

# STORIES OF LOVE

#TsunamiOfLove



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# TELL ME YOUR STORY

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We love stories. Watch them constantly at the movies, binge the series box sets. We tell all the best ones to our neighbours and read them to our kids at night. Stories can be powerful.

This short booklet contains a few of our stories.

***Real stories of real lives.***

In the midst of a lot of bad news here's some good news. God is on the move. He's very present and very active. We could give you long-winded reasons why we believe this. Or we could tell you some stories.

We believe that God is rising a new tsunami in our day. A Tsunami of Love. These stories are evidence of this. Each one tells the story of how God transformed someone with his love in the midst of their everyday lives.

We hope that as you read them you find them as inspiring as we do.

Be blessed

If you have a story to share, email [hello@tsunamioflove.co.uk](mailto:hello@tsunamioflove.co.uk)

## SURPRISED BY JOY

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People didn't know I was looking for something. How could they? I didn't know myself. At 24 I was in the age bracket of people least likely to stumble into a church. A small business owner who'd recently graduated – I loved life. The only reason I'd gone to church this Sunday was to try and impress my new girlfriends parents.

My only memories of church from childhood had been of a dry and dusty place where judgmental people go to sing, gossip and be spoken at. I remember being dragged there by my mother until she finally broke and allowed me to stay home and play football with my friends.

I'd happily say that to me Christianity was boring, irrelevant and frankly untrue.

Yet the people I met seemed to carry with them a joy that I didn't know, they took great pleasure in 'worshipping' God and listening for His voice. They knew a peace, despite their circumstances, and a hope that I'd not seen before. All rooted in this man Jesus and the other stories written in a book written 1000s of years ago.

I'd thought Jesus was no more significant than a fairy story, fable or newsagent comic. I was wrong.

If pressed I'd have told you I believed in God, probably even have ticked the box on the form saying I was a Christian. After all we live in a 'Christian' country and the things we see must have come from somewhere? It was beyond my comprehension that mountains and trees, parrots and bees, fingerprints and sunsets could have all have come from nothing. Yet the idea of an all-loving, all-knowing and all-powerful God was far from my mind.

I'd ask my girlfriend about it, and patiently she'd try and help me where she could.

Quickly I found I had an insatiable desire to find out whether I was the one who was blind or whether these church goers were. I

committed to reading books on the big objections to faith, and studying web articles. I'd listen to debates and began attending a course on the

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Christian basics. I loved the course, not just for the food, talks and company, but the debate.

I'd love to ask the really big hairy awkward questions that'd make people squirm and think. I'm sure some people thought I was just trying to be frustrating, but I was for real. I was searching.

Could all I'm discovering of this guy Jesus and the God he is the 'perfect image' of be true?

The more I questioned the history, and the stories, the more I investigated the searching issues that I had, the more answers came. Yet the more the questions no longer seemed to matter. It wasn't just that I wanted to know about God, I wanted to know God.

But the game changing moment was as I listened to three visitors to our course share with us what they felt like God was saying. They picked me out, and I felt nervous as they began to speak out what they felt like He wanted to say to me... I was blown away and could deny it no longer. Describing secret thoughts and feelings, alongside pictures of things that only I could have known. God was real and He knew me. This changes everything. I didn't have all the answers, but I knew enough to want to put my trust in the grace of God and work of Jesus.

No decision has been more significant than that one, none ever will.

Since then so much has changed. I have my own stories of knowing peace through storms, seeing God's power before my eyes. Seeing Him come through for me again and again. Seeing Him shape and encourage me in character and calling. Finding security, forgiveness and genuine joy in Him.

I will never go back, could never go back, and it all started with a kind of search. I was searching for purpose and life and I've found it in God.

The bible says 'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.'

I've found it to be true. I'd encourage you to do the same.

*Steve*

## Knowing God through grief

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Growing up in a small village life had been very happy and very 'ordinary'. I spent most of my childhood playing in the fields, doing sport and being with family. My Dad was part of a local Church and I used to go along to the occasional service with him when it was his turn to serve as I enjoyed giving out the hymn books and welcoming people.

