

Three Stories of Grace

Three typical American “Christians.”

Three happily-married people with families they love.

Then, three very *shocking* moments of truth: **“I am living in adultery!”**

It takes grace to obey, to align ourselves to the teaching of Jesus. Our flesh will usually go into outright rebellion at His calls to righteousness and holiness.

But to glorify Him in all we do, we must obey His revealed will.

And that takes grace.

These three testimonies reveal how the grace of God enabled people to crucify their natural desires and let Christ reign in them. Agony, doubts, objections from well-meaning friends and family; but finally peace and freedom as they submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ. Yes, they are testimonies of “the true grace of God!” 1 Pe. 5:12

Kathleen Naylor, Myerstown, PA

Dear readers, I write this to you in my dear Savior’s name, for His glory.

I grew up a strict Catholic girl, never hearing God’s plan of salvation. I was never told to read the Bible and never knew anything about a personal relationship with God.

At the age of twenty, I was married to Robert. This five-year marriage was agonizing, as he committed adultery numerous times. (I have long ago forgiven him and have been praying for his salvation for 28 years.) It ended up that I had to live with a family in Doylestown, Pa. Divorce papers were delivered to me at this home. I knew nothing of it and never signed anything.

Two years later, I was working in a convenience store in Piscataway, NJ. I felt very distant from God. I whispered a prayer in my heart as I worked, “God, draw me closer to you.” I did not yet realize that God had even heard my prayer.

Three weeks later, an older gentleman came in the store and began reciting scriptures and telling me about Jesus. Through his persistent witnessing, I was brought to salvation, in 1982.

In 1985, I married Mark Naylor, who was also a babe in the Lord. We met at Central Bible Church in Boundbrook, NJ. Our pastor told us it was okay to get remarried, since both our spouses had committed adultery on us and we were the innocent ones. We believed him and were so very happy together. We had two children. Never could we imagine the agony we would go through later.

Up until about 2002, we had experienced Pentecostal, Evangelical, Baptist, and Non-Denominational churches, but not one ever taught on divorce/remarriage, modest apparel, or the dangers of “eternal security” teachings. Half of the people in those churches were divorced and remarried.

According to the following Scriptures, marriage is “until death do you part.”

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Ro. 7:2-3

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever

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Mark Naylor, Bethel, PA

I grew up Catholic, following all the Sacraments. The Church led me to believe that I was going to heaven, but in my heart I knew I wasn't saved.

I got married early in life, at age 18, to a girl named Karen. Everything went fine for the first four years, but then we began having arguments and disagreements. Karen was working evenings, and one night when I went to see her, she wasn't there. I found out she was having a relationship outside the marriage. It seemed that my entire life was coming unraveled. I remember one night when I was crying and hurting pretty bad, being outside gazing into the heavens. I didn't truly know the Lord at this time, but I said, "God, if you're out there, make yourself known to me."

I started using drugs and alcohol around this time, to cover up the pain inside. My mom noticed what I had been doing, and it hurt her pretty bad. She came one night to talk to me and pleaded with me to stop using drugs and alcohol. She told me that my brother Butch had started going to this church called Central Bible Church, and asked if maybe we could go together on the next Sunday. I went, just to make her happy. Going to this church was a lot different than going to the Catholic Church. The people seemed friendly and happy, and I just couldn't figure out what made them tick. It took about three Sundays before the Lord opened my eyes, ears, and heart to the gospel message. I got saved that day.

I tried to reconcile my marriage to Karen, but she told me she was seeing somebody else and didn't want things to change. A few months later, I tried leading her to Christ, but she said she wasn't ready for a commitment at that time. She asked me for a divorce a few months after that, so we got divorced.

It was about two months after this that I met Kathleen. We became very good friends, and our relationship started to grow. I went to the pastor to see if it would be okay for us to get married. He said it was, because both of our spouses had committed adultery, and besides, "God was a God of second chances." So Pastor Bill married us. We had two daughters together.

