For me, that was God's intervention

Testimonies of Faith compiled by Erik Tantal

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Foreword

Nowadays, it is not self-evident to report on your own experiences of faith. Perhaps you fear that others will frown, because no one can prove it. Was this a direct intervention by God or was it "just" a coincidence? I have compiled various stories that have been told or sent to me by Christians on this question. But this is not about proving anything. Nor is it about the question of why in many cases God obviously does not intervene at all. This collection simply intends to make the reader think and be amazed. A big thank to all the storytellers!

All of the following texts are mostly memory logs with no claim to 100% accuracy.

Most of the names of people and places have been changed.

My sincere thanks go to everyone who proofread the entire script.

The Landlord

Bernd tells us about his family's first apartment in Mölln:

Our Landlords were the elderly Ebeling couple. We lived on the first floor above them, and they also owned the house next door. Mrs. Ebeling was extremely nice and always friendly. Her husband was fine with us, too, but unfortunately not to his wife. We noticed that because it was an old house with thin walls. Furthermore, Mr. Ebenling was very cynical when it came to topics like religion and the church, and this happened very quickly. And when he started talking to us on the rare occasions that we couldn't avoid, we usually had to listen to his contemptuous attitude towards church and religion. The apartment itself was like a gift to us. We were allowed to use the large garden freely and even set up a sandbox for our children.

One evening in November, I was strolling through the garden and thinking, primarily about our new building in Hamburg, which was supposed to be finished by the end of the year. This day Ebeling family's daughter, who just stayed here for a visit, came out of the house and started a conversation with me. She explained to me that her father was severely ill with cancer. The doctor had told

her he would definitely not survive the six weeks until Christmas.

I was deeply affected and saddened by this. After I was alone again, I continued walking around the garden and began to pray for Mr. Ebeling, and especially also for his wife. Suddenly, it was as if someone was saying to me, "As long as you live in this house, he won't die."

This sudden hint was completely surprising for me and absolutely illogical in view of the facts. I not even told about it to my wife. What did it mean?

And why was it me who received this unbelievable message?

I suspected, but would never admit to myself. But it was not easy to forget all this.

In the meantime, there were problems with the construction of our new house. There was a construction stop. All work would take more time. For Ms. Ebeling, this wasn't a problem. She told us, "You're welcome to stay in the apartment as long as you need to. We appreciate every day you're still living here."

That's why we could wait patiently without any need. And I was waiting for Christmas. Was it a true message, or was I wrong that evening? At Christmas, Mr. Ebeling

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was still alive. Even after New Year's. So I decided to talk to my wife about my experience that day in the garden.

"That is obviously clear," she said, "it means you should go to him and tell him about God!" Yes, that was my initial assumption, which I would have liked to suppress.

"Never!" was my thought, and I said to God, "I won't do that. But if you want me to talk to him, then you have to give me an opportunity."

February and March passed, and Mr. Ebeling was still alive. At the beginning of April, I had to go to the Ebelings' apartment for a heating bill. Mr. Ebeling was lying in his bed in the living room wearing a white nightshirt. His wife sat next to him. As soon as I had finished talking about the billing, it started:

Mr. Ebeling grumbled and grumbled. He cursed the people in the house next door. They were Muslims and never had any money. But suddenly there was money for the father's trip to Mekka, even though the children were in bad shape. And then it came to the claim that the Church was hoarding so much wealth and that everyone in it was a hypocrite, what the Pope was doing, and so on.

As he paused, I began to respond to him with the Gospel. I said that with Jesus, everything would be totally different from what his critics say about religious behavior. I told him that God came to us in Jesus so that we could be free from fear, from the pursuit of God's favor through religious constraints, and from insecurity. He gave us his love and paid for us so that we may have peace with God in the end. I don't know what else I was saying, but Mrs. Ebeling nodded at everything I told him. At the end, she thanked me warmly as I left the apartment. Mr. Ebeling seemed to be more peaceful now, at least he didn't contradict me.

Our house construction continued to be delayed, but at the end of June, our house was finally finished, and we were able to move in. The week after our move, we received the news that our former landlord, Mr. Ebeling, had passed away.

The confession

Jens tells us about his experiences at a youth camp:

In my early 20s, I volunteered at a youth camp in our community. This week was designed for both newly confirmed and also older youth.

The theme chosen for the camp touched the young people so deeply that some decided to take a step toward faith. This was also the case with Ulf:

He wanted to bring order to his young life – he was 15! That's why he asked me for a confession talk. We sat in the garden of the leisure house, where we could talk in peace. Ulf said that he had stolen from many people, also from his mother and other family members, but also from strangers, if there was an opportunity to do that. At the end of his confession, I wanted to forgive him in the name of Jesus, as I had been taught. But then the following thought flashed through my mind:

"And you had stolen, too!"

