While I grew up learning about Darwinism and the theory of evolution, all my atheist ideas went out the window as I peered up into the night sky as a child. I was awestruck by the immense vastness of the universe and would often feel something in the pit of my stomach, a nudging, a knowing that there must be something bigger out there in that vastness, somewhere…somehow.  Romans 1:21 declares, “For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

I would be exposed to the gospel message and hear the name Jesus Christ spoken here and there as I casually attended Christian functions with friends as a young adolescent. However, the clear message of the gospel escaped me. I had no concept of the supernatural world, let alone a need for a savior, having grown up with ardent atheist, Communist parents. Instead, I found my significance in my love for children. At an early age, I decided to become a young mom. Given my unique upbringing, I was fine breaking conventional norms, so I became a teen mom at 15 years old. I was determined to “make it” and prove myself to some unknown person who might eventually be proud of me. My performance-based significance followed me into higher education as I pursued my university degrees. I earned several scholarships out of high school, including a four-year scholarship to attend the university at the nearby city of Bakersfield.  I left home at 18 to attend school, worked three jobs as a single mom, while being a full-time honors student, always working with a sense of urgency for no other reason than to perhaps impress others and out of my fear of failure.

It was during this time, spring of 1999, as an upper graduate student that I was introduced to Jesus Christ. I attended an Easter service at a local church in Bakersfield, California, at the invitation of my oldest sister.  The pastor preached an animated, clear gospel message and challenged me by giving a clear invitation to accept or reject the salvation message. I carefully considered the message, quickly deciphering the implications of it if it turned out to be true or false. I concluded that the message was compelling enough that should it be true, it would be of eternal significance and if the message turned out false, that accepting it as true would be of no consequence. So there in my seat, I silently prayed to accept Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and to believe that He had paid the penalty of all my wrong-doing – my sin.

What followed was a new type of agony I had not encountered before – the war between my flesh and my born-again spirit. This war began causing great stress in my social life.  I juggled my responsibilities, adding Bible study to my busy schedule as I met weekly with a woman who today is an ordained minister of the gospel. I attended church regularly and became a member of the church, serving in various capacities and ministries, including the Missions Committee, the Children’s Ministry, and the Women’s Ministry. In my first year as a believer in 2000, I completed the Alpha Course, led by CRU missionaries. Through that course, I learned the fundamentals of the Christian faith. The final session of this Bible study consisted of a one-day retreat and an invitation to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Having never heard of this phenomenon, but being a risk taker by nature, I was the first to volunteer for the laying on of hands to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I was baptized with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in tongues; filled with deep emotion, through tears, prayers in the power of the Holy Spirit gushed out of me as I received this precious gift. That moment sealed my faith in the supernatural.

Shortly after being baptized in the Holy Spirit, I participated in a water-baptism celebration on my 21st birthday, professing my faith publicly. That same summer, I joined a team from church going on a short-term mission trip to work on a project aimed at getting Bibles into the hands of North African Muslims. I continued to grow in my knowledge and fervor for the Lord. I fed my spirit with God’s Word, continued to fellowship with other saints, and attended and led Bible studies. Yet, for years, I misunderstood the Holy Spirit’s role as my Sanctifier. Consequently, I denied Him access and “worked hard”, believing I could will myself to be better, but mostly feeling defeated.  Many sin patterns continued to plague my life.

One very painful decision I made as I “worked hard” to clean up my life was to sever my relationship with a long-time boyfriend I had been dating before my conversion. This was the “love of my life,” yet he rejected Jesus as Lord and was antagonistic about the gospel and my faith. While I grieved my loss, I made a conscious choice to follow God by being “pure” instead of being miserable trying to live a compromising life of known sin. In the days that followed the break-up, the Lord directed me to Psalms 37:4 “Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”  That night I prayed that Manuel, my ex-boyfriend, would come to know the Lord and that we would be reconciled to each other. About seven months after that, that ex-boyfriend called me out of the blue to tell me that he had been thinking a lot about going to church. Manuel began attending church with me and within several weeks, he wept after a church service, and the same pastor who had preached that one Easter Sunday prayed with him to accept Jesus as his personal savior. A few months after that, Manuel and I began dating anew and within a year we were married and remain happily married today with three children and one grandchild.

Today, I praise God that Jesus has increased my measure of faith in deep ways since 2015. I have come to know each person of the Trinity in a personal way, by revelation and by seeking, asking, and knocking. I grew exponentially when I cried out to Jehovah Rapha, my Healer, and He healed me miraculously from many ailments, two of which I had been told from doctors would require surgery (endometriosis, sleep apnea, rheumatoid arthritis). I chose to believe that by His stripes, I was healed (Isaiah 53:5), and indeed, Jesus healed me and I am completely symptom free since 2015. Soon after that, Jesus delivered me from a spirit of fear and religion that robbed me from the joy in serving God, and Jesus revealed Himself as The Lord of Hosts in a supernatural encounter where Jesus appeared to me while on an airplane in January 2018.  That is when I was baptized with the fire of the Holy Spirit and received new spiritual gifts that the Lord used to launch me into ministry with the anointing to build up the church, cast out devils, and heal the sick. That ministry today is known as Kingdom Prayer Ministries, Inc. Jesus called me to love and serve His sheep, using the words “rescue my sheep”. The Lord continues to raise up devoted disciples of Jesus Christ who are willing to forsake all to follow Jesus, committed to the laying on hands and seeing people saved, healed, delivered, and empowered by the Spirit of God to do God’s will.  I continue to lead this ministry today, pastoring a small fellowship of saints and equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. I am an ordained minister of the gospel under Bishop Earl Stocker and am also ordained with the International Congress of Churches and Ministers. I am a student in the Doctor of Ministry program at Oral Roberts University and my favorite thing to do is share the love of Jesus with people and put the devil to shame by winning souls and casting out devils. My favorite Bible verse today is, “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is One. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4).