

RENEWAL WITNESS

1. INTRODUCTION (3 minutes) 529 words

It was Monday, March 4th at the Harrisburg Hospital. A baby girl was born to Shirley and Charles Pekar. They named their daughter Elaine Marie. I am that child.

When I was born, I had two sisters who were identical twins. Kathy, Carol, and I grew up like triplets, with Mom at home making our clothes from the same pattern and fabric. She was creative and grew flowers, fruits, and vegetables in the backyard. Dad had a degree in Finance from Johns Hopkins University and he worked at International Harvester as a Credit Manager.

Two more daughters came along, Betsy and Jenny, making me the middle child of five girls. We attended Catholic schools and tuition was a hardship. My father let me know he had sold his Hillman Minx convertible to send me to Mercycrest Kindergarten. I spent four years at St. Theresa's in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and when I was 10 years old, Mom picked us up from school and took us girls to McDonalds to tell us that we had moved to an apartment. It hurt me to know that Dad had come home to an empty house. I deeply resented my mother for her actions, and it took many years to forgive her.

My parents reconciled and we moved as a family to Horseheads, New York. When Dad got a job in Syracuse Mom refused to move and they grew apart. After their divorce, Mom left on the weekends to join her boyfriend at his cottage at the lake. During this time, I fractured my ankle ice skating in our front yard. It reflected the brokenness I felt about my parents' divorce. Fortunately, a neighbor who was a nurse rushed over to help send me to the doctor who could perform surgery that night. I was grateful to God for mending my leg so that I could walk again.

I was President of the 8th grade class at St. Mary Our Mother and went to Notre Dame High School in Elmira, New York. Cheerleading was my thing and one year when I didn't make the squad, I became President of the Pep Club. I transferred from a State University of New York at Geneseo, to the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, Florida. After graduation, I took graduate classes for my Masters in Business Administration. I loved school and living in the Sunshine State.

I had an 18-year career as a Software Engineer working for defense contractors in Brevard County. After teaching and training, I signed a contract to write a textbook. But there was no money for a first time author. Then I received an email from a government agency inviting me to train their personnel. I flew to Washington, D.C. with my husband Tom assisting me in teaching the class. As payment for one week of training, I received a check which covered my expenses during the 16 months it would take to complete my book.

This abundant blessing came from God to help transform my career from programming to publishing. Paul shares how God helps us in our time of renewal. Please turn to page 219, Philippians, chapter 4: verses 19 through 20.

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Philippians 4:19-20¹⁹ “And with all his abundant wealth through Christ Jesus, my God will supply all your needs. ²⁰To our God and Father be the glory forever and ever! Amen.”

2. RENEWAL (10 minutes) 1,106 words

My textbook was published with a simple model of the mind that could run any thought. I asked God what makes this grail, the container of my thoughts, holy. The following month I attended a spiritual conference and came home inspired to run the thought of world peace on the model, changing the generic process to a specific thought of peace and love. I began helping my family and friends come to inner peace by taking them through the 6-Step Peace Process.

My renewal began suddenly one morning while walking the beach in Indialantic, I had a vision of the peace symbol glowing neon violet. I burst into tears at the experience of God’s amazing grace while feeling the shame of my secret sins. As I walked, I came upon baby turtles being born, and by 9:00 AM I was home at my computer writing the first chapter of my next book.

October of that millennium year I was studying *A Course in Miracles* Lesson 185: I want the peace of God. I invited a friend named John over to join with me. The text said if any two sincerely joined together with this intent that it would change the world. John and I were sincere in declaring the peace of God was all that we wanted.

We can be transformed by the renewing of our minds and Paul tells us how in his letter to the Romans. Please turn to page 176, Romans, chapter 12, verses 1 through 2. Page 176 the paragraph below the heading **Life in God’s Service**.

Romans 12:1-2 So then, my friends, because of God’s great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. ²Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

God led me to open an exercise studio on Fifth Avenue in Indialantic. Some people who came to my classes had experienced tragedy in their lives. I was encouraging people, teaching them the way to a spirit-filled balanced life. Linda Sands came to teach and during her evening class on commitment I wore a wedding dress and turned my marriage over to God. The following week I returned to class with a present— a white robe with the word *Bride* scripted in gold thread!

