

Who Am I?

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“Here, Christina, here’s \$40.” I walked swiftly towards my father, overjoyed with the reassurance of money—an important green piece of paper desperately needed in order to get through life, to live a life of pleasure—in my wallet. As I got closer and closer to that vital element, I was ecstatic with the decisions I had to make; what should I buy first? Only an inch away, I then mechanically snatched it out of his hands, and just as hastily as I came to get it, I quickly then walked away, ready and on my way to the mall.

These were the good old days. Anything I wanted, I usually got. Everything was handed to me by my parents. Every week. A routine. A requirement. And perhaps, on days when I was upset with them, even known in my world, as their *duty*. But those days were soon to be over, and would only be a distant memory that I can only reminisce now. It was the winter of 2003, when my father found himself without employment. The truth hit me hard a month after my dad’s retirement from the military, when I noticed my parents start to worry immensely, argue and fight, and less and less of that green piece of paper was given to me. My dad continued to search for jobs, only to get declined every time. How did this happen? What had gone wrong? Had the Lord left me and my family? Confused

and angry, I kept asking myself these questions over and over again, crying myself to sleep and waking up to another day.

The effects of this sudden and unexpected change devastated me; I realized I was going to have to change my lifestyle and make new adaptations. My mother and I began to go to church much more frequently, attending early bird prayer meetings. We prayed and prayed, asking the Lord to guide us, and to comfort us throughout this time. Going to school would not be the same anymore. The lunch food that I had always bought with my money, I now was eligible to get for free. My pride overtook me, and I was foolishly embarrassed to receive free school lunch. School was not the only aspect that changed, but so did hangouts after church. I was no longer able to go out with my friends—reluctantly having to give them excuses by telling them that I was not feeling well, and that I needed rest—in order to save the little money I had. I slowly began to understand that instead of being upset at the situation, I needed to accept it and make a 180 degree attitude change.

The event that led to my turning point was when a concerned friend who was aware of my situation, gave me an envelope that contained one hundred dollars inside. My first reaction was to this, was obviously, to decline the money. Yet, that friend had told me that he had felt convicted

by God to help a fellow sister in Christ, and because he had the capability to, he wanted to. He reminded me that money, in a Christian point of view, was only a worldly possession, and was no more than a green piece of paper in God's eyes. After a long and meaningful conversation, I graciously accepted the envelope, and I could not have felt more thankful. I went home that night and reevaluated my predicament, my actions. How selfish I was, how disgustingly spoiled I was. I was angry at myself, disappointed, yet, at the same time, overwhelmed with the feeling of gratefulness. I was grateful for my parents, for their love and support. I was grateful that I lived under a roof, in a place called home, with a warm bed to sleep in. I was grateful to have so many supportive friends surrounding me, and for their help to lessen my burden and stress. I was grateful for the school cafeteria, for giving those students who did not have enough income free food. I humbled myself before God, and I was grateful that the Lord was indeed still with us, that He had stayed faithful to his promises. I had taken these blessings for granted, and I was now so appreciative for everything I had. This was just another bump in the road, and God had intended to teach me a valuable lesson in life, or better yet, reveal the answer to who I actually was and the purpose of my existence

on earth...He loved me too much, and He was going to deliver me through all of this.

I was grateful that I had to undergo this experience, for I knew that it had all happened for a reason; it was all part of God's wonderful plan for me. Within that short amount of time, I matured into a stronger, more humble, and grateful person. These convictions drove me to get a job, where I was determined to help my family during this time of financial need. It was a miracle that I was able to find a job at a teriyaki restaurant with deliberate speed, and again, it was a reminder that God was in control of everything, guiding me throughout this process in which to mold me to be more like Him. Once more, I was thankful, and I worked extremely hard, showered with compliments of how hardworking and polite I was. I enjoyed coming to work, where I loved to interact with my customers that always seemed to make my day with a simple smile. I saw the world in a new perspective, and I was just simply—thankful...for everything. Through this tough, yet meaningful experience, I now always remember my manners, and say “thank you” whenever something is given to me, or even when my teacher simply passes back an assignment to me. I realized through this big event that had caused my family and I so much grief and hardship, to faithfully trust and turn to the Lord in everything, especially when things are

a blur. I constantly referred to Proverbs 3:5-6 during this time: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” Through this experience, much fruit was bared; God has taught me to be a more gracious person, a humbled servant, and has provided an opportunity for me to share my testimony to all. So who am I, may you ask? The answer is quite simple...I am a “Child of God.”