4. An Account of My Life

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I grew up in the Mennonite Church. My parents, however, saw themselves much more as Christians than as Mennonites, and so I had much exposure to a variety of Christian environments including the local Baptist Church. In the summer of my seventh year, I was sitting by myself on the back steps of our house. My heart was “strangely warmed” and by the remembrance of a recent VBS teaching, I asked Jesus to come into my heart.

Throughout my childhood, I always had a heart for the teaching of the word, but there was so very little available at that time.

At age fifteen, I had an experience with the Holy Spirit, but again, there was so little teaching available. Soon, my heart grew cold: I spent the next few years in the ways of the world, a time that was so very bleak, and thankfully, fairly short. Then I noticed God pursuing me. I ran for a bit, but before Christmas, 1975, at age nineteen, I surrendered my life back to God in a heart-wrenching experience lasting several days. Though I have certainly had my ups and downs, He has held my heart close to Himself ever since.

Over the next year, I attended Assemblies of God churches. But, although I sought the Lord and good Christian teaching and fellowship, I did not find a depth of truth and commitment to the kingdom of God sufficient to satisfy the growing desire for God welling up in my heart. Right from the start, I read the Bible from beginning to end. When I reached John 16, I experienced God speaking to me for the first time. The words “when He, the Spirit of truth, shall come, He shall guide you into all truth” leaped off the page, and I knew they belonged to me.

The idea that we cannot know the full revelation of God is foreign to the New Covenant and to logic. Why would God share any word with us and it not be His intent for us to know fully what He means, both in our understanding and in our experience?

At the age of twenty, I headed north into the Canadian wilderness. I was filled with an unquenchable desire to know the living God. I also longed for adventure and romance far beyond what my 70’s teenage years had offered. I did not know then that the cry of my spirit to know God and the desire of my heart for adventure and romance were two fingers of the same hand. God Himself lured me into the wilderness.

Life as I had experienced up until then was much too small for me. I longed to be a part of something far bigger than I had known. I was good at dreaming, but I also wanted reality. Dreaming has many advantages except for one major lack. Dreaming is not real. Yet the dream does point to the real for those who are not satisfied until they make the leap, bloody and bruised though the experience leaves them.

A few months before, I had gone with a group from church up into Oregon’s Cascade Mountains for a winter weekend retreat. The men slept in one large room, the women in another. We ate together, played together, and worshipped together. I drove home alone that Sunday. Tears streamed down my face as I cried out to the Lord all the way down the mountain.

“God,” I cried, “that was so right. Somehow, somewhere, there has to be a Christian experience that is more than Sunday church once a week. Somewhere there must be a radical, life-changing, full-time experience with God and His people.” I did not know if such a place
existed, but I knew I must find it or die. Four months later, I drove north into the Canadian wilderness.

There in a wilderness community of around 150 believers in Jesus, I found the beginnings of the fulfillment of that longing for God that gripped my heart. And in my experience there in Christian community over the next several months, God planted His seed in me. Now, looking back over thirty years of tears and joy since then, I know of a certainty that the seed planted by the banks of the Graham River fills my heart today with the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I am not worthy of God’s favor. But I know I have it. He has kept me and never let me go. The seed He planted in me has claimed me for His own.

In my first weeks at Graham River Farm, I was working with some brothers, mucking out a pig barn. I and another brother, an elder in the church, paused for a moment of rest, leaning on our pitch forks. He looked at me and asked, “Daniel, where is Christ?” I paused, not giving him a quick answer. Then he said, “Christ is in you.” I knew that it was true. That was the first time I heard those words, but I knew it was the truth of the gospel.

For the next twenty-one years I walked in the fellowship of a people who had given themselves in a radical commitment to the revelation of Jesus and to His kingdom. For eighteen of those years I lived in the context of Christian community, eating together, working together, fellowshipping daily together, seeking God together. I have seen great glory; I have known great pain.

Then, by the summer of 1998, I knew that something was missing, something was out-of-place in my understanding of God and how He would fulfill the revelation of Christ in His people. I knew that many things God spoke in the New Covenant did not fit my definition of Him, and I knew that my definition of God left me with so little hope. I very much needed hope.

