

IN HER OWN WORDS



*Relationship
with Christ*

WHAT JESUS MEANS TO ME

It is not easy to express what Jesus means to me. To attempt to do so is like writing a personal life story, for I cannot remember the time when I did not know Him. The passing years have given different meanings and new names for Him, but always He has been a vital part of life.

Due to the influences of a Christian mother, I early learned the name above all other names, and it was more than a name even then. My earliest remembrance of Jesus Christ is that of someone in the home. As little children, my brothers and I were made aware of the unseen Guest by whose presence our home was honored. The Son of God was abiding with us! A childish understanding, to be sure, of that mystical truth—yet the glory of it has permeated all life. It has never been difficult for me to accept unseen realities as more real than the seen because of this early home atmosphere.

From my earliest recollections the Bible was a book of prominence in our home. It was the Book, read and used as accepted Authority. And so as the various experiences of life have revealed to me new names for Jesus, or new meanings to familiar ones, it has always been with the background of the Bible as a book for daily devotional study.

I was still under ten when I learned that I could honor Jesus by letting others know I loved Him. And I made that public confession in a childish way, but with gladness in my heart. I have no remembrance of any questions asked me by the minister—I only know I was glad to tell others that Jesus was my Friend. It was

a real experience, and I am glad no adult was permitted to persuade me that I was too young to know what I was doing.

When the turbulent days of growing girlhood overtook me with their many problems, I began to turn to Jesus as Counselor. I needed help and guidance. So often I was perplexed, not knowing what to do, or where to turn. I had early been taught to observe a “quiet time” for Bible reading, prayer and “listening”—that was an established habit in our home and became a personal one in girlhood days. The help received from those “quiet times” was very real to me. But even in girlhood days there was no thought of limiting guidance to those “quiet hours.” I had learned how to turn to Jesus for immediate help in moments of need. He was my Counselor. Prayer was a reality.

I met sorrow face to face for the first time when an adored younger brother was suddenly taken by death. I was in my late teens. Oh, how rebellious I was to think that God could and would do a terrible thing such as this. After weeks of strain and struggle, the early teachings reasserted themselves and I began to feel a new need of Jesus. The thought of eternal life and reunion with loved ones in another world offered no consolation whatsoever—that was too far off. How could such a dim and distant future be of any immediate help to my aching heart? Yet as the lonely days came and went, I did turn to Jesus and began to know Him as Comforter.

The knowledge that life was to be used, not wasted, was given to me early. I cannot remember the time when I did not seem to know that God had a plan

for my life and that my supreme task was to find out what that plan was and to fit my life into the pattern.

It was when life choices had to be made that Jesus became to me the Way. And, in those days, the name meant to me willingness to live His "way to life," literally to lose one's own interests in a cause, a person. And I recall how challenging it was, what high purpose it gave to life, how thrilling to dare to put to the test of everyday life His teachings! How earnestly I studied His teachings! How daring some of them seemed! To bless one's enemies, to forgive seventy times seven, to take no anxious thought of tomorrow, to be unconcerned about making money, to be very much concerned about the spirit in which we did things, to put first things first—no one could do all these extraordinary things without inspiration—and so Jesus became to me the Way, and the Teacher of the Way. It was at this time that I dedicated my life, as fully as I knew how, to Him and to His service—there was a glorious readiness to leave all to follow Him—and to follow at all costs. How daring and courageous youth is!

It was in those early days of awakening of the spiritual life that I first became conscious of the need of Jesus as a Savior. I had always heard Him spoken of as Savior. I had always been in the shelter of a Christian home and the church, yet there came a time when I knew what it was to be born again and a new and deeper meaning was given to that name Savior.

In the emotional stress and strain of young womanhood, when life was overflowing and offering so many rich and tempting gifts, when choices high or low had to be made, Jesus suddenly became to me the Pearl of great price. It was given me to know that unless I

were willing to surrender every other thing in order to keep Him first, life would lose its meaning and purpose. He must be first, and all other adjustments made to that choice. I understood the parable about His kingdom.

It was a distinct spiritual experience when Jesus became my Supply. I was passing through a time of financial difficulty, bearing heavy responsibilities and facing a crisis which I knew not how to meet. Our home had been "a faith home," faith was a practical word in the home. I had accepted Providential care on faith without any question—it was "the way to live." "God will take care of us," how often I had heard that and how simply true it seemed. "My God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." That was a "home" verse. But there were independent adventures in faith to be made—and there was a crisis.

I went to my room, took my Bible, knelt by the bedside and asked God to speak to me. I am well aware what criticisms may be made by some who read this—it does not matter. To me at that time, it was a real and vital experience. God knows the heart and answers its cry. I opened my Bible, and the verse that met my eye was: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto You." That verse had been read, memorized and repeated hundreds of times. I had taught it to groups of young people in classes again and again—yet suddenly at that moment it was an entirely new verse, with a new meaning and with a personal message in it. I arose strengthened, assured, and went out from that quiet time to make certain adventures in faith which

have been carried on to this day. They are in a story by themselves, and some of the experiences seem almost like miracles.

