

## The Door In



*At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendors we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Someday, God willing, we shall get in. - C. S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory*

*"I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." Jesus, John 10:9*



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## Preface

In 2010, my daughter Rebekah and I made a road trip to the Southern Oregon coast, where my husband, Michael, and I first met. We chose to drive up the 101 and as we left Santa Rosa, I noticed the sign for Boonville up ahead. I reminded Rebekah of my adventures in Boonville back in 1970, and she said, “Let’s turn off and go see where you lived.”



We found the exact address where I once lived communally as part of a cult by doing some Internet research. The ranch where I had lived with its many trailers, vegetable gardens, and apple orchards was now a vineyard, and the only indication we found of its former purposes was the eerie sign shown in this picture.

In this meadow, trailers had filled up every weekend with recruits of the Unification Church coming for seminars on God’s purpose in history. Standing here brought back a flood of memories and painful emotions. But overall, the strongest feeling was thankfulness. My heart bowed in worship as I was reminded again of the power of the Holy Spirit to draw the wayward ones with His cords of kindness.

*“I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love.” Hosea 11:4*

This is the story of how Jesus drew one very confused and lost flower child of the 60’s to Himself. I hope as you read this story you too will be drawn to worship the One who loves so tenderly and completely.

Caveat: The events I am describing took place almost 50 years ago at a time when my mind was clouded. The description I have written is the best I remember, but my memory is fallible and has many gaps. I am well aware how over the years our subconscious can weave fact and fantasy together. I’ve tried to be as accurate as possible; what is truest in this story is the power of God to deliver.

Since writing my original conversion story, I have added more chapters covering the following years. I write some of this thinking of my little grandson, who may someday wonder about his mom’s mom.

*“One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts. I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works.” Psalms 145:4-5*

## Chapter 1: California Dreaming

*“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” Psalm 19:1*

In the late summer and fall of 1969, I was one of many “flower children” living on the streets of San Francisco. Lured by the almost mystical stories I was hearing about life in California, I joined a group of acquaintances from Ann Arbor, Michigan for a month-long backpacking trip in Yosemite. The experience was life changing for me.

Five years of life in Ann Arbor during the turbulent 60’s had left me emotionally and spiritually depleted. I had arrived at the University of Michigan in 1964 as a naïve honors student, intending to major in biology and pre-med subjects. But I soon found myself swept up in the cultural and political currents around me. Participating in campus protests, marching in Washington D.C. against the Vietnam war, experimenting with LSD, harvesting marijuana in rural Michigan, adopting a bohemian lifestyle with my Jewish roommate, searching for truth in Eastern mysticism...all had left me emotionally bruised and bewildered.

I didn’t have the mental energy to plan something like a trip across country, but a door just sort of opened and I stepped in. This began when I heard that a group of friends were planning to drive cross-country and backpack in Yosemite. It sounded like a wonderful relief to be out of Ann Arbor for a month. Then I heard that one of this group of eight would not be able to go. Since my friends knew I was interested, they offered me the available space, complete with equipment and already purchased food.

I quickly packed all my belongings into storage, ended the lease on the room I was renting, and said good-bye to a turbulent five years. Did I already know I was not coming back?

### Yosemite

Spending that month in Yosemite was balm to my weary soul. In the midst of the intellectualism and political controversy of my college years, I had lost all sense of the beauty of nature. The very mountains and brooks seem to cry out to me that there was a better way to live...harmonious, lovely, and free.

One night during that month, I threw my cigarettes into the campfire. They had been my constant companion during the four years of college and afterwards, often my only way of staying awake

when I was up all night studying for an exam. But in the fresh meadow-scented air of Yosemite, they suddenly seemed alien and wrong.

All was not sunshine and breezes, however; there was a dark side to the camping experience. My friends had brought along drugs, a familiar part of my life the last few years. I regularly used marijuana, but avoided most other drugs. I had had several bad experiences with LSD soon after I started at the University. These LSD trips had ended in terror, and I had no interest in risking that again. But my fellow campers had brought peyote. "Peyote is different," my friends said. "It's natural, like marijuana, not man-made like LSD." They convinced me that since peyote was part of the Native American lifestyle, it was the perfect accent for our beautiful environment.

Soon after eating the peyote, I wandered off by myself. The trees began glowing; each leaf and blade of grass seemed to have a life of its own and I was being drawn into the energy of the living things around me. But as I walked further and further, terror returned with crushing intensity. I had no idea where I was. The beautiful trees became dark and menacing; the call of birds and sounds of insects became sinister with evil undertones. I sought shelter in a small, enclosed area beneath a tree and tried to hide from the darkness. All alone, I felt completely desperate.

In the darkest moment of terror I felt a presence with me. A bright white-robed figure filled the space around me with unexpected comfort. I don't remember a specific message—I'm not sure I could have made sense of words—but I do remember the sense of peace, of being known, and a feeling of being invited into something new. I fell asleep.

Later, my friends came looking for me and I heard them calling my name. We found our way back to the campsite...I had not gone far at all. My sense of being lost was all in my head. Except, of course, I really was lost in every way that mattered.

By the end of our backpacking trip, I was changed. The group had planned to spend a few days in San Francisco before heading back to Ann Arbor. After checking out the scene in Haight-Ashbury and Golden Gate Park, my friends prepared to head back home. The thought of returning to my life in Ann Arbor filled me with revulsion. I wanted to keep moving in this fresh direction of life. So when the van headed East, I stayed in San Francisco.

## **San Francisco**

I had a friend from the University of Michigan who had moved to Berkley and looked him up. He was living in a small apartment with his girlfriend, but said I could camp in his backyard. I soon wore out my welcome and began moving from place to place with other seekers like myself, enjoying what fellowship I could find on the streets. At one point, a girl allowed me to sleep in her closet. I would creep in at night and spread my sleeping bag on the floor of the closet and creep out before anyone was awake in the morning.

The charms of this survival life style evaporated quickly and I became increasingly desperate, but still too proud to ask for help. One day when I was wandering by myself downtown, a well-dressed young man stopped me and began asking me questions and listening sympathetically. He

finally asked me if I had a place to live. When I said no, he told me that if I were to meet him at the same place on the next day, he would take me to a safe place. That sounded good to me. But as the day wore on, I became more and more uneasy about meeting him.

Something about him bothered me. A certain hardness in his eyes? The way he scanned the crowd moving by us? I never kept that appointment. In retrospect I am sure it would have led me into terrible darkness. In so many ways the Lord protected me.

