

CHRIS' STORY

YOU CAN'T OUTRUN EMPTINESS.



About this magazine...

The objective of this magazine is to wake people up to important truths. Truths which have been obscured & made ineffective as a result of centuries of tradition. The reality is that many people in the world who don't identify as Christian have not actually rejected Jesus, but rather a religious counterfeit inconsistent with the historical Jesus of the Bible. So if you feel tired, empty, guilty, disillusioned, or spiritually stuck... you're not alone, and you're not hopeless. Instead, you might just be trapped in a system that was never meant to box you in. This is the story of a man named Chris. But perhaps you will see yourself reflected in him.





The daily routine

Chris worked day and night as a cashier at a supermarket. Long hours. Work he found boring, and uninspiring. And he wasn't even paid much for it. Parties with friends on Saturdays, church on Sundays with family. Rinse, wash, repeat. Chris believed in God... or at least the concept of God; but He felt far from this God personally. As if he were standing with his feet straddling two sides of an invisible fence. In his head, he believed that there was a Creator, believed in things like love and faith and goodness; but in his heart, he knew he wasn't experiencing those things he professed to believe intellectually.

Church

Chris grew up hearing about God since childhood. He was baptized, and attended church faithfully on Sundays and holidays. But his 'faith' was one based around tradition and religious rituals. And, for Chris, it felt hollow. He was plagued by a constant feeling that something was missing... like there was an important piece to the puzzle which had been moved, or left out altogether. It got to the point where even routine church attendance became a burden. Rules, rituals, public prayers repeated on auto-pilot. Praise and worship on Sunday, stress and worry on Monday. Chris learned well enough how to "look" spiritual; but no one taught him how to really be it. He wasn't free. He was religious... and he was growing tired of it.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Realizing something was wrong

One day, the mask dropped... fully. A respected leader from his church, who preached fervently each week for "holiness", was caught stealing money from the church, having an affair with a choir member; and when church leadership learned of it, they covered it up. After learning of the matter himself, Chris felt disgusted, though in another sense, relieved. He was done. He said to himself: "If this sort of corruption is what church is all about, then I want no part in it."



"(they) are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

Matthew 23:27



That was the last Sunday Chris attended church. Not because he had stopped believing in God, but because he had lost faith in the institution. But the seeming contradiction was leaving Chris conflicted. What he was seeing in practice from the church was not consistent with what he had read of Jesus in the Bible. Was religion itself just one big scam? After all, Chris thought, where was God to be found, if not in the church?

The reckoning



One afternoon, while he was waiting to take the trolley in San Diego, a stranger offered something to Chris. It was a small magazine. The title struck a cord with him: “Leaving Religion Without Abandoning Christ”. Chris whispered to himself with a subtle smile: “Now that’s something I can relate to!” He put the magazine in his backpack. Later that evening, tired yet anxious, he took it out and started to read it. *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Romans 10:17

Open eyes

Each page Chris read spoke to him personally. It talked about loving God but hating religious hypocrisy, working for love but turning away from greed. The message brought peace instead of guilt, hope in place of disillusionment. It spoke of *living* by faith, instead of just talking about it; and it spoke of living like Jesus, instead of just wearing His image around one’s neck.

Chris was hooked. Never before had he heard a message speak straight to his soul so directly. What he read was not attacking Christ. But it was attacking religion’s attempts to keep Christ’s teachings buried.

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”
John 8:32



An open door

Chris reached the point in the magazine that spoke about there being just one mediator between man and God. How God sent Jesus not just to die on a cross, but to teach us how to live. And how religion had largely buried those teachings, so that others didn't even know they existed.

Chris put the magazine down. His mind started racing in thoughts about how he could have been so blind about true Christianity all this time. "God... if you are as Jesus really says you are... I want to know You. I don't want to keep pretending."



There was no dazzling beam of light, nor miraculous vision from heaven. But peace immediately started to flood Chris's heart. As if he could finally breathe after having held his breath for a long, long time. The door didn't burst open with a choir of angels singing out Hallelujah. But the peace of God, which he still couldn't quite understand well enough to fully articulate, was starting to fill his heart and mind nonetheless. He had found hope. God was real, and he didn't need to go to an expensive building once a week to find Him. All Chris needed to do was listen to Jesus.