That was unexpected for me, but it was true: More than 10 years ago, I once didn't return a toy that I had found to a girl of another class, although she asked me to do that. Instead, she received an insulting remark from me. Just at

this moment, I remembered the situation, which I had repressed for so long. What now?

I continued the conversation, offering Ulf God's forgiveness and advising him to repair the damages he had caused. He agreed, but in some cases he couldn't because he had no more contact with those people or didn't even know them. So we prayed together that God would give him the opportunity to repair the things he had done.

After Ulf left with relief, I remained sitting a bit depressed. It became clear to me: "If you are not doing the same what you gave as advice to Ulf, you'll never be able to serve anyone else in this way again. You are losing your spiritual authority."

So I prayed that God would give me the opportunity to ask for forgiveness and make things right again, because I didn't know where the girl lived now, only that the family was no longer there – basically, I didn't know anything except her name, and I didn't expect anything either.

During that same summer vacation, I drove my mother to the nearby small town because she had to go to the doctor there. I had to wait a while, so I strolled through the streets and entered the large department store. Suddenly I saw a young woman, whom I immediately recognized as the girl I had stolen from – after all this time!

A voice inside me said, "There she is!" and I replied, "But she's not alone", because she had obviously come with her friend. At that moment, I heard him say, "We are meeting at the car". Then he left. The voice inside me said, "Now she is alone!"

I followed the young woman to the escalator because leaving wasn't an option. Then I approached her on the first floor. I introduced myself and told her the story she had forgotten after so many years. I also said why I spoke to her, and she forgave me. She didn't demand compensation but was of course surprised by this strange experience. Then she told me that she is now living in a town far away. She had only visited this place on vacation.

After we said goodbye, I picked up my mother from the doctor's office. I learned that it is good to take God and one's prayers very seriously, because with him all things are possible - as one reads in the Scriptures.

From my student days

Paul has a completely different view of things:

It was always clear to me that there must be a God. But of course that is not the old man with the white beard up in the clouds. In general, I had and still have difficulties imagining a God who can personally connect with every person. That is why I find it difficult to pray the way many believers do. I simply cannot do it.

For me it is logical that the whole world with all its wonderful creatures was created by God. How that happened, of course, is not clear to me. Certainly not "at the push of a button". Everything developed over time according to very specific natural laws.

In my opinion, these laws have a divine origin. Without them there would be no physics, chemistry and biology. Research is constantly finding new, wonderful phenomena. It is probably the case that people want to get to the bottom of God's blueprints and recipes. In some cases they succeed. The result is technical progress.

If such a God is behind everything that exists, I cannot imagine that I should speak to him personally. He would have to have grasped my thoughts before I even open my mouth. And I have never received a voice message directly from God. Others have reported such apparitions. It may be that this is how it appeared to them. Perhaps they have a special wire, an antenna, with which they can receive such messages. It is then quite clear to them that God has intervened directly in their lives.

The following experiences, which I would like to report here, perhaps describe such interventions.

It was a long time ago. As a student, I rode to university on my new Bismarck bike. It even had a three-speed gear system. And then I suddenly had to brake at a big intersection because the traffic light was red.

I waited impatiently for the green light and then started at full speed. A vehicle crossed my path in the middle of the intersection. The driver had obviously not stopped at his stop signal. I had to brake again. This time not only by backpedaling, but also with both handbrakes. I don't normally use them.

But now. My whole bike did a somersault and I went with it.

My green phase had expired and the other waiting cars were driving off. So I had to get away from the intersection as quickly as possible. And that's what I did. There was no injury. The bike wasn't bent either. I just sat back on the saddle properly and started pedaling. Even today I don't know why nothing happened to me. I was able to continue my journey to university as normal.

Was it an intervention from God that saved me here? Or was it just random luck? In any case, I am of course grateful for it, but how can you thank chance?

I also keep thinking about another experience.

I was a medic in the German army and was able to work as a nursing assistant in a retirement home during the semester break. I usually went from station to station with an experienced colleague and was able to make myself useful by doing simple tasks.

During that time, several men or women were accommodated in one room. Usually everyone was happy when we came. My colleague always tried to spread good cheer. He was a former bricklayer and was good at getting stuck in. Even the ward sister was happy. Because of my size, she was able to use me to help hang the curtains.

Some of the elderly residents were very grumpy. I still remember a woman who sat stiffly and anxiously in bed, clutching her pink cardigan in her hands. She was complaining because everything was being taken away from her. And of course I understood that. Each resident of the home only had a small closet. There was never enough room for all sorts of personal favorites.