## A New Opportunity

*“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.”  
Mat 7:15-16*

One day, walking through the Haight-Ashbury district, I encountered a young woman I had known at the University of Michigan. She had been in a sorority and I had been an intellectual who looked down on sororities. We had shared a class, and I had visited her at her sorority house to work on a project with her. At that time, I had been slightly won over by her friendliness and intelligence, despite her sorority affiliation.

On the streets of San Francisco, her sudden appearance was like an oasis in the desert. We sat down over a pot of tea and she asked about my life and listened intently. I told her how I wanted to change my life and so had not returned to Michigan with my friends. Then she began to tell me about her experience with a group of people who had a powerful vision for making the world a better place, who wanted to live righteous lives, and make an impact for good. My heart was strangely stirred.

When she offered to introduce me to the group the next night at dinner, I didn’t hesitate to say yes. Whatever she had found sounded a lot better than what I was experiencing on the streets. Despite the feel-good philosophies of the flower children, the realities of our lifestyle were harsh. In the crash pads where we stayed, you were likely to find everything you owned gone in the morning: so much for free love.

While some hippies offered to share what they had, many others simply assumed whatever you had was theirs. I still had a little money in a savings account, but it was rapidly disappearing. I had recently had a particularly brutal experience hitchhiking in a risky part of town, and disillusionment had replaced my starry-eyed hopes of California dreaming.

## Meeting the Unification Church

The next night, clutching my friend’s written directions, I made my way up the steep hill to the address in downtown San Francisco she had given me. I knocked on the door of the large Victorian house and was immediately surrounded by warm and friendly faces. Everyone was eager to meet me, to find out more about me.

After enjoying a family style dinner, we gathered in the big living room for some rousing songs. Then someone shared a few inspirational thoughts and we all held hands and sang a final song.

Everyone I met seemed genuinely interested in me. They asked questions, listened thoughtfully, and expressed warmth and concern. I couldn't wait to come back. Most of the people I met were young men and women about my age; a small group of older Asian men and women stayed in the background, cooking, serving, and observing.

As it grew late and I prepared to leave, one of the girls who had been sitting close to me most of the evening took me aside. "You don't have to leave," she said. "You can stay here tonight. I have an extra bed in my room." And she suggested that tomorrow I could join a weekend retreat at their farm in Boonville to learn more about what they believed. She probably didn't know that the alternative to her invitation of sleeping in a real bed was tossing and turning under a bush in a park. I didn't need much persuading to stay.

My new friend showed me the bottom bunk where I could sleep and she even gave me a nightgown to wear. The next day I joined a group of somewhat dazed looking young people for a van ride to Boonville. We were all attending a special introductory weekend to find out more about the "family," as I now called them. We sang songs and conversed on the bus. The young woman sitting in the seat next to me asked me probing questions about my beliefs, what I thought about God, what I wanted in life, and seemed genuinely interested in my responses.

She stayed close to me the entire weekend, asking questions, making sure I understood what was happening, introducing me to others, getting food for me at meal times, and helping me get settled at night. We were busy every minute! After a lecture the first night, we stayed up late around the campfire singing songs. The next morning, we were up early for exercises, then breakfast, followed by more study. After study was work projects—we cleared land for a tomato garden—then lunch, more study in the afternoon, dinner, another lecture, then testimonies from family members around the campfire.

Sunday was much like Saturday, but instead of work projects, we had a church service, with singing and a message about God's eternal purpose to bring His messiah to show mankind how to live. Sunday night around the campfire, we were given the opportunity to choose to join this community and become part of God's redemptive purpose. My new friend turned to me and asked me if I would like to join. Taking this step seemed natural and right, and I said yes.

The idea that I could be part of a positive redemptive movement really appealed to me. My early years of militant activism at the University of Michigan involved dabbling with the Students for Democratic Society (SDS) and studying communist social theories. But I had increasingly turned away from activism to a spiritual search. The thought of combining social action with spirituality had never occurred to me.

The next day, I moved into the house in San Francisco. This was pretty simple, since I was currently homeless. My new sisters took me shopping and bought me a couple of outfits so I could look presentable when "seekers" came to visit at the house, and I began intensely studying

the books they gave me that explained their beliefs. Many of these were written by Koreans. I soon discovered that behind the movement was the shadowy figure of a man named Sun Myung Moon, but I wasn't yet clear on his role.

## **From San Francisco to Boonville**

Living in the house in San Francisco was difficult for me. Though I felt safe for the first time in months, I was used to freedom and a casual lifestyle. Our life was closely regimented and I was constantly on edge feeling that I wasn't measuring up. Then a totally unexpected opportunity came up: they needed additional staff on the farm in Boonville. Perfect, I thought. In my heart, I was still looking for a way back to "nature" and the simplicity and beauty I had experienced in Yosemite. Boonville would be similar, far away from city streets, with only a small team during the week. Surprisingly, the elders accepted my offer to volunteer for this role. The next weekend I repeated the bus trip to Boonville, but this time to stay.

I soon got to know the team at the ranch and we established a pleasant rhythm of life. I was given cooking duties and enjoyed making homemade yogurt, cinnamon rolls, and granola. John, the young man who led our team, had a "flower-child" background similar to mine. He still had a fondness for organic, back-to-nature foods, and a simple life style.

After morning devotions, breakfast, and exercises, we would work in the gardens, clean the trailers where we lived, and prepare for the coming weekend. Evenings were spent reading and concluded with group devotions.

Sometimes we visited local churches or community groups that met during the week in Boonville. John had explained to us earlier in a family meeting how important it was for us to demonstrate the most exemplary citizenship as part of advancing the Kingdom of Heaven in this community. We wanted the town's residents to accept us and see us as a positive influence in the community. I don't think we were very successful. When a group of four or five of us would enter a meeting room with smiling faces, every eye in the room seemed to track our progress and conversations became stilted and difficult.

Weekends were a stark contrast to our quiet weekday rhythm. On Friday nights, a new group of recruits arrived accompanied by watchful family members who carefully shepherded them through the weekend activities. Arrival was often late at night, made later still with singing around a bonfire. Early morning devotions were followed by calisthenics, breakfast (my yoghurt and granola), and a teaching session. Then everyone participated in some kind of manual work on the land.

After lunch, which I helped prepare and serve, a long hike through the entire farm followed another teaching session. Then came dinner, further teaching, and another late night around the bonfire. It was an intense, exhausting, and tightly orchestrated weekend with no time alone and no time to process all the information that was being shared.