Although we continue to have very great ties of friendship and family with that fellowship, in the fall of 1998, I pulled out, taking my family to the nearby town of Fort St. John, in British Columbia. In the next year, we moved to Lubbock, Texas, where I got my Master’s degree in education and a teacher’s certificate, then finally here to Houston.

However, in leaving that fellowship and Christian community, I made an agreement with God. He would show me what was missing, He would take my life all apart to put it back together again, He would, bit by bit, remove everything that had tacked itself onto what He had taught me through all those years, and He would keep and make more real than ever the revelation of Christ that I had given my heart to so many years ago.

In the summer of 2006, my family and I began to attend Lakewood Church with Joel Osteen, pastor. Right at the start, Pastor Joel spoke a word that went all through me. “Speak what God says you are.” I’m not the kind of person who can take anything anyone says about God lightly. I must know what God says. I have read the whole Bible more than 20 times, the New Testament more than 40. I have searched the word from beginning to end countless times through the years and written it down over and over. “The Bible says” is never sufficient for me, I must know what it says.

And so I started in Matthew and went all the way through Revelation, writing down every verse that fits “Speak what God says you are,” on the basis of this word: “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Then, over the next 16 months, drawing from years of walking together with other committed believers in Jesus, of searching the word, of sitting under awesomely anointed teaching, of seeing His power and glory, of knowing failure and shame and humiliation, of coming to peace
with my own weakness, and more fully, from the excitement of His revelation in me now, the Lord helped me to write *The Jesus Secret: Who I Am*.  

Writing that book changed my life, not the book itself, but the confession of Jesus Christ. Shame has no more connection with me, joy and certainty fills my heart at all times. He is so close, so close. I no longer see any limit to the power and closeness of His life in me. All that I knew I was missing is given to me; everything God Himself ever taught me is restored a hundredfold.

Of course I am hit with all the emotional trauma of being a human in this world. But none of that matters anymore because I don’t have to be something I am not. I am what He is and He is what I am. No matter what I feel like in the present moment, I place myself in the certainty the I am utterly inside of Jesus, and that He has taken me upon Himself, to be all that I am as I find myself in my present limitation and lack.

As I finished the last pages of the book, the Lord caused me to see everything I have ever gone through, the wonderful and the horrible. All the heartache and misunderstanding, all the failure, all the years of holding on to Him with all of my heart no matter what happened, all of it was for this, that I would understand His ways, to pour all of it into this book. The Father was very close to me when He said, “Well done, My good and faithful son.”

Those words are more precious to me than anything in this universe. Certainly, I cannot see how I could deserve to hear them, but Jesus. But with even more certainty, I know this: “I ain’t seen nothing yet.” Out of the confession of the Jesus secret, the mystery of Christ, out of the sure and certain knowledge of Christ in me, the triumphant One, flows a river of the revelation of Jesus.

To be with Him. To stand by His side as He comes in His glory. To know that in His triumph, He is counting on me. To hear Him say, “Well done, My friend, faithful and true.”

This is all beyond me, but not beyond the One upon whose breast I lean. On that day, with His help, I cannot be anywhere else. I believe in Jesus.

Then, a few months after I had completed *The Jesus Secret*, I was standing in the back of chapel service at the Christian school in which I taught at that time. At a certain point, as I was hiding in Jesus from a legalistic brother pounding Old Testament theology into the children, it happened. I disappeared. I was no more. In that moment I knew, Christ is my life; I have no other life. I knew as I had never known it before that I was one spirit with Jesus, and that I lived in total union with Him.

Excited about this wonderful knowledge of Christ living as me, I went searching on the Internet for confirmation. I very quickly found the website www.christasus.com and read confirmations of the wonderful reality God had opened to me in that moment of the revelation of Jesus Christ personally in me. Several months later I began a letter called *Christ Our Life*, sending it out to a small, but slowly growing list of email subscribers. I want to introduce to you now the first letter from *Christ Our Life*. Then, I will intersperse the letters nearly in the order in which I wrote them throughout the journey we are on.