

Chapter 9: Church Shopping

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“I want to go to church,” I said to my husband. “A regular Christian church, not a New Age church.” I was hungry to learn more about Jesus and the Bible.

Over the years, I’d tried to blend New Age beliefs with Christianity. I’d attended various religious services and ceremonies over the years, celebrating them all because of the New Age belief of coexistence. You’ve probably seen the bumper sticker of the various religious symbols side by side with the message that “we’re all worshipping the same God.” This goes along with a similar New Age belief that “all paths lead to heaven,” and my favorite tagline was “the more friends you have in heaven the better,” which meant that I prayed to Jesus along with deities of other religions. Exclusivity just didn’t fit with my worldview that God and Jesus accept everyone equally. I had a lot to learn about God’s love and holiness.

My husband was raised in the Methodist church and had been baptized at age twelve. However, he and his family fell away from church attendance, and Michael developed his own theology. He loved Jesus and was more familiar with the Bible than me, but he also held decidedly New Age beliefs. He traveled with me to New Age workshops, where he was on stage with me, playing meditative keyboard music. Michael frequently taught New Age doctrine from the stage and gave psychic readings to audience members. At my book signings, people stood in line to ask Michael questions, and he’d happily counsel them from a New Age-Christian blended worldview.

Like me, Michael tried to mix New Age with Christianity. Yet, like oil and water, Christianity and New Age can never mix. In the appendix of this book, I list the reasons why this is so. The main difference, though, is that the New Age is all about glorifying and empowering yourself, while Christianity is about glorifying God and praising Him for His power.

My point is that Michael and I were *both* involved in the New Age deception. Some people have insinuated that Michael manipulated me into Christianity. These rumors usually originate from people who can’t accept or understand my conversion. The truth is that Jesus was pulling both Michael and me out of the New Age simultaneously.

We began shopping for a church to attend. We started at a Pentecostal Foursquare church. We loved the pastor, a warm and loving man named Sione, which in his native Tongan means “God is gracious.” Pastor Sione would only preach for ten or fifteen minutes each service because his wife was convinced the congregation didn’t want to hear him talk much longer. Michael and I wanted to hear him, though! The rest of the two-hour services were devoted to worship music, prayer requests, and praise reports. Those are all worthy uses of service time, but Michael and I wanted longer sermons.

We tried various churches. In Hawaii where we lived, choices for everything—schools, restaurants, stores, and churches—are limited because the islands are only so big. So there weren’t as many churches from which to choose, compared to a mainland city. Many of the church services were in the native Hawaiian language, which we found beautifully charming. We did our best to understand Hawaiian, but it was challenging to learn theology in a different language.

Finally we landed at an Episcopal church. My longtime friend Becky who'd grown up Episcopalian was certain that I'd like the church. Many people have put me down for attending the Episcopal Church, as it is liberal. Let me just say that the Episcopal Church was a soft landing place for me after coming out of the New Age. I couldn't have handled a conservative church, like we now attend, after a lifetime of deception. Pastor Chris Rosebrough said the Episcopal Church was my "halfway house," where I could detox from the New Age.¹

I'm also grateful for the support that my pastors and the church administrators at the Episcopal Church gave me during my time of intense persecution. A New Age woman who was angry about my conversion began frequently calling and writing the church, and the bishop's office, to cuss at them because I was attending their church. They handled this spiritual warfare with grace and concern for my welfare, and I am deeply grateful. Since that time, I've had to be more cautious about publicly saying what church or school I'm attending.

From the beginning of our attendance until the day we moved away, Michael and I were warmly welcomed by the Episcopalians, who have a well-earned reputation for being friendly and hospitable. Within weeks of our first church visit, Michael and I were volunteering on various church committees and making friends.

I attended the women's Bible study monthly meetings, where we studied the women of the Bible. Michael and I also attended a coed Bible study and a few other classes, including catechism to join the church. I was disappointed, though, when I heard our coed Bible teacher say the Bible was errant, and class members expressed disbelief that parts of the Bible were authentic. Fortunately, God had a way to help me trust that His Word is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16).

