

TESTIMONY



In 1969, while working as a night club musician, I began reading books about mysticism and reincarnation. My only association with religion had been a couple of years in a church as a young child, but that brush with religion had confused me because what I saw manifested in the lives of adults didn't match up with what I thought the Bible required of Jesus' followers.

But I had always believed in some form of God, a higher power. Having learned about the concepts of reincarnation and karma, I next began a study of Eastern religions, centered around Hinduism and especially Yoga. These writers talked about Jesus and revered Him as a God-man, but they said you could get to God through the teachings of any of the world religions. They interpreted many biblical passages as implying Jesus' belief in reincarnation and karma.

The main thing they stressed was the need for a living master, a guru. By devoting yourself to such a man and practicing his teachings you could attain peace and happiness and escape the cycle of birth and death by attaining "God realization."

In the summer of 1971 I decided to find myself a guru. My search led me to the Integral Yoga Institute (IYI). The IYI was founded by Swami Satchidananda one of the most revered and famous of Indian gurus. He was coming to my home area of Dallas in November and I hoped he would take me as his disciple. I met my future guru at Love Field in Dallas. He looked to me like Moses coming off the mountain. I asked for and was given initiation from him that same week.

This began a five-year spiritual odyssey during which I threw myself wholeheartedly into the yogic lifestyle.

I became proficient in the various practices of Yoga, eventually becoming a certified teacher of these practices.

In 1973 my wife divorced me. After having lived through five years as a musician's wife with all the self-sacrifice that entailed, I progressively alienated her by the lifestyle I had adopted, and I really left her little choice. After our divorce I moved into the Dallas ashram (religious retreat). We loved and revered our guru and showed our devotion by worshiping him and singing praises to him. The guru was God to me.

I desired to become a Hindu monk, so I took pre-monastic vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience to my guru. I shaved my head and became a novice monk with the goal of total monasticism.

Even in all this there was something about Jesus that appealed to me. I began to read the Bible more. It seemed to me that Jesus claimed He could give me all the things I had been working hard for all those years. Yet even though this might be true, I was still devoted to my guru and didn't want to give him up.

In the summer of 1976 I arrived home to find that many of my family had started going to church. They said they had become something they called "saved," whatever that meant. They invited me to church.

Hoping to get an opportunity to teach them Yoga, I agreed. Besides, I didn't have anything against Jesus. As I attended the Church of God in Portsmouth, Ohio, I heard preached that Jesus was still alive today with power. I began to see that power manifested in the lives of many of these Pentecostals. They were kind to me, and even though I'm sure

I stuck out like a sore thumb on one ever criticized me for my jeans, beard, or long hair. They even prepared vegetarian dishes for me at their homecoming dinner.

I heard and met Margaret Gaines at the 1976 Southern Ohio camp meeting. She had a real impact on me. She didn't have to act holy; she was holy. I thought, *If this is the height of a Christian can attain to, then I want it.* I was still doing my yoga at home, but it seemed Jesus kept saying, "I will either be Lord of all your life or Lord not at all."

Finally that great day came! On a Sunday morning in August 1976, I asked Jesus to take me as His and His alone. Even though I didn't feel like a sinner, I accepted by faith that I was, because the Bible said it. As I fell before Him confessing my sin, He manifested Himself to me and became more real to me than anything I had ever experienced in this world. All those things I had zealously striving for all those years, He gave to me in a moment of time, washing over me with wave after wave of indescribable love.

That which the enemy had tried to steal, He began restoring. After five years of divorce, He brought my wife and son back to Ohio from Arizona. My son was saved first, and then my wife, and they were baptized together.

It's been nine years since I met Jesus, He called me to preach, and though we've had our ups and downs, He has always been there to encourage me on the way. Try Him for yourself. You'll find Him just as I did to be a living ever present, compassionate Master. When I found Jesus, I quit seeking and started following.

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