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Romans 8:1

Life starts to change



Chris didn't immediately turn into a perfect person. But he did change. He started seeing things in a different way, a different light. He stopped pretending, and stopped living a double life. He started to read the Gospels for himself, and discovered that Jesus said many things which he'd never heard. Liberating things. Things which, if Chris practiced, would revolutionize his entire life.

Chris stopped seeking approval from people. And started seeking the truth instead. He felt lighter. And he felt good. He realized that much of what he'd been taught was important in life really wasn't, and much that he had been taught wasn't important really was. His values were turned on their head. His life was different now.

*"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
2 Corinthians 5:17*

Clear sight

Chris now saw it everywhere. Religious people full of religious activities... but empty with respect to genuine compassion. Lots of talk without transformed hearts, nor any real action that looked like Jesus. He couldn't condemn them. He saw himself in them... or at least in what he used to be. And he recognized that one could attend church every day of the week and continue living spiritually empty. As lukewarm followers of lukewarm, watered-down and distorted doctrine. Chris was eager to help others see what he himself had seen. A truth that freed him from all the hypocrisy he had experienced in church. A freedom that could only come from a new appreciation of the actual words of Jesus.



"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6:63

First contact



Chris noticed the contact information that appeared on the magazine. “If this magazine has spoken to your heart... you are not alone.” He paused for a moment of doubt, and then sent the message. The response surprised him. Real people. Real stories. The same desire for Jesus. They weren’t forming a new denomination, or a new church. They were scattering seeds of truth around the world, and working together in harmony to do it.

They didn’t have big bank accounts, huge followings on social media, or much influence in any objective way. But they were happy. And they were, slowly but surely, changing the world.

Chris soon learned of other small groups like them in other parts of the world. They lived together, shared resources, and encouraged each other to practice the things Jesus taught. They explained to Chris that they worked for love, not money. And that they trusted God to meet their needs as they used their time to serve Him. This was a new concept for Chris. He couldn’t imagine how people could survive without working for money, though the people he met had been doing it for years, and they seemed to be prospering. Maybe it was more feasible than he first thought.



“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33

Joining the team!



Chris joined a small group, not as a fancy preacher, but as someone who knew what it felt like to be trapped in a system that promised freedom, but delivered slavery. That claimed to have the solution, but disappointed like a cloud without water. In a few short weeks Chris learned more about what Jesus actually taught than he had in years of going to church. Now he was giving his time too to help share the message with others. To live a sample of this kingdom of heaven which he had once heard preached in

church, but never seen shown in action. He started looking for opportunities to help those with less, to visit and write to prisoners, and to give of his time and resources to help orphans and other vulnerable peoples. He did all of these charitable deeds in secret, not making mention to anyone of his new-found interest in helping the poor and disadvantaged. Chris's life was being truly transformed; he was becoming a Christian - a disciple of Jesus - not just in name, but also in deed.

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." James 1:22



Chris realized that, though he had abandoned organized, institutional religion, he had actually found Christ. Religion had built up walls, while Jesus freed people from them. God didn't live in buildings made by man. He lived in the *hearts* of men! The magazine Chris received had not saved him: Jesus had. But the magazine had helped Chris find Jesus... the real One, and not the muffled one he was hearing preached at church. Now Chris

was determined to help others make the same discovery. He now saw "the system" for the lie that it was - the deception that life was all about accumulating more and more things, and how even institutional churches had played a part in perpetuating that lie. Chris wanted no part of such. He had found Jesus, and would dedicate the rest of his life to following Him, and to living his life based on His words.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.
Galatians 5:1

If this magazine has touched you, please take time to read the Gospels for yourself. (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.) Talk with God sincerely, and simply. We don't need religious pretence to follow God; we just need to listen to Jesus, the One sent by God to speak the words of life. If you do nothing else, please take time to listen to Him, and hear what He has to say for yourself.

The world is full of sermons. But it's starving for actual samples of what people preach.

We are not here to promote a new church, nor a new religion. Rather, we are looking for people more interested in love than greed, more interested in authenticity than pretence; people interested in truth. If that sounds like you, then this magazine is for you!



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