Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Eye Witness Encounter – by Aida Karabu



Eye Witness Encounter

Intro Quotes

"But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' Acts 26:16-18 (ESV)

"Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him." Luke 8:39 ESV

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

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Early on the first day of the week, after Jesus had risen, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had driven out seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, who were mourning and weeping. And when they heard that Jesus was alive and she had seen Him, they did not believe it. Mark 16:9-11

Jesus Appears to Two Disciples

After this, Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them as they walked along in the country. And they went back and reported it to the rest, but they did not believe them either. Mark 16:12-13

Later, as they were eating, Jesus appeared to the Eleven and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." Mark 16:14-16

My life: Autobiographical Background

Hello!

I've been through a lot in life. I want to share it all, so that even when I die people can still learn from my life, and can see for themselves who brought me out of the pit and how, and what they can do to get out themselves with His help, and to illustrate that it really never is too late for anyone.

And to parents with children who are going through a lot of things like I did, I want you to keep praying and never give up on them.

Brace yourself, because, like many people, my story before I met Christ is not a pretty one.

Loosely, I grew up in church, but I turned away from the Lord, and when I was 14, I moved to the UK to a prestigious boarding school to complete my GCSEs (sounds nice huh?). I was one of the few black girls, and I didn't have many friends in the slightest. I did complete them, and got A's and A*'s across the board in 10 subjects – with only one B (which just about shattered me at the time). I felt really sad and alone – but I kept it all in without an outlet. The girls there were sometimes, often, mean beyond description.

One day, I remember asking to be excused from class, and instead of going back to class I just broke down crying in an empty classroom. I just broke down. I had kept it all in for so long when I finally let it out I became indifferent, numb. I just wanted to disappear. I knew that no one would care or really notice if I did. Maybe just cruel gossip about where they think I might've left and my issues once I'm not there.

I finally broke the façade of the perfect girl slamming it at school, and as soon as my parents found out how I really felt, they shipped me back home to Ethiopia, where we lived at the time, and reassured me I didn't have to go back if I really didn't want to.

I felt like my life was over and I was ruined, that I was a total failure and that I would never make it, and so I did the natural thing, I dove into a downward spiral.

When the one thing I used to define my self-worth, my grades started to fall, because of anxiety at the new school after everything, and now that faith in God was a thing of mockery and a sign of stupidity in my mind based on what I believed about science and my secular standing at this point, I started doing all kinds of crazy negative things to try and cope.

I started smoking what the world touts as "harmless weed" to ease my heavy heart and mind, making friends with others who did this and who felt like they were also going in a downward spiral, going to crazy wild parties (fyi if you would like to know, the bible uses the terms carousing and debauchery to describe these exact pastimes), that I did to try and drown all the pain out. It didn't work.

Then "just for fun and relaxation" started to become drinking super heavily till blackout or throwing up at parties and sleeping around with people I had never met. At this point I didn't feel like there was anything worth saving, I had already even completely left behind my childhood commitment to remain a virgin for my husband.

Then it turned into hard drugs. Miscellaneous pills from strangers and joints filled with unknown substances, other than weed. I was totally dead inside, and I hated everything I had become and everything I was. I needed someone to save me. I needed someone to love me enough to walk with me and guide me and fix me and make me a better person. I kept looking for this.

In my mind I was a total waste. For me all hope was lost. This is the part where I write this in the hopes that someone going through this or thinking of doing this will not go through with it.

Long story short, I had 5-10, brace yourself – suicide attempts – over the course of a few years. I still bear the scars on my arms. It was a total nightmare for my whole family. I tried to die by swallowing an entire bottle of pain killers, I drank bleach, I cut the mains electricity wire with a metal knife, I tried to hang myself, I took a whole pack of sleeping pills, I was taken away in an ambulance more times than I would care to count – and for some reason I just wouldn't die.

I remember thinking of God one day and just thinking "Why won't you just let me die? Are you so cruel to leave me suffering like this? Just leave me alone and let me die!" I was looking for peace, and in my misery I thought that death would bring it to me. I realize that it was peace that I was looking for, and not death. I only wanted to die because I thought that was the only way I could find true peace in life.

