

My Encounter with God (personal testimony)

I am blessed to be part of a large family. My parents had seven children, and I am the youngest of all. Holy Spirit came into my heart when I was around eight years old. But when I was 11, I started becoming rebellious, and I wanted to go on my own like a prodigal son. I wrestled with God just like Jacob and prevailed. God let me go my way, but it was a living hell from then on.

I indeed became a prodigal son, trying to indulge in worldly pleasures of the lust of the flesh, the lust of my eyes, and pride of life. I was drifting just like that person not knowing where I was heading? I could not answer life's fundamental questions,

- Who am I?
- What am I doing here on earth?
- What is the purpose of my life?

Nothing made any sense at all. Any "God talk" sounded foolish to me. I had absolutely no aim or goal. I finished my Bachelor of Arts, and a diploma in Business, and came to the USA for my MBA program.

During that confused period of my life, I was going to the University of Baltimore and sharing a room with a college buddy who was a faithful church attendant. Now and then he would nudge me to come for "international students Bible study" on Saturdays. Honestly, the only reason I went there was because there were some cute Korean, Japanese, Chinese girls (no Indian girls at that time) and I wondered if I could pick one of them for a date! And in those Bible studies, I would talk a lot to impress as though I knew the Bible inside out, but honestly, I did not know anything.

One day, I was sitting in my room and getting drunk as usual. At that time my eyes just gazed at a corner stool. There was a red object on top of it. I kept staring at that object and realized that it was the Bible my mother had given me. I never cared to read that Bible, and it was just collecting dust. Suddenly I became very curious.

- Why are there so many religions, and which one is right?
- Why are there so many denominations? They all seem to believe in the same Jesus, but why could they get along?

Then I started questioning myself - How can I talk about a religion which I have never read or studied?

I decided to sit and read the whole Bible. Not only the Bible, but I wanted to read all the other major religious Scriptures also - the Hindu scriptures, the Buddhist scriptures, and the Islamic Scriptures. I wanted to give equal opportunity for all religions, and then I planned to arrive at a conclusion about my faith.

I decided to start with the last book of the Bible, Revelation. You know why? It seemed to have a lot of dungeons and dragons characters. Yes, just like any young person, I was addicted to that kind of dungeons and dragons video games in those days, and I thought that it would be fun to start with that book. I came to the third chapter of Revelation 3:15-22!

Revelation 3:15-22

15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

I thought that it is cool to be not too spiritual nor too indifferent toward spirituality. But God detested such a lukewarm position, and He warned me that He would spit me out!

16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

17 Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, (I realized that it is not about worldly fame, power, glory, and riches, but it is all about spiritual riches, and only God can provide that.)

18. I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

Verse 19 and 20 made me realize that My Jesus loves me and He wants me back again!

19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

I did repent and opened the door of my heart to Jesus Christ.

It is this love of God that melted me. I JUST wanted this loving Jesus for GOOD!

I crumbled and fell down on my knees and surrendered. After that, I became so hungry for the Word of God. I spent anywhere from 4 to 10 hours every day reading the whole New Testament first, and then the entire Old Testament. I read the whole Bible 3 times in different translations within a short span of time. I was that hungry! Holy Spirit clearly taught me that I must take baptism only after I repent of my sins and receive Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, who died for my sins and rose again for my justification.

But before baptism I wanted to make sure that Jesus is the only Way, the Truth, and Life, no one comes to the Father but through Jesus Christ. I read all the other Religious Scriptures (Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic Scriptures) to see if there is any truth. I did not find it! Bible told me an entirely different story compared to any other religion. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down from heaven to offer Himself for our sins on the cross and to save us from our penalties. He paid it all for us. He brought salvation to humanity by His grace and not by our filthy works. Anyone who believes in Him and follows will have eternal life.

I obeyed God's Word and took baptism by immersion. I started connecting with the Holy Spirit, and He opened my spiritual eyes to understand the Scripture. He nudged me to go to a seminary. But I was not sure if God indeed wanted me to go to the seminary or not. I pleaded with God for a definite confirmation. That night around 5 am I had a dream. I was sitting in a small house with few believers. A lady was playing the key board very melodiously, and softly. As I was listening to that music, someone was authoritatively whispering in my ears, "**Second Timothy, Second Timothy**". I got up from my sleep.

That authoritative voice kept ringing in my ears, mentioning that book again, Second Timothy. I opened my Bible and went to that book. The fourth chapter came first, and it was a clear charge for the ministry.

2 Timothy 4:1-5

- 1 solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:*
- 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.*
- 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,*
- 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*
- 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

Then I read the whole book.

2 Timothy 2:15 gave me a crystal clear reason for going to a good seminary!

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

This verse became a cornerstone of my ministry. I was very particular about correctly interpreting the Word of God. To do that I needed the best education possible.

After completing my MBA program, I joined the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina for my Master of Divinity program in 1980. I completed my program in 1984 and went to India to find a virtuous woman like the one in Proverbs 31 who can help me out in my ministry. I was particular about a family that pours its heart out for ministry. I was not working at that time. I had only \$400 in my account, but yet I wanted to get married by faith. I did not want any girl to marry me because I have a great career, or wealth, or fame or power. I wanted someone to marry me and follow me as a wife of a poor minister of the Gospel.

By divine providence, Viola became my beloved wife. I was willing to go back to India for missions work after my seminary degree. But I was offered only \$100 a month for my ministry. But if an American born citizen would go to the same place, he or she could be offered \$3000 a month. This racial discrimination made me very sick. I tried to establish my own ministry. The Lord nudged me to work among the Indians who live in America. I started an Indian Christian Fellowship. We gathered once a month, and we had an Eastern Convention every year. It went very well. But I saw the real need for a church. I was yearning for a New Testament church that is based on Acts 2:42. I did not like one of those hi, bye church. I wanted a church that focuses on the intimate relationship with all people who attend the church, and with Christ our Lord!

In 1997, we planted Church of India, and the worship was held on Sunday evenings. In 2004. We bought a small building and had worship service both morning and evening. The following year, it became a permanent morning church and started ministering to those who considered this church as their primary church.

God wants me to develop and train the church members to be leaders and plant small house churches wherever there is an opening. Instead of gathering everyone in one building and trying to make it a mega church, God wants me to split the leaders and plant small house churches in various neighborhoods. The dream I had before I went to the seminary is still before my eyes. I will be more than happy to start another church with just 2 or 3 families. But unfortunately, this kind of New Testament vision is anathema to modern churches. They all want to gather as many people as possible under one roof and make worship a show business. If I believed in that kind of vision, I would have arranged for a professional band, and professional people with the gift of the gab and built a bigger church through their talents. I am not dreaming for a big church mass.

I am dreaming for a grassroots church that is rooted on Acts 2:42 church (Please read the article, "What is an Acts 2:42 church?"). Yes, I am swimming against the tidal waves of modern church concepts. Please look at our church through the pages of the New Testament rather than through the modern church concept. The New Testament churches were progressing geographically from house to house. They were not trying to gather everyone under one big roof of a mega church. If the Lord calls you to be part of planting small house churches, please feel free to contact me!

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