In another room we looked after an old woman who I felt very sorry for. She could only lie in bed. She couldn't speak either. But I will never forget the look in her eyes. There was no bitterness about her own fate. The woman simply radiated in a way that you can only show in times of happiness and peace. Where did this woman get the strength to do that in her situation?

That was something that touched me deeply.

It began with a train ride

Brigitte begins her story with an event that her mother told her:

I was about seven months old at the time. It was towards the end of the Second World War. We lived in Silesia. But it was already clear that we could no longer stay there. Polish officials gave my mother a choice. Either stay here, under Polish administration and then with the condition that she only speak Polish, or move west. My mother decided to flee with two of my aunts. One aunt also had a small baby, about my age.

The three women and their two babies boarded the train heading west. It was a long journey. Suddenly the train stopped on the open track. The staff informed us that we would have a two-hour layover. The supply of coal for the steam locomotive needed to be replenished. My mother and the two aunts looked around and discovered several abandoned houses right next to the track. They wanted to look for something to eat there and quickly set off.

My little cousin was carried on his mother's body. I stayed in the stroller. Because I had just fallen asleep so

soundly, no one wanted to wake me. Besides, there were still two hours until departure.

But shortly after my mother and the aunts entered the first house, they suddenly heard the whistle. Contrary to the previous announcement, the train started moving again. The women ran as fast as they could, but only saw the tail lights of the last carriage.

Meanwhile, I continued to sleep peacefully in my stroller while my mother and aunts cried in despair.

Shortly afterwards, a railcycle-draisine approached, operated only by a man's muscle power. My mother, the aunts and the little cousin were now allowed to follow the train that had left. This was an extremely difficult task for the man. With all his strength, he managed to catch up with the train. The train had had to stop again in the meantime. So my mother was finally able to take me in her arms happily again.

Because I hadn't noticed any of this at all, my mother told me this story several times later.

But after that, another incident occurred. During this time, the people who were fleeing often helped each other. And a strange woman gave my mother a small jar of honey. Babies are not allowed to eat honey, of course. In rare cases, it can even be life-threatening. But my mother didn't know that. She was just happy about the unexpected sweet and gave me some.

After a short time, I was later told, I turned horribly blue and had to vomit several times. It was obviously an allergic reaction. Nobody knew what to do until another woman came with a bucket of water and poured it over me. That worked. The blue coloring disappeared, I recovered and had no further problems after that.

After a few years, my father returned from the war. Our family finally found an apartment in a small town in Schleswig-Holstein. I had completed the 4th grade at school myself and now wanted to go to high school. But there was no money for that, so I stayed in middle school. How I would have loved to learn more foreign languages!

I was able to partially compensate for this lack with my English pen pal. I was invited to visit my girlfriend in England for a month. My parents allowed me to travel alone by train and ferry, even though I was only fifteen years old. My host parents picked me up from the train station. They were very friendly. They were Gideons, i.e. devout Christians. They prayed a lot. I hadn't seen that in my family. On the day of my departure, my host father gave me a small Bible and asked me if I wanted to give my life to Jesus. (Won't you give your life to Jesus?) If so, I should also sign the Bible to confirm this.

I didn't understand that at all at the time. But I did it out of politeness. To be honest, not because of my faith. I was then advised to try to get in touch with a Christian youth group in Germany.

There I met Thomas, a nice young man who told me a lot about Jesus. I was a little disappointed though, because I had expected that the youth group would offer a lot more entertainment. I eventually left the group. I lost contact with Thomas completely.

In the meantime, my parents had found me an apprenticeship at a health insurance company. I was supposed to work there for a while during my probationary period. But I didn't like it there at all. I spent the whole day doing shopping for my colleagues and then delivering the mail. I didn't learn anything there. My mother eventually found me another company. There, my good English skills were put to good use.

After that, I attended a faith course at a church. That made me think a lot. One day, it was like scales fell from my eyes. With tears in my eyes, I realized that everything that had happened to me up to that point had only happened because of God's influence.

Since then, I have confessed my faith in Jesus Christ. Later, too, there were many events that I can only understand as God's work.

At an event for women that took place in the church, there was a small card with a Bible verse on the table for each participant. I found this one: "Yes, I will restore your health and heal your wounds." (Jeremiah 30)

But I couldn't do anything with that because I didn't feel sick at all.

Years later, I was treated in hospital for a thyroid disorder. After the operation, I was in the recovery room. The anesthesia was still wearing off. Suddenly, I had terrible shortness of breath. A tracheotomy had to be performed. After that, I could no longer speak, but I could breathe again.