Now looking back, I now know it was God who kept me alive, although then it felt like cruelty, He didn't want me to die like that without me knowing true peace, which was Him. He was the one who saved me from my own hands each time, and He was the one who had all the good in store for me to see after He rescues me.

At that time I didn't know God at all, I had forgotten all about Him, but somehow deep down I knew that if someone loved me enough, deeply beyond all my worst failures and worst mistakes, that I

would be fine. So, I changed my approach of sleeping with different kinds of men for sexual pleasure alone to sleeping around so that I could find this type of love. Newsflash, I didn't find it in men that way.

I didn't really tell anyone, but I resolved to get into a long-term relationship for this purpose. So in all my wisdom at the time I used dating applications like Tinder to find this. Most of those meetups ended up in one-night stands with strangers or simply didn't not go anywhere – until I met .. let's call him J.

We met at his house, and I loved it so much I just never left and I lived with him for about a year or so. But all of this in my past and all the scarring on the inside of me was still there, and I couldn't fix it, and neither could J.

I thought sexual love with a romantic partner would fix it, and it was the kind of long-term relationship I had dreamed of getting on Tinder, but he, although there was so much I loved about him, had his own issues and didn't know God either, and he just couldn't help me the way I was looking for.

He could buy me a whole new wardrobe, deck me out with the best makeup, buy me cool gadgets I could never afford or get from my family at the time, he bought me new shoes, he could paid for plain tickets and expensive vacations and weekend getaways for me, he bought me my favorite foods and loved me in all the ways he knew how. We picked out a house to live in and raise kids together, I thought I was as happy as I could ever be, but I still needed so much fixing, and I still had that longing for that other kind of love. This may sound like a perfect love, but J also caused me a significant amount of harm. Physically, emotionally and psychologically.

I realized my life would end up with me and him living in a small town with kids, wondering how my life ended up that way, with kids who alienated me because I was an imperfect mother, a husband who was estranged from me, hating my life, hating myself, and trapped. I didn't want that. So when it got to the point where I wanted to leave J and everything too, I realized my last resort to get this love and get my life and my soul fixed inside wasn't working. I realized I that I wanted to leave but I didn't have a reason. We already had so much history that I didn't want to end it, but it wasn't bringing me any satisfaction or fulfilment, many times it was taking away from me more than it was giving.

Philosophy Class

Interestingly enough, the thing that got me thinking about God again was a secular philosophy class. Philosophy 1306, Reality, Thinking, and the Self. I hadn't thought about God in a positive or serious light for as long as I could remember, even as far back as Sunday school although many times as a teenager I would tag along with my mom and my immediate family to church. Hearing, and I guess deep down sensing that Jesus was true and real, but believing God was unfair and Heaven was only for the select few who gave up everything and hard to work hard for it. I wasn't that. I couldn't raise the dead like Elijah. I didn't understand all the strange prophecies in the Bible. There's a lot of junk in there that didn't seem to make a lot of sense in a logical, modern scientific technologically advanced world I was living in. I have school to go to. I thought, I can't follow God and go to school at the same time. I would have to be a desert nomad and go into the desert and give up everything I knew and loved – it seemed like too high a price. So I swore a kind of hatred or vow against god in my heart, not consciously or verbally, but to continue living my life walking away from Him and disregarding His advice and commands with the aim to meet Him in Heaven on Judgement Day or whatever and blame it on His unfairness. I didn't care if I went to Hell, because I believed I could claim it was because of God's injustice. I thought I would somehow be more right than God, more holy, more honorable or more loving in some way by choosing to dive in. I think many, many people have made this deep unconscious decision in their heart, never really articulating it. Many of them may cover this secret decision with what they believe is scientific evidence which disproves the existence of God, or evidence that God is not just or is somehow a liar, or trying to keep something good from us from scripture. "Why would God kill innocent babies?", they ask. It never occurs to them that if they think God is equally guilty of it than equally so is anyone who kills a baby in the womb or a newborn. There are so many logical inconsistencies in these arguments that looking back I wonder at how I didn't see them before.