There was about a dozen people in the congregation and most were senior citizens. Despite not knowing any other Christians my age or seeing any examples of how God was relevant in my life I harboured a curiosity about Him and a desire to know more. I went to classes run by

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the local vicar to try and find out more and read bits of the Bible. I didn't really feel as if I was getting anywhere and then when I was 15 my life took a sudden change. My Mum had been unwell for some years but I had never been told what was wrong with her. I found out 4 days before she died she had cancer. I was in a complete state of shock and within a week my whole understanding of the world and my life was turned upside down.

In the months following the death of my Mum I began to try and make sense of my new life. I had no reference point for the depth of pain and loss I suffered and did not know what to do with the strength of emotion I was feeling. Day after day instead of sitting in school where I should have been learning about algebra and grammar I was out walking the fields and coastline around where I lived just me, my dog and my questions. As Autumn moved into winter I wrapped up against the harsh winds and stinging rain and would look out across the bleak countryside and wondered how anything could survive the winter out there. I wondered if I would survive the winter. I would shout out my anger, hurt, confusion; only to have the wind snatch the words out of mouth before I could barely finish a sentence. I called out to the heavens as I trudged along the seawall, desperate to make some sense of my misery.

My Dad remarried within a year to a lady who was a full on Christian. She and I came to blows on many occasions and our relationship was

not an easy one. But she played a significant role in introducing me to the Jesus I now know and love. I found a life and vibrancy in a faith which seemed to have a living active part in the lives of people I met who went to her church. I went to a huge spring gathering of thousands of other Christians and found myself caught up in worship where my soul felt at home and I drank in teaching about who Jesus is and how He changes lives.

Then just a few years after my Mum died my Dad also perished from Cancer. I had longer with him to process the reality he wouldn't live and prepare myself for the loss but it didn't make it any easier. After his death I felt very alone in the world. Orphaned, I had no siblings and the relationship with my step-mother broke down. My wider family were amazing but along way from Bedford where I was living. I felt defeated and utterly lost. But I knew one thing, even though I felt that way the God I had began to get to know and trust hadn't changed. Therefore, I had an opportunity to learn what it was to really stand on the solid rock of Jesus. The Bible says He is our healer, comforter, He is with us always. He sees when we rejoice and when we are sad and walks with us through the dark valleys as well the mountain tops. So despite being very weak and with little spark for life I just took small steps to keep putting myself in the way of His goodness. I read the Bible. I went to Church, sometimes I could only sit and listen but just to be with others worshipping was good for me.

A key turning point for me was when I opened up my private, dark, suffering world to faithful friends around me who prayed with me, challenged me, loved me and helped me walk a path to emotional freedom as I processed the pain and loss I experienced.

Gradually I felt my strength return, but it was different from before. I felt so much more at peace with myself, who I was and what my life looked like. I had learnt that God is control and I can trust Him with my life whatever my circumstances. I no longer feel lost or alone, but I know my heavenly Father has plans and purposes for my life. I am content with Him having numbered my days from start to finish. He has given life in a way I could never imagined when my heart started asking those questions in a small stone village church 35 years ago.

*Kirstie*

# Journey from despair

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I can still remember pacing up and down through my small apartment in The Netherlands. I just walked to my sideboard full of pills that help against panic attacks. About four minutes before I took some medicine with shaking hands, I knew it was too late. I was in the middle of a full blown panic attack.

Thankfully they didn't last long, but they were the result of my depression in my teenage years that became intolerable when I left school. I can still remember staring at the computer screen, needing to do simple tasks and I physically couldn't do it, my brain was all fuzzy.

When I finally admitted I had a problem, I started seeing a psychotherapist and a friend said to me: "Go to this Christian conference with me and see what happens". I did, and the rest is history.

For several months a psychotherapist really helped me discover who I really am. From a Christian perspective he showed me that there is a purpose to my life, that there is joy to be found in knowing that someone is joyful about you, namely God. Not a distant deity, but a loving Father that was willing to look beyond His own comfort, just to make sure we would know that He loves humanity, rather than rejecting it.