When Jesus Changed My Life

On January 7, 2017, I attended an outdoor Saturday afternoon service at our Episcopal Church. That day changed my life and eternal destiny forever. I was still an unsaved new ager, and I now realize that the Episcopal Church wasn't sound in its practices or teachings. So, the setting was ripe for deception.

During the service, I saw a clear vision of what I thought was Jesus, complete with white robe, dark curly hair, and light coming out of his "sacred heart" (which I later learned was Catholic imagery). As I saw this image, I also received a life-changing epiphany that Jesus is the Son of God who died for our sins, and that the Bible is God's inerrant Word. I realize this epiphany sounds like basic Christianity,

¹ Doreen Virtue, "Confessions of a Repentant False Prophet," Fighting for the Faith, December 18, 2019, YouTube video, 1:14:03, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7-RHo7bHog&t=3s>.

but it was a profound truth that I hadn't previously held. I'd heard this truth from listening to Christian radio sermons for over twenty years; however, that day I truly *believed!*

This vision didn't save me, but it did point me to read the entire Bible, which resulted in my conversion in late 2017. Because I received and believed the truth about Jesus and the Bible during the vision, I naturally assumed that Jesus had delivered this message. *I must have seen a real vision of Jesus!* I excitedly decided. I then proceeded to widely share about my "Jesus experience."

However, as I shared this story with some of the Christian pastors that I interviewed on my YouTube channel, they expressed skepticism. The pastors rightly questioned my vision and asked if it was a demon. However, I was convinced that it *was* Jesus because of the accompanying epiphany. How could a demon point someone to the Bible? Satan can't divide against himself.

Over the years following my salvation, I had renounced my other visions as being demonic. However, I clung to the January 7, 2017 Jesus vision because it seemed so real, and because of the four realizations that accompanied it. I'd even asked an artist friend of mine to paint a representation of the vision. However, as I matured in my faith, I threw the painting away as I realized I was treating it as an idol and so violating the second commandment. As I grew in the sanctification process, I also thought that the painting looked a bit cartoon-like and had Catholic symbolism. I struggled with doubts about the vision, but the accompanying epiphany made me believe the vision was genuine.

I continued reciting the story of the Jesus vision in interviews and in a book I self-published. I didn't stop to question the vision, though, because of the accompanying realizations of biblical truth. I even wrote about the vision in the first edition of this book and the audiobook. However, if new agers told me that they had visions of Jesus, I reacted with skepticism as I knew how easy it was to be fooled by the prophesied false Christ (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22). I was applying different standards to stories of other people's visions! I've repented for this hypocrisy.

Many of my Christian friends whom I respect also shared their doubts about the vision's authenticity. I would thank them for their input, but would point to the biblically correct epiphanies accompanying the vision. They counseled me to pray about it, and ask God for His wisdom and truth.

Then on July 17, 2020 (three and one-half years after my Jesus vision), Pastor Chris Rosebrough of Fighting for the Faith clearly explained what had happened on January 7, 2017. Pastor Chris said that the vision and the epiphany were two separate simultaneous experiences, in a spiritual warfare action. The vision was the devil appearing as a Jesus-figure of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) to tempt me to continue with false teachings. After all, at that time I was seriously considering enrolling in "Prophecy School" to become a professional "Christian prophetess." I may have been one of the false prophets I warn others about, who appear on the stages of Christian churches, but who give unbiblical messages.

At the same time that I was having this vision, God in His mercy allowed me to understand the gospel truth that I'd been hearing on Christian radio sermons since the 1990's. Pastor Chris pointed to Isaiah 55:10-11 which says that God's Word does not return void. In other words, whenever we hear the Gospel, it's like God's rain which always results in the land being watered. I'd heard the Gospel all those years, but didn't believe it until that moment because my heart was hardened from sin and new age teachings.