Anyhow, I was attending this Philosophy class at school online as I was living with J, and God came up in the course material. Just a general discussion, the Philosophy professor wasn't preaching per se, but he was presenting how some believe in the possibility of the existence of a creator because of the intricacy of the human mind out of the philosophical duty of presenting both sides of an argument.

However simple this philosophical conversation was, I can't remember exactly the topic, but God came up as evidenced by our minds as thinking things. Where did the mind come from? Can chemical and meat soup make a mind if left in a jar for thousands of years? I started to be intrigued. I remember talking to J about it. I was really excited. What if this higher omniscient (all seeing, all pervasive, everywhere at once), omnipotent (all powerful in terms of power and technological and

mechanical wisdom) being exists? I said. Like an omniscient being that's always everywhere that sees everything that has just always existed. A different kind of being different from us, Ancient. Always been there. Has seen everyone and everything from the beginning of time. The philosophical notion of such a being make me excited and happy. The wisdom this being must possess. Like, there was a possibility of a freedom and new wisdom and life and knowledge by somehow coming into contact with this being. Logically speaking, if such a being existed, I reckoned that it would have the wisdom to do things like teleportation, to different universes and realities that we are not even aware of. This all coming from my secular, atheistic and scientific world view. We think about such beings in science fiction all the time, it shows up in kids shows constantly. I just started to consider and realize the existence of a true, benevolent, omniscient and omnipotent God in reality.

For some reason, when I was bringing it up as a question to J I actually believed it. I wasn't asking him for his opinion yes or no or to validate or deny my thoughts, they were already firmly planted, I was just sharing my excitement and thoughts to see how J would react. I can't remember at what point, but I was convinced. I never even once associated this being with the God of the Bible that I grew up with at church, I didn't see him as a 'God' in the religious sense at all, I was opposed to religion at this point in my life, in my mind such a beings existence was just a kind of scientific or philosophical possibility of the universe. If you are an atheist and you believe in aliens, you can't rule out that there might be some beings out there that exist outside our dimensions. Beings that have been around much longer, that know a lot more than we do, that can see through time and space.

I reached out to the Philosophy professor and I told him that whether or not he intended it, his course led me to conclude that there is a God and that i brought me back to my faith in Christ in a dramatic way afterwards. I don't know if he saw that coming, I wonder if he was atheist himself. He never said if he explicitly believed in God after the fact, I asked him and he told me that he would like to keep his personal views on God incognito, and He didn't reveal to me whether he did or he did not believe in a God explicitly either way, but I have my suspicions.

Come save me

So, I began to desperately cry out to this omniscient, omnipresent, omnibenevolent being just to see what he would do. I wanted him to take me to another planet. Another existence. Another reality. I was just tired of life on Earth. If you know the reference, I wanted the being to take me to another reality and show me a new Kingdom like Thor took Jane to Asgard.

For some reason, because I know the fact of his existence was not brought into question, that it was a reality, that he would answer as long as I welcomed him as who he is and had an understanding of His power and his separation from us in terms of his power etc. He's just a being on a different scale of life, so I called out to Him jokingly for 3 days is straight, for some reason I knew that if I jokingly called out to Him believing and knowing that He would show up if I just kept asking, he would. Now here is where you guys might not want to listen to me anymore. I didn't realize what the Bible said at the time, I only realized what it said after I saw what I saw and I started to read it:

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mark 11:24 ESV

"anyone who approaches Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." Hebrews 11:6 (BSB)

"'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'" Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)

And one night, someone from that side of reality I was calling to did show up. And surprise surprise to my or maybe your atheist/agnostic self at that moment, it was none other than Jesus Christ.

The encounter

"the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." Matthew 4:16 NIV

"On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased." Psalm 138:3 (ESV)

One day I was in the other room sulking and feeling lonely. I am not going to omit that I was high, I was feeling very ashamed of myself, and very disgustingly gross in terms of hygiene (I hadn't

showered, or brushed my teeth, and I was wearing pajamas all day).