I finally went to the Christian conference and the keynote speaker called me up front from the crowd and started talking about things in my life. He spoke to me about my depression and my recent relational breakup. I now know that when you believe Jesus is alive, you can also hear His heart for other people. Christians call this prophecy. Then the speaker said something that changed my life: "You need to know that God is doing something in you that is as pure gold!" Life suddenly flooded through me and I didn't know it then, but several weeks later I realised that my depression was gone.

I didn't suffer with hopelessness anymore. I now know that someone is for me. That someone fought for me.

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That someone is happy to see me. His name is Jesus, my God. My saviour, my Rescuer.



Now almost a decade later, I still have sad days like anyone. However I live with hope, purpose and know that there is a God who is smiling over every person in this world, ready to wake them up into a eternal relationship with Jesus.

Take the risk, say yes to God.

*Marco*

## Encounter on the roadside

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I was born into a Muslim household, and being brought up by two excellent parents and the teachings of Islam. Once I reached my teenage years I realised that I felt differently about it, and I enjoyed the drinking alcohol and the clubbing culture. Then at University, Islam began to slip further and further out of my life.

On some level I thought I was Muslim, but I was not practicing and I lived a more mainstream British life, having a couple of long-term cohabiting relationships. I remember at Ramadan I'd throw myself into prayer, fasting and study but at the end feeling nothing, no connection to the religion, and no connection to their God, and I went back to a non religious lifestyle. I'd have called myself an atheist.

I enjoyed myself – living well; having a successful career, long term relationships – and life appeared good! But there was an emptiness, an area of unfulfilment, an area of missing a real purpose, living the rat race, and not feeling a true direction. Then a good friend of mine started introducing me to Christianity through her own extraordinary journey, we'd end up debating the virtues of Christian life and values through to the small hours.

I found myself being lead closer and closer, why would my eyes start weeping, why would I get cold chills running through my body, from speaking about such things. I began by buying a Bible, which started its life living on book case, and never really being touched, then it made its way onto my lamp side table in my lounge, which encouraged me to start picking it up, and thumbing the odd page, I found that I enjoyed doing this, reading the stories and thinking about faith.

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The real breakthrough came when I began attending an Alpha course. What really touched me was the power of the people in this church, and the weekly talks, they just seemed to fit into my journey of finding the power of Christ.

As the course progressed I found myself yearning for more, and my breakthrough came on the 21<sup>st</sup> March, 17. Over years of having to lead others in a professional capacity, asking for help appeared to be a weakness to me, but I wanted to talk to God and ask for His help.

That night on my way home as soon as I got onto the A421 heading towards the M1 I began to pray, and I asked the Lord for help on a couple of things. The road was dark, it appeared as though there were no other cars on the road, but I found myself tingling all the way down my back, and as progressed the feeling got stronger and stronger, then my eyes just kept weeping. Feeling overwhelmed by his love as I reached the M1 – I found myself saying “Amen”. The relief that I felt was extraordinary, and I just started laughing, I then felt the most amazing amount of courage just wash over my body. It was at that point I had realised, that I had my first encounter with the Holy Spirit, and it was GOOD!

It was the first of many encounters with God, and I’ve not stopped enjoying His presence since.

Thank you Heavenly Father for blessing us with your son to wash away our sins, thank you Lord for inviting me to join your people, and thank you Lord for providing me with all of your runway lights to enable me to land here.

*Abul*

## Looking for adventure...

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My story is a privileged one, really - void of any major trauma or heartache. For that I am utterly grateful! I had a happy childhood in suburban, middle-class America with a family who loved me and made home a safe place.

In spite of this, as an 18 year old, I went off to university bored and deeply dissatisfied with life. I had this driving hunger for more! I was eager for something gritty - I longed for risk and adventure.

I just knew in my spirit that there must be more to life than what I had!

I relished the endless opportunities for fun that university offered, and jumped into partying and relationships with both feet. And for a while, this seemed to fill the hole in my heart. After a few years and the heartbreak of a broken relationship, the party life started to lose its lustre, and I was back to feeling dissatisfied, lacking hope and purpose, and full of shame about the things I had done.