I thanked God and waited in the hospital bed again. After a few weeks, another doctor examined me. It was somehow strange. He scolded during the examination. But I didn't understand it. Later, they gave me the file, which I was supposed to hand in to my ward. I took a look in the elevator and found out that something had obviously gone wrong with my operation in the hospital.

It actually said that I could have died of suffocation two hours later. I thanked God again for his guidance. But I didn't say anything in the hospital. They had all tried very hard. The doctor who treated me at the time had probably gotten too close to the nerves in question during the operation. He even apologized later for his mistake.

There was a small service in the hospital, and I was the only visitor. After that, I was discharged and, because it was Pentecost, I visited a healing service in a large church. At the end, we were invited to come to the front and pray. A woman who was organizing the service with the pastor laid her hand on me and said:

"Jesus, please heal my sister!".

And indeed, a few days later I was able to speak a little again. During follow-up treatment, it was discovered that one vocal cord was still paralyzed, but the other was working again. For me, all of these were signs of God's help. A year later, I was even allowed to retire early because of my illness. I got involved in work with the homeless within a free church community.

There was an event in the church where the question was asked about which gifts enable us to perform a particular service.

It wasn't really important to me, because I already had a commitment. But the pastor asked me anyway. Suddenly I heard myself saying:

"I want to get involved in prison work."

I don't know how I came to that statement. The pastor replied:

"Yes, Lord, if Brigitte should do it, give her a sign!"

But it was obviously not that easy to take on such a commitment. At first I was put off. On the way home I took the S-Bahn (City-train) and met a young man who caught my attention because he was smoking a cigarette in the car. But I didn't say anything.

Suddenly he was standing in front of me and showing me his swollen hand. I don't know why he asked me. But I offered to pray for him and he allowed me to. It turned out that he was currently on leave. He still had to serve a sentence in prison. At one of the next stops we parted ways. I never saw him again. But it seemed to me to be a sign of my desire to take part in prison work.

And I was finally allowed to do that. One day a friend suddenly called me and told me that they were looking for people for prison service. After a special course, I now visit people who are in prison every two weeks with great joy, together with a married couple.

The Bible

Robert, from North America, talks about his faith:

I grew up without a father, with my mother, and later with my grandmother. There was absolutely no Jesus. I went to church maybe once or twice, to funerals, weddings, or something like that.

When I had my first LSD trip as a teenager, I developed this overwhelming feeling of unity with all creatures and the earth. Even today, sometimes when I walk, I will become over-whelmed with emotion at the beauty God has created.

During that time I had a friend who asked me if I had read the Bible. I said no and he said I should read the New Testament about Jesus. So I did and it was a revelation to me. Back then, I heard of people who did nothing but praise God, day after day, all week long.

So we went and sure enough they were praising God day and night, it was amazing, just like in the book of Acts, everyone was one.

The revelation was the way christians were supposed to live. To be found in Acts in the Bible. To live in community to share everything to pray together to praise God together to help all to accept all. I was baptized in a lake at this point, they ministered right out of the Bible, nothing else. This was the Jesus Freak movement, an evangelical Christian movement that started on the West Coast of the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s and spread mainly in North America, Europe, Central America, Australia and New Zealand before dying down in the late 1980s.

So one day we went to one of their houses, which they called House Agape, House Amos, etc. But there was no one there. Why? Who knows?

So I fell back into my old habits. It was like the parable of the sower. Years passed: marriage, kids, alcoholism, divorce, three hospital treatments, marriage and of course work.

So 15 years ago I woke up one morning with an overwhelming desire to read the Bible, it was one of those things I had to do. My first thought was that God wanted me to get right with him because my time was near.

So I started reading every day whenever I had the chance. After about a month, I started going to church, even standing at the door as a greeter and working on church projects. I have read the Bible 15 times now because I read it every year. I don't know anything about people's religions and their rules and holidays like Advent etc. But I know the Bible. I still read it every day. When I share my testimony, I always say,

"This is not my idea." For me it means that God/Jesus/Holy Spirit controls my life.

From doubt to faith

Gerd tells his story:

There was a time when I thought I could just shoot myself in the head right now. Of course, that wasn't what I really wanted. It was only my analysis of life. What difference does it make whether I die now or in 60 years?

In the end, everything would be over anyway. No memories, no consciousness; at some point neither the world nor time exist anymore; leaving anything behind is senseless. So what's the point of continuing to live if the end is inevitable? We all die – and then what? Then comes nothing.

"Great, Gerd. Great insight. Grade B+."

That's how my philosophy teacher commented on my contribution in my 11th-grade class. She was thrilled.

That's how I thought back then. Rational, sober. The Advanced Physics course at school was interesting.

God? For me, he didn't exist. But that nagging feeling remained: Something is wrong here.

Humans search for meaning, for answers.