When J finally walked in to check on me, to see if I was okay, I knew that he would end up doing or saying something to hurt me, to make me feel ashamed of myself, not worthy, not good enough. I didn't want him to see me like that. Like the mess that I really was on the inside. But he came into the room anyways and I mustered up the resolve to love him anyways, because I didn't want to lose him. But I felt like I had nowhere to go to hide my shame and filth and disgrace from J, and I wish he didn't walk in and see me like that and change how he thought or felt about me by seeing me intoxicated like that. Looking back, seeing me intoxicated would have never made J change his mind about me. We got drunk together all the time, and J didn't mind when I was smoking or drinking marijuana drinks. The thing that made J change his mind and feelings about me was when I saw Jesus, and I was freed from alcoholism and drug use. That's what made him too ashamed to associate with me or love me anymore. When I started sharing that I saw Jesus and believing what He said, reading the Bible and dragging him to church with me. But anyways, that's jumping ahead.

When I looked up at J when he walked in, it wasn't his face there, I saw someone else's face superimposed over his body there that was glowing brightly like the sun – but not harsh – it was a soft light, I didn't have to shield my eyes.

He looked something like the following if you're interested. Note how handsome and majestic He looks, but he shines a lot brighter – with the light coming from within, like the second picture:

"Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread. And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. "Peace be with you," he said." Luke 24:35-36 NLT

I had never seen that persons face before but I instantly knew who it was. He didn't tell me who he was. He didn't need to. He walked in and I saw Him shining bright like the sun with a crown on His head and a Jewish nose and long hair and I just knew who it was. He was smiling at me. A soft, "Surprise!", his smile said. There as so much compassion and love for me in His eyes. I felt like I had always known Him and He had always known me when I saw Him. His presence validated my entire existence. It justified me. If He is who He is and He was there with me and He loves me, then that's what makes me who I am. Not my mistakes or my failures, the fact that He is who He is and He was

there with me for even just that one evening. It gave me the freedom to start again. To live a life free of the burden of my past mistakes. To live a life identified by the fact that He is real, He is literally on the throne of the universe, and He was there in that dingy single bedroom apartment room with me and J. Except only I could see Him.

I felt such awe and reverence, like I was in the presence of a King – He was wearing a golden crown shining like white light, and I remember I just chuckled and laughed to myself and said "But it's You!", "But You're Jesus!" I knew who He was, and He was there, in the room with me. Only I could seem Him in His minds eye. J had no idea what I was seeing.

If you've never read the Bible before, I don't care, in the Bible, someone else saw Jesus in a similar way, where the others around them couldn't see Him. Saul saw Jesus in his minds eye on the Damascus road. Only Saul could see Jesus:

The Damascus Road: Saul Converted (Acts 9:1-9 NKJV)

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ****and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, **and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.** Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It *is* hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." **And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.** Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

So, I felt the weight of His presence and His power and authority ***in the universe,*** He's well known throughout time and space and to other creatures, what the Bible would describe 'heavenly hosts' that I was not aware existed up until this point. Think of the creatures like the cherubim and the seraphim mentioned to be in the Heavens or the presence of God in scripture. There are other creations God has made in the universe.

But anyways, He was who He was and He was right there in front of me in person. I was honored to be in His Kingly presence, so I bowed low to the bed where I was sitting, because I felt like that's the most natural thing I could do in His presence, and the least I could do to show that I recognized who He was and that I was honored to be in His presence. He didn't force me to bow or ask me to bow. I think, deep down He wouldn't have been offended if I didn't. When Jesus was on Earth plenty of people stood before Him and didn't bow, in fact, many people were compelled to mistreat him. He didn't mistreat them or command anyone to bow before Him, even though He knew who exactly who He was and who He would be the entire time.

He didn't say anything, but His eyes spoke volumes, volumes of love and forgiveness and compassion and understanding. He had so much love and compassion for me in His eyes. I understood that He actually knew me and was always with me, and was always there my whole life even when I didn't see Him and didn't know it. I saw that He loved me, and that He felt so much pain to see me in my pain knowing that no one would help, that He went out of His way to do whatever it took to just stop it and save me from my suffering, and He didn't even blame me for anything I had done, He just wanted to save me and put me out of my misery.