It was during this time that my mum asked me if I would read the Bible with her. I reluctantly agreed - mostly because I had gotten myself into a financial mess and my parents had let me move back home rent free. I felt this was the least I could do.

One day I read a verse in the Bible that says Mary (Jesus' mum) took the things she experienced and treasured them in her heart. For some reason that just really stuck in my mind and I kept thinking about it and letting it swirl around in my heart.

It was during one of these musings that I encountered God's gritty, personal, and very real love for me. I was thinking about what it was like to treasure things in your heart, and suddenly I heard a still, small voice (which I somehow knew to be Jesus) say, "Caroline, I love you and I have hidden treasure for you to find in life too!"

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For me, in that moment, it was like the world stood still. It was as if HIS hand was held out to me in invitation. In that one sentence, He invited



me home. In my heart I said, “YES! I am all in!” and I took His hand, and for the first time experienced for myself, forgiveness (I felt as if my shame was washed away!), freedom, purpose, joy, life and hope for real ADVENTURE!

I have absolutely never looked back. My life with Him hasn't been 100% easy, but it's never been boring and it's always been beautiful!

*Caroline*

## Instantly His love came rushing in

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From the age of four I remember going along to Church. Sunday after Sunday sitting at the back watching the time pass by. I never really understood God and wasn't interested in finding out. But, as the years went by I began slowly to discover who God was and at the age of 12 I decided for myself that God did exist and I chose to give my life to him in that moment.

I wish I could say my life was great and my faith grew but, the reality of school and the pressure to fit in meant I felt I had to choose between God or friends; I chose my friends. I think fundamentally I had always struggled to grasp the concept that God loved me.

How could God love me? I didn't merit myself worthy of love from anyone, let alone the creator of the universe.

I would of given anything to feel love, to know I was loved; I just didn't look to God. I searched for love my whole life and at times it felt like an aimless and hopeless search. I made mistake after mistake and I was left feeling alone, broken and confused. I battled with fear, shame and guilt - regretting the

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choices I made but not knowing what to do with the emotions I looked to love from people to try and comfort the pain I felt.

I hoped that the praise and love I received from these people would be enough for me, but it wasn't. I turned to a lot of things that felt right in the moment but I learned the hard way, almost all of it left me feeling completely empty. I think there was a lot of fear in my life and I slowly built walls around my heart. I was scared to let people in because I was scared of being let down. Throughout this period of my life I would still go along to Church and smile on the outside as if I had everything together, when the reality was inside I felt so lonely. People would tell me, "God loves you" and I would remember thinking to myself, if you know the things I had done, the person I was you wouldn't say that to me. I tried to connect with God time and time again in Church services but would always leave feeling disappointed.

I had left school and went away with my friends to a notorious party destination being surrounded by 1000s of people that were drinking,

dancing and appearing to love life. I remember one of those nights looking around the bar I was in and thinking these people all look so lonely. I was among people the same as me, people searching for love, acceptance and a place they belonged. I then just got this overwhelming feeling that I didn't want my life to look like this anymore. I wanted love; real love.

The next week I had agreed to go to a Christian camp for a week and to this day not really knowing why. Going into that week I remember thinking this is make or break for God and I. I was going to try one last time to feel Gods love, one more opportunity to let him in before I gave up on him altogether.

It was the first night and I was standing in the meeting and I stood there for a moment and said "God, I want to meet with you." Instantly, His love came rushing in.

He had been pursuing me my whole life, I just never knew it.

The God who once was a distance idea became my closest friend in that night. I was surrounded by 1000s of young people who knew they were loved, knew they were accepted - I finally felt like I belonged; I had found what I was looking for. All the moments of trying to earn his love felt wasted. In that moment I realised I was worthy of his love. Not because I tried hard, not because I had searched hard or because I put my best face on or even because others told me I was worthy of his love. I'm worthy of love because I am a child of God who has been pursued from the very beginning of time itself. I realised I didn't have to try so hard; I can rest in a future that is secure not because of my own striving but because of His grace.