## Questions

I still didn't really understand much about what the family believed. In addition to the books the family gave me, we read the Bible. I found myself often putting away the obscure and difficult books by Korean family members and just reading the Bible. I had been raised by God-fearing Lutheran parents. We attended church and Sunday school regularly and as a child, I had loved to read Bible stories and participate in church activities.

But as a teenager, I had grown out of my parent's religion. They didn't seem to be able to provide compelling answers to the questions I raised about creation, good and evil, social justice, the terrible deeds done by so-called Christians throughout history. I soon came to dismiss the entire Christian church as the "opiate of the masses," as identified by Karl Marx. The church seemed to me to be a source of oppression, both socially and intellectually.

My parents, intimidated by my verbal challenges, retreated, although they both prayed for my heart to change. By the time I graduated from high school I had turned my back on everything I had ever known as a child. I was determined to break away from tradition and find real truth.

Now memories of childhood experiences flooded back into my heart as I sat alone with the Bible and read familiar words. What if I had been wrong? What if the Bible really did contain the answers I was seeking? My new friends had a great respect for Jesus, but they felt that he had failed. Looking at the state of the world and the triumph of evil in so many areas, I could see why they believed that. If Jesus came to establish a righteous way of life here on earth, something had gone drastically wrong. But then doubts would come. The scriptures I had learned as a child would come rushing back. Didn't Jesus say that his kingdom was not of this world? If so, then wouldn't it be wrong to expect to see righteousness and peace here?

I shared some of these questions with the staff at the ranch during devotions and discussion times. They explained to me that when Jesus died on the cross, his life was cut off early and he was not able to complete the purpose for which he had been sent. God had wanted him to restore a perfect Godly family and usher in God's kingdom.

This sounded plausible. Certainly the world was not as it should be. If Jesus Christ had succeeded in his Kingdom mission, why was the US engaged in an unjust war in Vietnam? Why did children die of cancer? Why did men and women strive so hard to make money and live empty miserable lives?

Since God's purpose to establish a Godly family had not changed, I was told, God had sent another man to complete what Jesus failed to accomplish. Now I began to more clearly understand the role of Sun Myung Moon in the theology of the family.

Some days, all this looked plausible, and on the days it did not, life was pleasant enough for me to be able to push the questions aside. But as weeks stretched into months, the nagging uncertainties became increasingly more difficult to push aside. Weekend after weekend, buses came with new recruits and I witnessed them experiencing the same carefully orchestrated events that I had



participated in. It began to seem a little staged...why couldn't people openly and freely ask questions? Why was everyone so busy every minute?

When I watched the girl that had befriended me on my first weekend behaving exactly the same toward other young women again and again, I could not help wonder whether she had really been my "friend," or if the careful pairing I saw was part of a larger strategy to contain and manipulate newcomers.

## Escape

Just as my discomfort was becoming increasingly acute, one of the Korean elders came to spend a few days at the ranch. This man was high up in the Family and was sent to inspect the activities at the farm. Before he came, we had many tense conversations about what would please him and how we could best show our commitment to the family. We cleaned and cooked and weeded the garden and tried to make everything on the ranch perfect.

During the days this dignitary and his group were at the farm, many conversations took place with low voices behind closed doors. One day I was preparing food in the kitchen in the main meeting trailer and overheard low voices outside. Then I heard my name. They were discussing me! The ranch leader was expressing concern about my spiritual state, indicating that I had been asking many questions and didn't really seem convinced of the view of history that was presented in the family.

One of the Korean dignitaries suggested that I should be sent back to the house in San Francisco, where the opportunities for education (and supervision) were more intense. He then added casually, perhaps marriage would help. The last thing I heard was, "She shall come back to San Francisco with us tomorrow," and then their voices drifted off as they continued walking.

Marriage? I began to think about bits and pieces of conversations I had heard, stories of large group weddings. One girl had told me that her friend was married in Korea to a man she had never met, and she was so happy that the Pappa San in the house had selected the right mate for



her. I had dismissed this as an oddity, but now I realized that this was the way relationships in the family were normally initiated.

This practice still continues. This picture was taken in 2009 of 10,000 couples from around the world participating in a mass wedding ceremony arranged by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church at Sun Moon University in Asan, south of Seoul, South Korea. Many of the couples were matched by Moon himself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As reported in <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2009/1014/p06s08-woap.html>

A cold chill went through me. What had I gotten myself into? The idea of returning to San Francisco was suddenly abhorrent. I determined right then that I needed to get away.

In the afternoon when everyone was busy and the trailer where I slept with the other girls was empty, I snuck into our room and searched the back of the closet for my backpack and sleeping bag. The pack and sleeping bag were all I had left from my past life in Michigan. But this wasn't the time to think about the sequence of events that had brought me to this place; I needed to move quickly.

I stuffed the sleeping bag in the pack, gathered a few changes of clothes and my personal items, and added a few items of food I brought with me from the kitchen. I also placed in the pack a copy of the *New Testament* and the *Divine Principle*, which I planned to read side by side when I was no longer being observed and could think independently. Then I carefully stored the pack behind the closet door where it would not be seen.

That night, I lay down with the other girls, but didn't sleep. I lay quietly on the floor, willing my breathing to become slow and even, and listening intently to the breathing of the girls around me. Soon the rhythm of their breathing quieted, as fatigue took over and they drifted into sleep. We all worked hard enough and rose early enough that falling asleep at night was seldom an issue. But tonight, there would be no sleeping for me.

I waited, checking my watch, until the hour of midnight passed. Moving stealthily, I crept from the room in the dark, picking up my backpack, my coat, and my shoes where I had left them earlier in the evening. When I was out of sight of the trailer, I put on my shoes and began walking down the long private driveway to the county road. The night was clear, with bright stars, and only a sliver of a new moon. I kept a swift pace while trying to make as little noise as possible. On my many trips into town and back, the driveway had never before seemed to stretch so far.

What a relief when I finally felt the county road under my feet. I was familiar with this portion of the road because the family and I had regularly volunteered to pick up trash from the point where our driveway joined the road into town. I remembered clearly the town meeting at the Boonville community center when John offered to clean the streets twice a month. We all sat in a row with bright smiles on our faces. The long-term Boonville residents sat around us glancing at us with undisguised distrust if not active dislike in their eyes.

