

# MY GOD WITH ME

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## MY TESTIMONY

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First of all, I thank God for His unfailing love and grace which empowered me to write this testimony. Secondly, I thank my beloved sisters of CSI Wesley Church, Chicago women fellowship for their support and encouragement to share my gifts of ministry in Women's Bible Study. I feel this is a blessing to share my transforming experience in the form of a testimony.

To begin with, I would like to write few glimpses of my childhood days which greatly impacted my later spiritual life. My both parents were God fearing people though they did not practice religion much. At the age of 9, I was sent to my uncle's house (pedananna) to get my high school education because both my uncle and aunt were high school teachers in a small town called Mummidivaram. I stayed with them for six long years growing up along with their 6 children. After all these years, now I am realizing how much I missed my parents and siblings during those long growing years. But past is past and I believe that there is a purpose for everything in our life. Though I did not experience physical abuse at my uncle's house, they abused me with hard words on the plea of discipline. I was so naïve that I never felt to share my struggles with my parents. On the other hand my father was so loyal to his brother and his wife and he trusted them by all means by sending me there for better education.

My life was not comfortable there. I was just a child and I did not understand many things that were happening to me especially the fact of living in a small village where as my parents were living in a big town. But, I cannot deny the spiritual blessings I received at my uncle's home because they practiced religion so strictly in their home. There was always a regular family prayer before dinner and morning devotion time and all the children had to participate in it without fail. I was nurtured by the word of God though I did not understand the core meaning of it. Reading three to four chapters from the Bible was my everyday morning ritual.

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## REMARKABLE PURPOSE

## MY GOD WITH ME

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I read the Telugu version of John Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress' at the age of 11, and Russian War stories of Leo Tolstoy at a very early age. I read the biographies of well known crusaders and great evangelists during that time. There was a little library at my uncle's place and I loved it so deeply. Books were great inspiration to me because there was nothing to do in that small village. Even Bible was a wonderful story book for me and I never experienced the transforming power of the word of God during that time may be because I was still very young.

During my teen age days, I was bouncing between the word of God and worldliness. Though outwardly I look perfect, my inner nature was very sinful with impure thoughts and desires. During that time, I was not conscious that they were sins in the sight of God. After finishing my high school at my uncle's place, I came back to my parents and joined in a college in Kakinada and continued to live a life of confusion and frustration. I enjoyed being a college student but there was no joy in my life and I was not even good in my academic life. I always carried the spirit of inferiority and dissatisfaction in me may be because of the hurts of my child hood. I was unable to pursue the education I desired to do. During that gloomy time of my life I was introduced to a non denominational Fellowship Church through some of my good friends. Without the knowledge of my parents I used to attend those prayer meetings and fasting prayers. First time in my life, I started to understand the real meaning of my life. The word of God convinced me that I am a sinner and I need healing and forgiveness. My prayer partners who were also my college mates encouraged me to attend special youth meetings to hear the word of God from the servants who really experienced the transformation in their life. I was so blessed by the powerful messages of dedicated God's servants.

During those days, I started to seek the true meaning of my life. My only goal was to receive Christ as my personal savior.. All the other things seems to be very useless and meaningless to me. I studied the word of God day and night and prayed day and night with tears to forgive my sins and cleanse me from my unrighteousness. When my parents were away for their respective jobs, and my little brothers and sister were away in school, I was alone at home fighting and pleading God to give me salvation experience. I confessed all my iniquities and asked God to speak to me. This type of spiritual warfare went on nearly one year. Then a day came in my life to experience the real transforming power of Jesus which was so powerfully and beautifully came on me while I was listening to the word of God on a Good Friday day. The spirit of God

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## REMARKABLE PURPOSE

## MY GOD WITH ME

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convinced me to repent for all my sins I committed and I was crying and confessing my sins. My main focus was on the face of Christ who visited me with his unconditional love. After the service, God's servants helped me and guided me to take the baby steps in my faith. On Easter morning God spoke to me very clearly by giving the following promises.

Isaiah 1: 18 *"Come let us reason together, says the Lord, Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."*

And also with the promise from Isaiah 44:22

*"I have swept away your offences like a cloud, your sins like a morning mist Return to me for I have redeemed you".*

These were the initial promises of forgiveness and salvation given to me by my savior. After that, God assured his salvation through so many promises. An unexplainable joy came into my heart. I felt some newness and freshness in my heart. I continued to read so many spiritual books and soul lifting biographies of so many wonderful servants of God. The history and faith journey of Sadhu Sunder Singh, greatly impacted my spiritual life. My attitudes, goals, and behavior changed and people around me and especially my parents started to notice significant change in my life. I started to understand the word of God clearly. I can call this experience as a born again experience or salvation experience. What ever you call it, but it was so real and glorious experience for me. This experience occurred to me more than three decades ago when I was a young woman of 20. But still I am anchored to that first experience which is guiding me and leading me all these years even though I stumbled several times on the way. Shortly after my conversion, my sister who was just 16 at that time accepted Jesus as her personal savior.

The power of God started to do wonders in our home. We experienced both spiritual and material blessings one after the other. God touched my intellect and gave me the spirit of confidence to flourish in education. I started to share my testimony to my friends and even to the people who come to our home for begging. But the enemy was not happy about all these good things happening in my family. So he created some problems through my own father who strongly discouraged my spiritual discipline. He objected me not to attend any prayer fellowships and meetings. He feared that I will neglect my studies and finally will become mad. He strictly told me not to move from home after college. I was forbidden to meet my spiritual sisters and to attend the night prayer meetings. I have to obey my parents because of the culture and tradition, but my

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## REMARKABLE PURPOSE

## MY GOD WITH ME

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spirit was longing to hear the word of God and fellowship with my spiritual sisters. Secretly I started to attend some prayer meetings. But Satan used my father as his weapon so I was so afraid to go out. Slowly my spirit stopped to fight and surrendered. Later I went to Guntur to pursue my Masters degree. That was the time I reconnected to the prayer partners in that town and God used me to share the love of Christ with the students who lived in dorms along with me. Those two years were the most blessed years in my life. After my studies I joined in Government service at my own town called Kakinada and again I came under the supervision of my father. He was my boss at my work place too.... because we both worked in the same office.

The real struggle started when my parents were searching for a husband for me. I always wanted to marry a person who serves the Lord. A Godly woman who visits my home very often, professed that I will marry a servant of God. But my father was far away from that idea. After many prayers and waiting in the Lord and also after experiencing many disappointments, I submitted my entire situation to the hands of God. God miraculously answered my prayers through my marriage to my husband Omega Varma who was then a seminary student.

If I want to write my journey after marriage, it will take at least two hours for you read. So I will save my story for another time. But one thing I want to share with you. My marriage gave me a freedom, freedom from the patriarchy of my father , freedom to worship my God, and freedom to follow my own heart. My husband Omega Varma is a minister and my married life gave me so many opportunities to serve God in so many ways

Salvation experience is not a one-time event but it is an ongoing relationship with Christ who empowers us with his Devine strength. But in my life that is the first step of my faith journey.

It will be unfair, if I do not mention about the transformation of my father who passed away in 2006. During the later years of his life he changed and realized his mistakes and encouraged our ministry in so many ways. He always lives in my heart as my loving father who loved me with earthly love while my heavenly father loves me so deeply and tenderly always...forever. Amen

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## REMARKABLE PURPOSE