Not everyone understood how God was renewing me. With old friends, there was talk of me changing my name to Christine, and a good scientific mind going to waste. But Christine was my confirmation name, and after many years of slumber, the Catholic in me was coming out. My youngest sister asked me not to speak of being the Bride of Christ. I said I would rather go upside-down with my head in a mud puddle! And so, she stopped speaking to me.

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My husband and I went to Vero Beach to see the movie *Moulin Rouge*. With her last dying breath, Satine, played by Nicole Kidman, asks the Bohemian writer named Christian to write *Our Love Story*. When she said that, I felt my heart squeezed in my chest and I struggled to breathe. It was God, letting me know I was writing His Story.

For eight years, I wrote faithfully in my journal an hour or two almost every night. Sometimes I worried that the writing would stop, and then I worried that the writing wouldn't stop. In my mind, I heard clear as a bell, "If you want to be part of this family, you'll have to run everything by my mother." And so, I renewed my devotion to the Blessed Mother. After fixing my rosary for the third time, Damon at the jewelry store complained, "You're wearing Jesus out!"

When Tom and I moved to Merritt Island, I dedicated myself to facilitating the 6-Step Peace Process. The first book in *The Peace Prophecy* trilogy was published on Mother's Day, May 13th. I became my Dad's caregiver and went with him to church at Holy Name of Jesus, attending a *Christ Renews His Parish Retreat*. This was the weekend my sister said that she loved me, zany wedding dresses and all! I was so emotional because her acceptance and my renewal came after ten long years.

Last year, I traveled on pilgrimage to Portugal for the 100-year anniversary of Our Lady of Fatima. To prepare, my friend Tracy and I said prayers, created a vision board, watched movies, and read books about Fatima. On July 13th we joined a bus full of pilgrims from the Servants of Jesus and Mary in a candlelight procession to sing the Fatima *Ave Maria*. It was wonderful to be in a group of Catholics attending Mass, singing praises, and saying our Rosaries. We were at the JFK airport in New York waiting to board our flight home when my husband called to say our friend Manny had a heart attack and was in a coma. "Get on your knees" I told him and we prayed to God for Manny's life. The next morning I said a rosary for Manny and he woke up three hours later. In five days he was fully recovered which was a miracle!

At Holy Name of Jesus on August 13th, I visit the statue of Our Lady outside to say a prayer. After church I stop by Mary's statue again for a blessing. I think "Queen of Peace" and am surprised to hear a reply in my mind, "Peace Princess." Sitting down on that concrete bench beside her to contemplate, I find a gift for me—a child's plastic tiara! I place the silver tiara on my head and stand before her in humility. Once more, I feel renewed by God's amazing grace.

Let us read the instructions that Paul wrote while in prison to encourage our renewal of faith, no matter what our current circumstance. Please turn to page 219, Philippians chapter 4, verses 8 through 9. Page 219 the paragraph above the heading **Thanks for the Gift**.

p. 219 Philippians 4: 8-9 ⁸In conclusion, my friends, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable. ⁹Put into practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you.

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3. MUSIC (5 minutes) **“Your Great Name” by Natalie Grant**

[Verse 1:]

Lost are saved find their way at the sound of your great name
All condemned feel no shame at the sound of your great name
Every fear has no place at the sound of your great name
The enemy—he has to leave at the sound of your great name

[Chorus:]

Jesus,
Worthy is the Lamb
That was slain for us,
Son of God and Man
You are high and lifted up and all the world will praise your great name

[Verse 2:]

All the weak find their strength at the sound of your great name
Hungry souls receive grace at the sound of your great name
The fatherless—they find their rest at the sound of your great name
The sick are healed and the dead are raised at the sound of your great name

[Chorus:]

Jesus,
Worthy is the Lamb
That was slain for us,
Son of God and Man
You are high and lifted up and all the world will praise your great name, your great name

[Bridge:]

Redeemer, My Healer, Lord Almighty
My Savior, Defender, You are My King

[Chorus:]

Jesus,
The name of Jesus,
You are high and lifted up and all the world will praise your great name
Jesus,
Worthy is the Lamb
That was slain for us,
Son of God and Man
You are high and lifted up and all the world will praise your great name, your great name, your
great name

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

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