At that moment, the truth clicked! The vision *was* deception, like the other visions I'd had since childhood! But the epiphany also *was* a supernatural work of God upon my heart! God had protected me from the devil's evil tricks. I felt a huge weight lift from me, and I realized that the Holy Spirit had been convicting me about the vision. I had wondered if the vision and the realizations were two separate processes, but it took a mature Christian mentor (Pastor Rosebrough) to teach me how this was possible. It just shows that we must be so careful and compare everything to Scripture, so we won't be deceived.

What stands out about that experience on January 7, 2017 isn't the vision, but the four realization epiphanies which accompanied the vision.

The Four Realizations

During that January 7, 2017 experience, something extremely important and supernatural happened in the form of four realizations that occurred, one after another in succession. Pastor Chris Rosebrough helped me to understand that these realizations were accumulated from what I'd heard over the years I'd been listening to Christian sermons on the radio. He quoted Isaiah 55:10-11, to show me that these sermons had piled up like a snowbank upon my unsaved hardened heart. On January 7, 2017, when the devil tried to tempt me again by appearing as Jesus, God melted the snow upon my heart and allowed the biblical truth to finally penetrate my heart.

These were legitimate "epiphanies," a term which means insights that help you to suddenly realize a deep spiritual truth. It's like a "divine download," as knowledge appears in your mind. I was, and still remain, completely convinced of the truth of these four realizations:

1. ***Jesus of the Bible is real.*** My experience was accompanied by a dramatic change in my heart and head toward Jesus. Prior to that moment, I thought of him as a mortal man leading us by good example (because my Christian Science upbringing that taught me this) and I had adopted the new age belief that Jesus was "an ascended master," a term for deities like Buddha and Krishna who were thought to be helping humanity from Heaven like a superhero team.

All those misconceptions melted away as I gasped and realized that what I'd read in the Gospels was true: *Jesus really was fully God and fully human during his earthly ministry!* He really was seated at the righthand of our Heavenly Father in Heaven. Jesus performed all of those miracles, including walking upon water and raising the dead. No one else has been able

to do these things except for Jesus. There are no words to adequately explain how this realization blew my mind, except to say that my heretical worldviews of 58 years were instantly replaced with Christian theology.

2. ***The Bible is true.*** In that moment, I knew with absolute certainty – and still do today – that the Bible is inerrant and trustworthy. I was previously swayed by new age conspiracy theories that claimed the Bible was tampered with by the Roman Catholic Church for manipulative nefarious reasons.

I didn't need to consult with apologists (people who defend the Christian faith and inerrancy of the Bible), as I knew for certain that the Bible is God's Word. Since that time, though, I've read fascinating biblical archeological work supporting my epiphany. I especially recommend the writings and videos of Daniel B. Wallace, the executive director of The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts.

3. ***Jesus really did die for our sins.*** This epiphany was another 180-degree turnaround from my previous worldview which had denied the existence of sin and believed the Fall was a myth (from Christian Science and new age influences). Prior to January 7, 2017, I couldn't wrap my mind around the phrase, "Jesus died for your sins." I didn't understand why anyone would have to die, especially Jesus. I also didn't believe that I'd sinned, as my influences of Christian Science, the new age, and *A Course in Miracles* said that the only sin is negative thinking. I didn't identify as a sinner, because I didn't understand the nature and gravity of sin.

My false beliefs unraveled as I had this epiphany. It was as if I could feel the extreme weight of humanity's sins striking Jesus' crucified body like agonizing arrows. Of course, I felt only a fraction of the weight and the suffering Jesus endured on the cross to save us. This realization radically transformed my beliefs. You see, new agers generally hold to a documentary called *Zeitgeist*, which gives unfounded opinions that the crucifixion is a story borrowed from ancient Sumerian and Egyptian mythology. While there's not one shred of

evidence to support Zeitgeist, the documentary is compelling because of its dramatic music, voiceover, and visual effects. When you're in the new age, you don't want Christianity to be true because then you'd have to stop committing sinful behaviors.

