

My Way - A Testimony

How Jesus changed my life

1. Childhood and youth

I am the third of four children and was born in 1963 in Riedberg. I grew up in a Catholic home and had a beautiful, sheltered childhood in the countryside. We played outside in the meadows and the bushes, sometimes even in our pyjamas in the evening. That time was marked by freedom, security and many happy memories.

In my youth I was accompanied by wonderful people. I was active in the youth church and closely involved in the Catholic parish. Faith was simply part of life. Later I took my school-leaving exams in Riedberg and began training as an industrial clerk. Further training as a secretary and as a foreign-language secretary at an industrial company followed.

Professionally, things went well. I moved from Riedberg to Guetersloh, which at the time felt like stepping out into the wide world. I worked as assistant to the sales director, had my own flat, did sport, sang in a choir, played the piano and discovered aerobics.

But my faith suddenly played no part any more. It had got lost somewhere. I was busy with my career, my free time and self-fulfilment - and yet, in my early thirties, a great emptiness began to grow inside me.

2. The search for meaning

One day I was simply standing in my living room and asked myself: "Why am I actually alive? What is the meaning of my life?"

Shortly afterwards more questions came: what happens after death? Does God really exist? Is what the Bible says true?

I began to search intensively. I read philosophical books, went to seminars, ordered texts, read the Bible from cover to cover, marked passages, underlined sentences. But inside, everything stayed empty. I did not understand Jesus - even though I had been raised Catholic, even though I had taken communion and been confirmed.

I asked myself: did Jesus really die for me? Did he rise again? Where is he now? Does he still do miracles today?

Those questions stayed with me for years.

I changed employer, moved after sixteen years to Claas and worked there as assistant to the management. I enjoyed the job, but deep inside I knew: this is not what my heart is about. I wanted to do something that really made sense.

3. The break and a new path

At some point I sensed it quite clearly: I no longer want this assistant's life. No more suits, no more trade fairs, no more career ladder. I wanted to serve people.

So at the age of thirty-eight I decided to start again completely and train in sport. My father was appalled: "You are demoting yourself from officer to private."

But I knew this was my way. For three years I commuted daily from Guetersloh to Muenster, four hours a day by train and bicycle. I studied alongside seventeen-year-olds, took exams, even broke my foot, and additionally qualified as a sports therapist.

I worked with blind people, did personal training, helped people in rehabilitation - and still I sensed: this is not quite it either.

4. The crisis and the first call to Jesus

In September 2018 my mother was diagnosed with bone cancer. That news triggered a fear in me such as I had never known. I lay in bed at night and my whole body began to shake. I had no control any more.

In my desperation only one name came to mind: Jesus.

And I said out loud: "In the name of Jesus: stop. Be still."

In that moment the fear was completely gone. Simply gone. The next morning I knew: there is something here. Jesus is real.

5. The first real encounter with Jesus

In December 2018 I found a small advertisement in the newspaper: "Christians at work - from emotional wreck to woman of strength." A woman named Marit Eichberger from Paderborn was telling her life story there.

I cut out the notice and pinned it to my board. Something inside me said: you have to go there.

The event took place in a restaurant called "Zum Himmelreich". It had snowed, the light was warm, the atmosphere calm and inviting. I went on my own and knew nobody.

There were about twenty to thirty people. There was music, you could eat something, and I felt at ease straight away. Then Marit began to tell her story.

She spoke of failed relationships, debts, illness, inner emptiness - and of how in her greatest need she had called out to God: "God, if you exist, then I need you now."

Shortly afterwards she experienced a turning point, was freed from her guilt and met Jesus personally. Her life had changed completely.

When at the end she said, "You can invite Jesus into your life now," and prayed a prayer, I prayed along.

And in that moment I knew: this is it. This is the truth. Jesus is real. Something inside me became quiet, clear and certain. For the first time I had the feeling of having arrived.

6. The search for the Holy Spirit

Someone had once said to me: "You have to experience the Holy Spirit." I had never experienced that in the Catholic Church. Nothing had happened at my confirmation. Inwardly I had always thought: where is he then?

After that evening I began to wonder: what actually is a Pentecostal church?

I searched online and found the CGM in Muenster. I put the service in my calendar - and kept postponing it. Videos from America had put me off. I did not want that.

But then, at "Christians at work", a lot of people from exactly that church were suddenly sitting there. They seemed completely normal. Friendly. Genuine. And I knew: now is the time.

7. My first service in a free church

The first service was completely different from anything I knew. No incense, no vestments, no altar - just an ordinary building, a friendly welcome, children playing around.

Then the worship began: drums, guitar, keyboard - and a deep, honest atmosphere. I thought: this is like coming home.

The sermon was given by a man with a rucksack. He took out cushions with words written on them: guilt, illness, depression, fear. And he said: "Jesus carried all of this." I was deeply moved.

At the end you could come forward to be prayed for. I had never known anything like that - but I went.

Two men laid their hands on me and prayed. And I burst into tears. Everything came out: the years of searching, the doubts, the fear, the emptiness.

I felt seen, held and accepted - not only by people, but by God.

8. The first supernatural sign

A few weeks later, at the third service, something happened that changed my life for good.

A young woman from the church went to the microphone after the sermon and said she had seen a picture: there was a person here who had been searching for twenty years - walking through a dark forest, but always carrying a light. The forest became bushes, the bushes became weeds, the weeds became lawn. Now this person was walking across a lawn flooded with light.

In that moment I knew: she is speaking about me. Nobody knew my story. Nobody knew that. Only God.

