

Hello,

I could start this letter off with details of what my parents are like, or some of my childhood experiences. However, I am not sure how relevant any of those are to Jesus' story in my life. All you really need to know is in my past I struggled with addiction, rebellion, and promiscuity. Once I was out of that phase of my life it turned to being a Grade A student in my post-secondary studies, graduating at the top of my classes, achieving degrees, designations, and promotions. These two versions of myself, both "bad flesh" and "good flesh", had a common goal.

I have learned that every human being is the same. We are seeking love and acceptance and we have a deep need for a relationship with unconditional love. The way we go about attempting to achieve this love looks different in each of our lives.

The amazing thing is that we all have access to this the minute we believe in Jesus Christ, it is done. Just look at Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." There is no striving here, there is no need for human beings on earth to give you their stamp of approval once you realize the King of Kings is so madly in love with you that he died for you. Not only is He madly in love with you, He quite literally lives in you! There are various scriptures that state this fact and it has been given various terms over the years. "Abundant Life", "Christ Life", "Exchanged Life". Whatever you call it, this relationship has the power to heal you, no matter what your parents were like or your childhood experiences. The real story begins there.

It was March of 2019 when I was first introduced to a book called "Handbook to Happiness". It was busy season at work and I was experiencing severe "crappy feelings" again, barely able to cope with my day to day. I had been on and off like this for about 7 years. My heart would race, pound, palpitate, I would feel light headed as if I was going to pass out, I wouldn't be able to get out of bed and walk. Eventually I would just tell close family, I am experiencing my "crappy feelings", and they knew what that meant. I had been to hospital emergency rooms multiple times by this point and had multiple ECGs, blood tests, and holter monitors. There didn't appear to be anything wrong with my heart and it was deemed that it was likely anxiety and panic attacks due to stress. I was convinced there was something severely wrong with my heart and that it would kill me eventually.

I sat in the kitchen one morning eating my breakfast before dragging myself into the car to go to work, and Googled "Christian ways to get rid of anxiety". I read through a few article titles and books and saw the title "Handbook to Happiness". I thought that is exactly what I need. I read the reviews on Amazon and the synopsis and thought well let me give this a try. If this didn't work I was going to set up an appointment with my family doctor to discuss a prescription medication that may help relieve me of my symptoms. I didn't know why God wouldn't take away my fear, I didn't think his plan for me would be to take prescription medication just to cope with life but I

was running out of options. I was desperate for relief as I could barely stand or walk without feeling like I would pass out or just die right there.

I purchased the e-book and had access to it right away. I read it every morning and every night for the next week or two until I had finished it. Those were some of the most euphoric days of my life. I remember driving to work just smiling, for no reason, other than of course the fact that I am loved by the King of Kings and I realize I do not need acceptance from my family, friends, and colleagues. I have everything I could ever need. Jesus lives in me. What a beautiful thought. It gave me strength to continue on through that busy season. It gave me just enough strength through my pregnancy which commenced in June of the same year.

If I am being honest pregnancy for me was not an enjoyable experience. I was scared to get pregnant, not knowing if I would survive it. Then I got pregnant and don't get me wrong I was SO excited and thankful, but in the back of my mind I couldn't help but think I am not strong enough to do this. I had a feeling that I would die during childbirth. That my heart wouldn't be able to take it and I wouldn't have enough stamina. I had nightmares and could barely sleep many nights while I was pregnant, just laying there worrying about labour and delivery. I could barely cope with my day to day life as it was, how was I going to survive this? Towards the end of my pregnancy I could barely stand, my iron was low and my anxiety was high.

By the grace of God I survived the birth of my beautiful son. My son was delivered with forceps after 30 hours of labour. When he came out they quickly held him up for me to see and then just as quickly had him over to a table to suction his throat and lungs, and then to the nursery. I didn't get to meet him until an hour or so later once I was stitched up and taken to him. He spent the next 7 days living in the nursery as there were various health concerns. Over the next 6 months we were in and out of hospitals both in our home town and a few hours away in a larger city for appointments, bloodwork, and testing. I was exhausted as a new mom and COVID was rampant so it was up to me to take him in to these appointments alone. God gave me the strength. For the next 1.5 years after my son was born God gave me the strength. I stayed home with my son and did not return to work as I didn't believe I could physically do it. I continued to experience heart palpitations, pain in my chest and ribs, dizziness, and feeling like I am going to pass out. I continued to have episodes of panic attacks, only this was worse because now I had a child to care for. When I had my panic attacks out in public it wasn't just myself I had to worry about, I also had to worry about what would happen with my son. God gave me just enough strength.

The anxiety of these thoughts and pressures from this world continued to bear down on me until October 2021 when I broke. I had been in contact the last couple of months with my family doctor and referred to a cardiologist because of my heart concerns, I was convinced I had a serious heart condition and would die from it. I didn't exercise, I didn't take my son for walks, I didn't take my son to the grocery store, I could barely take him to daycare because of the fear I had.

On this particular day in October my husband and I were to take my son to a routine doctor appointment for a check up. I had a panic attack while getting in the car to go to the doctor, my

heart was racing and pounding and I could not get control of it. I was sure this was a heart attack, Ben rushed me to the hospital instead of our son's doctor appointment and dropped me off at emergency. I walked into the emergency room, sure that I had just experienced a heart attack and this was my chronic heart condition acting up, and getting worse.

