

The Jesus I Know

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HONEST CONVERSATIONS
AND DIVERSE OPINIONS
ABOUT **WHO HE IS**

KATHIE LEE
— GIFFORD —



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INTRODUCTION

SURPRISING ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

My very first encounter with Jesus was in a dream. I was a young girl in Annapolis, Maryland, and I remember I was raking leaves with my daddy in front of our house. I looked up at the sky, and, suddenly, there I saw Him, sitting cross-legged on a cloud. I knew exactly who it was—there was no doubt in my young mind. It was Jesus.

Our eyes met, and He smiled at me and said one word. It was all my young heart needed to hear: *Kathie*.

I fell to the ground, as if dead. And yet, clearly, I was still very much alive.

Several years later, when I was twelve, my brother and I went to a small theater in our town to watch a movie by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. And where did God touch my heart? In a movie theater, right where I lived and breathed! I'd always wanted to be an actress and a singer and a writer, and that's exactly where Jesus met me. As I watched the movie, I heard a voice speak to me directly. Although it wasn't audible, I sensed the Lord saying in my spirit, *Kathie, I love you. If you'll trust Me, I'll make something beautiful out of your life.*

When the movie ended, they said, "If anybody wants to receive Jesus into your heart, come forward." I couldn't get out of my seat fast enough! Standing at the front of the theater, I asked Jesus into my heart. That's how

my walk with Jesus began, and He has made something beautiful out of my life.

Those are just glimpses of the Jesus I know, the Jesus who has revealed Himself to me, the Jesus I am getting to know more every day. The Jesus I know is a personal God who knows me intimately but loves me passionately anyway. The Jesus I know is the epitome of grace, the radical incarnation of His Father's face and merciful eyes. The Jesus I know is the perfection of all creation.

He is love. And He loves us. Period.

In this book, you will read honest conversations about different encounters with this same Jesus. These are people God brought into my life, and they mean a great deal to me for many reasons. Some of their names will be familiar to you, and others won't. But each one has a profoundly personal and powerful story to tell about Jesus, a story that cannot be tied up neatly with a bow. Why? Because their stories aren't finished yet. Neither is mine, and neither is yours. If we are still breathing, we're not done yet; it's as simple as that!

Jesus is always the same, but He doesn't show up the same way to everyone. We are unique individuals who come from different places with different shaped and colored faces and different sets of circumstances. But for me, that is the eternal beauty of how our Creator seeks us and meets us right where we live and breathe, and then we begin the journey of a lifetime.

Every one of my friends' experiences with Jesus is special to me. Some of their stories will surprise you. In fact, the stories I've included in this book are just a few of the many examples of my being continually surprised by people I had no idea believed in Jesus.

For instance, years ago when I was being maliciously attacked in the media for my so-called sweatshops that didn't even exist, I got a phone call at home from Kevin Costner, whom I had met through my show with Regis Philbin. After saying hello, Kevin said to me in that familiar voice of his, "Kathie, remember, 'Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.'"

I was stunned to hear him quoting 1 John 4:4. Incredulous, I asked him, "Were you raised in the church?"

He chuckled and said, “Yes, but I certainly haven’t followed everything I learned.” Then he went on to encourage me not to give up, not to listen to ignorant critics, and to keep holding my head up high until the storm passed because he knew it would. I deeply appreciated Kevin taking the time to find my number and then calling me to be a blessing to me. That call began a friendship that continues today.

Another time, I was interviewing the beautiful, brilliant actress Angela Bassett, who leaned over after we cut to commercial and said softly, “I’m praying for you, sister.” I had no idea she was a fellow believer, and I have prayed for her ever since.

My favorite surprise came from my dear agnostic friend, Craig Ferguson. We were on the set of the film I wrote for him, *Then Came You*, and we were waiting to shoot our next scene. We were nearing the end of our six-week production and had shared many respectful, lively conversations about faith and Jesus. “You know, Kathie,” Craig said in that delicious Scottish brogue of his, “I still don’t believe in your guy.”

“You mean, *our* guy?” I said, chuckling.

“Okay, our guy,” he acknowledged.

“But I also know you believe that the way He lived his life and the way He taught us to live is exactly the way that we should.”

“One hundred percent!” he exclaimed.

“Welcome to the kingdom of heaven,” I said, and I hugged him. And we went back to work.

I believe with everything in me that the Holy Spirit is still working in Kevin’s and Angela’s and Craig’s lives because God loves them and will never let them go. He will continue to pursue them, just as He continues to pursue you and me. No matter how long it takes, the Holy Spirit will finish what He starts in us. If we are faithful, we can know Him, “The God of the How and When.”

I despise labels that try to define people and then relegate them to tiny boxes on a shelf. Therefore, I am vehemently opposed to the concept of “canceling” anyone or saying anyone is too far gone for Jesus to reach them. That is the complete opposite of what Jesus did two thousand years ago and

what He still does on a daily basis in the lives of billions of people all over the world. I am just one of them!

Many people around us every day are encountering Jesus in their own ways. Recently, I was talking to my dear friend and former *Today* show cohost Hoda Kotb about our faith. She said, “How important is God to me? Well, I have a conversation with God just about every morning. Sometimes it’s simply thank you for the two little girls sleeping upstairs or a prayer for the birth moms to let them know the girls are loved. I realize my morning journal may actually be a daily note to God, filled with thank-yous. As you have often said, it is not about religion; it is about a relationship with God. Lucky me: I found He is someone I can talk to!”

These people you will meet in *The Jesus I Know: Honest Conversations and Diverse Opinions About Who He Is* are all in various stages of knowing and experiencing Jesus. Many are still struggling, just like I am, to overcome our weaknesses, unhealthy dependencies, bitter memories, or deep-seated disappointments. Some have suffered through trials and tribulations. Others have dreams that have not yet come true, and many of their questions remain unanswered. No matter where my friends are in their own spiritual journeys, they joined me in my favorite cozy chairs while I asked them, “What does Jesus look like to you right now?”

These are our honest conversations about how God is doing a mighty work in them, just as He continues to do in me and in you. Some of these stories are exciting, with incredible miracles! And some are messy, but God still broke through. In our conversations, I created an environment for these friends to tell me their truth. I pray that I will be a worthy messenger to share their extraordinary stories of faith.

I hope my friends will encourage you as you consider the Jesus *you* know, wherever you are on your spiritual journey. Maybe you have walked with Jesus for a long time. If so, you’ll be inspired and perhaps moved to pray for these men and women. Perhaps you have friends who are curious about faith, and you’re not sure how to talk to them about Jesus. I pray that my honest conversations in this book will be an example of how to interact

compassionately and genuinely with people in various stages of their journeys with Jesus.

Maybe you have no idea who Jesus is, but you're interested in learning more. What an adventure you're about to begin as you read these conversations! All we have to do is welcome His Holy Spirit into our lives and then get out of His way. Moment by moment, day after day, and year after year, God sets His own pace to accomplish His purposes. Because God doesn't just show up right on time—He shows off when He gets there!

