

Odette's Christian Walk

I was raised in a Christian household by the direction of my father who was a spiritual warrior as well as a serious alcoholic. Needless to say, my family life was very dysfunctional. We spent many late nights being emotionally tormented with occasional physical abuse towards my mother, which would force us to leave home in the middle of the night for refuge. Adversely, we also spent numerous nights attending church conferences, bible study classes and other church events. This made me realize that we were living a double life. I prayed heavily as a child that my dad would stop drinking and we'd all be happy. But at age of fifteen I simply did not have faith to pray anymore on the matter. By then my parents had separated. Finally we had peace. However, we endured serious financial hardships growing up, as my mom raised my siblings and me as a single mom. That was difficult, but God always provided for us abundantly which confirmed my faith in him. At the age of sixteen I gave my life to Christ; however, I was not prepared to walk the righteous path then.

A year later I left my home to attend college in Canada. As a college student, I lost sight of everything and got involved with heavy drinking and partying. I was on academic probation in second year and almost lost my financial aid as a result. With my dad's support, I was able to turn this around completely, as he encouraged me to push harder which I did, because I always wanted to please him. In my senior year, after a long party weekend, a friend of mine had a demonic possession. This was something I had only seen on TV and nothing prepared me to deal with it that night. As the night ended, so did the fun. The result, during this, my senior year, was that I had become spiritually awakened again.

After returning home from college in 2005, I continued living a sinful life of drinking, partying and sex. However, as the result of an emotional break-up with my boyfriend at the time, I re-committed myself to Christ and found perfect peace in His loving arms. No longer did I hold on to hurtful feelings, but instead truly felt a sense of release once I began to develop a stronger relationship with Christ.

A result of my parents' separation was that all of us were also separated spiritually. Thus I started church shopping, with the hope to find a church family in the process. During this time, God was very abundant in my day-to-day life, providing me with a great career at the time, and a scholarship to pursue my Masters in Spain.

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After returning back home from Spain in 2010, my dad and I had a horrible fight. I was emotionally drained from dealing with an alcoholic my whole life, and lost all tolerance. I decided to write my dad a letter, letting him know that I no longer wanted him in my life, if he decided to continue his destructive path of alcohol and drugs. This led my dad to finally seek help for his alcohol addiction in which he's now been sober for 2 years. My dad publicly apologized to my sister and me, in front of a large group of other alcoholics in his AA program. Our stories were real and our memories were painful, most of which my dad could not even remember. This was the start of the healing process for my family in which my relationship with my dad now is awesome, and he's been an amazing spiritual and emotional advisor to me and many others.

In 2011, I recommitted my life to Christ, but struggled to remain a devout Christian, as I would occasionally swear and drink amongst friends and family. As I continued to fall short as a Christian, I always kept coming back to church, 'hungry' to be spiritually filled again and again. I knew at that time, that attending Church wasn't enough for me and I needed a lot more to fill me up. This led me to join a small group at Church that eventually became my spiritual family and kept me grounded in my spiritual walk. The small group also was responsible for organizing local missionary outreaches and an international outreach into Europe through OM. Finally, I felt 'whole' and content in my Christian walk and no longer was I seeking for something more.

I refer to Ecclesiastes 3:11.

"He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end."

This scripture is really my testimony. Never should we lose faith or sight of God's work in our lives. He is always there, even when we abandon or disappoint him. God has a plan for all of us, most of which includes trials and tribulations. I'm happy I endured these trials growing up, because now I'm a focused, driven, strong, God-fearing woman with a purpose to motivate and encourage others and to lead and persuade others to come to Christ.

This is my testimony. I would be happy to elaborate over a discussion. Feel free to email me at odettecarey@hotmail.com.

"I was born again twice!"

by Mary Seychell

My story goes back to December 9th, 1956. It is a date that is etched into my brain. Here's what happened. Together with my boyfriend (now my husband), my aunt and her 3 children, I went on a stroll along the sea cliffs, 'tal- Munxar', limits of St. Thomas' Bay. As we passed along the path where at one place it came very close to the edge, the rock cracked and the piece I was walking on broke away, causing me to fall almost 40 meters down to the rocky coast below. I should have been dead, but miraculously I survived with only minor injuries. Friends and family were amazed! Several told me that I was "born again" and in a sense I was - at least physically.

