

My Faith Story

I am Gary and would like to share my direct experiences with God.

A young boy began reading the Bible he received at Sunday School graduation before entering Confirmation Class. He felt ungrateful for having not read it recently. Plus, he needed to be prepared for Confirmation Class. He picked it up, opened to a Gospel and began reading the story of Mary, Joseph, the birth of their baby in a manger, and angels rejoicing over the birth. He slammed the Bible shut, looked up and exclaimed – **“God!! Is that all there is to learn here? I’ve learned all this in Sunday School and heard it all before!”**

Unexpectedly, he had an immediate feeling of intense warmth, a sense of absolute pure love like he had NEVER experienced before. About as quickly as that “feeling” came, it began to leave. He exclaimed, “Lord don’t leave me! Don’t leave me!!” knowing instinctively that it was the Lord. The boy exclaimed, “That’s it?!? That’s all there is to it?” That could not have been real. It was just my intense frustration coming out. But was it really the Lord? Why me? It was so-o-o-o intense... It was way beyond description... I must be a little off my rocker!

Ten years later, the boy, now a young man, was returning from a military exercise feeling cold, hungry, tired, frustrated with his education and life in general. As he got off the bus, a stranger greeted him with a cheerful smile, asking where he was headed and could he walk along? The soldier shrugged and said, “I’d rather just be left alone.” As the soldier walked down the street, he said, “What am I doing uttering such nonsense to a nice fellow! This is not the man I am!!” He turned looking for the nice man who had greeted him to apologize, but the stranger had vanished. He sat down on the stone wall and whispered **“Lord, what in the world am I doing here?”**

Forty years later, that boy, Gary, had become an engineer, a husband and a father, began thinking about these unshared “experiences”. One Sunday morning, an older man came to share his testimony about what God had done for him after a critical surgery. He shared how the “feeling” of intense love and peace came over him. He said it was so intense, so real, but could not be described with mere words.

I wanted to jump from the pew and shout “I know!! I know!! I, too, have had that exact experience” but I could not. At the time, I believed the sanctuary was a place to honor God, not me. I thought a small group is a far better place to gain from the experiences of others and share what God has done for us. **I joined a small group and began experiencing the intense love God makes available to all of us.**

***“For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.
Praise the LORD.” Psalm 117:2 (NIV)***