Throughout these conversations, my friends and I often share scriptures that have been meaningful to us. If you are not familiar with the Bible or want to read the verses we discussed, I've included a section in the back listing the scriptures mentioned in our conversations.

My friends, two thousand years ago, Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." Forever and always, that is who He is and who He ever more shall be. Thank you for joining me in the pursuit of the truth of Him!

Lead us, Gentle Shepherd, down these
rocky paths of faith, and illuminate Your
truth to us. Help us to find You in the
wind of their words and in the whispers
of their hearts. For if we seek You, You
have promised You will be found.

FIVE

DO NOT GROW WEARY IN WELL DOING

CHYNNA PHILLIPS BALDWIN

I loved listening to the Mamas and the Papas in the 1960s. They were hip and California cool, and their beats and harmonies were magic. I dreamed of one day making a life for myself in the entertainment industry that beckoned to me from sunny California.

Chynna Phillips grew up in this world, the beautiful daughter of John and Michelle Phillips, founding members of the band. They were rock-'n'-roll royalty. And although she inherited her mother's beauty and her parents' musical talent, Chynna also fell into a life of drugs, alcohol, and abuse. Then, in 1995, she doubled the drama by marrying Billy Baldwin, one of the four famous acting Baldwin brothers.

While I'd interviewed Chynna in the past, I had never really had a conversation beyond her career with the music group Wilson Phillips, which she founded with Wendy and Carnie Wilson, daughters of rock-'n'-roll legend Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys. To say Chynna surprised me is an understatement. I found her to be raw and authentic and articulate and

refreshingly brave about her life in a world very few of us could ever imagine experiencing. I fell in love with her. I think you will too.



KATHIE LEE: I was a huge fan of Wilson Phillips. I think we met when I was on with Regis.

CHYNNA: It was a crazy time. That was thirty-three years ago!

KATHIE LEE: I have to tell you, first of all, how impressed I am. I knew you were happily married, but I didn't know about your amazing YouTube channel, California Preachin'. I am so blown away by it. You come off so real and honest, and God is obviously blessing it. A lot of people have heard the headlines about your family, but what I think surprised me the most is how deep your walk with Jesus is. This is not surface Christianity.

CHYNNA: It started out much more produced: hair, makeup, teleprompter. I started getting this horrible back pain before I started to shoot. I prayed, "God, I know for sure You told me that You wanted me to do a YouTube channel, so why does it hurt?" I just got this really strong message of "*Just turn the camera on and show the world who you are. Just be you. You're not a pastor or a preacher; you're just a sheep. Go out there and be a sheep among many, and people will identify with you.*"

KATHIE LEE: You're an adorable sheep! I thought you were charming, but then I started getting really pulled in when you stripped it down raw. And made your suffering not as a victim. You're somehow doing the impossible, which is telling all these incredible things that happened in your life without begging for our compassion because you've been so victimized. You come off like, "Yeah, but God saw something in me."

This book I'm writing is *The Jesus I Know* because Jesus is so many different things to different people. It doesn't look the same ever. Because we don't look the same to Jesus. No story is like anyone else's. God went to so much trouble to make us unique. Tell me your story.

You grew up in a Hollywood family, and so did your husband. All sorts of drama. What was your picture of God when you were growing up?

CHYNNA: I had a nanny when I was one year old. Her name was Rosa Garcia, and she didn't speak a word of English. My mom grew up in Mexico City and spoke fluent Spanish, so she was ecstatic that I would have no other choice but to learn Spanish. I was basically raised by this woman. She lived with us until I was nineteen years old. She walked me to school, fed me, read my bedtime stories, danced with me, sang with me, prayed for me. I remember she had crucifixes hanging over her bed, and she had candles with Mother Mary; she was incredibly Catholic. When I was sick, she'd douse me with holy water. So that was my first introduction to Jesus.

Then when I was in a public elementary school, I was struggling. I begged to leave because I was being bullied, and my mother reluctantly transferred me to a Christian private school. She said, "You do realize they're going to talk to you about the devil and 666." But I was so miserable, I just wanted out.

About a week in at the Christian school, I stole a chocolate milk from the cafeteria. The next day, these girls came up to me and said, "Chynna, we saw that you stole the chocolate milk," and I said, "Well, I didn't have any money." I gave them a quarter, and they said, "We don't want the quarter." They said they were wondering if I'd accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior. And I thought, "*Ugh, I stole the milk; look what I've gotten myself into. Now I'm gonna have to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. All right, fine, I'll do it.*" So they brought me to the girls' bathroom, and they all surrounded me—not awkward at all! They stood around me, and I said the words out loud on the card that they gave me. As I began to read the words, I started to feel a holy scan begin from the top of my skull, moving down my face, down my shoulders. As it was happening, I felt as though I was being completely purified. By the time it got down to my feet, I felt like I'd become a new creation. I was saying the words sincerely, but I didn't think anything would happen! I couldn't speak; I was paralyzed. I was holding on to this card,

and I was thinking, *“This Jesus person is for real. This is not a joke; He’s really the Son of God.”* I left the bathroom a completely changed person. He put a new heart inside of my body and made me a new creation.

I went home to the marijuana roaches in the ashtray, no Bibles in the house, no father to talk to, and a very busy single mother. I didn’t know how to explain what had happened to me. I told nobody about my spiritual experience. So, basically, I stole a chocolate milk, and I got saved. A true sinner saved by grace.

And then I got into drugs and alcohol and got promiscuous. I was a Hollywood statistic kid. I was drinking, partying, hanging out with people who were just like me, until I had a second coming when I was about thirty-four years old. My husband’s brother, Stephen, got saved. He’s a great guy. Every time I’d see Stephen and his wife, Kennya, they’d be tagging along with their Bibles. I thought, *“Wow, they’ve really taken it to the next level.”*

Then about two years later, I was living in Bedford, New York. It was Super Bowl Sunday, and everybody came over. Some of my nieces got in trouble, so Stephen and his wife were praying over them with zeal. This was not just any kind of prayer. They had their hands over them, and I could hear it from the other room. The Holy Spirit said to me, *“You go in there, and you tell them, ‘Whatever you’re doing to them, I want you to do to me.’”* I was like, *“Oh no, here we go again.”* So I did. They said, *“Are you sure you want us to pray for you?”* and I said, *“Yes.”* It happened all over again with the holy scan down my body. I was bawling.

The first thing I did was go straight to my front door. I had purchased this expensive wooden Buddha that had sat there for years. I grabbed it and wrapped it up with duct tape and put it in my garage. I said, *“That’s it, Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, and I will dedicate the rest of my life to serving Him and furthering His kingdom. I’m sold out for Jesus.”*

KATHIE LEE: What was your husband’s, Billy’s, reaction?

CHYNNA: Billy was supportive, but it scared him a little bit. I mean, how do

you compete with Jesus? And he knew it was a profound experience. I had an anointing. He knew something had shifted, and it was out of his control. When I was baptized a few days later, Billy cried; he was really taken by it. He went to church with me that Sunday. I figured he was going to be right behind me. I thought, *“It will just be a couple of weeks or months, and we’ll raise our kids Christian,”* but that wasn’t the case. He’s still not completely on board, and it’s been fifteen years. We do attend church together as a family, and Billy does pray with me.