Sooner or later, they begin to paint the world the way they like it, like Pippi Longstocking – and then perhaps even create a God that fits their own worldview. A God who has to adapt to us. What a luck that things turned out differently for me.

God is there – always. And the crucial thing is: You have to turn to him. That is free will. Turn around. Let it go. Trust. Faith. Whoever trusts in God will also receive answers. Truth is shown to him.

This is how my story began.

Between 2000 and 2001, I began talking about God more and more often with my school friend Hanno. He began reading the Bible, was very interested in politics, and believed that the God of the Bible was the only true God – and that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.

I tried to provoke him: "God should make a lightning strike, here and now. Then I'll believe, too." I became loud, almost defiant. Of course, there was no lightning. Or was there something after all?

Because God began to occupy more and more space in my thoughts. At the same time, I was given a glimpse behind the scenes of the world – into connections, people, and power systems. Suddenly, many things seemed contradictory, incomplete, and problematic. I began to question things. Even though I didn't want to admit it to Hanno – I was too proud – I became curious – and eventually, even fascinated.

In 2001, when I was working for three months in a packaging company in 2001 to earn money for a trip to Australia, I met Justus. He was older, but I could talk to him differently than I could with Hanno. And so I didn't have to agree with Hanno that God does exist; I was still a bit too proud.

9/11 was just behind us, and Justus talked to colleagues about things that weren't in the newspapers. My ears pricked up. During a break, I saw him with a Bible. I was impressed. We talked a lot, and he was the one with whom I bought my first Bible. After that, I never saw him again.

With that first Bible, I flew to Australia.

There, far away from my homeland, I truly began to believe. I started to read the Bible – even though mosquitoes and other insects, bugs big and small, hindered me. I always had to stop because they were sitting on the pages. But then it worked. I read almost the entire New Testament and began to really get to know Jesus Christ. I believed. And I talked about it enthusiastically.

I talked a lot with my best friend there, Cedric, about the Bible and God – but this time it was me who defended him. There were many moments when I felt God's presence. For example, when I ran out of money after two months, even though I planned to stay in Australia for a whole year.

I was desperate and searched for work in the city – unsuccessfully. On the way back, I prayed seriously for help for the first time. And as soon as I got off the bus, I met my roommates – and Harry spontaneously offered me a job on a construction site. This turned into six months of well-paid work, which even allowed me to afford a car. It was hard work, but well paid, and I had a great time. Cedric also worked there.

Another example: Edward, an American who was staying with us in the hostel, was robbed. It was early in my stay in Australia, and I didn't have a job at the time. I barely had any money myself – maybe 300 Australian dollars – but I gave him 100 of it. I told him: If I need anything, God will provide for me. And that's exactly what happened. I learned to trust God.

Someday, in Australia, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord. I asked him for forgiveness – and he forgave me. I placed my life in his hands. Because he rose from the dead, I am saved, too – like a prodigal son, adopted again by the Father. Over the years, I became increasingly aware of this grace, this love, this mercy. And the more you trust, the more God reveals.

Today, I'm concerned about how many people want to distort God's Word. They want God to adapt to the spirit of the times. But God's Word is alive because Jesus Christ lives – not because it can be changed. God's truth is timeless. I'm concerned because so many people are lost. God isn't lost, but man is.

A particularly significant moment was my baptism – it was a very special moment for me personally, even though it is not crucial for salvation.

It was 2014 or 2015. I had just read the book of Romans and truly understood what it means that faith saves – the grace that lies within it. The baptism took place in the Elbe River. Hanno's cousin spontaneously asked me if I wanted to be baptized along with his brother Mark. I agreed – Hanno would baptize me.

But I came too late. Without a ticket in the train. I was checked – even the federal police arrived. I thought:

Great. You want to be baptized and were caught traveling without payment. I was ashamed – and at the same time I started to judge others in my head because they might not wait for me. But they waited. Hanno waited.

I remember clearly how I went to the water. Hanno was standing there, Bible in hand. As I approached him, he just shook his head – not in a judgmental way, but as if to say: You messed up, yes. But God forgives you. You didn't deserve it – but he loves you.

This mixture of shame and joy – it is not easy to describe.

I was allowed to be baptized. I was allowed to confess that Jesus Christ is my Savior.

Only years later, I understood even more deeply: They had every reason not to wait for me. I had been absent. I had stolen. I was late. But Hanno waited – just as God waits. Not because I deserved it. But out of grace. Out of love.

For the wages of sin is death. Not because God wants to punish – but because it is the just judgment. Hell is not a place intended by God, but the consequence of sin. Just as prison is the consequence of stealing. The only way to escape this place is to never enter it. And the only way is Jesus Christ. "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Amen.