Several years passed and in the autumn of 1966 my husband had a friend called Ray, who use to come home with him. They would stay up for hours, talking together till late into the night about religious matters. I can't say that I followed them in everything, but this friend's faith amazed me, especially when he used to say that Christ Jesus was his personal Savior. I found myself yearning to have such an experience as Ray had.

One night, in the Spring of 1967, I had the Bible before me as Ray and my husband were reading from the Gospel of John. By chance I read another chapter which turned out to be Jeremiah 29. Verse 13 said, "*and you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*" It must have been the Holy Spirit who spoke to my heart because since I was seeking, the Lord found me right then and there! This was, as our friend Ray explained, the new birth that Jesus spoke about in John's Gospel (John 3:3-8). Something really changed within me and I felt very happy.

From then on I continued to read the Bible which now to me was more meaningful than ever before. In obedience I put away one by one the traditions and customs of the past that didn't agree with the Bible. I cannot say that it was easy, especially as our parents and friends could not understand what had happened to us. However, the Lord remained faithful and proved Himself to me over and over again. For sure I was "born again" (spiritually) and it is now more than 40 years ago.

How happy I am that truly I found the Lord who laid down His life for me. And how happy I am that the Lord found me, a sinner that needed Him so desperately!

One promise I still hang on to and claim, is the one where it says in the book of Acts, "*You will be saved and your house.*" God has already started doing that.

From the depth of my heart I thank God that our son, James, and his family have made the same decision. They sought the Lord and they found Him also. They made Jesus their Savior and desire to follow Him. My prayer continues for our other 3 children and grandchildren.

Allow me to close by thanking the Lord for His goodness. It is a blessing now to see that many other Maltese have become Christians, asking Jesus Christ into their lives and thus

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also being born again. These new "born again" believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ make up several Christian fellowships on Malta. What a change as compared to some years back, when just a few Maltese and some foreigners came together. It is my prayer that many, like me, will truly seek the Lord, and be born again - born into God's family and be children of God. May you be one of them - that truly is my prayer! To God be the glory!

In Jesus' loving grace,

Mary Seychell, a born again believer and follower of Jesus Christ

If somehow you want to respond or desire to talk more about how to be born again, then just contact me. My mob. number is +356-79305008

From being a person of the world, I became a person of the Word.

A testimony of Mary Bartolo - her and her family's amazing experiences with God.

My husband and I lived a very worldly lifestyle. Here's how I would describe it. Between the two of us, really the only difference was that Mario did all the bad stuff outside of the house and I did them in the house. He would go out with other women, drink, swear a lot, go to wild parties and just live a very hyper active life. He says of himself, "I was a naughty boy!" Me, I stayed home, but basically did a lot of the same things. What Mario was doing outside, I did inside. Probably because of being depressed, I didn't want to go with him. Instead, I drank, smoked and cleaned the house. There really wasn't a moment that I could stop doing those things. Each day I would smoke 80 cigarets, take speed 3 times and my drinking never stopped.

Besides being depressed, I was very nervous. Altogether it meant that I wasn't very good with the children. In anger I would slap them. Bad things would happen, like the time when I broke a broomstick on the back of Charlene, my daughter. When I was angry with the boys, I would bite them. One time I hit Savior, my son, so hard with a belt, that he needed stitches. The kids ended up calling me "Hitler" or "the Hulk." My crazy solution to my depression was to clean everything and do that the whole day. I cleaned from Monday to Sunday. In restlessness I would get up at 1 a.m. to clean and in those dark, nightly hours. In the mean time I would smoke 15 cigarets.

Then, one day Mario started going somewhere. I didn't know what it was, but somehow I could see that he was changing because of it. I didn't ask him where he was going, but the changes were so good, that I said, "Keep on going there." I kept on doing the bad things, but Mario didn't do them any more. He even stopped drinking and going to parties. For sure I could see the change in my husband and in a few weeks time he also calmed down. So where was he going and how did he change? Those were questions in my mind. Well, I discovered that he was now going to some evangelical church where he was learning from the Bible about Jesus. He said that Jesus Christ was changing him and in 1987 he gave his life to Christ and made Him his Savior. It all really amazed me!