KATHIE LEE: Well, He’s The God of the How and When. We stand on God’s promises, but only He knows how and only He knows when. And that’s the maddening part, when we have to “live by faith, not by sight,” because everything we’re seeing is saying, “No, this is impossible.” The father of lies wants to tell us deception, deceit, and discouragement—all the Ds, instead of the Rs: refresh, resurrect, renew, restore. I knew some of your story, but wow.

CHYNNA: Billy and I are polar opposites. He’s into wrestling, politics, but I’m not a person who turns on CNN and reads the paper; it’s just not my thing. We also struggled in our marriage. We had financial troubles, and then our son got sick. I filed for divorce at one point. There are days when I wake up, and I’m like, “Why did I do this?” But you know what? I think that’s okay. Sometimes I wake up, and I go, “Ew. What have I done? I don’t want to look at your face.” People want the truth about the struggle and how to get through it, how to embrace the suck of your marriage.

Divorce isn’t an option for me anymore. Every single day, I wake up and ask God to help me navigate my marriage. Because it’s not a walk in the park. I have great days with Billy where we laugh and we’re best friends; we’re truly connected. No one makes me laugh like him; nobody’s taught me more than him. I’ve never met anyone more intelligent. I know he still gets excited when he sees me singing and writing songs; he happens to think I’m very unique and special. So there’s lots of wonderful things about our marriage, but we don’t stroll through our marriage. We have to work at it.

KATHIE LEE: This is just fascinating. I'm listening to your story, and I'm thinking this is cool, real stuff. I loved Frank Gifford so much; he was the love of my life, and he ripped my heart out when he cheated on me. I forgave him right away because God showed me all the things He forgave me for. I got angry with Frank because it was so easy for me to forgive him that he just thought it would go right back to being the way it used to be. I went to a counselor who said, "If you can't forgive your husband, forgive your children's father." It took my eyes off of me and put them on what I needed to be concentrating on, my family. When I changed my focus, that's when my heart was softened enough to do the right thing, and God could heal. I felt love, and he felt forgiven. Only God can do that.

CHYNNA: Yes, only God. We're just not capable to forgive on that level. That's provision by God.

KATHIE LEE: He died on the cross, which is the free gift of grace. He forgives our sins daily. It's not a one-time gift; it's a gift for eternity. Forgiveness is a reliable, renewable resource that we can count on, and boy, do we need it!

CHYNNA: It's like the old adage that resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

KATHIE LEE: Once you had that second born-again experience, it took root this time. How did you change? Did you become a churchgoing person?

CHYNNA: I started going to church in LA. Then we moved to Santa Barbara, and we attended a church pretty regularly, but with COVID it's almost impossible. I know that the church is the body of Christ, and I know that I need to find a home church.

KATHIE LEE: You need to find a community of believers, not necessarily a building. How are your children doing spiritually?

CHYNNA: I beat myself up because I'm like, "My children aren't reading the Bible." They believe in God. My youngest daughter, Brooke, was baptized alongside Billy's mother, Carol, several years ago. My older two were baptized by me during COVID lockdown in my bathtub! I was hoping they'd have the holy body-scan experience, but it didn't happen

that way. I cover them every morning in prayer. We used to dress our kids as babies, so why can't we dress them in prayer? I cover them in the armor of God, the shield of faith, every single day. I believe God is faithful and in God's time.

KATHIE LEE: What about when you went through your son's cancer? Were you ever angry at God?

CHYNNA: No, I wasn't angry at God. I actually thought, "*Maybe this will bring Billy to Jesus.*" Unfortunately, that wasn't God's plan. I don't know what it will take. Our son's doing great now. He just had another surgery three months ago. Because it was stage 4 cancer, he had some more tumors in his stomach, but they were not malignant, which was so huge. I truly believe that the Lord will give Vance an opportunity to share his cancer testimony with many. I have called him "war horse" as a term of endearment for many years. I never really understood why . . . but now I know.

KATHIE LEE: During that time, you still did one of your YouTube talks, but you were losing it.

CHYNNA: I didn't want to cross any boundaries with my son, and he wasn't ready for the world to know he had this surgery, so I had to talk around it. All people saw was me in this furry hat in the bathroom. Billy joked that it looked like I'd been committed. I get that it totally looked that way! It was a tough time. All the viewers supported me through it, and then I was finally able to share. My son did twenty-eight rounds of chemo. He had four different types of cancer. This one particular form of cancer was resistant to chemo, so he had to have a major surgery to remove the nonmalignant tumors.

KATHIE LEE: What would you say is the hardest thing you have to deal with on a regular basis?

CHYNNA: I still struggle with a lot of anxiety, and that's closely related to depression. I have a counselor who keeps telling me, "We're going to land your plane, Chynna. There's going to be a lot of turbulence, the descent is not going to be easy, but we're going to land it." I'm having faith that my plane's going to land.

I have a lot of PTSD—not only did my son have cancer, but we had a mudslide and lost twenty-eight people in our community. And then my “other mother” passed away. We all called her Granny Jax. She witnessed all three of my children being born. I love my mother with all my heart, but this woman showed up for me in a way that my mom could not, and I lost her too. This all happened back-to-back.

I have this issue of not feeling like God loves me or that God’s there for me. I believe in God and that He’s real and that Jesus is His Son, but I have such deep-seated abandonment issues that for years I couldn’t call God “Father.” I felt no connection to that word, and now just recently I’ve been able to call God “Father” organically, and I actually feel the connection when I say it. It’s been a long fifteen years of not feeling that God loves me and is present in my life. I know I’m not alone in this.

KATHIE LEE: Basically, your story is that the struggle goes on. Do you ever want to give up? Say, “Okay, Jesus, I love You, but this isn’t working for me”?

CHYNNA: I’ll say six months ago was the lowest I’ve been, when Vance had to go back in for surgery. I thought, “*I don’t know what You think I’m made of, but I can’t do this anymore. You’re going to have to pick someone else.*” I didn’t have one more ounce to keep fighting, but I thought, “*If my son is still fighting, then I have to also.*”

I begged them during COVID to let me be by Vance’s side in the hospital. I’d already had COVID and had the antibodies, so they let me stay. I slept on a cot in his room for ten days. We bonded, we laughed, we cried. It was extraordinary. And then I couldn’t get out of bed for like two weeks, I was so spent. After ten days of just focusing on what needed to get done for our child, the emotional aspect was just so draining. I was weary.

KATHIE LEE: The Lord says, “Do not grow weary in well doing,” because He knew we would get weary in well doing. He says, “*You don’t have to; I am enough. I’ve carried it all before, and I can carry it again for you.*” I love your story because it doesn’t have a beginning, a middle, and an end. It’s ongoing. Thank you for sharing it.

TEN

A NEW PART OF THE FAMILY

GRANT GASTON _____

I met Grant recently when he moved into a hotel nearby. My best friend in Tennessee, Angie Clawson, and I began to include him in all our activities because that's what Angie does. She welcomes you into the neighborhood, and then she adopts you.