Faith of the heart

Here Marvin writes:

My faith has its origins in early childhood. All of my family members were baptized, confirmed and married in church, but with the exception of my mother and her mother, this was probably because it was the custom.

My mother and grandmother, on the other hand, were very religious, and my grandmother, unlike my mother, was also a regular churchgoer. In the family I grew up in, however, there were no regular church attendances or prayers at home.

But: When I was small or very young, my mother prayed with me every evening, e.g. the classic "Müde bin ich, geh zur Ruh" (I am tired, go to rest) or sang the song "Weißt du, wie viel Sternlein stehen" (Do you know how many little stars are there?) and she also spoke about God in everyday life, e.g. "The good Lord sees everything", which is not always helpful for adolescents. From these early childhood prayer times I developed what I call a "faith of the heart" that I have never lost.

So I have a kind of "childlike faith" that has not been affected or even eliminated by my reason. "Real" Christians (in the sense of the institutional church) would probably call me an unbeliever or consider me a heretic.

I question the scriptures, sometimes even down to the rabbinical interpretations, and I deal with the scientific findings obtained by theologians, historians and archaeologists with regard to Jewish, Christian and so-called pagan history.

I often find the texts of the Bible in the "old" language (up to the 19th century) and taking into account the Hebrew and Greek origins of the words to be colorful and powerful, but I consider much of it to be historically inaccurate, invented and presented by dogmatic believers in the spirit of their faith and their missionary will. But this does not limit my "childish faith", my "heartfelt faith".

On the contrary, I find the discussion of the philosophical foundations, the theological agreements or similarities with other, earlier religions and faiths or the different early Christian views, I am thinking here in particular of Arianism (essential similarity instead of essential equality), to be incredibly enriching.

Many things, even those that arise directly from the scriptures, I find to be of great beauty and homage, such as the word "Elohim" (plural, literally gods) instead of Eloha (singular, i.e. God).

Elohim (plural), not Eloha, said: Let us (plural) create man in our likeness. For me, the best explanation for the use of the plural is that the incomprehensible diversity of God cannot possibly be expressed in a singular.

I have called my faith childlike because I often see beauty in a rusty nail lying in a puddle, just as a child can see the colorful glitter of the nail when it is hit by a ray of sunlight.

I can recognize God's handwriting in everything that exists: the cosmos, minerals, plants, animals and humans, and the presence and light of God in living things. And so I thank and praise God for this, even in so-called little things or seemingly insignificant things.

Regardless of whether this seems crazy or not, this viewing is for me a constant source* of joy and happiness, as well as security in the feeling of being connected to God's creation.

* Source – also beautiful: "brecha" = source is the etymological basic form of the Hebrew "baruch", including holy, blessed, praised: For me it can also be read as God is the source of all being and is holy. Baruch hashem Adonai = Praised be the name of the Lord.

In my life, at least in retrospect, even in difficult human situations such as death, serious illness or separation, I have always had the experience and gained the knowledge that God was and is always with me, even if I was not always able to perceive it in the situations themselves.

For example, without a serious heart attack that I suffered at a young age and which caused irreparable physical damage, I would never have met my beloved partner of decades. Thank God!

Regardless of all the difficulties, fears and injuries that occur in every human life, I would not want to miss any of it, because it is the basis of my current existence and all the love and care that I have received and the basis of the feeling of being mostly happy and content.

Despite existing addiction structures, I consider this to be a pure gift of grace, as I stopped drinking alcohol and smoking. In December 1989, my father died in his bed at home from a pulmonary embolism. The family doctor who had examined him beforehand had diagnosed a groin strain. The emergency doctor who was called later said he could not find the house number. My father died and I screamed "God, I hate you!"

But God did not condemn me for this, but stayed with me, held me and gave me strength to do everything necessary and to be able to give comfort, which ultimately comforted me too. Thinking about "God's justice" would have led to no result. Thinking about the impossibility of continuing to live together in this world would also have been pointless and painful. As the saying goes: The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

In 1993, I was in a coma for about two weeks after suffering a heart attack that was not recognized in time. The attack had probably occurred the night before in the hospital bed and had led to unconsciousness. The unconsciousness and the heart attack were not discovered until the next morning and it was therefore too late for corrective intervention, so since then I have only had half of my heart function.

After I finally woke up in my bed, I couldn't get up, but I could look out the window while lying down. And it was as if I could see further than my immediate surroundings.

I saw a landscape that had come to life in my mind's eye and looked like a landscape from God - green and alive, as if it had just been created; with meadows, trees, bushes and lovely hills in the background - and in that and in me there was no room for pain, fear about my future or my health.