As time moved on, we attended various Evangelical churches, but ended up in Oregon in a home church, and home schooling. This led us to the Godly Home tapes by Bro. Denny Kenaston. In 2002, we moved to Pennsylvania and started attending Ephrata Christian Fellowship, and enjoyed it very much.

One day, Bro. David Cooper asked if he could come over and talk to us. He confronted us on our being di-

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Joanne Smith, Monett, MO

I grew up in a non-religious home with my dad and my brother. My grandma took us to her little Independent Fundamental Baptist church every now and then, but not regularly. We did not really care to go, but enjoyed getting rewards for attending and bringing a Bible. In our minds, it was worth enduring the two hours for the treats.

When I was eight years old, I "accepted Jesus into my heart" after attending the annual Baptist Bible Camp (that was always so fun!! Lots of games, goodies, food, crafts, etc. ... with a little about Jesus sprinkled in here and there). I remember I was "saved" while in the back of my grandma's car riding home from camp. For some reason I was sitting on the floor. My grandma's dear friend was in the front passenger seat—she helped "lead me to Christ." I was trying so hard to figure out how

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Jesus could fit into my heart ... did He shrink down or something? And, why did I get Him all to myself? Could He split up and go into other hearts too? Or, maybe He just spent a little time in my heart and then made His rounds to other hearts? I had no idea. I remember I had a funny image in my mind of the classic-looking Jesus (longer brown hair, white robe, sandals, a trim beard, etc.) standing there somewhere amidst the chambers of my heart with all the blood, vessels, etc. holding on to bars like He was in a cage or something. Strange! What was He doing there? Just hanging out, I guess.

Time passed and I had nothing to do with church. I didn't like to go there, and no one but grandma seemed to care if I went. I continued to grow more confused and eventually got bitter. I no longer attended church when I was in my teen years, and thought anyone who believed that stuff was a brainwashed hypocrite. I wanted nothing to do with it. I had better things to do with my time—drugs, drinking, smoking, hanging out with friends, etc.

When I was sixteen, I got pregnant with Tylor. His father and I knew we did not want to be together, so he left (a mutual agreement) and I raised Tylor alone. When Tylor was about eight or nine months old, I met Michael. Handsome, funny, smart, a good singer ... we started

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Kathleen Naylor - Continued from page 10

marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery. Lu. 16:18

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Ps. 12:6

We moved to Bethel, PA, approximately eight years ago. We visited Ephrata Christian Fellowship for a while, but God led us strongly to Harmony Christian Fellowship, where we have been attending for over seven years.

One evening, precious David and Cherie Cooper came to visit Mark and I. With love, anguish, and Scripture pouring out of their godly hearts, they explained to us that we were living in adultery. We were shocked to hear all of this, as no one had ever made it known to us before. How I wish it had been! How I wish I had been under godly preachers as I am now, who preach all of God's Word and not just tickle the ears and keep the pews filled. What agony this would have prevented!

That evening will be forever in my memory. I'll never forget the pain on Cherie's face. What loving, obedient servants they were to come to us with such devastating news, the truth. Oh, how I thank my Lord for sending them!

However, I was not thankful at the time. I was stunned and confused. That evening, as Mark and I began the search of our lives, the Coopers kindly left us with some tapes to listen to on this truth. I nearly wore those tapes out over the next year of my seeking God, all the while hoping it was not true.

Satan was not happy. This became more evident as my seeking was consuming me. *Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. Ps. 112:1 Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. Ps. 66:16*

How the dear sisters at Harmony church loved me, patiently showed me Scripture, and fervently prayed. *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. He. 4:12*

I spoke to Mark, saying that I'd be moving out of our bedroom into our daughter Kelsi's room if God showed me that we really were living in adultery. At one point in my search, I spent three days with a precious Christian lady friend in another state. For three days, all we did was search the Scriptures and pray. We went to a Christian bookstore

and stayed there for six hours, reading every book we could find on the subject. The books we read were by some very well-known, looked-up-to authors, pastors, and speakers.

