jeremiah 33:3*). If I would do that, He would outline my future, (*Jeremiah 29:11*). Above all, I was to hold unswervingly to the hope I professed because He would be faithful to bring it to pass, (*Hebrews 10:23*). God would keep me in perfect peace if I kept my mind stayed on Him, and trusted Him, (*Isaiah 26:3*). I was told, if I remembered nothing else from that night, to burn this scripture in my memory, for it would be the one God would use the rest of my days on earth, to remind me of His Sovereignty over my life. The verse was Psalm 34:7, ***“an angel of the Lord encamps around about them that fear Him and he delivers them”***.

I was so new in my walk with the Lord, that I didn't understand the gift of discerning of spirits, words of knowledge or the gift of wisdom. I didn't understand anything about spiritual gifts. All I knew was that when Harvey

began to prophesy over me, I got a crash course in theology, and with each scripture he spoke over me, my body surged with electricity, just like I'd felt the day I plugged in the vacuum, only this time, there was no pain, only warmth... like water rushing through my veins. I was being washed from the inside out by the washing of the water of the Word and I was being renewed by the Spirit of a Living God.

I experienced the words in Titus 3:4-7 that afternoon. ***“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit, Whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior; so that we, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”***

I believe that man was a true modern day prophet, sent to me by God, and his obedience to take the time to minister to me, changed my life forever.

His words took the anger that had coddled me all those years, and swept me away from its grip. God, Himself, saw me in my utter despair, and He intervened. He lifted the stronghold of the spirit of oppression and death off from me, just as surely as one would lift a heavy blanket from a bed. Like changing bed linens, He draped a new clean sheet over me - His Sovereign Shield of Faith, covering me in His Glory. I couldn't have been further removed from the things of God. In fact, in my mind, I was in total rebellion. But God saw the intents and motives of my heart, and He chose to overlook what I, and probably others, saw as rebellion, and He saturated me in His Mercy. He covered me with His Grace and God met me... where I was.

God chose to pluck me out of the cords of death that clearly entangled me, and saved me, in spite of myself. One day I went back to my cardiologist, because every time I took the meds after that fateful day, I felt sick. The EKG results came back and he was puzzled by the results. For seven years I had been suffering from a severe mitral valve prolapse, and for

seven years I had taken meds to stabilize the muscle and make it work properly. Now suddenly, with no viable explanation, there was no indication that the muscle in my heart had ever been malfunctioning. It was completely healthy tissue. I got sick when I took the meds because I was overmedicating. I no longer had the condition for which I was originally prescribed the meds for. Go figure the grace of God. I try to stop my heart, and He restores it back to factory specs.

My life, through the years, has been a mixture of blessings and complete chaos. There are times I find myself battling the same familiars of failure and rejection and shame, and worthlessness, as I struggled with before I was redeemed. Those things don't just magically go away. Once you entertain them, they try to follow you wherever you go, to take you down and hold you hostage. Certain people look at my life and probably wonder why God even bothers with me. I have more in common with society's throw-aways than I do with members of my Christian faith. I think it's because I can't seem to forget where I came from. Most of the pains

associated with the memories are gone, but the memories are still there. And sometimes I digress. I don't live there for long, but it's a struggle to maintain sometimes. Strong Christians might suggest I lack understanding of Who He is, or who I am in Christ. I may lack understanding and seem immature to others who are more grounded in their walk with God, but that doesn't change God's Sovereignty or His Divine Plan for my life, or the love I have for Him in my heart. I am arguably more educated than I once was; certainly more spiritually discerned, but there hasn't been a day that has gone by in the forty years of my own personal desert of affliction, where I haven't needed to draw from His wellspring of Mercy and Grace. And I think that's the whole point. God's ways will always be higher than our ways. The times I feel perplexed by circumstances, He continually tells me the same thing, over and over again: ***“you may not understand the process, but there is always a purpose”***. When God speaks, He speaks clearly, and simply for the world to hear in hopes that they will draw close to Him...

Call upon Me when you're weary, call upon Me when you're low.

Call upon Me during trying times, My Child... Your heart shall I behold. Call upon Me for great wisdom, I'll give you strength to help endure... The times you feel alone, I'll take your hand, so rest secure.

Call upon Me when you're fearful, I will guide you to My Light. For I AM the Lord, your Banner, be courageous in My Might. I alone, am Holy. I alone, can make a way. I alone, dear child, will help you when there is no other way.

I called to God, and He answered me. And God listened to the cries of my heart at the times I couldn't pray. There's a lesson in that for all of us.