Kathie's Testimony



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By Kathie Smith

Hello. My name is Kathie and I would like to share with you a story of true friendship. Funny thing is that until I had this friendship, I never knew the magnitude of what I had been missing before. This friendship relationship is so significant that it will last forever, never to be parted by physical death but lasting forever into eternity.

I had passed by this new friend of mine when I was in church every Saturday night at mass. I would find out later on that he was always eager to meet me, but I just wasn't given the opportunity to meet him. We always seemed to simply pass by each other and never really truly had the chance to get to know each other personally.

I would pass by him when I would see a person helping another person in need. I would watch him work through the person assisting the other person but again, never was given the opportunity to meet him as I casually just observed from a distance.

I would pass by him when I would hear the kind words being said by a person trying to encourage and lift me up. Once again, I never recognized that it was his voice speaking but rather just heard the voice of the person speaking to me.

I would pass by him when I heard his words preached in the gospel readings during mass. His words were simply words on a page. I never heard His voice talking to me but rather I simply listened to the mere words being spoken.

How did I finally meet this friend of mine, Jesus Christ? Sit back, relax and I will tell you the story of how my relationship with Jesus Christ began.

I was raised by two loving parents who along with five other siblings were brought up in the Roman Catholic Church. We went to church every Sunday and Holy Day, received communion, confessed our sins in confession and were confirmed in the Church. I had an awesome childhood. Our family was very close. My parents were always the types of people who would do anything for us and for others. We all respected them as children and trusted in the belief system that they instilled in us.

After finishing college and working for a few years, I married a Catholic guy from a local town near our hometown. We were blessed with three wonderful children. We continued our Catholic faith by faithfully attending the Catholic Church and by enrolling our children in the local Catholic school. After living nine years at a thirty minute distance from my parents, we decided to buy property from my grandmother and build a home out in the country to be

nearer my family. It was beautiful out in the country and meant a great deal to me to be close to my parents and to allow our kids to grow up with their grandparents living right down the road from them. Everything should have been perfect, right?

Well, the year was 1999. Y2K. People were running around telling others that doom and gloom was lurking at the strike of midnight on December 31, 1999. Stories were circulating that electricity and phone service could cease and that food shortages could occur. I started to dwell on the what-ifs of the whole Y2K thing. I started to doubt our safety and became very scared for what the future would hold. Having just moved into our new house, I started to miss all of our old friends, our old neighbors, our old school and just all of the usual things that I had grown accustomed to at our old home. Deeply troubled over all of these things, I plunged into a state of depression. Any of you who have ever been through this will understand that it is a very difficult time. I was sad and simply could not tell anyone why it was that I was sad. What was I missing in my life? I had everything – a good job, a wonderful husband and family and a beautiful new home. Why should I be in such a state of sadness? I had never experienced anything like that before.

Remember that friend that I had mentioned? Well, you see the friend that I had been passing by my whole entire life, was calling me. He was calling so loudly this time that I finally heard him. My brother emailed me about this wonderful thing that had happened to him. He had found an Internet site addressing salvation through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. He sent me a simple prayer to pray asking Jesus to start a friendship with me. Being so desperate to dig myself out of the depression that I had been feeling, I humbled myself and cried out to God. I knew that there wasn't anything that I could do on my own to save myself and I asked God to do it for me.

The next day I woke up and I felt different than I did the day before. My

depression was gone. I was happy again. It was simply incredible. To this day I can't even remember what it was like to be in that state of mind, but I am just thankful to the Lord for what he had done for me.

I met the Lord Jesus for the first time in my whole entire life. I could feel his warmth inside of me and the friend that I had been passing over all of these years was finally with me.

I had been taught to pray to God ever since I was a little girl. I prayed every day but never felt any response back when I prayed. Now, I finally understand the presence of the living God in my prayers. He had become my friend, my forever and eternal friend.

Are you missing that one true friendship that I had been missing? Maybe you are doing all of the right things as I had done, attending church every week, saying your prayers, trying to obey the ten commandments, and simply attempting to be a good person but you are missing something. Maybe you are attending church simply because it makes you feel good inside because you took the time to go to church. That's how I used to feel. My husband and I used to go to church on Saturday night so we could "get it out of the way" for the weekend. It was merely an obligation that we needed to fulfill every week like any other item on our "To Do" list.