Sadly, not even one believed what God says in His Word about divorce and remarriage. I was still confused as we left the store. When the three intense days of searching, studying, and agonizing were over, my friend—who is one of the most intelligent, kind ladies I've ever met—looked at me and said, "Well, Kath, you're convinced now that you and Mark are okay, right?"

I said, "No, I am not convinced."

I'll just say that God's love and patience for me is so deep. He knew that I was a thickhead, but he also knew that I wanted to be clear with Him and walk pleasing in His

sight, in all His truth. So, for the one-hundredth time, I knelt down in my prayer closet (the bathroom) and cried out to Him: "Lord, I beg you to show me the truth, and I will obey You."

It was a moment I will never forget. God graciously and lovingly poured out His truth into my heart right there, no doubts at all ever again—I was living in adultery.

I nearly crumpled to the floor with agony, but also with relief, if you can comprehend those feelings. I had desperately wanted God to tell me, "You and Mark are okay." That evening, I told Mark what God had revealed to me, and even in his agony he so kindly and respectfully said, "You and Kelsi take the big room, and I'll take Kelsi's room." Her room is the size of a stamp.

I tell you this in all truthfulness, that even though Mark didn't share my conviction on the subject at that time, he never looked at me the same way again. Never again did he touch me or ask me. This is only God's love and mercy. Mark had nothing but agony, love, and respect in his heart. We lived as brother and sister, yes, under the same roof. But the adultery stopped. This continued for a time, until God eventually worked it out that Mark moved into a separate home.

I'm so grateful to my Lord for all He has done and is doing. How He sustains me! How He carries me!

I'm so thankful for my brothers and sisters in Christ who help, love, and encourage me. They cannot fathom just how much. I cannot stress enough to read the Scriptures on divorce and remarriage. God's Word is true and clear.

We must set aside our own pain and dwell on the pain it causes our Lord if we remain in adultery. We must repent. When all is said and done, only what is done for Christ will last. Eternity is forever. To God be all the glory! ~

It was a moment I will never forget ... God revealed to me that I was living in adultery!

Mark Naylor - Cont. from page 11

divorced and remarried. I took it pretty hard and asked him to leave. I didn't believe what they were saying was right. I was distressed in my spirit, and started searching the Scriptures. I was hanging on to Matthew 19:9 and Matthew 5:31-32, believing that infidelity on the part of a spouse justified putting him/her away. But I couldn't find any scriptures that supported remarriage.

For two years, I continued to search, searching in the Greek and Hebrew, hoping that the church's stand on divorce and remarriage was wrong. It was during this period that Kathleen and I separated rooms. I somehow just wanted to hang on to the fact that I was right, that Kathleen and my "marriage" was okay in God's eyes. At one point, I thought I found scriptures in 1 Corinthians 7 to support our being married, but as I read them in context, I saw that they were talking about something completely different than I thought. I realized that I was only divorced from my first wife by worldly law, and not by God's law. I also read something that confirmed this in Romans 7:2-3. It said that the only separation that would allow me to be remarried in God's eyes would be the death of my first spouse. Even though at that moment I knew it was true, I still did not want to accept it. My walk with the Lord started really growing cold, and I wasn't fellowshiping.

In November 2007, Kathleen and I separated houses. Kathleen was afraid that I would be upset, but I respected her wishes and moved out. We stayed friends and are still friends today.

After I moved, I read the series of articles in *The Heartbeat of the Remnant* by Dean Taylor titled "The Exception Clause." The information there helped back up what I already knew to be true. Regrettably, I was still too stubborn to acknowledge this truth out front.

In May 2009, we went to a tent meeting in Amherst, Virginia at Dayspring Christian Fellowship. While Jerry Mawhorr was preaching, I felt the Lord tugging at my heart. The Holy Spirit let me know that I was wrong for being angry at Him and at the church people who had told me the truth. I asked the Lord's forgiveness, and He restored me.