Tonight, I was banking on the goodwill of one of those distrustful citizens, or perhaps the generosity of a passing stranger. I made my way through town and found a spot under a tree where I was not visible from the road. Wrapping myself tightly in my coat, I leaned my head against the tree and eventually drifted into sleep. When the early rays of the morning sun touched my face, I woke with a start, gathered my belongings, and moved to the roadside where I hoped to hitch a ride to the coast.

I didn't have to wait long. Within a few minutes, a farmer in his truck stopped. I told him I was going to Mendocino, and he agreed to drop me off there so I quickly climbed in, eager to put distance between the farm and me. Only after about twenty minutes of driving in silence did I

heave a sigh of relief. I was grateful that the farmer didn't ask awkward questions, questions that I couldn't answer.

My driver dropped me off when we came to the coastline. I knew a state park was located nearby. I had heard discussions about it in town and I also knew that it was popular with the hippies making their way up and down the coastline from San Francisco.

Even though this was a lifestyle I had left behind when I joined the family, it was the only one familiar to me. I knew the rules of the road among hippies: everyone shared what they had: food, weed, even blankets, or the warmth of each other's bodies. So now in a desperate moment, I hoped that I could find a group of hippies to join.

Even so, part of me resisted the thought of returning to the hippie lifestyle. I also remembered the emptiness and the loneliness of that life: people coming and going like the wind in the trees. Here one day and gone the next. Pretending it was "all good." Drifting through days suppressing fear of what would come next.

Because to be honest, being a hippie wasn't the only lifestyle I knew...I just didn't want to open the door to the other flood of memories that threatened to overwhelm me. A warm clean home, the smells of dinner cooking, a full refrigerator, the comfort of my bedroom and reading books late into the night, the pride my parents took in my accomplishments. It all threatened to overwhelm me...but I had rejected the middle-class life. And even though longings for these familiar comforts stirred in me, admitting these longings stirred an even more powerful sensation: guilt and shame. I knew that the only way back in that direction required asking forgiveness, admitting I was wrong. This was a narrow gate I stubbornly refused to go through.

## Days in Mendocino

When I left the ranch, I had only the vaguest of plans. Mendocino was close and seemed like my best option at the moment. Beneath the practical questions of where I would stay and how I would live, I wanted time to think and process the ideas of the family and compare them with the Bible.

For weeks, I walked the beaches at Mendocino, letting the ocean breezes cleanse my mind and heart. During the day, I would go down to the beach or sit on one of the cliffs overlooking the ocean. I would sit with my back against a rock and the *Divine Principle* and the Bible spread out before me. At night I would find a sheltered spot in the campgrounds to sleep. Sometimes I would join other groups of young people who were camping in the park.

The park included an enclosed public lodge with picnic tables and a fireplace. Day campers used it for meals, and I often hung out there trying to keep warm on the foggy coast. One evening I was sitting on the floor near the fireplace with my head leaning back against the wall, half dozing, and half watching the people around me. Several days had passed since I had eaten anything and I was lost in my own private world.

I found myself drawn into watching one near-by family as they prepared a meal...mom, dad, two children. There was nothing special about this family, other than a certain sweetness in the way they interacted. The kids didn't talk back to the parents. The older brother was genuinely solicitous of his younger sister, helping her carry loads that were heavy and patiently showing her how to set the table. Their love for each other was unmistakable.

As I watched them, I found my heart aching. A great longing came over me to be part of a real family again. Why did I feel like I had always been on the outside looking in, I wondered. As their meal preparations concluded, the family sat down and the mother prepared plates for each one. Then the four of them took each other's hands across the picnic table, bowed their heads, and the dad gave thanks to God for His goodness, His provision, and for sending Jesus. When the Amen was said, the mom took one of the plates piled with food and handed it to the little girl. I saw her whispering something to her. Then the child rose from her place, carefully holding the plate, and walked in my direction.

"Are you hungry?" she asked. "My mom wants you to have this." I couldn't say much, but asked her to thank her mother for her kindness. Yes, I was hungry, but it wasn't just for the physical food. I was consumed with a longing to be at peace, to be reconciled with my parents, to have real friends who knew me and who I knew. And I was pretty sure that somehow the God they had thanked for their meal held the key to how that might happen.

These feelings were soon pushed to the background again in the struggle to stay alive. I soon lost interest in reading and spent more and more time with various groups of travelling hippies hanging out in Mendocino.

## Chapter 2: Missing Family

*“God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.” Psalm 68:6*

How did I come to be so isolated from my own family? I had wonderful, caring, hard-working parents, who had brought me up in the Lutheran church. Now we had not spoken in over a year and they had no idea where I was. How had this happened?

### Beginnings

My mom and my dad grew up on adjacent farms in rural Iowa and attended local small-town schools. My dad was the first boy from his high school to attend a four-year college. He studied engineering at the University of Iowa in the early 1930's, during the worst part of the depression. To survive, he lived in an open dorm room with 140 other poor students and he worked 3 hours a day at a small hamburger shop for meals (no money). Times were tough, but not too tough for an Iowa farm boy determined to become an engineer.

My dad eventually graduated and landed a job with GE in Schenectady, NY. Once settled with a good paycheck, he could think about marriage and family, and remembered the Norwegian girl down the road from his Iowa farmstead. Their relationship developed and when he asked her to marry him, she said yes. She took the train by herself from Iowa to New York in June of 1938, where they became husband and wife.

My dad did well in his career, moving into increasingly more responsible positions in various companies, and of course he and my mom soon began thinking about starting a family. After several miscarriages, a premature baby that died after only a few hours, and an almost fatal hemorrhage, my mother was told she could not have children. So, they began to consider adoption.

They brought my brother Tom home about a year later in 1943; he was 14 months old. My sister Margaret (Tom's birth sister) arrived as a newborn a year later. But their hearts still had room for one more: me. I was three months' old when a representative of the adoption agency brought me to their home and placed me in their arms.

I don't remember when I was told that I was adopted...I seem to have always known. And even though I was well loved and cared for in every way, my unusual origin cast a shadow over my spirit. I harbored a private sense of rejection and felt that I did not belong in my family. This was

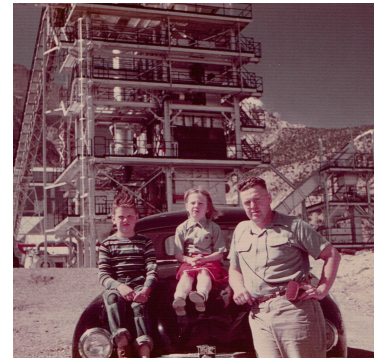
exacerbated by the fact that my brother and sister—though also adopted—were “real” siblings and actually did seem to have a lot more in common with each other than I did with them.