Little did Grant know that meeting Angie would begin the journey of a lifetime, far beyond his native Australia.



KATHIE LEE: You've been sweet enough to agree to share your story. I know you grew up in Australia. Did you grow up in a faith kind of a home?

GRANT: I did. My father was a schoolteacher in a little country town, and we used to go to the local Presbyterian church.

KATHIE LEE: So were your parents what would you call religious people?

GRANT: My mother probably more so than my father, yeah, definitely.

KATHIE LEE: And what did she tell you about God when you were growing up?

GRANT: I can't remember her saying anything specific because it was really

just going to church. It was all about being a leader and setting the standards and values and morality.

KATHIE LEE: Okay. A lot of people use church as a code of ethics, basically, to raise their children. So let's fast-forward. What brought you to America, and why particularly Tennessee?

GRANT: I had the master franchise for Australia, New Zealand, for a big health-care brand. But the Australian health-care system is very different than the one in the USA because it is government funded.

KATHIE LEE: So you ended up at a convention where you met a woman?

GRANT: Yeah. I attended a conference in Austin, Texas, and I came across a business opportunity with a lady who had developed this marketing system. I decided that her marketing system sounded great, so I'd take it back to Australia. Part of that was wanting to get to know her better but also flying her out to Australia to help me run my first Australian franchise conference.

KATHIE LEE: So you went into business with her?

GRANT: I went into business with her while I was still in Australia. Then I decided to move to the USA. So she became my sponsor, and we set up a company in the USA. It was business, but it also turned into love. When I did finally move to Tennessee, we shared a house together. And we shared the business together.

KATHIE LEE: And did you think that would be forever?

GRANT: I'd hoped, and we'd talked a lot about that. But a lot of business things got in the way.

KATHIE LEE: Okay, so suddenly that relationship ended. What were you feeling at that point? I mean, you were a long way from home, and you were separated from your son. You never did marry her, right?

GRANT: No.

KATHIE LEE: Okay, so what were you feeling then?

GRANT: There was a lot of guilt around what I had left behind, my family being left behind in Australia, particularly my son who was nineteen at the time.

KATHIE LEE: Did you feel like you were abandoning him?

GRANT: My son was coming here quite a bit, so that was great. But now when I reflect on it, I'm not sure what I was trying to do. I think I was trying to maintain a connection, to be responsible for the whole family back in Australia.

KATHIE LEE: It's not uncommon for people to be the caregiver to everybody, is it?

GRANT: Yeah, there was a lot of that. And there was another reason for being drawn to this woman, and it was that she had some very deep beliefs. She'd been reading Scripture for many years. And she followed the Messianic way although she wasn't Jewish.

KATHIE LEE: And that appealed to you?

GRANT: It appealed to me a lot, because you mentioned values and morals, and I hadn't really been connected directly with God over the period of time.

KATHIE LEE: Did you feel like you had lost it or had never had it to lose?

GRANT: No, I was trying to show that my values and the way that I lived my life were, in fact, similar to the values of God that she was talking about.

KATHIE LEE: Did you start going to church with her?

GRANT: No, we never got there. We had a lot of discussions about it. There were some Messianic things that we did, and I chose to be respectful of the things that were important to her. We used to pray together in the first year. And I have to thank her for opening all that up for me.

KATHIE LEE: Okay, so you ultimately broke up. What happened?

GRANT: Yeah, going back, probably about the middle of 2019, things started to change. She said, "I don't want to be with you anymore. I want to get on with my life."

KATHIE LEE: Were you heartbroken?

GRANT: Oh, I can't tell you how heartbroken I was, because it was all my dreams, the future.

KATHIE LEE: So is that when you moved downtown?

GRANT: Yeah, I didn't know where I wanted to live. All I knew was that I wanted to be in the downtown area. I'm used to living downtown in Melbourne, where it's vibrant, where all the options are.

KATHIE LEE: And what was your spiritual condition at the time?

GRANT: Almost from day one of moving in, there was construction going on in the courtyard of the apartments where I was living, and I was stressed. I was just trying to make sense of everything. I'm an athlete, so I started to run again. But the second week of moving into this accommodation, my back went, and I had this extreme pain. And so I had the construction going on, and my back pain, and I was trying to save the business.

KATHIE LEE: And you couldn't return to Australia because of COVID and also because of your immigration status, right?

GRANT: That's right. But then I started to meet people, like Greg and Angie.

KATHIE LEE: The most hospitable, welcoming, godly people. They are the reason I live here too.

GRANT: They just accepted me from day one. They saw me sitting at the coffee shop on my own, and they asked some questions.

KATHIE LEE: Angie tried to set you up with certain people!

GRANT: That's right. And then Greg and Angie just invited me to the next thing and the next thing with a whole bunch of other people.

KATHIE LEE: They made you family, didn't they?

GRANT: They really did, from day one.

KATHIE LEE: Was it obvious to you that their faith was their motivator in life?

GRANT: Well, I saw it very early with them, because I was interested in what their backgrounds were. So that was the beginning of meeting, I guess, people of, let's call it deep faith.

KATHIE LEE: That's what it is.

GRANT: And what was just wonderful is that I didn't feel like I was being judged. There was just this support that appeared out of nowhere.

KATHIE LEE: They weren't prying into your life; they were just there if you needed them?

GRANT: They were just there. And then we had flooding in the apartments. We all had to move out of the apartments, a whole bunch of people who didn't know each other, and we moved into a hotel. Because we couldn't

prepare meals and access our apartments, we'd all gather around the bar at the hotel.

KATHIE LEE: Oh, those were great days.

GRANT: It was the most amazing thing because we were sort of all stuck, and it was COVID, so we got to learn about each other. We were asking questions that we'd never had the opportunity to ask. And I discovered they're some of the most amazing people I've ever met in my life. And what was interesting, almost without exception, every person there had faith and belief in God. So it became a great community because we could share our life experiences.

That is where the conversations with Angie and Greg really began, and then, of course, I met you, and you allowed me to be part of your family. It was wonderful. There were all these people who were my supporters. It was just an amazing feeling. I felt safe. I felt part of the community.

KATHIE LEE: You felt loved?

GRANT: I did.

KATHIE LEE: So tell me what happened that night that we prayed?

GRANT: In the lead-up to that, a lot of people had been talking to me and, almost without exception, the conversation was sort of around faith. I started doing my work remotely in a coffee shop because it wasn't great working in the apartment. And people would come up to me and say, "Hey, do you mind if I sit down and have a chat?"

KATHIE LEE: Most people love to talk about themselves.

GRANT: Yeah, and they were opening up, and I was happy for them to talk. And after a while, one of the things I started to put in the conversation was, "What's your relationship with God like? Tell me about that." I was really sort of getting into the deep parts, I guess, of some of the things that troubled them.

KATHIE LEE: Yeah, people are used to "What's your sign?" and all of a sudden it's "What's your relationship with God?" It's a huge leap.

GRANT: Yeah. So this was starting to make more sense to me that "Wow,

what I'm doing by just being available and talking to people is really important for them."

KATHIE LEE: And for you.