I thank the Lord that He put it into my heart to ask David Cooper for forgiveness for the way I felt toward him. I visited him a few weeks after I got back from the meeting, and the Lord blessed our time together. I also asked the other brothers that I had been bitter against for forgiveness. I am now back in fellowship at Harmony Christian Fellowship. I thank the Lord for His love, patience, and mercy in my life. ~

Joanne Smith - Cont. from page 11

hanging out, and eventually I got pregnant with Brianna. We were married about nine months after she was born, and when she was two years old, I had Corban.

Michael eventually left. He'd come back on and off, but mostly he was gone. Eventually he stayed gone and I was determined to make a better life for me and my children. I did not intend to divorce him; I had been through a lot as a child, and it was set in my mind that once I was married, I would not divorce. I believed in my vows that said "til death do us part." While I would claim to not believe in God at the time, I still had a fear in my heart and a general knowledge of right and wrong (God gave all of us the knowledge of good and evil). Unfortunately,

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the world came in and persuaded me to believe it was all right to divorce and just move on. Even some of his Christian family members were telling me I was "too good for him anyway and deserved better." So I filed for divorce. I had no idea where he was at the time, and he did not protest or show up for the hearing.

I met Bobby when Corban was about a year old. I did not intend to date, but for some reason I went ahead and did it anyway. We dated for quite a while, and he eventually moved in. For some reason, I had it in my mind that it would not be right to marry him, but he was so kind, loving, etc. Once again, the world came in and convinced me it was "my right" to remarry. Even though I still had a small prick in my heart, we went ahead and married about four years after we met. In this time, I hardly heard a word from Michael.

A whole new world opened up for me and my children when the idea of home schooling was presented to us. I took my children out of school and never looked back. I had no idea how I was going to do it, but I knew in my heart that it was what we must do. I found out quickly that the majority of parents who home school do it for religious reasons—I was the minority in every group we visited. So here I was, bitter towards Christianity, yet surrounded by professing Christians.

Not too long into our first year of homeschooling, Tyler asked if we could start going to church. I was the kind

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of parent that thought it was good to expose your children to as much as you could, as long as they were interested. If he had said he wanted to go to a Hindu temple or a Muslim mosque, I would have taken him.

Through a series of moves, we ended up in Washington (State). At this point, I began to seriously seek and follow the Lord and read His word. I ignored the Old Testament at first and headed straight to the Gospels. As I read them, I noticed that it seemed like many of the teachings of Christ were being ignored or twisted. I was confused as to why the church we were visiting would go directly against things Jesus said. I kept reading right through the New Testament and found several other things that just did not seem to add up. I kept my mind and heart open.

My first time through the Gospels, I came to Jesus' teachings on divorce and remarriage in Matthew 5. My heart jumped and felt like it stopped for a second. I remember thinking, "Surely it does not mean what it seems to mean? I must be missing something." I resolved to continue reading, but kept those words in my heart. Along came Matthew chapter 19 ... and with that, another prick in my heart. Then, of course, there was Mark 10 and Luke 16. Each time I read a new passage about divorce and remarriage, I felt so condemned and torn. I prayed for the Lord to help me understand.

I also prayed that He would show me if I was missing something; once again, I did not want to believe what it seemed to mean ... and why would I? My life was going along just fine the way it was: a loving husband, a good home, plenty of food to eat, and so on. I continued to read and got to Romans 7 where Paul wrote about how a woman is married to her husband as long as he is alive ... and if she marries someone else while he is still living, she is in adultery with that person. That's very clear, and I was feeling more condemned than ever; even still, I hoped and prayed I was missing something. Next was Romans 8:1 ... a verse I had heard many times already in the Baptist church, only it was longer than I remembered. Previously I had only heard the first part of it quoted: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Isn't that wonderful?! Well, I thought it was until I read the rest of the verse: "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