From a small child, I loved stories: both reading them and writing them. To me, bringing home a new book from the library was like finding buried treasure. While very young, I kept a notebook and began writing stories. One of my favorite themes was a story about a child who had been taken captive by Indians and later rescued by strong heroes. I think these stories represented my subconscious feeling of having been taken from my “real” family and raised by others. I was waiting for the ones who had lost me to find me again.

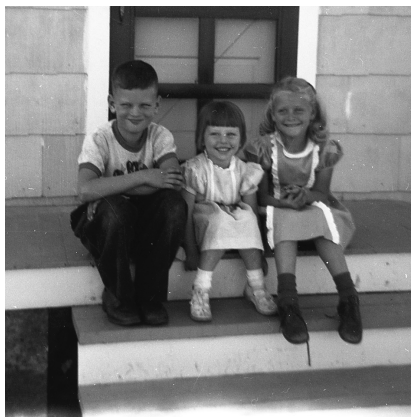
I eventually came to understand these feelings as a stronghold that Satan planted in my mind from childhood. This is a common strategy he uses with children who have been adopted. Because of this stronghold, I withdrew from those who loved me most.

## Early Life in Rifle (1947-1955)

Despite the “shadow” of adoption, my early years were almost idyllic. We lived in a government housing project outside of Rifle, Colorado where my dad was an engineer at an experimental oil shale plant. Even now, I’m not quite sure what he did, but it looked very complicated. Here is a picture of me with my brother visiting my dad at work, high up in the cliffs where the mine was located.



All the houses in the project were pretty much all alike, placed in a U-shape with a community center built at the base of the U and playgrounds in the middle. Everyone knew everyone else, and from a child’s point of view, every house was home.



Here I am sitting between my brother and sister on the back steps of our government issue pre-fab home. We roamed the canyon behind our house, built forts among the trees, played cowboys and Indians, and skated for hours on the small piece of concrete our dads had laid in the central part of the housing development.

I attended a small elementary school in Rifle through 3th grade. We had no TV reception in the canyon (TV’s were barely known at this time) and the high point of our entertainment week was listening to the Lone Ranger and

Tonto on the radio on Sunday afternoon, with a bowl of fresh popcorn.

My mom was a full-time homemaker: she sewed all my clothes, canned vegetables and fruit, made delicious meals, and kept our home spotless. We even had a wonderful Boston bull terrier named Jiggs who entertained us all with his antics.

I loved school and loved reading. I had two special friends who lived close by. Life was good. But this wonderful season came to an abrupt end. The government determined that the oil-shale plant was not profitable and decided to close it. Our life was about to change dramatically.

## Move to New York (1955-1964)

In June of 1955, we moved to Pittsford, a suburb of Rochester, New York. My dad started a new job at Eastman Kodak, the company he had worked for when I was adopted. We bought an old remodeled farmhouse (built in 1900) with a wrap-around porch and an acre of land behind it so my mom and dad could have a garden. The end of our lot bordered the old Erie Canal, which provided a bit of wildness for exploring and play. In the fall I started fourth grade at an elementary school in Pittsford.



This picture of our house in Pittsford at 2540 Clover Street was taken in 2015 when Michael and I visited the area. The house is exactly the same as it was when my family lived there 50 years earlier, though painted a different color.

Pittsford was not at all like Rifle, Colorado! Pittsford was an upper-middle class suburb full of wealth and sophistication. Everyone had fancy store-bought clothes and multiple TVs in their homes. Kids played organized sports or took ballet lessons, and didn't run wild and unsupervised in the open spaces. Homes were large, often with multiple stories, and big back yards.

My dad said of that year, that during fourth grade I cried myself to sleep every night. I had no friends and felt like a total outsider. On top of everything else, our sweet dog, also used to running in the open spaces, was hit by a car and killed soon after we moved to New York. I desperately wanted to return to Colorado.

By the next year I began to make friends and figure out how to fit in. First, I insisted that my mother buy my clothes, not make them. But the trauma of moving settled into the wounded area in my heart that already felt different, unwelcome, and an outsider.

I reacted to this loneliness by becoming extremely competitive. I wasn't good at any sports, but I was good at reading and remembering. Academic achievement became my all-consuming goal: I wanted to prove my worth by being first and always being right. I was already stubborn and strong willed by nature, and now I became even more determined to be on top.

The following incident demonstrates something of my stubbornness. My mom was a homemaker—she was almost always home when we got back from school. But one afternoon, she had an appointment and wasn't there. When I got off the bus, my brother Tom was already home. When he saw me coming, he locked all the doors to keep me out and then stood at the window teasing me.

My patience ran out very quickly. I knocked louder and louder with no result, other than becoming more and more angry. I finally walked down to the garage, which was unlocked, and



found my father's ax. I returned to the side door and began to chop at it with the ax. Eventually my brother gave in and opened the door, but not before I had done substantial damage to it.

This was of course a bit difficult to explain when my mom and dad returned. I don't remember exactly what my punishment was, other than losing my allowance for an indefinite time until the door was paid for. I stumbled across a poem that I wrote asking forgiveness in my mom's drawer after she died:

People act foolishly that I can say  
People act foolishly every single day  
People get oh so mad, act foolhardy, and that is bad.  
People should be cool  
If they aren't they are a fool  
I am sorry and that is right  
For I say it with all my might.

It was actually a rather defining moment as I saw the potential danger that feeding wrath can produce, a situation that the Bible describes well: *The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.* Proverbs 17:14

I soon developed a reputation in school (which I was proud of) of always being right. I would argue my position with teachers and fellow students and not back down. I jumped at the opportunity to show teachers their errors, the more publicly the better. I lived in a black and white world. And while I was quick to show others their errors, I was very slow in admitting when I was wrong.

When I was thirteen, I completed confirmation classes in our local Lutheran church. On completion, our pastor gave us each a personal Bible verse. Mine was Isaiah 30:15. He had no idea how prophetic this verse would turn out to be for my life. Many years would pass before the grace of God produced the fruit of this verse.

*"In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Isaiah 30:15*

In high school, I consistently brought home high marks. I took advanced placement classes and eventually graduated as the valedictorian of my senior class. But beneath the surface I was growing increasingly unhappy.