GRANT: Yeah, I've always wanted to help people. So there were a number of people who would talk quite a bit about God and faith and different Bible verses, and I really felt out of my depth.

KATHIE LEE: Was that embarrassing or frustrating or . . . ?

GRANT: I just would pull back a little bit, you know. I was open to exploring and understanding, but I thought, "*Oh boy, I'm going to have to read the Bible from the front to the back.*"

KATHIE LEE: Feeding your soul.

GRANT: But this one night in the hotel, I was talking to a couple of ladies, and one of them said, "Tell me about your relationship with God." That's what I'd been asking others! At the time, all my friends in the community were all sort of around the bar.

KATHIE LEE: They saw the conversation taking place.

GRANT: Exactly. And then you walked past in the hallway with Greg and Angie, and this lady saw you walking by, and she waved and said, "Come over here—"

KATHIE LEE: Beckoned.

GRANT: And then within minutes, there was a whole bunch of people gathered around me. And you came in and prayed, and it was sort of like a welcome prayer. It was amazing. And I think that's when I finally accepted that this is wonderful.

KATHIE LEE: I led you in the prayer of receiving Jesus, do you remember that? You said you were ready to have Jesus in your life. And I said, "Is that true?" And you said, "Yes." I said, "Well, then, we need to pray."

GRANT: That's right.

KATHIE LEE: And you said, "Okay," and we all got around you. You were on my left, I held your hand, and Angie was on your right?

GRANT: I think she was.

KATHIE LEE: And there were several people all trying to touch you, as I remember. Then you teared up.

GRANT: I did.

KATHIE LEE: But then you said later, when you went back to your room, you did sob. Tell me about that.

GRANT: Yeah, it just, it hit me all at once. I was very emotional during the time, but it was so uplifting. It was just this incredible meaning that was coming into my life. And yes, there were tears, but this calm came over me.

KATHIE LEE: Peace.

GRANT: This peace. And I had the best sleep that I've had. So tears of happiness, I guess, tears of relief and this coming together.

KATHIE LEE: What did you feel besides peace?

GRANT: The word *calm* just keeps coming back. It's like the worry about money, the worry about the business, the worry about everything just seemed to disappear. It almost went straightaway, and my body started to heal as well. I started to get strong again.

KATHIE LEE: That's where a lot of your joy came from, didn't it?

GRANT: That's right. And then there were so many people who got involved with my life.

KATHIE LEE: Building you up.

GRANT: Yeah, because I think they could see that I was open, that I was ready to do it.

KATHIE LEE: You were a new creation.

GRANT: People could see the change in me. And it's just been a wonderful time since then. I started to look at my business in a different way and look at the importance of what I was doing.

KATHIE LEE: Not for the financial gain but as part of God's kingdom, to help people.

GRANT: Yeah, and the money sort of became irrelevant. I can't say it was a calling, but I went, "Wow, this is really important to me."

KATHIE LEE: So when you look back now, do you see the hand of God? There's a scripture, Romans 8:28, that says all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. When you look back at all the painful incidents and how you got here,

and everything you had to go through in the relationship, in the business, in the brokenness, do you see the hand of God working in your life every step of the way?

GRANT: Yes, and He was. I didn't know how to access that understanding—it was new to me. A lot of people talk about their moment. For me, it was just like it flowed through me.

KATHIE LEE: Well, when you sit down at the piano, like so many of my friends do, or you sit down with a guitar, that flow that you're talking about is the creativity of the Holy Spirit. All of God's creation sings to the Creator, Jehovah Elohim. And that's why you feel that flowing. You're co-creating with the Creator, and that's what we were born to do. That's why you're so joyful when you do it.

GRANT: The music impact has been significant. I had all these melodies for years. But now if I spend the time, there's a melody every day and lyrics also.

KATHIE LEE: You gave yourself over to it.

GRANT: The music just arrived. I've written twenty good melodies, and I've written lyrics for six. I've also been collaborating with a great friend of mine to write a gospel song that we have titled "Living in the House of God," to be released sometime this year. It's just like, "Wow, this is amazing!"

KATHIE LEE: Like your soul had been dammed up. And once Jesus healed your soul, it flooded with streams of living water.

GRANT: Yeah.

KATHIE LEE: I'm so happy to hear your stories today. Thank you for sharing them.

EIGHTEEN

OUR COMMON GROUND IS SACRED GROUND

RAAKHEE MIRCHANDANI

I met Raakhee Mirchandani in New York City in 2012, when she breathlessly dropped into her seat at my table at Neary's pub, where I was already seated with the editor of the *New York Daily News*, Colin Myler, Raakhee's boss.

She was newly pregnant at the time, and I instantly warmed to this inquisitive and lively, obviously brilliant young woman. Hoda and I eventually began to write a weekly column for the paper, and we began a beautiful friendship that continues today. I wanted to include Raakhee's story because it is so different and interesting, just like she is.



KATHIE LEE: We met around nine years ago. Tell me about your background spiritually.

RAAKHEE: I was born in New Jersey to Indian immigrants. My parents emigrated from India to the United States. My grandparents were refugees because of the India-Pakistan partition in 1947, so spirituality

was baked into everything we did, every conversation we had with our parents and grandparents. We knew in our hearts that what carried my grandparents safely from country to country, and my parents safely from country to country, was God, and that God made a space for them in this world. It was on all of those prayers, from my ancestors and my grandparents, that my life and my family's life came to be so blessed.

KATHIE LEE: And you grew up in a Hindu home, right?

RAAKHEE: Yes, my parents are Hindu, but because of the community that we're from, it's called Sindhi. It's Hindu with very strong Sikh influences.

KATHIE LEE: Thus, your husband's influence as well?

RAAKHEE: Yes, Sikh. Yes.

KATHIE LEE: So in the Hindu religion, there are many gods. It's polytheistic, right?

RAAKHEE: Yes. That's right.

KATHIE LEE: Tell me what that meant to you.

RAAKHEE: So this is the way my parents would explain it to me, and I still very much believe this: God is God. There's one God, and there's all these different forms that appeal to different people. So if the goddess is appealing to you, if Ganesha the elephant god is appealing to you, if Krishna is appealing to you, then that's what you worshiped and invited into your heart and your home. The essence of God, or the idea of God, was one, but the forms were many, as the paths are many to sort of attain that salvation that we were seeking.

KATHIE LEE: Okay, so this was powerful in your life, this whole concept?

RAAKHEE: It was extremely powerful in my life. I didn't really spend time to understand the difference between religion and spirituality, and quite frankly, I'm not sure I still understand the difference because they're really intertwined in my life. I also went to Catholic school for a couple of years as a kid. It was very formative for me because I felt like it didn't feel separate from the faith my parents were teaching me at home. It felt like a reaffirming and a confirmation of what I knew in my heart, which was that God is real, and God is in my life every single day.

KATHIE LEE: It's so interesting that you find the two compatible.

RAAKHEE: It always worked for me. For me, I'm the kind of person when it comes to these sorts of things, I look for confirmation. I meet people, and I find goodness in them. We may disagree on ten things and we may agree on two, but in those two I think there can be real power. So, for me, that's the connection point and that's the shared humanity. And I believe that's what God is in people.