"The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me." Psalm 116:5-6 (NIV)

I felt true peace when He was there with me. True security. True love and understanding. Negative emotions were so far removed. I had no feelings of regret, or guilt or shame or condemnation. All of these emotions we're lifted in His presence. That's what He came to take away from me.

I'm happy from the inside out, and from the outside in, I'm firmly formed. You canceled my ticket to hell— that's not my destination!

Now you've got my feet on the life path, all radiant from the shining of your face. Ever since you took my hand, I'm on the right way.

Psalm 16:9-11 MSG

He didn't say "I died for you", to make me feel guilty, the crucifixion is not even something that He mentioned to me in that moment, that is just what it took to end my suffering, and now He was glad that my suffering was now over, "Its okay, stop crying I'm here" is basically what His love in front of me said, "Shh shh, stop crying, it's okay now, everything is going to be okay, I'm here now, It's okay." The calming comfort of a loving Father grasping His scared child in His arms, I lept with joy into them with intense relief and shed a watery tear or two realizing who He was, feeling His peace, and knowing that He saved me and forgave me, and no one could make me feel guilt or shame or judge or condemn me because He was God's Son and He was in the room with me, He loved me, and if He didn't judge me and He's literally King of the Universe, who then on Earth had the right to? I realized that no one could use the guilt and shame of my past mistakes (or sins as the Bible would say) as a weapon to keep me bound and trapped in chains of fear, and to keep me from erasing past mistakes from memory and doing things the right way now. He gave me freedom. I had received a kind of presidential pardon and justification, I was in the same room as the resurrected Jesus I think. That alone just completely changed everything. Talk about a game changer. This one was free and undeserved, and an eternal one at that.

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." 2 Corinthians 3:17 ESV

He was smiling at me, and His compassionate, understanding, fatherly smile said, "You tried it your way right? Now are you ready to do things my way?", with a twinkle of light and compassion in His eyes.

I felt a love and a grace so deep that I thought no one could've ever got that from the Bible, and that all the religious people really didn't get it, until I read the Bible for myself after seeing seeing who I saw, and I realized that's exactly what the Bible had been saying the whole time about Jesus, and love and how all the religious people that didn't know His love didn't get it at all, which is kind of mind blowing to me at least. I just didn't know what it said.

"So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." 1 John 4:16

"Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." 1 John 4:8

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"How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!" Psalm 36:7

"For your faithful love is as high as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches the clouds." Psalm 57:10 (CSB)

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people" Titus 2:11 (ESV)

Following

Over time following this, I started to become a completely different person. I started listening and watching sermons out of interest, and reading my new Bible, and going to church and trying to convince J to come with me.

I also started feeling really uncomfortable whenever I slept in the same bed or room as J, he'd reach for me and I would pull away, not because of anything He would've done to me, he would never ever hurt me in a million years, but because I started to feel like it wasn't right with God. I just had this overarching conviction or deep desire to not continue living in sin in that way, but it was a tough decision, because every desire of mine to live in sin and fornication was waning but I was still living there. And my body wanted to sleep with J every moment of every night as we had been doing for about a year, so I had to make a tough decision and just decide to ignore and not satisfy the passionate desires of my flesh.

So I started to sleep on the couch or in the other room. I thought God wanted me to stay with J and fix him and love him as my husband because I knew God was all about love now, but the pastors I talked to straightened me out letting me know that sleeping with someone unfortunately does not make them your husband. And J had made it clear that he didn't want to marry me, especially now that in his eyes I was just a religious crackpot who was mentally ill because I say that I saw Jesus. Anyways, this was just a temporary cohabitative situationship. As someone who didn't believe in God before, this didn't bother me. Just live with J and sleep with him, even have kids with J, I thought a marriage certificate and a ceremony wasn't that necessary to live like we were married. So it really did break my heart, because before I had hope that if I stayed with him we would eventually get married, and I still wanted him and our relationship, but I just didn't want the sin anymore. I wanted

God more.

