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INTRODUCTION

It is my hope that this book will cause spiritual seekers to be careful when they set out on a quest for spiritual experience. Most of us mistakenly rely on our own limited or imperfect understanding in choosing what direction or path we will take in our life's journey. Failing that, we attempt to entrust our souls and spiritual destiny into the hands of a mere human being, which is folly. Only our Creator can lead us safely home. He designed us, and He has given us the Book of books for a faithful and true witness. Spiritual experiences without a firm knowledge of this book and a close, intimate relationship with God are insufficient barometers of spiritual attainment. It takes fearless honesty, not technique, to discover and understand His love. God has given to each of us a mustard seed of faith to find Him. You have to first "believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

The presence of the Almighty suddenly crossed my path one day in response to a simple prayer. I found fulfillment, not by following the path I was on, but by getting off of it. God had something so much better for me. I believe my spiritual journey reveals that God in His great love for us is able to take us by the hand and lead us to the place of His righteousness, peace, and freedom that we both desire and desperately need.

I thought that by following certain spiritual practices, I would eventually reach enlightenment. But God is no respecter of persons. He'll come to you whether you are knowledgeable and sophisticated or you can barely tie your shoes. If you sincerely desire to know God and are truly sorry for having withstood His rightful leadership over your life, He will forgive and profoundly change you.

My life as a spiritual seeker and fringe member of the 60's hippie movement led to my involvement in Transcendental Meditation and New Age philosophy. This is a story of the wonderful grace, mercy, love, and power of God that took me beyond these popular mindsets into a real encounter with my heavenly Father. May it help light your own path to freedom.



The Open Ward

We have exchanged the glory of God for other things... The sun of God's glory was made to shine at the center of the solar system of our soul. And when it does, all the planets of our life are held in their proper orbit. But when the sun is displaced, everything flies apart. The healing of the soul begins by restoring the glory of God to its flaming, all-attracting place at the center.¹

—John Piper

TUNE IN, TURN ON, DROP OUT

Berkeley in the 1960s was a place of great social ferment. Either you found your niche in this great living experiment (“The Open Ward” as some called it) or else you had the feeling that it was another planet and that you had best leave quickly. Vintage members of the 60’s hippy movement, even fringe members like myself, felt there was no other place on earth its equal. Even those from the “far side” found in Berkeley a comfortable social acceptance. Many of us could feel stirrings of the winds of change gathering on the horizon. Perhaps you, too, have sensed its growing momentum.

There seemed to be two general divisions of the San Francisco-Berkeley Bay Area youth culture at the time: the

political activists and the spiritual seekers. For the record, there was a third group from the university which the rest of us considered almost subhuman and detestable—the fraternity jocks, whose lifestyle exemplified what the rest of us practically villainized: materialism in the form of reckless spending, loud attention-getting beer parties, and what appeared to be a Neanderthal level of spiritual awareness.

There was an unspoken consensus among us that something was terribly wrong with the way things were going. The political activists thought they could remedy the world's problems by joining peace marches and student strikes or by serving jail time for confrontations with police. I personally preferred to observe the barbed wire and the tear gas from a safe distance.

Because of my artistic temperament, I opted for the non-political approach. Believing that what the world needed was a basic change in consciousness, my friends and I adopted the then popular motto, "Tune in, turn on, and drop out." People like us could be found taking LSD and smoking marijuana, going back to the land and joining communes, attending encounter groups, or simply meditating.

TWILIGHT ZONE

The first time I tried marijuana alone in my dorm room, I thought I had discovered a third state of mind—a twilight zone between waking and dreaming in which all dualities seemed to dissolve into a unified whole, or gestalt. This experience gave me a profound, but temporary, sense of freedom from guilt and fear and seemed to whet my appetite for more spiritual experiences. In order to maintain this euphoria, I learned to make hashish or marijuana brownies so I could get high inconspicuously. I soon

graduated to other kinds of “mind expanding” hallucinogens, drugs such as LSD, peyote, mescaline, and even horse tranquilizers. Friends would offer “acid” to us claiming that it was “really pure stuff,” but no one really knew its source or whether it was mixed with anything dangerous. Once I tried taking nutmeg, but the high didn’t compensate for the serious headache that sent me to the doctor’s office afterwards. Some of my LSD trips also had unpleasant “side effects,” like the time a ten foot entity decided to show up and stood by my side for a long time. I never totally freaked out the way some of my friends did, but after one especially powerful LSD trip, I felt as though I had received a frontal lobotomy and was in a daze hardly able to think or speak for weeks afterwards.

After awhile, I lived in the famous Haight-Ashbury section of San Francisco, regularly visiting the Psychedelic Shop and attending the famous Bill Graham rock concerts, the Golden Gate Park Love Be-Ins, and the like. It was a time in my life when I felt that I could live out all my fantasies, just as long as they didn’t collide with someone else’s. It was cool first to get stoked up on acid and then arrive “high” at these Bill Graham concerts dressed in all kinds of far-out costumes. Driven by an attack of drug-induced craving for “munchies,” my first order of the evening would be to head for the counter that was always laden with a tantalizing display of food and snacks. The music was so loud, however, that it hurt my ears, so I only went to a couple of these concerts. I realized that I might become deaf if I were to attend any more. In fact, a few of my friends became quite deaf as a result of regularly attending them.

I also realized that marijuana and LSD were affecting my memory. After hearing several horror stories about bad LSD trips, I gradually began to see that taking recreational

drugs was like playing Russian roulette with my life and sanity. I came to believe that being high was something we should attain solely as a result of a healthy lifestyle.

Living among the hippies had at least one good point—they taught me the value of health food. There were a lot of great juice bars right on the street where you could buy freshly squeezed grape or carrot juice, which is very delicious and energizing. I still love fresh juices and I believe that they are some of the greatest healing substances on earth. However, many of my acquaintances in the counterculture believed that you could sort of “eat your way” to God. Health food is a great idea, but it has its limitations like everything else. The best it can do is to make you feel calmer and provide you with stamina to fight emotional distress.

Another good point about the hippies—they had it right about materialism, but some of them took it too far and developed a kind of reverse, elite snobbery toward anything “establishment.” However, one can learn from overstatement. It is true that some people are imprisoned by their shortsightedness and can only see the world through a Bar Code. Materialism can blind you and divide your vision. It can also limit your freedom and keep you from receiving the light of revelation that can bring true transformation. But we human beings tend to resist change.

One day, a couple of my hippy friends went into my kitchen and declared almost everything as unfit to eat. In a short time I had completely switched over to brown rice, whole wheat bread, sprouts, lots of fruits and veggies (many of them raw), nuts, honey, and sea salt. But the Haight-Ashbury living experiment began to turn sour for me as reports of frequent thefts and even some murders began to surface. When the house next door was robbed by a cat burglar, I decide that it was time to move on.

How did a nice, well brought-up girl like myself, daughter of a prominent doctor and product of girls' finishing schools, wind up in rough and tumble Berkeley, pivotal spot of the 60's counterculture movement? To help you understand how I arrived there, I'd like to briefly take you back to my early roots.