I was becoming disillusioned with religion. I was a voracious reader, and at one point was fixated on reading books about the holocaust and the experience of prisoners in Nazi concentration camps and prisoners of war. My religious worldview could not accommodate the depravity that I read about. And no one in the church had compelling answers for my questions. I began to look for other worldviews that could help me make sense out of history, exploring philosophers like Frederick Nietzsche, Albert Camus, and other existentialists.



## Life at University of Michigan and Ann Arbor (1964-1969)

My high grades ensured a number of options for college, including a full scholarship to a New York State college. But I wanted to put miles between my home and me so I chose the University of Michigan, both for its distance from New York and high academic rating. I was accepted into a special honors program as a pre-med student.



When I arrived at U of M in the fall of 1964 (my parents drove me), I didn't know much about the winds of political turmoil that were beginning to blow through this campus and many others. But I was soon to find out. I had been given a room in a special "honors" dorm with other high achievers, and it turned out that most of the girls on my floor were from New York City, and were already involved in radical politics.

The first large-scale student movement, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), had been formed on the University of Michigan campus in 1960, and in March of 1965, I attended the first teach-in, also held on our campus, where we explored ways to deflect the growing involvement of America in Vietnam. By the end of my first year of college, I was morally adrift and had abandoned my pre-med track. My goal of becoming a doctor was based on the intellectual pleasure I derived from taking challenging subjects and not on a commitment to serve and care for others. Without a moral base, this plan crumbled.

As a sophomore, I moved out of the dorm into alternative co-op housing on campus, which gave me more freedom to pursue my increasingly radicalized life style. My scholarly focus also shifted. I signed up for classes in anthropology, psychology, sociology, and philosophy. I studied Russian history and literature and explored communist thinking. Of course, in my Russian Lit class we read Dostoevsky, a profound Christian thinker, and I was faced with moral issues I would rather not deal with. As C. S. Lewis says so well in *Surprised by Joy*:

*A young man [or woman] who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading. There are traps everywhere – "Bibles laid open, millions of surprises," as Herbert says, "fine nets and stratagems." God is, if I may say it, very unscrupulous.*

In November of my sophomore year, I joined other students in the March on Washington for Peace in Vietnam. It was an eye-opening experience. We drove in a bus from Michigan to Washington, singing peace songs, sleeping, sharing snacks. That peaceful fellowship didn't carry over to our time on the streets in Washington where I watched my friends berating the police as "pigs" and had to run as stones were thrown. I was all for peace, but I certainly wasn't experiencing any of my own.

The next year, I moved into an apartment with one of my radical friends from New York City. My experience the previous year had left me a bit disillusioned with organized politics. Instead, I began experimenting more and more with drugs, taking LSD for the first time during a trip to

New York City with friends. That was a scary and disturbing experience and from then on, I avoided hard drugs, and stayed with the less traumatizing experience of marijuana.

Amazingly, I still managed to graduate early in December of 1967, due to all my high school advanced placement classes. I had also taken classes during the summers and found local jobs in Ann Arbor, to avoid going home to Rochester. My dad had gotten me a job at Eastman Kodak the summer between high school and college. I did piece work on an assembly line for camera light meters and was so utterly bored I barely survived the experience. I had clerical jobs at the U of M that were much more to my liking.

Though my parents supported me through college, they became increasingly distressed by my life style. At first, I hid most of what I was doing from them; my dad was paying my school bills, and I didn't want to endanger that. But I gradually became bolder and more outspoken in my opinions.

## **After Graduation**

After I graduated, my parents realized more clearly how I was living and pretty much let me go my own way, hoping I am sure that I would come to my senses. Not having any clear goals, I remained in Ann Arbor, finding various jobs to pay the bills and continuing to hang out with my pot-smoking friends.

My one abortive attempt to do something constructive ended in disaster. I heard about a great need for teachers in some of the poorer mainly black schools near Detroit. These schools were so desperate they were willing to take college graduates without any teacher training. I applied and was given a class of eighth graders. I was unable to bring any control into the classroom or teach anything, and left in defeat after a few weeks.

During this time, I kept in contact with my parents, but only infrequently. Later when I joined the Moonies, all communication with them ceased. The Moonies discouraged us from contacting family and since I already felt cut off from mine, going along with this policy wasn't difficult.

I cannot imagine what that period in their life was like. I never thought about it deeply until I had children of my own (the first at age 35). What torments they experienced are still beyond my imagination. But that particular evening in the Mendocino State Park watching a family united in love was the first time I felt my heart beginning to grieve over where my path had led me.

## Chapter 3: The Prodigal Comes Home

*“Nobody has seen the trekking birds take their way towards such warmer spheres as do not exist, or rivers break their course through rocks and plains to run into an ocean which is not to be found. For God does not create a longing or a hope without having a fulfilling reality ready for them. But our longing is our pledge, and blessed are the homesick, for they shall come home.” Karen Blixen (Isaak Dinesen), author of Out of Africa.*

Despite moments of insight, I still had a distance to go before I came to the end of my rebellious path. I met a group of young people visiting Mendocino from Marysville and struck up a friendship with one of the girls who was very outgoing and self-confident. When the group was ready to break camp, she asked me if I wanted to go back to Marysville with them. Having no plans of my own, I agreed.

My friend had been living on the road and working the system for a long time and was quite adept at survival techniques: where we could stay for free, what was safe and what wasn't. In Marysville, she took me to a government office where they gave me food stamps and a small emergency fund, based on a story she coached me to tell.

### Hiding in the Hills

Based on my friend's intimate knowledge of free places to stay, we ended up at an A-frame house in the hills above Marysville in a remote area called Rackerby. Young people came and went randomly here; they would stay for a few days and move on. We stayed there often, hitchhiking down to Marysville together to pick up food stamps and replenish our supplies and visit her friends.

Gradually, I got to know many of the people moving through the area. Next door to the house where we stayed was an old goat farm. It was another hippie commune, but I heard many dark stories about it and was warned not to stay there, especially at night. Occult activities had taken place there, I was told, and evil spirits caused unexplained events and oppression.

A nearby creek had a lovely swimming hole, where I met people who were staying at the goat farm. After I got to know some of them, I would go and visit them on the farm, but only during the day. One of my new friends was a young man named Steve who had recently returned from a

tour in Vietnam. He was hard and intense and a little intimidating...clearly scarred by his experience and seemed much older than his physical age. His girlfriend was a 15-year old run away, with a baby face that made her look even younger.

