

WHY WE NEED A SAVIOR

MAN

GOD

IN THE BEGINNING . . . The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were created by God and enjoyed perfect fellowship with Him. They were without sin and lived peacefully in a beautiful garden that supplied all their needs. God gave them only one rule, which was not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. However, Satan tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit by saying it would benefit them. They ate it, and that act of disobedience against God was the first sin. It severed Adam's and Eve's relationships with God because He is holy and cannot have fellowship with evil.

MAN

SIN

GOD

OUR CONDITION TODAY . . . Since we are all Adam's descendants, every child in the world has been born with his fallen nature. Instead of coming into the world desiring to do right, we are all born with an inclination toward sin and evil. Proof of this natural downward tendency is abundantly evident anywhere human beings are found. Our sin results in tremendous pain, sorrow, and suffering. The consequences of sin reach far beyond this life because those who reject God and die in a sinful state will go to Hell and be separated from God eternally.

MAN

JESUS

GOD

GOD'S PLAN . . . God wants to remove sin from our lives so that we can have a relationship with Him and spend eternity in Heaven. However, the penalty for sin is death, and that penalty must be paid. Out of His great love for us, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior. Jesus lived as a man and died in our place for our sins. Because of that, if we follow the steps that God has laid out in the Bible, our sins can be forgiven. God will change our desires and give us power to live without sin so we can enjoy eternal life with Him in Heaven one day.

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*I Serve a
Miracle
Working
God*

I SERVE A MIRACLE WORKING GOD

Sheila has witnessed remarkable answers to prayer throughout her life.

By **Shelia Ricketts**



I was born in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica, the youngest of eight children. My early years were uneventful and I did well in school. Then when I was about ten, my mother died, and everything changed. One of my sisters took me to live with her in Kingston because she needed a babysitter. She beat me and was abusive, so I ran away many times. Finally, I told her I would kill myself if I had to stay, and she sent me back to my father. There, another sister took me to babysit for her, and life did not get any better; though she did not beat me, I was treated very badly.

THE BIBLE BECAME MY FRIEND

In 1964, when I was nearing my fifteenth birthday, a girl invited me to a young people's meeting at her church. Not knowing what to expect, I was hesitant about going, but went anyway and sat in the back. At the end of the meeting, the pastor started singing, "Too late, mercy gone." I had not intended to pray, but the song reached my heart and tears ran down my face. I went to the altar and cried out to God. When I got up, I felt different; a burden had been lifted from me, and there was peace in my heart. As I walked outside, I felt as if I were walking on air. The next morning, when I woke and looked out the window, the trees seemed greener and the sun brighter, and there was a definite change in my heart.

I began attending church regularly, and my faith grew. However, at home, life became more difficult. When I attended evening church services, my family locked me out of the house. Sometimes people from the church saw this and took me in, but other times, I slept on the veranda. I held onto the Lord during this time, and the Bible became my friend. I would often sit down and just get lost in God's Word—people would be around me talking, but I would not hear them.

As my life at home grew worse, I prayed and wrote letters to God, asking Him to take me out of the situation or help me bear it. The Lord answered those prayers and sent a Christian man named Alan Ricketts who asked me to marry him. Though my family was very much against it, we married in January of 1968 when I was eighteen. Since then, my husband has been a tower of strength for me.

TRUSTING GOD WITH MY FAMILY'S NEEDS

We raised six children, and there were some difficult times, but the Lord always saw us through. On one occasion, we were living in a rental house and having trouble paying the rent. One morning, I just lifted my hand to God in prayer and said, "Please take us out of renting a house." At the time, the government was giving away houses, and someone called and said, "I have a house for you." There was a small cost, which we also could not afford, but an aunt agreed to pay it for us.

Another answer to prayer came when our third child was ready to enter high school. It was not free as primary school had been, and as each child advanced, the financial burden grew. My son and I took the bus to register him for classes, and on the way, I heard a Voice say, "I am going to bless you. Receive the blessing humbly." I looked around to see who spoke, but the bus was very crowded and noisy. I realized it could only have been the Voice of the Lord.

Finally, I went to the Lord and said, "Here is the bill. I can't pay it, and I need You to help me."

From that point forward, the children did not want for anything—not clothes or lunches or tuition; the Lord provided all. For example, the next week one of my sisters came from the United States with a huge duffle bag filled with clothes, shoes, and money. After my children took

what they needed, there was enough left over to share with the neighbors.

The Lord has also been my Healer. When I was about forty, He healed me of an old injury I had received while living with my sister at the age of fourteen. One day she hit me over the head with a tin, and it caused a gash. The wound never healed properly, and over the years it reopened often. I saw many doctors, but it did not get better. Then a doctor said he was going to send me to the hospital to have the wound cauterized. I went home and prayed, "God, You are the greatest Surgeon, and I am your daughter." From that time on, the wound did not reopen. God had healed it.

GOD'S PROVISION FOR OUR CHURCH AND HOME

In the early 1990s, I was appointed as the pastor of the Apostolic Faith Church in Albert Town. There have been many challenges since then in maintaining a church and home, but the Lord has always been our Provider. One time my husband and I could not pay the electric bill in our home, so we paid just enough to keep the lights from being shut off. The next month, we were in the same situation, and the next, and the next, so the remaining balance grew.

Finally, I went to the Lord and said, "Here is the bill. I can't pay it, and I need You to help me." I left it in the Lord's hands, and after a short time, a letter came from the Portland headquarters. There was money in the envelope, and the letter said the Lord had laid it on someone's heart to send me \$100.00. Another letter just

like it came the next month, and each month after that until the electric bill was paid in full. Then, when we had no more need for it, the money just stopped coming!

In 2004, Hurricane Ivan hit Jamaica and took the entire roof off of our house, and the furniture went with it. We put on a temporary roof, but each time the rain fell,

My life has been a long road with many challenges, but God has always been there and He works miracles.

it leaked. For a year and four months we lived under that water. I kept setting aside money for a new roof, but it was never enough. One day, I put some money in an envelope and took it to the church and prayed, "Lord, this is for my roof." It was in faith that He would supply the rest. Then someone called and said they had all the lumber and zinc needed for our roof at a small price if we could transport it. We did, and some brothers came from the church and said they would not stop working until they had put the roof on our house. They worked for one full week, and in the end, the roof was replaced for only one-tenth of what the price should have been.

My life has been a long road with many challenges, but God has always been there and He works miracles. I love the Lord, and am happy serving Him.

■ **Shelia Ricketts is an Apostolic Faith pastor in Jamaica.**

STEPS TO DELIVERANCE

ACKNOWLEDGE

Admit that you have sinned and need God's help.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

CONFESS AND REPENT

Be genuinely sorry for the sins you have committed and ask God to forgive you.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3)

FORSAKE

Determine that with God's help you are going to turn away from all sin in your life.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him . . . for he will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:7)

BELIEVE

When you have honestly and sincerely taken the steps above, then believe that God will hear your prayer and save you.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

RECEIVE

God will let you know that the work is done in your heart.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:16)