I had no wishes and no desires. It was simply the feeling: everything is good and will remain, no matter what may happen. Nothing will be able to affect me negatively.

It could probably be said that it was a psychotic illness under the influence of medication, but I prefer my version: God showed me what is possible for him, especially for us humans: complete (inner) peace and absolute freedom. Never before and never again I have felt so free. It really was as Hermann Hesse described it: "… Only when you renounce every wish / no longer know goal or desire / no longer call happiness by name / then the flood of events / no longer comes to your heart / and your soul rests."

The Holy Spirit

Andreas describes his experiences with his faith:

My parents were both Christians. Going to church regularly on Sundays was normal for us. That's why I came into contact with our church youth group early. There was a cozy tea room where we could spend many hours of our free time. Later on I was confirmed. Our wedding was also celebrated in a Christian manner.

At that time, I hardly thought about my faith itself. It wasn't until a charismatic pastor started preaching in our church that things changed. His sermons could sometimes last more than an hour and a half. But they were powerful!

In the past, I mainly listened to sermons, that were much shorter. And usually, when I was asked afterward what the topic of the service was, I could barely answer. I simply forgot everything quickly. But the sermons of this charismatic pastor impressed me deeply. They made me think. Despite their length, I was still able to remember the content even after several days.

Everything kept circling around in my head for a long time.

Sometime later, I had an experience on the suburban train that I thought about a lot even later. There was an elderly woman with walking difficulties sitting opposite me, but at the other end of the car. At the next stop, she struggled to get to the door and tried to get off. I hadn't really noticed her at all. Probably because I was dozing from the long journey. Suddenly, I stood up and helped the woman get off. She thanked me. The strange thing was that the whole time, I felt like I had stayed in my seat. The person who helped the woman had somehow come from within me. I had the impression that it wasn't me at all. It only became clear to me much later how to classify this experience.

After several years my wife and I moved to another part of our town and visited the church there. My contact with the new congregation soon led to the pastor persuading me to run for church council. He even convinced me to take on the leadership of a Bible study group, even though I didn't really consider myself suited for it. My strengths weren't exactly "giving big speeches" in front of a group, which means that I found it extremely difficult to speak spontaneously in front of an audience. It happened as it had to happen. In one of the sessions, many questions were asked. I actually had to pass on one question, but then suddenly an answer came out of my mouth. I can't remember ever having thought about such a statement before. So it was clear to me that the Holy Spirit had guided me here.

I had a similar experience in a Bible study group. We just talked about forgiveness, and then we started praying. One woman spoke in her prayer of someone who had tormented her in the past. She prayed that he would receive the just punishment on the Day of Judgment.

Now I heard myself speaking about it. It sounded something like this:

"We just forgave our enemies. Therefore, it must be clear that there can be no more judgment for your tormentor!"

Such a thought I'd never considered before. How could this sentence come out of my mouth? For me, that was another indication that the Holy Spirit guided me.

And such leadership also explains my behavior on the train with the old woman.

The Ruach

Jana tells how she came to faith:

My life has never been straightforward. On the contrary, it was like serpentines and had nothing to do with the church.

When I got my entrance qualification for the University of Applied Sciences in my pocket, I left my village and went to a large town. There I started an apprenticeship that didn't bring me fulfillment.

After one year, I knew that I wouldn't grow old in this profession. The solution: I'd start studying! But what? Teaching was the answer to my question. My friend suggested, "Why won't you choose religion as a subject? It's easy to study".

I said, "okay, but I need a second subject. Since I like reading, it has to be German studies. Yes, exactly!" So the plan was in place, but the high school diploma and, above all, the living time were missing.

Every evening during my apprenticeship I went to evening high school for two years, so I obtained my Abitur parallel to my training. After 15 tests in the same month, I had managed to pass my apprenticeship and my high school diploma at the same time. That changed my life. From that moment, I knew I could achieve anything if I just worked hard enough. – It remains my life's motto up to this day. –

I studied as I had planned: to become a secondary school teacher, specializing in religion and German. I wasn't a typical student, as I was older than everyone else. I had experienced the professional world and always wanted to think outside the box.

And so began my journey to faith.

During the first week, I was sitting on the "Bible Studies Old Testament" seminar. The lecturer taught with such a passion. I had no idea about the Bible, the church, or even faith. Nevertheless, I absorbed every single word from the Old Testament. The books of Judges and Samuel in particular still fascinate me today. It was as if a new world opened up to me, just like when I was at evening school.

Thirsty for more, but what should I do? Should I change my subject of studies and study theology fully with the goal of eventually becoming a pastor? How could I become a pastor without having a Christian background or feeling connected to faith in God or to the church? With these questions in mind, I attended the university's opening service that same week, which a friend had dragged me to. I didn't really want to go, but luckily my friend persisted. That day changed my entire life.