In addition to the Zeitgeist documentary, the book *A Course in Miracles* which claims to be channeled from Jesus, also denies the crucifixion. This book is often referred to as "the new age bible," because so many new agers read it religiously, like I did for 20 years.

This realization that Jesus died for our sins led me to repentance and salvation when I finally understood my sinful nature after reading Deuteronomy 18:10-12, which lists sins I'd been committing such as fortune-telling, divination, mediumship, and interpreting omens. When I read that God finds people who practice these methods "detestable" and "an abomination," I fell to my knees crying. Prior to that moment, I thought my new age work was "helping God to save the world." Reading the Bible told me that Jesus is our savior, not me. God didn't need me; I needed God.

4. ***I needed to leave the new age.*** The fourth and final realization was a directive, like a loving but firm command: "You need to leave the new age." It's time. There wasn't an option to agree or disagree with this commandment. It was a matter of when and how. The when would be "immediately," and the how would be as soon as I figured out what it meant to leave the new age and be a Christian. I'd lived under deception for 58 years! What did it look like to trust God for everything? How was it possible to lean upon God instead of trying to predict or control my future?

As I received these four realizations, all I could do was gulp and think to myself, "People are going to be really mad at me!" And my conclusion was true: some people *did* become really angry about my conversion, as you'll read.

What Does It Mean to Be a Christian?

I'd always been transparent with my audience about my experiences and insights. Since hearing Alistair Begg's "Itching Ears" sermon in January 2015 and reading the Gospels in 2016, I spoke more often and openly about Jesus at my events, on my weekly radio show, and in my writings. People noticed this too. So they probably weren't surprised when I posted a video on January 9, 2017, called "Jesus Healing Light Meditation." I was still in the New Age, thus the New Agey-style title. I pieced together a rough representation of my vision experience, using images I found on the internet.

In the video, I tried to convey the importance of following the true Jesus who is recorded in the Bible. I'm not even sure if I was saved then, because I still hadn't repented. Not that repenting earns you salvation. It's just that repentance is a sign that you're saved. Jesus himself said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17).

After salvation, the Holy Spirit loudly convicts you of your sins and you no longer want to sin (John 16:8). I didn't want to sin either at that time, but I was like a tourist trying to drive in a foreign country without knowing the road rules. I had no idea what constituted a sin and what didn't.

I told a few people at church about the vision. They all thought it was great but didn't offer much advice. My pastor suggested that I make appointments to see a spiritual director, which is like a Christian life coach. I did, and while I enjoyed our sessions, she still didn't advise me of how to change my life and get out of the New Age. She said that I could stay exactly as I was, using angel cards and crystals for healing, while pointing to her own collection of crystals on her shelf.

The Bible discusses crystals throughout the Old and New Testaments. The Levite priests even wore crystals on their ephods (linen chest coverings). The Urim and Thummim appear to have been crystal. Yet there's a big difference between admiring God's gorgeous gemstone creations and using them as idols. In the New Age, we believed that crystals would amplify our healing energy, just as crystals are used in electronics. New Agers also ascribe healing and divination properties to each type of crystal. For example, a rose quartz crystal is said to help you open your heart to romantic love. A clear quartz crystal is said to boost your psychic abilities, and so forth.

Yes, some will argue, but didn't the high priests use the Urim and Thummim crystals for divination to get guidance and answers? Theologians say there's not enough information in the Bible to know exactly how the Urim and Thummim were used, whether it was similar to casting lots, or whether God appeared through them like he did with the ark of the covenant. One thing's clear about the Urim and Thummim, though: God directed their creation and use (Exodus 28:30). It wasn't like the high priest thought up the idea and then found some crystals and designated them as Urim and Thummim. The whole process was God directed.² Be careful about people inventing or "channeling" unbiblical and unsubstantiated theories about the Urim and Thummim.