Are you praying just because you were taught that that's what you are supposed to do? We always said the "Catholic Grace" before each and every meal. "Bless us O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive, from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen." I said that prayer so fast and without any meaning for so many years before meals. As I child, I never understood what "thy bounty" meant. It was just merely words spoken, done under obligation before we were to receive any food. Sadly enough, I continued this tradition into our own immediate family and was teaching them

to pray out of obligation rather than giving honor to the Lord. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:7 "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words." Are you praying out of simply an obligation to pray or are you truly talking to the Lord in open communication?

We were taught that we were obligated to attend church, obligated to say our prayers and obligated to be the best person that we could be. What is an obligation? Webster defines an obligation as "something that binds one to a course of action; a duty; an indebtedness". Isn't it true then that after the obligation is complete i.e. course of action completed or duty performed that you have satisfied the debt and do not need to do anything further? That's exactly how I felt. All I had to do was: attend church on Sundays and "Holy Days of Obligation", say my prayers and simply be the best person that I could be. By doing these things, I was satisfying the requirements and did need to do anything further.

I learned that if I performed the things that I had been told were religious obligations, that I would be secure in the eyes of the Lord and be in heaven forever. The problem was, how much was enough in the eyes of the Lord? Should I attend church more than I had been? Maybe I should have been attending daily mass. Maybe I needed to say more prayers. Maybe I needed to try and do more good things. Where would I draw the line? When would I do enough?

On that day in 1999, our Lord rescued me from the vicious cycle of "how much was enough?" My friend, our Lord Jesus Christ had already done everything that needed to be done for me already. 1 John 4:14 "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world." Jesus spoke his last words in John 19:30 "It is finished." The Father sent Jesus to save us from being eternally separated from Him. He endured the pain and

bore our sins when he hung on the cross. He completed the obligation that the Father had sent him to do – to bear the sins of all mankind on the cross. When he completed that, his work was complete. All of the things that I had been doing in my "vicious cycle" did not lead me to my forever friend; but, rather lead me further away from him because I thought that I was eternally secure.

How can you be eternally secure? What does he ask of us to do? Jesus tells us in John 3:3, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." John 3:6, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." We are born from our parent's flesh into a body made of flesh. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives as a living spirit inside of us when we ask the Lord to come into our lives." We are born once physically. We are born again when we are born spiritually, i.e. when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Was I born again by attending church every Sunday, praying prayers and attempting to do good things? All I had gained my whole entire life was a "good feeling" inside from all of the things that I had done. I was spiritually dead. I did not have the Holy Spirit inside of me. How can you become born again and receive God's gift of the Holy Spirit?

1. 1.Recognize that you are a sinner. Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
2. 2.Admit that no matter how many times you go to church, how many prayers you pray or how many good things you do that it will not be enough in the eyes of the Lord. Romans 3:10 "There is no one righteous, not even one."
3. 3.Believe that the Lord Jesus was sent down from heaven by the Father, lived a perfect life, bore all of your sins on the cross, died and rose again on the third day. 1 Corinthians 15:3 "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

4. 4.Confess your belief in what Jesus did for you on the cross. Trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. Romans 10:9-10 "That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

Are you being led astray into thinking that being a member of a church will guarantee your ticket into heaven? If you agree with the spiritual truths that I have presented, I now ask you to pray a very simple prayer. This is the prayer that my brother gave me, a very simple prayer that gave me my eternal and forever friend, Jesus Christ. Here is the prayer:

> God, I am a sinner. There is nothing that I can do on my own to make it to heaven. God, I accept the free offer that you make to me: Jesus' death on the cross for my sins. You sent your only Son Jesus down to Earth and he died as a substitute for our sins on the cross and then he rose from the dead and I know that he is going to return in glory. I accept this free offer; I want to be with you forever. I ask you to send the Holy Spirit to me. I open up my heart now to the Holy Spirit and welcome Him into my being. As I breathe in I ask the Holy Spirit to come into me and I ask the Holy Spirit to graciously make His presence known to me. I know that there is no amount of good deeds or clean living that could ever make me suitable for entrance into heaven. It is only your sacrifice that makes it possible. I give my life over to you. I ask you to forgive my sins and to guide me so that I can do what you want me to do on Earth. I am here for you now and ready to do your will and accept help from you. I know that through you, anything is possible. You are the most holy, the living God, the one that was, the one that is, and the one that will be. Amen.