I had always thought lightly of money—it was a convenience not to be thought about too much, and rarely to be spoken about, and never to be put first in planning. I had given it impulsively when I had it—but after that memorable quiet time, I started to put the kingdom first in my money matters. For one thing I began at once to tithe, not with any sense of limitation to a tithe, but as a simple plan of putting the kingdom first. I can but testify here to the needed things having been added, often in most unexpected ways. There has never been any turning back from that recognition of the reality of the Bank of Heaven, from which we may draw in times of need if the kingdom is put first. And Jesus and the Father have never ceased to be my Providence, my Supply, the Giver of every good gift, as well as of the least daily need.

A new name was given to Jesus when, by a series of circumstances, I was led to search the New Testament for its teachings on baptism. I had been brought up a Methodist and knew all the arguments offered by Methodism about the ordinance—indeed, had often offered those arguments. I had not questioned them, I had accepted them as a teaching of the church. Then, with new light dawning, I turned to the New Testament, almost as to a new book, for light on this one subject. The well-worn Book seemed like an entirely new book to me. It was in this search that Jesus became the incarnate Truth, the very Word of God.

I do not remember the time when I did not

recognize Jesus' authority as well as that of the Bible. Yet here was new light. In a new way Jesus became the Truth. I wondered at my former blindness. The appeal for Christian unity in obedience to New Testament pattern, which I had always associated with "a narrow sect known as Campbellites," suddenly was revealed to me as obedience to divine authority of Jesus and the Book. My baptism in obedience to the Truth was a crisis in my spiritual life.

It was in later years when sorrows crowded thick and fast, taking from me those that made life dear and worth the living, according to human plans, that I came to know Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life. Heaven began to take on nearness and reality, and through a risen Savior the doors of heaven were to be opened to those who had accepted Him. The good news that Jesus was the Conqueror of death sustained when all else failed.

Life had given generous gifts—it began to take them away! When disillusionments and disappointments and shattered plans tended to overwhelm—when changes came swiftly and there seemed permanency to no earthly thing—when I faced that crisis of the soul's discipline—I came to know Jesus as the changeless One, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Without Jesus I could never have understood the spiritual processes at work in the vicissitudes of life. But with Him as the Illuminator, I was assured that all things were being made to work together for good to them that loved God. Christ alone gave meaning to all that was taking place. He was the only Foundation on which life or abiding happiness could be built. It was

putting confidence in the changeless One and going along with Him, that gave courage to meet changing scenes.

As the vision of life enlarged and missionary enthusiasm carried my interests to the four corners of the earth, my understanding of Jesus grew. The same sins and burdens were destroying all races. The more widely the gospel is preached, the greater amazement that it meets the requirements of all human hearts. God gives His Spirit without regard to race or color, to enable all to receive the message of redemption and become the children of the heavenly Father. I saw Jesus as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. He is the Good Tidings of great joy.

There have been many times that I have known Jesus as the Great Physician, the Healer of life's ills of heart and mind and body. In the midst of work He gives rest, in hours of doubt, He gives understanding, and in times of physical pain, He either gives healing and relief or courage to endure. Oh, and I have known Him as the Good Shepherd, and the Bread of Life, and the Water of Life, and the Light, and the Unspeakable Gift, the Author and Finisher of my Faith.

Looking back to the days that are no more, and in the midst of the days that now are, I am aware that Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God, is All in All. He has met every need all along the way, and so it is I am assured that some day I shall know Him as my Pilot. He will safely guide the ship to the other shore, and open the door to the place He has prepared. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." But I know my loved ones

will be there, and that the Son of God will take me to the Father—I shall see Him face to face.

Faith demands that we make our choices day by day without knowing what the results will be. That calls for courage. It would be easy to choose a certain path if we could see the end—but our part is to walk by faith—to choose the highest and best we know at the moment of choice and then leave the rest with the Lord.

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ADVENTURES IN FAITH

The spirit of adventure enters into all phases of life. It gives zest and thrill to the commonplace experiences of every day. Life itself is a great adventure, and the greatest adventure in life is in the realm of faith.

Jesus made it very plain that we are to live by faith, not knowledge, yet most of us spend far more time gaining knowledge than we do exercising faith. Faith does in time become knowledge to us, but that is only a challenge to venture out still farther into new realms of faith.

A life is power-filled to the extent that it is faith-governed. No life can be truly successful, no matter how great its achievements, until it is lived in the spirit of continuously growing faith. The great things of the world have not been done by men and women of great talent and special gifts as much as by men and women of tremendous faith through whom God could work because of their faith.

The word faith is a much misunderstood word with many of us. We think of it as something associ-