

"It is all the Lord's Work"

I spent most of my life in the Worldwide Church of God, a cultic, legalistic group. In my later teens and early twenties I stopped attending but the church still influenced my life. For example, while I was participating in a sinful lifestyle I didn't eat any of the unclean meats listed in the old covenant, and I didn't celebrate Christmas, Valentine's Day, or Easter. I could be smoking a joint and at the same time looking at a bread label to make sure that it contained no animal fat. Of course this happened because no amount of rules or scare tactics can change a person's heart. Only the Lord can, and I am so glad He did.

I started regularly attending the WWCG again when I was older, and after a few years I started to see my own hypocrisy. I think that God was using this time to open my eyes. Before, I would not have entertained too many questions because I was sure I was in the "one true church" and that I just needed to try harder.

I remember reading a book about a woman with cancer, and what she and her family went through. The faith and comfort they had in God was foreign to me. I began to wonder at my own lack of faith and how it was that these "so-called Christians" had a relationship with God that was far better than mine.

Then an incredible thing happened. The WWCG started to change many of its long-held doctrines after Herbert Armstrong died and left Joseph Tkach in charge. And although this was a time of great turmoil, I found myself embracing it. But, even though the church was making changes, I had too many questions that no one could answer. This was a time of transition and learning for the leaders there and I needed to find people that already *knew* the answers, so I started attending a Baptist church. It wasn't long before I was in the company of real Christians and I was amazed. They weren't Christians because they kept the Sabbath, or because they got every leavened crumb out of their homes for the Days of Unleavened Bread, but because they loved the Lord and the difference was on the inside. It was amazing and refreshing. I practically lived at that church for several weeks, and drove people crazy with questions. I went to every class I could. In the WWCG we didn't talk much about Jesus and it took me several months before I could say His name without feeling weird. The reason for this was because we, as a church—leaders included—used to make fun of the way pastors and evangelists in other denominations would talk about Jesus all the time. We thought they gave Him too much importance. And we never said Jesus—it was always Jesus Christ. So to say "Jesus" was too personal and foreign to me.

It was during the time I was taking a class on *Who is Jesus?* that the Lord led me to repentance and I became aware of my need for His atonement. I'm so thankful the Lord brought me out of all that. If it weren't for my belief now in election and the sovereignty of God, I would have little hope of many people in that situation being saved. After being saved myself and seeing all the family and friends still entrenched in the old way, I questioned, "why me?". It has only been in the last 3 years that I have come to

understand election and am so grateful. I owe nothing of my saving grace to myself—
not one single bit. It is all the Lord's work and I am forever in His debt.