KATHIE LEE: It's like our common ground is our sacred ground.

RAAKHEE: Totally.

KATHIE LEE: So you and I and Hoda met at Neary's pub. And we began a friendship, and we became colleagues when Hoda and I started to have our funny little column.

RAAKHEE: That seems like a lifetime ago.

KATHIE LEE: When you and I first met, I started sharing with you about my rabbinical studies. What do you remember about that?

RAAKHEE: I remember when we first met after Neary's, I came to the greenroom. I must've been three or four months pregnant at the time. I was nervous, I was young, and I was at the *Today* show. I didn't know you then, and what I found so interesting in that moment, your care for me, someone who you just met, told me so deeply who you were and how you see people. And as we got to know each other, the thing I thought was most fascinating was the way you talked about Israel. I think you said your dad had taken you there as a kid for your first time?

KATHIE LEE: Yes, he sent my mom and me there as a high school graduation present.

RAAKHEE: That's right! Agan and I had been trying to go to Israel. It just didn't work out because of the politics of the passport. I was desperate to go. I thought it was so interesting that after so many years of trying to go, within just a couple of years of you and me being friends, we actually made that trip happen.

KATHIE LEE: Tell me, what were your first impressions when you got there?

RAAKHEE: I had come off a really tough time. My daughter had been sick with cancer for the first year of her life. So the trip came at a time when

she was healthy and I was trying to piece back together parts of my life and parts of my relationship with Agan. It's really hard to be married when you think that your child, your newborn, is going to die. We clung together, and I clung to faith as I normally do. I remember when we got to Israel, there were two parts in particular that I thought, "*I need to be here because I need this in my life just now.*"

KATHIE LEE: What were they?

RAAKHEE: The first one was when we were walking at Ein Gedi, where the waterfall is. We were sitting there, and Rod had us read a part of the Bible. And I don't know how to read a Bible. He was saying names and numbers, and I was like, "Why aren't you giving us page numbers? How am I supposed to find things?" And then, of course, he kept calling on me to read, and I was like, "I don't know where you are, Rod! I don't understand where I am in the book!" He had me read something, and there are two pieces that I still remember. Something about living water.

KATHIE LEE: Yes, streams of living water.

RAAKHEE: I remember being really touched by that idea at that moment. And the other thing was that I sensed true, intense power when we were in Israel. We had gone on a little hike, I think in the Valley of Elah. I had never read the story. Of course, I'd heard of David and Goliath, like in the Malcolm Gladwell sense. In many ways that story was made just for me, at that moment in my life. I believe that if we really listen to what's happening around us, God speaks very clearly to us. And I felt like I was being spoken to very clearly.

KATHIE LEE: How much did it matter that you were in the place where that event occurred?

RAAKHEE: Agan and I talked about that a lot. Because I felt in Israel very similar to the way that I feel when I'm in India. For me, I think it's because really important things have happened there for centuries, and I think that lots of those energies and those whispered prayers hang in the air there, and I felt them really deeply. It meant everything to be there. I think if you'd said, "Hey, Raakhee, let's read David and Goliath

while we're sitting in New York," I'd be like, "No." I mean, if you told me to do it, I probably would, but I don't think it would've worked in my heart the way that it did there.

KATHIE LEE: There's such a connection with the ancient there.

RAAKHEE: I think there's something to this idea, right? It's a place that people have been living and praying and doing for centuries, and I think that energy hangs everywhere. And it's for you, if you're open to it.

KATHIE LEE: And you really sense the presence of God there, and the ancients.

RAAKHEE: I agree.

KATHIE LEE: Tell me your first thought of Jesus. What were you first taught about Jesus as a child?

RAAKHEE: My parents are very religiously and spiritually free, so we were exposed to lots of different religions and beliefs. As a young girl, I had books about Buddha and books about Jesus. We watched *The Ten Commandments* every year. My parents went to Catholic school; it's a common practice in India. I started my schooling in Catholic school, so I was pretty familiar with Jesus. Like, I knew the Our Father at the same time I learned Hindu prayers. They were both on my tongue at the same time. It never felt separate for me. God always felt the same; it all felt like the same. It wasn't like, "This God is your God, and this one is mine." It all just felt like, "This one is my God."

KATHIE LEE: And you weren't at all threatened by Him?

RAAKHEE: Never, not at all.

KATHIE LEE: And did you learn anything about Him that changed your perception?

RAAKHEE: I was quite familiar with religion, but the thing that I learned in Israel, and was surprised by, was to have a window into other people's relationships with God. I think about how we stopped on the side of the road by the river Jordan, we had to walk up a little bit. People were going to be baptized—which I thought you just got baptized as a kid. I didn't know people did that as adults. I tried to find a place that was

out of the way. Of course, in trying to move out of the way, I ended up having a front-row seat.

KATHIE LEE: You sure did. You ended up having to help people in!

RAAKHEE: Literally! I put all this stuff on myself that I want to be out of the way. Of course, that was not the plan God had for me. God's plan was, "You will witness all of this, you will help everybody in and out, you will have a front-row seat because there's something in this experience for you too." And I don't think things happen accidentally.

KATHIE LEE: Did you know in the Hebrew language, there's no word for *coincidence*? God is either sovereign God, or He is not God at all.

RAAKHEE: That is a very Indian, Hindu philosophy. Everything is for a reason. All of it. Maybe you don't understand it today, but that doesn't mean it doesn't have a reason. I've unpacked that experience a lot for myself because it was so interesting to me.

KATHIE LEE: I've spoken to quite a few of us who were on that trip. The first one in the Jordan River was a young man who grew up in Scientology, and the last one was someone I've been praying for for thirty years, my stepdaughter, Vicki. Was there ever a moment when you thought that you might like something like that in your life, that cleansing?

RAAKHEE: No, because I felt like it was very much my experience but in a different way. It was the way it was supposed to be for me.

KATHIE LEE: Well, God is such a custom-made God.

RAAKHEE: Yes.

KATHIE LEE: And at the very end of it, at the last day, when we were all offered Communion at the Garden of Gethsemane, did you take Communion that day?

RAAKHEE: We didn't.

KATHIE LEE: Tell me why.

RAAKHEE: I felt like there were rules around what you had to do, certain things, in order to go through the Communion process, and I never did any of that, so I didn't want to disrespect anyone.

KATHIE LEE: That's interesting. That is part of the Catholic faith but not

part of the Protestant faith. So that was totally a part of what you learned.

RAAKHEE: Totally. I don't want to disrespect anyone. I take that pretty seriously. Not just when it comes to God and religion. Just in general, I don't want to disrespect people. That's not my vibe, not how I want to live my life.

KATHIE LEE: That's interesting. For me, so much of what I share is about the difference between religion and relationship with a living God. Did any of that make any more sense or less sense during your trip?

RAAKHEE: I've heard you say this to me a lot during our friendship, so I had thought about that concept before. And my parents had spoken about it before too. As a believer, I don't subscribe to a lot of the rules as much as I subscribe to the way I want to live my life in service. The way I worship God is that I live my life in service to other people in my community and other people who need an extra hand. Faith looks like a lot of different things in everyone's lives. It gave me comfort in knowing people experience this differently. It's not like you have to do these ten things if you're a good person, a religious person.