I cried again - this time in amazement. And I knew: the Holy Spirit exists.

9. The Alpha course - answers at last

After these first encounters the church leader invited me to an Alpha course. Ten evenings with a shared meal, worship, a talk and open conversation about faith.

For me it was like a gift. For the first time in my life I could ask all my questions: who is Jesus really? What is the Bible? What is sin? What happens after death?

Nobody had to believe anything. You were allowed to doubt, to ask, to discuss. And for the first time I had the feeling: I am allowed to believe - and I am allowed to understand.

10. The weekend on the Holy Spirit

A highlight of the Alpha course was the Holy Spirit weekend. I was curious and sceptical at the same time.

At first nothing spectacular happened. But then I heard about praying in tongues, as it is already described in the Bible with the disciples.

One story moved me particularly: a pastor prayed in a language he did not know - and a man suddenly recognised it as his old mother tongue, which nobody else knew. God had spoken to him

directly.

Then I knew: this is real. The Holy Spirit is still at work today.

11. My baptism - 7 July 2019

I decided to be baptised - not out of tradition, but as my own decision.

On 7 July 2019 I was deliberately baptised. I symbolically left my old life behind and began a new one with Jesus.

My family, who are not believers themselves, were there. They saw that I meant it. And they saw that I had changed.

12. The baptism in the Spirit

Some time later, during a time of worship, I experienced something I will never forget.

I felt as though every cell in my body was vibrating. I suddenly began to sing in a language I had never learned. It was as if I were plugged into a socket - full of energy, full of life.

I received inner impulses: "Go there." "Pray for this town." "Trust me."

I knew: the Holy Spirit is now real in my life. From then on I began to serve in the church - in the welcome team, in the prayer ministry and in the home group.

13. The time with my father

In 2021, in the middle of the Covid period, my life changed completely once again. From one day to the next my father could no longer walk. He was ninety-six years old, suddenly bedridden, without strength, helpless.

Inwardly I sensed very clearly: "Care for your father."

I was able to work from home, reduced my hours to part-time and moved in with my parents. I was there for him day and night. I washed him, fed him, talked with him, prayed for him.

My brothers and sisters said: "You do not know how long this will last. Perhaps years." But for me it was clear: this is my assignment now.

14. The most important question

The question that occupied me most was: does my father really believe in Jesus?

In our family, faith was never a topic. Yes, we went to church - but Jesus? That was never talked about.

One day I asked him directly: "Dad, do you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your guilt? Do you believe that he rose again and is alive?"

He thought for a moment and said: "Yes. I believe that."

I wanted to believe him - but inwardly I had doubts. I thought: he is only saying that because he loves me. But God showed me something else.

15. The song from heaven

We had a baby monitor in his room so that we could hear him. One day I suddenly heard him singing loudly:

"Jesus, all creation rejoices in you, Lord over life and death you are, who overcame death and hell, who rose in triumph from the grave."

Then he prayed aloud: "Jesus, I love you. Great God, I love you. Holy Spirit, I love you."

I stood there and wept. I knew: the Holy Spirit has touched him.

16. The last words

After two years his strength grew less and less. One day he said to me: "Annette, I will be going soon."

I said: "Dad, then we will see each other again. Jesus is waiting for you."

His last conscious words were: "Jesus, take me out of the ashes."

Shortly afterwards he moved into a different state of consciousness and died peacefully a few days later.

I had no more doubt: my father is with Jesus. And that is the greatest hope of my life: death is not the end. We will see each other again.

17. Return to life - and God's guidance

After my father's death I stayed with my mother for another year. In May 2024 I returned to Muenster and took up full-time work again.

And today I can say: God really does guide every step. Sometimes we do not understand his ways immediately. But looking back I recognise again and again: he had a better plan than I did.

18. The car that broke down - and the baby

In October 2024 I wanted to drive to Karlsruhe for work - first to a workshop, then privately to a conference.

Five minutes after I set off, a yellow engine warning light came on. I drove home again, cancelled everything and prayed: "God, I do not understand this - but you know better."

That evening a sister from the church called me: "Annette, our fourth baby is coming. Can you come to the hospital with me?"

I should not have been in Muenster at all. Yet on exactly that day I was able to go with her. Twenty minutes after I arrived, her labour began.

And I was allowed to help little Isalis into the world. I was allowed to cut the umbilical cord. I was allowed to hold this new life. A gift from God.

19. Johann and the answered prayer

Another time I was in the Netherlands. I simply wanted to go home - but inwardly I heard three times: "Go to Johann."

I did. Without calling first.

When he opened the door he said: "Annette, you are an answer to prayer. Today I asked God for someone to come."

We sang, prayed and ate together - and I understood: God uses us when we listen.

20. The wallet

I once found an old wallet in the street. Nobody came forward. We later used the money for the stage and said: if anyone comes forward, we will give it back.

To this day nobody has. I believe that this too was God's provision.

21. The closing message

Today I know: Jesus does not want to be only a part of our lives. He wants all of it.

Not half trust and half worry - but complete trust.

Not "today I pray" - but "I live with him".

Jesus wants your heart, your thoughts, your decisions, your relationships, your finances, your body - everything. Because he is not only Saviour. He is Lord.

22. The prayer

Jesus, thank you that you love me.

I believe that you are the Son of God.

I believe that you died for my guilt.

Forgive me my failures.

Come into my life.

Be my Lord.

Guide me in every area.

Fill me with your Holy Spirit.

My life belongs to you.

Now and for ever. Amen.