Sleeping with him just made it pre-marital sex, which is called fornication which is classified as sexual immorality in the Bible, and it is a sin. In other words, it is something that ultimately brings unnecessary pain and heartbreak to our souls when we do it.

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." Hebrews 13:4 (ESV)

"Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people." Ephesians 5:3 (NLT)

"But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." Revelation 21:8 (ESV)

This can sound harsh, but notice it doesn't say no sex, it says, if it's sex, it's for life, which is what I had wanted at the start. J didn't want to marry me now that I was a believer and now that I was so pushy about him going to church and now that I was always trying to change him and I viewed him as flawed in his own words. I wasn't the same woman who had moved in with him. I had changed in a very drastic way, and this wasn't in the contract. If J believed me when I told him what I saw and that it was real, believed in Jesus and the Bible and got baptized with me, I would have not had a problem marrying J. He would still be my first choice. I just knew if we had completely different worldviews and purposes and meanings in life the marriage would have been difficult. One night, when we were sleeping in the same bed, I had a nightmare that J proposed. You may expect that any woman who dreams of their boyfriend proposing would be happy, gloriously happy! In the dream, it was dark out, nighttime and there was a hurricane blowing all around us. J had his signature beige jacket and beat up shoes and dry dandruff peppered blond brownish hair, he took a knee and he presented a ring. Except I started to panic, like I couldn't breathe and I felt like I was having a heart attack. I felt like I was making the greatest mistake of my life and I got backed into a corner and I had no way out. At this point we did things like listen to the book of Ecclesiastes together and watched Christian movies on PureFlix together and watched sermons together. But J would ask to change the channel then later that same night he would reach over to me at night and I was say no. I remember at one point I was crying deliriously, and I asked him to pray with me, because I sensed a

coming judgement and I felt like we needed to beg for mercy from God because we we're living in sin before Him. I sensed the weight of the sin. J prayed with me for a bit. He prayed silently, but I felt unsettled, like he was just going through the motions to do whatever to keep me happy, not because he believed. Eventually, regrettably after I fight, I moved back in with my parents. Whenever we did talk or meet up I ended up sleeping with him again, so in the end we just stopped talking.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, I did gain enough self-control to learn how to resist the temptation to sleep with people who were not my husband. In any case, to enter a marriage with a non believer, would be what the Bible calls being unequally yoked. All in all, the Bible says don't do it because the unbelieving spouse will convince you overtime to abandon your faith or join theirs, or because the tension in the relationship and world views and priorities will ultimately lead you in different directions and approaches in life, tearing the relationship apart.

Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 (NLT)

Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction? Amos 3:3 (NLT)

Next, I made a declaration of my faith and symbolized the change that happened within me in public by becoming baptized in my mum's home congregation in Canada, and this was quite literally the happiest day of my life till this point, and it was a testimony to the whole church because they had really seen a big change in me. It also renewed hope for their friends and family members who also didn't believe and maybe were lost because of this new flame of renewed hope and affirmation that God really does still save in miraculous ways. More than anything, it was an answered prayer for my mum. All those years of diligent praying and desperately crying out to God to save my life, and man, did He answer! I was the prodigal daughter living in sin far away from home, and Jesus sent me back home answering my moms prayers.

I invited J to my baptism at my mums church but he didn't come, and I felt God's presence again so strongly and freshly, I had a completely fresh blank new slate on life, I was free! I could start again! I got what I was looking for all along, the redeeming love. I had found it given freely and without restraint in one of the most unlikeliest places to a young girl living in the 21st century, I found it

Jesus.

It sounds incredulous, but I know that it's true. I know that this sounds like religious crackpot nonsense. Except I saw it and it's true. It seems so impossible yet it just simply is without explanation. I now know there's nothing impossible for God, and it sounds like I'm a totally changed person, because I totally am. It's one of those things that many people just sometimes don't believe unless they see it themselves.

"Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." John 3:3 (NLT)

Jesus appears to (sometimes called 'Doubting') Thomas Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.' A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' (John 20:24-29 NIV)

That was me, I was a doubting Thomas, and now I saw what I saw and I'm telling you. So please believe me, but I understand why you might find it hard to believe. If not me, read the Bible and believe Jesus, what He said, that He lives today, and that He's coming back to take true believers to where He is forever, at some point in the future, that I eagerly hope and pray for.

As a result, a lot of the negative addictions and cycles in my life and the desires to continue in them we're broken overtime. Overtime I realized they we're bad for me, and I didn't have a reason to do them anymore. I realized it was more self harm than anything. And the redeeming love of God have me a license of forgiveness so that I felt free to stop. I don't drink anymore, I don't smoke weed anymore, I have not watched porn and I don't sleep with men I've never met anymore. In terms of faith, I used to identify as an atheist existentialistic nihilist since I was 13-ish, and now I found a whole lot more than anything I thought I could ever find, better than anything I could have ever wanted in one singular moment. Better than a million dollars, better than a boyfriend, better than

life itself. I found Jesus and the literal way to immortality. Talk about a plot twist. I did not see that coming in the plot of my life. Someone did. God did. God always knew in advance. Jesus has been alive all those 2000 years or so since His death, I think He will be alive a lot longer after that as well.

So I renewed my commitment of celibacy 'till marriage, 'till death or 'till Jesus return. I'm more forgiving, I'm more loving, I'm more understanding, I have way more self-control, I have a hope to pick me up and a comfort to rely on when I'm down and divine direction and wisdom to go back to when I feel aimless and I need guidance. All because I came to a point so low in my life, after I had exhausted every other option, I called on Him. All because when I called to Him He came to the rescue. I want you to know that you can have this too, it's free gift to all who ask for it.

"Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 NLT

"Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life." Revelation 22:17 NLT

You can call on Him too. I have deep assurance and hope and security in immortal life and His return one day because I saw Him, it's a kind of assurance that always stays deep within me in the midst of distress.

"God rescued me from the grave, and now my life is filled with light." Job 33:28 (NLT)

I wrote this to tell you that just asking God for help can do what all the psychologists, well-meaning family members, motivational self-help journals, medications, drugs, alcohol, sex, women, and men combined could ever do in a lifetime for the fixing of your soul in one moment, and for free. Why not call on Him? What do you have to lose? You might lose an opportunity to have something far above anything you we're ever looking for or expected in your life.

I don't believe in Jesus or the Bible because a Pastor preached it to me, because I was raised a Christian, because someone told me to, or because I was convinced or taught it by a person. I was

minding my own business and I saw Jesus, alive and well, standing before me shining like the sun exactly like the Bible says while I was probably still a professing atheist against the God of the Bible at that moment. I believe in the Bible because I saw Jesus, and it corroborates with everything I saw. It all checks out. It explains everything crystal clear. If you're like me in the past or J, and you have a problem with blind faith, this is not a blind faith. It's not really even faith, because faith is defined as "The assent of the mind to the truth of a proposition or statement for which there is not complete evidence" by the The Century Dictionary. I don't know who would argue that I did not have conclusive evidence, therefore this by definition is not faith. It's just reality or fact.

Just like He showed Paul, Moses, Hagar, the disciples, Mary Magdalene and the women at the tomb, Sarah and Abraham. He hasn't changed how He does things. He's still the same God. After that, the Bible was perfectly authenticated to me as a historically accurate and relevant text. A never ending story penned by God, including me.

Never as a show of religion, but out of a realized need, you can communicate with God and ask Him to come into your life and become real to you, or you can just read these following Bible verses.

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mark 11:24 ESV

Keep asking and calling on Him genuinely like you actually need Him until you get the answer you're looking for or you get a response or some kind of guidance.

Here are some helpful scriptures:

If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved. (Romans 10:9-13 NLT)

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They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." (Acts 16:31 NLT)

""For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. "There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son." (John 3:16-18)

"For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners." Mathew 10:13 (NLT)

"Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."" (John 20:29 NLT)