The bottom line is that we are called and commanded to turn to God, and God alone, for answers (Proverbs 3:5–6). We're also told to worship and serve the Creator, not hHis creation (Romans 1:25). We must be very honest with ourselves and the Holy Spirit about our intentions for having or using crystals. Are they decorations? Or are they viewed as having some curative property?

I also have a personal request for Christian women to be aware that some crystal necklaces are symbols that you are a New Ager. A Google image search of "New Age crystal necklaces" will show which types of necklace fall in this category. Primarily, this includes crystal-point pendants or earrings

² Edward Robertson, "The Urim and Thummim: What Were They?," *Vetus testamentum* 14, no 1 (Jan 1964) 67–74.

(crystal points are used as pendulums for divination and psychic protection). Wearing these New Age–inspired necklaces could unwittingly cause unbelievers and baby Christians to stumble, because they imply that it’s okay to blend New Age and Christianity. In the appendix, I’ve included a list of reasons why they can’t blend.

During this time of confusion about how to leave the New Age and live as a Christian, I somehow found a book called *The Light That Was Dark* by Warren B. Smith and read it in one night.³ It was the story of Smith’s immersion in eastern New Age practices of meditation. Smith and his wife, Joy, then got involved with groups studying *A Course in Miracles*, the “Jesus-channeled” New Age bible that I mentioned earlier.

Warren and Joy had lived in the same town as my parents: Magalia, California, which is now famous for the horrible “camp fire” of November 2018, which burned everything to the ground. My parents had sold their Magalia home and moved in with Michael and me one year before the fire burned their house. Anyway, the point is that Warren and Joy Smith and my mother knew many of the same people.

My mom originally introduced me to *A Course in Miracles* by gifting me Marianne Williamson’s *A Return to Love* book on the topic. My mom also used to attend *Course* study groups in Magalia with some of Warren and Joy’s friends.

The Light That Was Dark is a well-written autobiography of Warren and Joy’s spiritual journey into darkness and how Jesus saved them. Without spoiling the ending of their story—as I highly recommend that you read their book—let me just say that they provided stark comparisons between what Scripture says and what *A Course in Miracles* says. This side-by-side comparison showed that *Course* is the opposite of the Bible!

Since my January 7, 2017, epiphany about the Bible’s inerrancy, I’d been reading Scripture daily. My son Grant had gifted me *The One Year Bible*, New Living Translation, which prompts you to daily read a passage from the Old and New Testaments, plus a Psalm and a Proverb.⁴ In a year, you’ve read the whole Bible.

Still, I didn’t quite understand what I was reading. The Holy Spirit was using Scripture to mold and shape me and it was working! I was hungry to read the Bible, like a starving woman who hadn’t eaten a full meal her whole life.

Reading *The Light That Was Dark* impressed me with the importance of comparing everything to Scripture. Sometime later, I started watching and made a guest appearance on a YouTube show called *Fighting for the Faith* with Pastor Chris Rosebrough, who also compared Scripture against what popular preachers were saying. Watching Pastor Rosebrough convinced me to stop following some false teachers whom I’d assumed were solid Christians when I was first saved.

After reading *The Light That Was Dark*, I threw away all my copies of *A Course in Miracles*. I’d always been a truth seeker, and I knew in my soul that the Bible was the truth. Into the trash went my expensive collector’s copies of *A Course in Miracles*, along with its concordance and commentaries. Amazingly, instead of grieving over the wasted time and money invested in *Course*, I felt a big weight lift from me as I threw these items away.

I later wrote and introduced myself to Warren and Joy Smith, and we developed a friendship that continues to this day. As ex–New Agers themselves, the Smiths have lovingly helped me navigate out of deception and into the *true* light of Jesus.

³ Warren B. Smith, *The Light That Was Dark* (Magalia, CA: Mountain Stream Press, 2005).

⁴ *The One Year Bible*, New Living Translation (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2004).