I sat in that service, not listening, pondering about my future. Could I be a theologian, or even a pastor? Does God really exist? How could I tell people about a God when I myself cannot understand him? And then I thought, "Just study what fulfills you! The rest will work itself out."

And in this small moment of inner, very quiet clarity, I felt a breeze around me. Not only on my back, but all around me. My hair danced gently in the wind, my back felt warm, and my body was relaxed like it hadn't been a long time. It was beautiful, and I felt no fear or doubt at that moment. I didn't know where this wind was coming from. All doors were closed. No one was going in or out. My analytical nature controlled every possibility. There was nothing. It was real. I felt that breeze all around me. It seemed as if the world stood still. Everything around me was frozen, and only I was surrounded by that breath of wind. A breeze that gave me backing. Ten seconds long. 10.9.8.7.6.5.4.3.2.1.0.

I don't know where that breath of wind was coming from, and I don't want to sound banal or crazy. But this gentle breeze encouraged me. Perhaps, yes, I firmly believe that it was the Holy Spirit. Hebrew: $\bigcap Ruach$. It was the Ruach I needed. It was the moment that showed me: There is a God who sees me. A God who lets me feel he is there, who resonates with me.

The next day, I changed my subject of study. Instead of becoming a teacher, I became a full-time theologian. I've never regretted that decision.

Due to my relatively late entry into theology through second-chance education and my background, which is far away from education and church, I often saw theology studies from a different perspective than my fellow students.

I never thought my study would be a matter of course, for I am the first person in my family who had started an academic career. I always looked for ways to combine theory and practice and to include people's everyday experiences in my theological thinking.

I focused my studies on practical theology, but I was also interested in other subjects. Because of my aboveaverage grades in all theological disciplines, I received a scholarship. So I financed my studies alone through scholarships and jobs, without loans or maintenance. Therefore, I shortened my studies by one year and was able to complete them after ten semesters, despite learning three languages (Latin, Greek, and Hebrew).

Additionally, I also volunteered in the student council and within the faculty and sought opportunities to get to know academic life and the scientific community.

And that only because a small Ruach changed my life. Today I am a pastor in an evangelical church with deep faith in God and a special connection to the Holy Spirit. I'm living in the security of faith, knowing the Ruach resonates within me. In you and in me. Every day. I firmly believe this. Amen!

We Are Singing

We are praising God, we are not alone. We are thanking God, with a heartfelt tone. We are singing loud, we are here at home.

Together we are singing. Together we are winning. That makes our hearts be full of joy.

We complain to God, we are not alone. We are asking God, with a trusting tone. And we pray to God, to protect our home.

Together we are singing. Together we are winning. That makes our hearts be full of joy.

We mourn before God, give us comfort now. We cry out to God, illness weighs us down. But we trust in God, for He gives us hope.

Together we are singing. Together we are winning. That makes our hearts be full of joy. What happens when we sing like this? The text reminds us of a prayer. It begins with praise and contains wishes that we bring before God. At the same time, it also shows that we are full of confidence and gratitude.

Similar prayers are spoken and sung thousands of times by people all over the world. Many believe that God really hears them. But of course there is no evidence for this. The only thing that is certain is when we pray and sing together. This is confirmation that we are not alone with our wishes. Music also plays a big role. It takes us to another level, at least for the time we are singing together. We are then detached from ourselves and can open up.

We open ourselves to the idea that the distance between us and our Creator has become a little smaller.

What would you answer?

Why many Christians don't talk about their faith?

Answer from ChatGPT

There are several reasons why many Christians don't talk openly about their faith:

Personal restraint

Many people consider their faith a private matter and are uncomfortable discussing it publicly.

Fear of rejection or controversy

In secular or mixed religious societies, speaking openly about one's faith can lead to arguments or even conflict. Some people want to avoid such situations.

Humility and modesty

Some Christians believe that faith should be demonstrated through actions rather than words. They don't want to appear superior to others.

Uncertainty or doubt

Some people feel they are not sufficiently informed or have questions about their faith and therefore avoid discussing it.

Social pressure

In some cultures or social circles, religion is considered unfashionable or backward, so believers fear being ridiculed or not taken seriously.

Past experiences

Those who have had negative experiences with rejection or negative reactions become more cautious about sharing their faith.

Lack of habit

Many Christians never learned to speak openly about their faith because it wasn't customary in their family or church.

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Author Erik Tantal, alias Klaus Friese

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Copyright © Klaus Friese, Hamburg

E-Mail friese@esperanto-hamburg.de

Website esperanto-klaus.de

Cover Erik Tantal