KATHIE LEE: Not a one-size-fits-all.

RAAKHEE: Exactly. For me, that window, in watching other people, gave me that sense of what relationship looks like for others in action. And I loved that.

KATHIE LEE: When you talk about how you want to live your life in service, do you think you're really describing the essence of Jesus?

RAAKHEE: Service, right? Yeah, this is a very big concept in Sikhism; it's called *seva*. It's like a central tenet, and it means service. It's to be in service to yourself and to others, and that's how we honor and praise God.

KATHIE LEE: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

RAAKHEE: For me, I take that incredibly seriously, and I live that out every day. That's how I practice my faith.

KATHIE LEE: So what was your takeaway? Did the trip change anything or everything?

RAAKHEE: I think there were factors that led that to be the exact right time. A lot of things had to have happened for Agan and me to be there. Agan wasn't supposed to come, and then the thing he was supposed to do got canceled. For us to be there together, at that critical juncture in our marriage and our parenting journey, and going through some real trauma together, I think it changed a lot of things. We were connecting with each other; it made us talk about different things before we went to bed. I think it changed a lot of things for us.

I don't know that it changed me spiritually. I think it reconfirmed a lot of things that I believed, but I think that it deepened some understandings for me. And I think it also brought more faith into my life that I'm not sure what would've happened otherwise. I was deep into a life trauma. Hoda always says, "There's a handful of times that you're on your knees." I was really on my knees. I told Agan, "Who would've thought that a handful of folks looking for Jesus were going to be a part of my story?" But there it was.

KATHIE LEE: That's called God meeting our need right where it happens, where divinity and humanity intersect. Did you feel God's love while you were there from the people you were with, and also by being in that place?

RAAKHEE: I have very rarely not felt what I would describe as God's love. I have felt it in the happiest times of my life and in the darkest times of my life. Even when Satya was sick, I never felt forsaken or alone. I have always felt that.

I was telling Agan that the thing I felt there, the only way I can describe it, is the way that I feel in India, where there are some places we are just more deeply free of the world and more connected into ourselves and into God. And I felt that in Israel, in the exact same way that I felt in India. I find it really intoxicating, and it's why I really want to go back. I felt things there, and was compelled to talk about things there, that I don't necessarily get that same opportunity in myself here. There is something special that exists there, in a way like I feel in India where it's easier to look inside.

KATHIE LEE: It creates a very inviting environment. It invites you into a place of surrender of the spirit.

RAAKHEE: Totally, and I think that observing, on the Sabbath, our Jewish brothers and sisters having a really important moment at the Western Wall, and seeing our Muslim brothers and sisters praying also, I just think there was something really important. I don't have all the words for it, but I think you can feel it.

KATHIE LEE: Thus, the need for the next trip. The journey continues.

RAAKHEE: The journey continues.

NINETEEN

A JOURNEY OUT OF ATHEISM

ROGER CHARLES

On September 18, 2020, a group of Californians came to my home. My dear friend Angie Clawson had invited them because they were all contemplating a move from LA to Tennessee for various reasons. Roger Charles and his beautiful wife, Cynthia Garrett, were among them. Roger is one of the world's most accomplished architects, and he was designing a magnificent new development on thirty-eight hundred acres of Tennessee land.

As I welcomed them all with a glass of GIFFT wine and took them on a tour of my home, I was able to catch the excitement in them about starting a brand-new life in a brand-new place. I had done the exact same thing just three years before, and I wanted to be as helpful and kind to all of them as Angie and her husband, Greg, had been to me when I first arrived there.

Roger was a native Californian from Long Beach who grew up during the Jesus Movement, as I did. I love his story because he set out to disprove the existence of God, with surprising results.



KATHIE LEE: Roger, you have one of the most amazing testimonies in that you came out of a world of atheism.

ROGER: Yes, that's true.

KATHIE LEE: Where do you want to start with your story?

ROGER: Yes. There are so many factors that go into that whole story. Logically, I just believed there was no God from everything I saw. I'd been listening to all of the experts . . . or, at least, who I thought were experts. I lived in Long Beach in 1970, when the Jesus Movement happened in Orange County. It just exploded.

KATHIE LEE: How old were you at that time?

ROGER: I was ten or eleven. While I was in high school, my friends were becoming Christians, and my brother's friends were becoming Christians. I was getting asked a lot about God and Jesus. I didn't think any of them knew what they were talking about, but I didn't have any evidence to say they were wrong.

KATHIE LEE: You knew something was happening.

ROGER: It was very clear, but I was still young. To me, becoming a Christian sounded like believing the story your parents told you when they had to flush your pet goldfish. Christianity sounded like, "There is this great Daddy in the sky, and He created everything, but He has a problem now, and we're all going to die for it. But don't worry—He sent His Son to die for us and save us. But you can't talk to Him because He's gone to Daddy heaven so He can take care of all our no-nos. So everything is good now . . . if we just believe." It sounded like a fairy tale.

Anyway, all these people were talking about Jesus. I just didn't have the answers. I said, "Look, all the experts agree, Jesus never existed. Most of the Bible never happened." Finally, I decided, "Nobody has put together the definitive work on why the Bible is unreliable," so that's what I set out to do.

I realized I had no forum to prove things true or false. Without God, there is no purpose, and a universe without purpose is meaningless. So I had to find a philosophy to prove things true or false.

KATHIE LEE: You didn't even know where to start.

ROGER: It was crazy. So I started reading philosophers, and I got stuck on Descartes, the father of modern philosophy. He got rid of all the history of man's beliefs and everything we know and started proving our existence and purpose from there. Descartes was a Christian, but I liked him because he set aside his preconceived beliefs, including Christianity and the Bible.

Proving anything came down to only two things that are reliable: tangible evidence and reliable witnesses. It's like a court of law. If you can put tangible evidence on the table, great. If you can put a reliable witness on the stand, great. Those are the only two things you can prove anything by. With that, I was set to disprove the Bible.

KATHIE LEE: You were how old at this time?

ROGER: Seventeen. So I decided to take all the things that were on my evidence table against the Bible and start proving each of them. One of the things Descartes talked about was going to the source and not trusting what others said about evidence, which meant I had to read the Bible.

KATHIE LEE: Best thing you did.

ROGER: Definitely. Then I had to get context. So I read both sides. I read atheist authors, and I read Christian authors. And the Christian authors didn't sound quite as stupid as I thought they would.

KATHIE LEE: The usual suspects from that time: C. S. Lewis, Josh McDowell, Philip Yancey?

ROGER: Yes. I was reading all the evidence for and against. And at this point, I was trying to prove all of it is false because I was sure there was no God.

KATHIE LEE: You were still thinking you could do this?

ROGER: The Bible has over forty authors who wrote over two thousand years. I figured, "There's not five people over two thousand years who are going to agree on any subject, let alone God." I thought there would be contradictions everywhere. There were guys who appeared to be very good scholars, PhDs, and they wrote books on the contradictions in the Bible. The only problem is, I answered all of them at seventeen. There isn't a contradiction in the Bible.