There was my answer right there. I was feeling condemned because I was walking after the flesh instead of the

Spirit. Of course, I still did not want to believe it; I still held on and hoped I was missing something. I got to 1 Corinthians 7 and read more about what the Bible teaches; in verses 10 and 11 the Lord is very clear that if a woman separates from her husband, she is to remain single or else be reconciled to her husband. Verse 39 reiterates what was already said before about a woman being bound to her husband as long as he is living. I thought maybe there was a 'loophole' in the middle of the chapter. However, when comparing it to the rest of the scriptures I had already read, it did not add up. I would have liked to believe that "not under bondage" meant I was free to remarry, but that's not what

it really says. Even after all of that—and the verses about fornicators and adulterers not being admitted into heaven—I denied it all and tried my best to live my life as a "good Christian." I tried really hard to convince myself that since I was not a Christian when I got divorced and remarried, I was "washed in the blood" ... God forgot about my past and saw me as I was right then. That all sounded good, but it still did not add up.

I continued to read the New Testament; each time I read it, I saw new truths. Also, each time I read through it, I was more sure than ever that I was not living according to God's word. I noticed how in Matthew 19 and Mark 10, Jesus pointed the Pharisees back to the beginning. When

a man marries a woman, they are no more two, but one. This made it clear to me why a woman is married to her husband as long as he lives ... because as long as he is alive, they are still one flesh with each other. The only thing that separates you from your flesh is death. I once heard someone put it this way—it's like taking two balls of clay, one red and one blue, and mixing them together. You now have one ball of purple clay; they are no more two, but one. Now try to separate the blue from the red. You cannot.

Through all these struggles, Bobby was right there helping me and being so loving and patient. He was not a Christian, but he was such an encouragement to me. He told me once that he was not going to stand between God and me. At first, I hated that response. It seemed to me that it would have just been "easier" if he got mad, called me crazy, and kicked me out. However, God knew best; I needed to accept this, not take the easy way out.

Not too long after that, I was online and found a "What kind of denomination are you?" quiz. Looking back now, that sounds really silly, and I would not recommend trying to fit a denomination into your beliefs! But I answered the

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questions and anxiously awaited the answer ... “Anabaptist.”

I did some research, since I had no idea what an “Anabaptist” was. Their history caught my attention ... a group that was actually being persecuted for obeying the teachings of Christ and willing to die for it.

An online research led me to a contact who pointed us to conservative Anabaptist congregations, but throughout this whole time, I was constantly struggling with my marital state. I tried my best to ignore what I knew the Lord was asking me to do, however it was to no avail. Bobby remained patient and supportive. Church problems eventually caused me to stop attending church for a while.

Sometime during the beginning of the summer of 2008, I was finally ready to step out in faith and follow the Lord. I had counted the costs for about three years or

I had counted the costs for about three years or so, and knew that I must give up all that I had to be His disciple. That included Bobby.

so, and knew that I must be willing to give up all that I had to be His disciple. Lu. 14 That included Bobby.

We split up, but did not tell anyone for months. In times past when I thought I was ready to take that step, I’d start talking to people and get so confused. It didn’t matter if they agreed or disagreed; it all confused me. This time I knew I had to keep it between Bobby, the Lord, and me. When I finally did start letting others know, most assumed it was “my church” that convinced me to take the path I was set to take. However, I had not been going to a church for two years or so at that point. I was just reading the Bible and earnestly seeking the TRUTH, no matter the cost.

We now attend the Church of Monett, in Monett, MO. I’ll just say that I’ve never met a church group quite like this—totally dedicated to serving the Lord and “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Also, their heart for the lost is something I’ve never experienced before in any group we were ever a part of. They are willing to travel to the other side of the world if that’s what it takes to connect with those who are truly seeking and trying to follow the Lord on this narrow path He has given us to follow. ~

The above was extracted from Joanne’s testimony at: <http://fewtherebethatfindit.blogspot.com/2010/05/my-journey.html>