

# DISCOVERING UNCONDITIONAL LOVE!

## *Pamela's testimony*

"On a summer camp at the age of ten, I invited Jesus into my heart. I didn't feel any strong emotion, but I believed that God had accepted me. When I came home, I told my parents, who were very happy, and my pastor, who told me this was the most important decision of my life. During my teenage years I went to the youth group and went to church every Wednesday and Sunday. We didn't smoke, drink or take drugs.

"I tried to be a good Christian, read my Bible every day, prayed and invited others to come to church. My spiritual life developed in spurts, whenever there were altar calls to devote ourselves anew to Jesus. I often had a longing to get to know God better, but I had the feeling that I hadn't actually got to know Him better since I had given my life to Jesus. I got married and we sat in church every Sunday and were a model couple. A friend invited me to a seminar and I went along for her sake. I was expecting the usual sermons in which you heard how lukewarm you were and then got invited to devote your life to God anew. Deep down I believed that I would one day really get to know God, and perhaps it would happen here?

"That seminar completely turned my life upside down. In the first hour I heard that God loved me unconditionally. He loves me because He is love and not because I have done well. I had been in church my whole life but I had never heard that. I was like a woman in the desert dying of thirst and those words were fresh water to me. I always heard in sermons that we should make ourselves even more available to God in order to really please Him. I had always had the impression that God was tired of having such half-hearted, lukewarm Christians. The fact that He loves me, irrespective of my behaviour, was a completely new thought for me. I could hardly sleep. The Holy Spirit was doing overtime with me. I reflected on my life.

Why do I go to church, why do I read the Bible and why do I pray? Why don't I do things that others do? Why do I give testimony? I had to admit that the real reason was that I wanted to please God. My whole life had been a half-hearted attempt to earn His love.

"And that new understanding changed everything. If He loves me because He is love and not because I behave well, then I don't need to earn His love because He already loves me.

"As I lay there, I cried out of relief and joy. Again and again I said: Thank you, Jesus. These words sounded strange. I had never said or felt anything like that before. I said: Jesus, I love you! That, too, was something I had never said before. My whole understanding of life changed. I didn't do anything to be a better Christian but simply loved Him back for loving me. That night I stopped wanting to earn His love or wanting to please Him. That desire died and was buried that night. I praised Him that whole weekend and repeated again and again the words: I am loved! He couldn't love me any more than He already does, for He is love!

"If He loves me, why am I spending my whole life trying to convince Him to love me? In those few hours I developed a burning desire to read the Bible to discover this God whom I had never really known. I wanted to pray and talk to Him. I was no longer afraid of Him. I had the greatest news in the world for my neighbours and could hardly wait for the first opportunity.

"I was bewildered that many friends in the church didn't want to hear what I had discovered. They wanted to continue working hard to earn God's favour, and so I lost a few friends. It wasn't always easy. I have had many personal trials but since that time I have had a compass that leads me – the magnetic north of His love for me."

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