Now being a true Christian, Mario started to read a verse from the Bible before we would go to sleep. Those verses from the Bible, God's Word, started to touch me. One time he read 1Peter 3:3&4. It said, "Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God." (NIV)

It struck me so hard, that I said, "That verse is for me!" That is the verse that helped me come to faith in Jesus Christ. Now things started to change in my heart also and I wanted to go to church and learn more about the One who can change us. So I asked Mario, "If I come to the church, will they accept me?" I said that because I was of the world and I looked like a "hooker." He said that it was no problem. So I came with my shorts and was planning to go straight to the sea as I always did on Sundays. That was 9 months after Mario had come to Christ. In looking back now, I realize that I had given him a very hard time during those 9 months.

In church, as I heard the message, I asked Mario, "Did you tell that preacher about me?" I really thought Mario had talked because the preaching was speaking right into my heart and seemed to even be speaking about me. It all was all exactly for me! No, Mario had not talked about me and no one even knew I was coming. So it was clear that God was speaking to my heart. Also I saw the love of "the people of the Word" and the difference between them and "the people of the world." As God touched my heart, all I could do was to give my life to Jesus and make Him also my Savior. **So that Sunday my life was changed. I no more was a child of the world, but a child of God.** Hallelujah! That was 1988 - a life changing year. **From being a person of the world, I became a person of the Word.** I realize now that I first belonged to Satan, the devil, but now I belong to Jesus, the Savior.

The result was that my whole life began to change. One of the first things God did was to take the depression away. PTL! Then, even outwardly everything began to change. One by one, God took away my bad habits. By God's grace I quite smoking. Within 2 years I had quit everything. At different moments, when I was ready, God helped me in stopping a bad habit in a day. One day it was drinking and another day it was massive smoking. The compulsive

cleaning God took away from me and I started to be a good wife and mother. Now, with Jesus in my life, I am a loving mom and grand-mom. Daily I help to take care of my children's children.

Yes, my Lord Jesus changed me. Faith in Him and His Word, the Bible, changed me completely - everything changed! There was a period after I came to know the Lord that I would daily read Joshua 24:15. *"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* It was the start of living out of the Word of God, and that meant that from here on out, me and my house would serve the Lord. What an honor and joy and what a change!

So how did it go after that initial change? Two years after I'd given my life to the Lord, I had a problem with the circulation of the blood in my leg. My brother had had the same thing and his leg needed to be amputated. So I thought the same is going to happen to me. However, here's what the doctor said: "If you wouldn't have quit smoking, you would have lost your leg a long time ago." Being faced with this giant problem, I went to church for intercession. When I was prayed over, I felt warmth come up my leg. Then, when I went to the surgeon and they took ultrasound, he said, "Your leg is okay!" So praise God, He had healed my leg. From then on my leg has been good and it is still here as part of my body.

Another time, while the children and I were swimming, our son, Savior, had a major accident. We hadn't been there very long when his brother came running up to me to say, "Savior jumped and landed on a rock." The ambulance came and took him away. At the hospital he had about 125 stitches in his head. When I got to see him, I found him all bandaged up with the middle of his head kind of caved in like there was an empty space. It was very shocking. However, the professor came in with great amazement and said, "I can't believe that nothing really bad happened to him. Usually when someone has had an accident like that, they either are dead or completely paralyzed and in a wheelchair. But your son is going to be okay!" So I thanked God and praised Him for His protection over my son. God did according to his name, "Savior", by saving him.

Our other son, Adrian, also had a horrible accident in 2002. With his motorcycle he slammed into a bus and then slid right underneath, being trapped under the bus with many bones broken in his leg and pelvis. For more than a week he was in ITU and then for a whole month he was in the hospital for operations. In the mean time our fellow Christians joined in prayer with us for Adrian's healing. A lot of prayers were sent up to the Lord - we were fighting the battle in faith for our son, asking God for a miracle. The doctors told him, "You are not going to walk and play rugby any more." However, again God did a miracle in our family as Adrian is walking and he did play rugby again! Now he's okay! Praise the Lord. He works with his dad in construction, often carrying heavy stones.