I have been made new and given a home that will be mine forever. I don't have to worry anymore. Where once was emptiness is now purpose. Where once hopelessness, hope. Where once stood fear now stands my faith, where once I was broken I found His love.

That night I felt like God said this to me, "You were made for love. I made you in my image, I made you to be with me." From that day I have been on an adventure of discovering who I am in Christ. I've learnt that my identity is rooted in so much more than the decisions I had made, I was finally free and knew I was loved.

*Owen*

# Becoming God's daughter

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Thanks for taking the time to read this. My story began when I was just 17.

As a small child I often stood looking up at the sky and being fascinated by clouds and I loved looking at pictures of angels in my prayer book which had gold edges and reading the prayers when I went to bed. I had no sense of who God was but somehow I felt comforted by the pictures.

As an adopted child I felt a sense of shame about who I was and even though I know my parents loved me, my struggle to feel accepted or to belong influenced most areas of my life. I grew up believing that I had to work hard to be loved and that to feel valued

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***My thoughts about God were limited to a vague notion that perhaps God lived somewhere above the clouds.***

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I needed to be like everyone else. Desperate to fit in, I wore a mask but behind it I felt lonely and insecure. My thoughts about God were limited to a vague notion that perhaps God lived somewhere above the clouds. I certainly had never considered that God might love me and want to know me.

I felt very accepted and very loved.

When I first met Alice, a friend at school, I could see there was something different about her. Around both her and her family I felt accepted and very loved. Alice invited me to her church. At first I felt awkward as though I shouldn't be there because I didn't belong but the more loved I felt the more I wanted to stick around.

It was after this that I discovered that God loved me in the same way. In fact he loved me so much he had sent Jesus to die in my place so that all my wrong doing, which separated me from knowing him could be removed once and for all. God's love is a free gift but as with any gift if we don't receive it and open it we never know what is inside. When I chose to receive God's gift of forgiveness and eternal life I became a Christian, a follower and friend of Jesus.



Back then I didn't know who I was or who I belonged to. It was like I had a missing identity. Since that day in 1973 God has shown me that He is the most perfect Father, my Father and our Father.

I know that I belong to him forever because He will never let me go. I also know that I don't need to be like anyone else because he loves me for who I am, for who He created me to be. I also know he loves me not for what I do but for who God says I am, his daughter.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come'

*Claire*

## Back from the brink

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I can still clearly recall kneeling on my bedroom floor, tears streaming down my face, and the feeling of the cold blade against my wrist. I was in my early 20s and a propensity for depression and a stressful job had created a toxic cocktail. On the outside I was happy and outgoing, but on the inside I was desperately trying to hold it all together. Feeling the weight of depression with the added guilt that I was meant to be one of those 'happy clappy Christians'. And yet here I was wanting to end it all. I felt like an absolute failure.

In my desperation I cried out to God, wanting a sign that I was loved or that someone cared. I would love to say that in that moment I got my instant miracle and a host of heavenly angels showed up or I heard the audible voice of God. But nothing happened. I felt utterly alone. I know now that God heard my prayer and answered it; just not in the way I thought He would.

As I look back to that night I know that is when my miracle started. I had nothing left in me to carry on. No fight. No desire to be here. And yet somehow I found the strength to put the knife down. At the time I thought it was because I was a coward, but I know now that it was God giving me courage. Courage to carry on. Courage to get up every day. Courage to begin to hope again. Looking back, I know without a doubt that in that moment God kept me going. He gave me the strength I needed when I had nothing left. He answered my prayer by taking me on a journey to show me just how much He loves me and how much He cares.

I grew up going to church. I had heard over and over that God loved me. That He loved me so much that He sent His son Jesus to die for me, to take my place for the bad things that I'd done and thought. And yet somehow these truths had never really sunk in or gone from my head to my heart. I could tell you all about God's love, but at that time I'm not sure that I really believed that God loved me.