This was just the beginning of God bringing me to the end of myself. I would be rushed to the hospital by ambulance a couple weeks later with heart symptoms again. I would spend the weeks leading up to Christmas laying in bed sure that I was dying. Praying to God and crying out to him, wondering "Why? What purpose does it serve me and those around me for me to be like this?" I started to feel like I had to come to terms with the fact that I may just be a vegetable who can't do anything, either that or the realization that I may die and leave my family. I would have multiple blood tests, holter monitors, cardiograms, stress tests, ECGs and examinations in the coming months only to be told that there is nothing physically wrong with my heart. There is no evidence that I have ever had a heart attack and they can find no evidence that my heart isn't working 100% as it should.

It took 16 years of me trying out some "bad flesh" and "good flesh" to see if I could achieve a joyful and abundant life through my own means. Finally, at the age of 30, I came to the end of myself. I was failing at being a mother, failing at running a business, failing at being a wife, failing at being a woman. That is how I felt. God brought me to the end of myself, deep down into the lowest valley I had ever been in. This was what He needed to do for me to say "God, I give up. I can't live like this, it is not working".

I found myself back in a deep valley with no way out, I knew the key was somewhere in that book, "Handbook to Happiness", I just couldn't put my finger on how to make it a reality in my life. It was November 30th when I reached out to GFI, I searched for them on Google based on the contact information in the book. Later that same evening I received a call from an angel. I remember ending that phone call thinking "That may just be the sweetest, most peaceful person I have ever spoken with. And that prayer she prayed for me! Was that ever powerful!" Our first video call was December 11th. Over the next 6 months God used her, as well as various books regarding the abundant life, and GFI conference materials to lead (sometimes drag) me up out of that valley to what now feels like the top of Mount Everest.

Since those scary heart issues in the fall of 2021 I have been tested with some of my worst fears. Contracting COVID, my family having COVID, extreme pain due to an ovarian cyst leading to multiple emergency room visits (yes more hospital visits), and being told that cyst may be cancerous leading to more testing. These things were back to back, one after the other, and all during the busiest time of year for me as an accountant, tax season. As of the time of writing this letter (June 2022) I am awaiting surgery for the cyst to be removed and based on testing the doctors are fairly certain that it is not cancerous.

I can now look back at the last 6 months and see how God was there the whole time carrying me and being my strength. I was at my weakest point and God was able to take over. 2 Corinthians

12:10 became a reality in my life, “for when I am weak, then am I strong”. If someone had told me what I was going to go through during this year’s tax season I would have said “nope, there is no way I can survive that, I am gone to Bora Bora”. That would have been a mistake, it was so necessary for me to face my fears. It really wasn’t that bad in the end. Don’t get me wrong, those cysts really.. really hurt! But overall I had a strange positive and content attitude through it all. I meditated on verses such as “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” James 1:2. I had peace and joy because God loved me and I am safe with a place in heaven no matter what happens down here. My mind was tempted a lot to think “What if it is cancer? What if I am too late? My son will grow up without a mother, I so badly want to see him grow up.” I cried one time, and stopped myself quickly. “How can I take pity on myself, how can I be scared? It is God’s perfect purpose for my life. Worst case scenario I die and go to heaven to be with my Father and Brother, Jesus. It will be so sad, but that is my ultimate destiny anyways. I accept God’s perfect will for my life.” I couldn’t help but smile and thank God for loving me so much.

I cried once during my meetings with my counselor over those 6 months. The one time I cried to her throughout everything I went through was when I was trying to explain how thankful I was to God for being with me, and giving me the strength to survive all of the events that took place. I became flooded with emotion. He loves me so much, how could I have ever doubted?

How can I have these thoughts in such a distressing and scary time? The answer is Christ life in me.

I remember driving home from dropping my son off at daycare the summer before all of these events. I was listening to a Christian radio station about Ephesians 6:10-18. The radio announcers spoke about all the various pieces of God’s armour and how important each of them are. They spoke about having your feet shod with the gospel of peace, and if you do not arm yourself you are vulnerable to the devil’s attacks. I thought “Wow, I don’t have peace, I am riddled with anxiety and have regular panic attacks. I need to learn to trust God.” I prayed for God to give me that peace. Little did I know what I was asking for. Little did I know how real that piece of scripture would become in my life when I was introduced again to it by my counselor and reminded of that prayer I prayed 8 months earlier. Little did I know what that fall and winter would do to me as I began my spiral downwards to the cross.

I encourage anyone reading this letter to ask God to reveal to you the abundant life or Christ life. Your journey won’t look the same as mine. Just as we all seek unconditional love and an abundant life using different methods, God must use different methods to empty us of ourselves, and fill us with Christ.

I would be lying if I said I have never had another anxious thought since I came to realize Christ lives in us, never had my heart act up, haven’t been faced with various challenges. But I would also be lying if I said my life now is not an abundant life. You see the abundant life isn’t freedom from challenges, but freedom from overwhelming fear and striving during those challenges. “O

death, where is thy sting?" 1 Corinthians 15:55. The Christ life is unspeakable joy and incomprehensible peace that see you through those challenges.

Love,

One of God's daughters