We often talked together about spiritual topics. Because of his experience in Vietnam, Steve was very sensitive to the darkness at the goat farm. He told me with fear in his voice that he had seen strange manifestation and objects move for no reason. The spiritual world seemed very real to him.

## Light Breaks Through

*"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Col 1:13*

When Steve disappeared for a while, I didn't think much of it, since people were always coming and going. But then one day he showed up again, returning with a specific purpose.

He had been visiting his friend Ken in Davis, CA. Ken was a former resident of the goat farm who had become a Christian a few months before. When Steve had visited Ken previously, he had been especially intrigued by discussions of the end times based on a book called *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey that everyone was then reading.

Ken invited Steve to attend a meeting where he could find out more about God's plan. In this meeting, Steve had a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ. "Helen," he told me, "Jesus is real. This is what you've been looking for." He shared the same message with everyone who would listen at the house where I stayed and at the goat farm, inviting us to come to Davis and find out for ourselves. He said that Jesus had sent him to tell us about a power greater than fear and darkness.

The next day, when Steve prepared to go back to Davis, he persuaded his girlfriend Sue to go with him. I went along too, determined to find out what he was talking about. Steve told me that he knew that as a follower of Jesus, he and Sue could no longer be together, but he said that a house for guys and one for girls was available in Davis where we could stay. Clearly, something powerful had changed him.

When we got to Davis, Steve took us to a house crowded with young people. The "meeting" had already started and several young people with guitars were leading songs. All over the room people stood with arms raised to heaven, some with tears on their cheeks. I had never seen or heard anything like this. Not once had Steven ever used the word "church" to describe what was going on, and I still didn't connect this experience with church...although it was a church meeting in the truest sense: a meeting of God's *ecclesia*, the called-out ones.

The singing continued for a while, rising and falling in intensity. Everyone seemed to know the songs, even without song sheets. Later, someone gave a message. I don't remember the message,

or even responding to it; I just remember the presence of holiness in that room and the feeling of being home.

I was graciously welcomed into the crowded girls' home, called Bethany House. The details of the next few weeks are a blur, but the Lord had me in His grip and His Word, like a hammer and fire, was breaking down all my rebellion and resistance. Later I think I went up to the altar during services at least three or four times to receive the Lord, because every time the pastor talked about this needing to be a specific event, I could not remember the exact point when I had done so.

Even later, I realized that it was more about Jesus receiving me, than me receiving Him. The first night I walked through those doors, He had enfolded me and would not let me go. My understanding of what happened took a little while to catch up with the reality, but this prodigal daughter had come home, and the Father had run to meet me and enfolded me in His robe of righteousness.

## Family Reunited

*“And he will turn...the hearts of the children to their fathers...” Malachi 4:6*

I came into Bethany House in Davis a traumatized, fearful, and broken person, and the Lord began to gently restore me. The first thing I needed to do, I realized, was contact my parents. I wrestled with how to do this, feeling that my sinfulness and rebellion was almost beyond their forgiveness and that they would be unlikely to want to have anything to do with me. I could not bring myself to call them, so I sat down and wrote a letter. I explained where I was living and what had happened to me. I told them that I had met Jesus and He had forgiven me, and I asked for their forgiveness. This letter was postmarked Nov. 21, 1971.

A few days after putting the letter in the mail, I heard the doorbell ring and someone called me downstairs. I had received a telegram. It was from my parents saying “Hallelujah. Call us collect.”

My parents were overjoyed. I found out later that my mother had contacted many radio ministries across the country asking them to pray for me. She attended many prayer groups in their city, and she and my dad had even begun to attend a non-denominational church on Sunday nights where the pastor often preached on the miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit. In their need, they had drawn close to the Lord, claiming His protection over me, and now they were seeing the fruit of their prayers.

For Christmas that year, my mom and dad sent me a Bible, and when I opened it, tears filled my eyes. Inscribed on the inside cover was “To our precious daughter, Helen. Christmas, 1970.” It was now Christmas of 1971. They had purchased this Bible in faith the previous Christmas as a gift for me, not knowing where I was, but believing that the day would come when I would welcome it.

As I spread this Bible open in my hands, a sense of the power of our covenant-keeping God overwhelmed me. He had known me and in all my wanderings, His unseen Hand had never been removed and “in returning and rest I had been saved” as the verse given me at confirmation promised.

It would be several months before my parents and I actually met each other face to face. My church was planning to take a team to visit a fellowship in Victoria British Canada and—by a coincidence clearly orchestrated by the Holy Spirit—my mom and dad had signed up for a train trip to Victoria through my dad’s place of work. They were going to be in Victoria the exact same dates as the church team. During those days, I was able to meet my mom and dad in a neutral location and begin the process of healing our relationship. Later, I would go home for a longer visit.



This is one of the few pictures I have from this time, one my mother took of my dad and me on the street in Victoria. I was wearing my “Jesus People” uniform of a long skirt and loose top, and though you can’t see it very well, I was also wearing a smile of joy, the more genuine sign of the Lord’s gracious touch on my life.

Notice that this is my dad on vacation...still wearing his tie and dress shirt as if he were reporting to the office!

## Jesus People: Revival Fire

*“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:46*

At first, I did not realize that my experience, which was so deeply personal, was part of a larger movement that was affecting young people throughout the United States and even elsewhere in the world. Based on the heartfelt intercession of untold saints, God was pouring out His Spirit in marvelous ways to pull back a generation from the brink of destruction.

My memories of that first year of following Jesus are full of a sense of holiness and awe. God was moving in a truly wonderful way and every time we met together, we expected and received intense encounters with His Spirit and power. Our fellowship met in a public hall and consisted almost entirely of young people under the age of 25. Some were college students from UC Davis, but many like me, were refugees from the hippie life.

Our pastor Ron Coady was from New Zealand, a fiery preacher full of zeal. His wife was warm and motherly and a great comforter and encourager. Church services were long...we arrived early for prayer and pre-service worship. During the service, we would often have extended times of free-form worship. We had many talented musicians and guitar players. Often the Lord would give one of them a spontaneous new song, which they would sing out and the other musicians would follow along. It was an amazing experience to hear these songs flowing out in perfect

rhyme and measure, knowing that they were being birthed in that very moment by the power of the Spirit. At times we felt like we could hear the angels singing with us.

At almost every service, people were being saved. Young men and women with hollow haunted eye, wearing dirty clothes, came in with backpacks and bedrolls. The next week, you would see them again with a new countenance, wearing clean clothes, lifting their hands with joy. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit was real and tangible.