Another miracle is the change in our daughter's life, when she came to the Lord again. When she was young, she came to the church services. But when she was 15 she went into the world and, like our old life, drank a lot. However, in faith we knew that when she finds the right man, she would come back to the Lord. Well, the Lord did just that. So when she met her mate, she knew that she had to now take a stand for what she knows is the truth and in the Lord Jesus she was going to live the true Christian life. Therefore she told her boy friend that she was a "born again Christian" and wanted to be married in an evangelical church where the Word is preached and lived out. One thing of course led to another. Because, when you want to be married in a Christian church, you have to be a Christian. That is what she made sure she was. She gave her life to the Lord and stopped with all the bad stuff such as drinking. Last year in the fall she was baptized, and this year she gave her testimony. Her now husband is also eager to come to the fellowship.

Allow me to close with my life verse which is 1Pet. 5:7. *"Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."*

If you want to know more, please contact 357-79797973 or <openhand@live2give.net>

My purpose of life

By Melanie Haller

Dear Reader,

With the following sentences I want to tell you about the most important thing in my life, why and how I got there and my reason for sharing this with you.

I grew up in Austria in a Christian home. In my childhood I heard a lot about God and the Bible, and I also knew that I have to give my life to Jesus Christ to receive eternal life and salvation. When I was 4 years old, I prayed to God that He would take control over my life and that I want Him to come into my heart. It might sound strange or unbelievable, but I do remember this moment unto now as if it was yesterday.

If you think back to your own childhood you may consent with me that faith as a child is a different thing. As a child you believe what your parents or others in charge tell you without doubting any of it. However, as I grew older, my faith became less and less important. Some of the most important things for me were to be accepted by people, to look good, to have a lot of fun and enjoy life. Thus I started going out with my friends every weekend, living a common teenage lifestyle. During this time I still went to church on Sunday mornings with my parents because I didn't want to disappoint them and I knew it meant a lot to them. Trying to act like everything was okay, I felt more and more unsatisfied. I started to become very angry and aggressive about the smallest issues; I was torn apart on the inside, living two lives at the same time.

Inevitably I reached the point where I had to make a decision, either for the one, or for the other. Unto now I thought deciding for Jesus would mean to live a boring life, ruled by a lot of restrictions and limitations and no fun! But then I got to know some young Christians who proved differently. They talked about Jesus in another way than I was used to, full of joy and passion.

With a new motivation I started to search for God, trying to find out more about Him, so that I would be able to decide. As I started to pray again, to read God's Word and to spend time with other believers, I gave God one part of my life after another. It was a process of finding my way back to where I belong and to experience the love God has for me. Digging deeper into God's Word I found that the promises He gave us are also true today.

In August 2011, I committed my life to Christ by getting baptized. On that day God changed something in my heart. Suddenly a peace came over me which I never experienced before. I realized that throwing everything onto Jesus meant to gain so much more than I ever had before. After that God changed my life. He answered my prayers very practically and detailed.

When I look back on the last two years of my life, I see that those were the best years of my life so far. Not because nothing bad happened, but because I knew that I am in God's hands. Now I have this peace and joy in my heart and the security that my decision was the right one.

Furthermore, I experienced that being a Christian doesn't mean to go to church, to read the Bible or to pray (though those things are part of my Christian life), but without surrendering myself to Jesus all these things are in vain.

The reason for sharing this with you, is that I want you to discover the fullness of life like I did. I found my purpose in Jesus Christ. The faith in Him gives me strength and joy, helps me through tough situations and comforts me. It gives me a new and better perspective of life.

If you became curious and you want to find out for yourself what it really means to be a Christian, just start reading the Bible. This is what God says in His Word:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "**plans to prosper you** and not to harm you, **plans to give you hope and a future**. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me, **when you seek me with all your heart I will be found by you,**" declares the Lord. **Jeremiah 29:11-14a (NIV Bible)**

In addition, I'd love to help you. So if you need any help to get started, feel free to contact me via email. [mel_haller@hotmail.com]

Be blessed,

Melanie