KATHIE LEE: How could you know that without knowing the Greek and the Hebrew?

ROGER: Some of it is superobvious. I'll give you a classic example. In the Old Testament, it talks about the dimensions of the laver in the temple. It's a large bowl. In the Bible, when you read that in 1 Kings 7, the circumference is exactly three times larger than the diameter, but we all know pi is 3.14, et cetera. So the critics say, "The Bible is inaccurate." But further on, the Bible gives the thickness of the lip on the laver. When you adjust for the lip, the dimensions equal pi.

KATHIE LEE: Evidence.

ROGER: All of a sudden, the evidence against it becomes the evidence for it. That's what kept happening to me. I started off with archaeology. The first thing I had was the city of Tyre. Ezekiel made a prophecy about what was going to happen to the city of Tyre. And it turns out, archaeologists, when they finally discovered the city of Tyre, everything was exactly the way that Ezekiel talked about it. Ezekiel 26 says the city would be flat like the top of a rock, only good for fishermen to mend their nets on. And sure enough, there were fishermen mending their nets on what looked like a flat rock, but it's actually the pavement for the street.

KATHIE LEE: Right as he said it would be.

ROGER: So I freaked out and thought I would try a different way of proving the Bible wrong.

KATHIE LEE: Move on to the next thing . . .

ROGER: The next thing was to try to find Bible verses that contradicted. So I took all the experts and their Bible contradiction verses. Every time I dug into a supposed contradiction, I found out their criticism turned out to be evidence for the Bible. All my evidence against the Bible had whittled down to hardly anything, and the other evidence table had been stacked to the moon with evidence for the Bible.

So now I was sitting there thinking, "*I have way more evidence for the Bible than against the Bible.*" I had read the Bible three times at this

point. And, of course, the Holy Spirit started working in me. The Bible was starting to make sense.

KATHIE LEE: Even things like the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead?

ROGER: Here's the problem. There are a lot of miracles in the Bible, and, of course, you can't prove them one way or another. Virgin birth being one of them. We just don't have the gynecology report from her doctor that says, "Yes, Mary, you're a virgin and pregnant." There are certain things you can't prove one way or another, but there are other things you can, and we do have witnesses. "Are they reliable enough?" becomes the issue. I wasn't concerned as to whether the Bible was Scripture or God-breathed. I was concerned as to whether it was reliable.

KATHIE LEE: At that time.

ROGER: Well, of course, because all that matters for Jesus to be true is that it's reliable. If I know I have great history on a situation from four, five, six, seven, eight witnesses, which is what the New Testament is, then can I trust those witnesses? And you've got somebody like Luke, who writes like any historian of his day, taking down other people's testimonies, like Stephen or Philip. All of a sudden, you have more witnesses. Like Apollo. You have all these witnesses, and to be an atheist, you have to prove they are all unreliable. The truth is, you can't prove any of them unreliable. Nobody has done that.

KATHIE LEE: When you know that the world changed hugely by their testimony.

ROGER: These guys spread a message to all the nations of the world because, at that time, the nations of the world were the Roman Empire, and a little bit beyond that. In their lifetime, within a hundred years, they had spread the gospel and become a religion in every nation, which is what Jesus told them to do. One of the things I learned as an atheist is the Bible is very specific.

KATHIE LEE: Nothing random about it.

ROGER: Every little detail becomes incredibly important, especially when you believe you have evidence and reliable witnesses. The more you

pick apart details in the Bible, the more the Bible has the evidence and witnesses.

KATHIE LEE: It always has the answer.

ROGER: If you are determined to dig to the bottom, you'll get your answer, and that answer will blow away your doubts.

KATHIE LEE: At what age did you finally say, "Okay, I believe," and did you get down on your knees? Did you have some sort of a revelation? What happened?

ROGER: It was a full year later. I just was angry that I lost the battle and that the experts I trusted were liars. I threw away the Bible and went on to live my life like an idiot. Proving that God exists doesn't mean you know God.

KATHIE LEE: That's fascinating.

ROGER: About three months later, I was looking back at my life because most of my plans either failed or succeeded but with horrible results. I was thinking, "*I've proved that God exists, the Bible is true, and God loves me and has a plan for me. Also, He lives outside the time domain, which means He knows the future and has perfect plans. Why don't I want to know Him?*"

KATHIE LEE: Why wouldn't you want the better plan?

ROGER: I was an idiot. At this point, I hadn't been to a church. I just said, "God, I know You're real." I started praying every day, but my prayers felt like they were bouncing off the ceiling.

I understood there was a Holy Spirit, but I didn't know what that meant. In my mind, I thought it was like a shazam moment, because that's what it appears to be in the Bible, people have these shazam moments. So I started praying. I kept telling God that He could come along with me in my life. But nothing happened. After a few weeks, I finally said to God, "I know You won't reject me, so I will live my life for You, with or without a shazam moment." That's when it happened.

KATHIE LEE: That's precious.

ROGER: I walked out of my bedroom, and *boom*, peace just came in my life. All of a sudden, I was sharing Jesus. I was like, "God is amazing," and

people's lives were being changed. There was power in it. I came back home that night and thought, "*I didn't curse all day. This is a miracle. And I didn't get angry all day.*" I believe God took those two things from me. I think He took the anger because I would've ended up dead.

KATHIE LEE: Or somebody else would've been.

ROGER: He just took the anger. At the same time, He took cursing out of my mouth. I had used its quota of curse words for a whole life. He said, "*You're done. That's it. You've used it up.*"

From that point on, I went to Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa. I was playing professionally as a bass player at that time. This music was exploding in Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, which was the epicenter of the Jesus Movement, with all these bands. I showed up and got introduced to some of the musicians, and there weren't enough bass players. As we started to fellowship, they realized I had a pretty deep knowledge of the Bible. I even answered some of their questions.

So they thought I'd been a Christian a long time, when in fact it had been just months. They just threw me in. All of a sudden, I was playing worship with a worship band. Now I was on a mission. My first two years as a Christian, I'd just beat atheist heads into the concrete over and over, which won arguments but didn't make other fellow believers. Then I realized, "*Wait a minute—*"

KATHIE LEE: Do I want to be right or righteous?

ROGER: You can be so right, you're wrong. To make a long story short, that is my journey into Christianity and into knowing God.

KATHIE LEE: In all the ensuing years, has there ever been a crisis of faith? I know you've had a health issue and a marriage that didn't work. We all have drama in our lives. In this world, we will have trouble, Jesus said. So, did you have a crisis of faith, anywhere along the way, about what you had decided about the Bible or about Jesus? Or was that decisive for you?

ROGER: It was decisive. There has never been a moment when I doubted God. The Bible is true no matter what anybody says, and I can just go right down the line with anybody who is logical and show them there

is no other choice. It doesn't matter what you want, it doesn't matter what you feel, the Bible is true. End of story. There is no other option, logically.

KATHIE LEE: But do you want to follow it? That's a whole other thing. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us, Roger.