Life didn't change overnight. My miracle took time. But as I sit here typing this it is crazy to look back and see how far God has brought me and what I have learnt about Him and me along the way. I used to believe I was unlovable, ugly and worthless. I was forever trying to seek people's affirmation to fill the void of wanting to feel loved. And I was constantly berating myself for missing the high standards that I set for

myself. I was caught up in a cycle of believing that God and people only loved you for what you could do, not for who you are. I was tired in every possible way.

Since then things have changed so much. I can't put this down to one moment in time, but to so many moments that have helped me to fully know that God loves me. Not because of anything I can do for Him, but just because He is so amazing. It is an incredible feeling knowing you are wholeheartedly and unconditionally loved. I feel so much more alive and confident in who God has made me

to be and comfortable in my own skin. I'm still on a journey and I'm not sure you can ever stop learning about the depths of God's love, but I know God has brought me this far and He will be with me whatever life has in store.

There is no magic formula and being a Christian does not guarantee you an easy life, but it does guarantee you the peace that comes from knowing you are truly loved.

If you need to know that you are loved, why not ask God to show you that He is real and that He loves you.

What's the worst that could happen? You never know, it could change your life. It certainly changed mine.

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***There is no magic formula and being a Christian does not guarantee you an easy life, but it does guarantee you the peace that comes from knowing you are truly loved.***

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## WHAT ABOUT YOU?

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Some people would read stories like these and are amazed, we really do hope that they encourage you that God is on the move.

Some might read the stories with interest but then just go back to their Jaffa cakes and Earl Grey Tea thinking “this could never happen to me”... but some people dare to wonder if the same God who has encountered the people in these pages could be inviting them.

He is inviting you.

Around two thousand years ago God launched a radical mission into the world to rescue the lost and the lonely. Whether you know it or not, you were made to know God, and put plain and simply **God loves you**. His desire was never to condemn the world as some people think but to save it, restore it, redeem it.

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***“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16***

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The Bible says that each of us like sheep have gone our own way, and when we look under the surface we know it to be true. We’ve thought, said and done things we regret and that rebel against God, yet in Jesus we have a saviour who offers us forgiveness and reconnection with the God who knit us together in our mother’s womb.

We’ve all gone our own way. All fallen short. And all deserve to be separated from God now, and for eternity. Yet the Bible says the free gift of grace that he extends to us is eternal life in Jesus.

He so loved the world, that he gave His only son, that whoever believes in Him won’t perish but will have that eternal life.

But this gift must be received. The Bible calls us to confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts in the one He sent to rescue us. To put our trust fully in Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. For whoever calls on His name will be saved.



For all of us the relationship started with a prayer. There is nothing ‘magic’ about it. But when a sincere heart comes before God to invite Him in, He hears, and He responds.

Should you want to, you could pray something like this today:

*Father, I come to you now wanting to know you.  
To say sorry for my sin, and I choose to turn from it now.  
Thank you that Jesus died for me, to pay for it.  
I put my trust in the finished work of the cross and  
resurrection.  
I receive your grace and ask that you’d come into my life to  
guide and empower me from this day forward.*

*Amen*

If you prayed that prayer, congratulations. You’ve just started the best journey of your lifetime as a son, or daughter of God. Adopted into his family.

Let us know at [hello@tsunamioflove.co.uk](mailto:hello@tsunamioflove.co.uk) and we’ll happily help you with next steps on enjoying the adventure.

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Some verses you might want to find in a Bible that all of the above is based on are:

*John 3:16-17  
Isaiah 53:6  
Psalm 139:13  
Romans 3:23  
Romans 6:23  
John 14:6  
Romans 5:8  
Romans 10:9-10  
Ephesians 2:8-9  
Romans 10:13*

## SOME NEXT STEPS

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We hope you've enjoyed reading these stories. They are just a handful of hundreds across our community at the King's Arms Church in Bedford, and of millions across the globe.

You'd be welcome to visit us, any time at King's House to explore the claims of Christianity, or to see what a church community is like. It might surprise you.

Directions and information can be found at [kingsarms.org](http://kingsarms.org)

If you're not in Bedford, we'd encourage you to find somewhere close to you and ask some big questions. Visit [alpha.org](http://alpha.org) or get yourself online to find a church near you.

*1 John 4:8 God is love.*