After the service, we would have potluck lunches before going out in the streets to witness. We would gather on street corners in Davis and sometimes in Sacramento. Someone would play guitar and the rest of us would talk with those who walked by about the power of Jesus. Later we returned to the church for evening Bible study.

When I joined the church, Pastor Coady was in the middle of teaching a series on the Tabernacle of Moses. This may seem like an unlikely topic for nourishing a bunch of spaced-out ex-hippies, but I was enthralled by the revelation of the pattern of salvation that he drew from the various furnishing and layout of the Tabernacle. He showed how each piece reflected some aspect of Christ, who was the fulfillment of all that was foreshadowed by the patterns of Old Testament worship. I felt like someone had opened a treasure chest in front of me, and suddenly all those dry, dusty stories from childhood became rich and vibrant and alive with meaning.

To this day, I am grateful for that series of teaching, which instilled in me a deep love for the Old Testament and an early understanding of the unity of the Biblical story. I have since met many believers who have focused almost entirely on the New Testament and lack the depth and richness of understanding that comes from seeing the new in light of the old.

## **Holiness, Repentance, and Adoption**

*“Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.” Ephesians 1:4-5*

Most of us who had partaken of drugs, rebellion, and free love left that lifestyle deeply scarred and in need of emotional and spiritual healing. In the girls’ home, we had a basement room that we set apart as a prayer chapel. One at a time, we would go to the basement to spend time alone seeking the Lord in prayer.

I can remember often hearing the sound of weeping rising from that room and I recall my own times of tears and groaning as I lay in deep repentance before the Lord. Job’s words capture my experience:



*“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”*  
*Job 42:5*

I had prided myself on my intelligence and enlightenment, but as Jesus said, “If the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt 6:23) Instead of enlightenment, I had been led into greater and greater darkness, until the God of the Bible reached out and rescued me from my foolish ways. Like Jacob, I would in some ways forever walk with a limp, a reminder of the weakness of who I am in the flesh and of God’s ultimate sovereignty.

During that first year in Davis, I had one special encounter with the Holy Spirit that was truly transformative. This happened when a guest speaker brought a message on adoption based on Ephesians 1:4-5.

The Holy Spirit exposed the dark and painful part of my mind that saw adoption as a form of rejection and that left me feeling like an outsider, marked as defective. After hearing this message, we had an extended time of worship. It was then God spoke very clearly to me that adoption was the method He had chosen to build His own family, the church. In fact, it is the only way to become part of His family and enter a relationship with Him. He showed me that it was actually a privilege that I was allowed to experience adoption twice: once into an earthly family and once into his spiritual family.

In my spirit, I saw His hands picking me up and placing me into the arms of my adoptive parents. He spoke to my heart, “I chose this family for you. Do you doubt my wisdom? Before you were born, I had a plan for you to be adopted, just as before the world began, I planned to form my own family through adoption.”

I cannot fully put into words the impact that this revelation had on me, but it was as if a dark shadow that had been part of me for as long as I could remember was suddenly gone. The healing wasn’t just in my understanding, but in my emotions and the deepest part of my being. The life-giving and bondage-breaking power of truth had set me free.

## **From Unity to Division**

*“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” 1 Tim 4:1*

Once we were cleaned up from the hippie life style, the hard work of learning how to walk in a manner that pleased the Lord began. For many of us, our minds and self-images had to be rebuilt as God laid a foundation for His character in our hearts. This was hard work. The simple realities of being responsible, getting a job, being accountable to one another, and living in the “real world” at times were overwhelming. And of course, eventually some gave up and turned away.



At the same time, weeds began to grow up among the good grain. I remember the first time I encountered a group from the “Children of God” on the streets in Sacramento. They greeted us as Christian brothers and sisters, but something seemed a little strange about them. Soon we were hearing of friends that had joined this group, and then rumors of their drug use, justified by a teaching that marijuana was one of “herbs of the field” that God had given us to enjoy. The sad reality was that false teaching was already rampant in the Jesus People Movement.

But for me, life was generally good. I went through a sequence of low-skilled jobs, tailored for developing humility and Christian character. Since I had no job history or references, I had to take what I could get. My first job was as a field worker picking tomatoes. I lived with the other migrant laborers in a large shed-like dormitory. The shed was broken up into individual units, but the walls separating the units were only 7 feet high, sort of like stalls for people. We rose before the sun did to climb on the big harvesting machines and sort the tomatoes as they were picked up from the field. It isn’t a job that had much to recommend it.

After I moved out of Bethany House, I moved into an apartment shared with three other believing young women. I benefited greatly from their fellowship...none of them had fallen quite so far out of “normal” society as I had, so I found their discipline and energy helpful in keeping me moving forward.

Later, I worked for a year as a nursing assistant in a senior care facility, where the brother who led Bethany House worked as a nurse. Eventually again through a sister in the church, I was able to get a job as a typist for a local Davis newspaper. One summer, I stayed with a friend in Lake County and we worked in a pear packing plant. Another summer, I accompanied the same friend to Northern California to work for the forest service.

People around me were growing in the Lord, some were getting married, and I felt that my life would continue on pretty much the same as it was. But again, the future held some surprises.

Trinity Tabernacle, the fellowship where I had found the Lord, experienced its own crisis when Pastor Coady, our senior pastor, took a sabbatical and traveled to India. This lively Pentecostal preacher returned from India as a bishop in the Syrio-Chaldean Church, an ancient body that traced its lineage from the first-century visit of the Apostle Thomas to India.

The first Sunday he was to preach after his return, we arrived for the service excited to welcome him home. As the service began, I turned in shock when some of our brothers entered the room dressed in long black robes swinging incense censers. Pastor Coady followed, also dressed in elaborate robes and holding a bishop’s staff. The order of service was printed and handed to us, with chants and recitations.

Most of us stood in stunned disbelief. In addition to Ron Coady, the senior pastor, we had two associate pastors. Within a few weeks, the church had split in three directions with a portion of the community following each of these men. I was devastated. I found the whole situation so painful and repugnant that I could not see myself remaining where I was. As a new believer saved

out of cult, I could not comprehend how true Christians could disagree. Hadn't Jesus called us as one body?

When a friend asked me if I would like to take care of her house in southern Oregon for six months I gladly accepted. I wanted to leave all the turmoil behind.

It was there—when my next-door neighbor sent her handsome, single younger brother over to take my trash to the dump—that the Lord opened up a new and unexpected chapter in my life.

