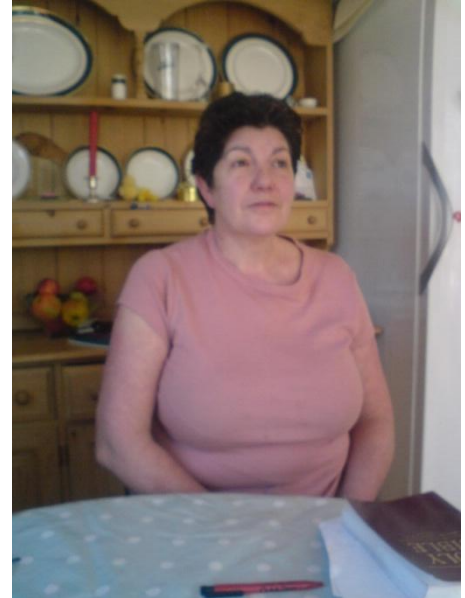


Gill Attfield

My family was not Christian but they did send me to Sunday School, so every week I went on my own. Later, when I had my own children, I was part of a church.

In 1989 Dan and I lost everything due to a business failure. We lost our home and had to move. I felt that my church family were not supportive. Looking back maybe I didn't ask for help, but at the time I felt rejected. I said I'd never go to a church again. My faith weakened, though I never shut the door on God totally.

We moved back to Brentwood in 1990. Eight years later I met Vicky, then a member of Brentwood Baptist Church and Diana, a member here. We met for prayer in Vicky's house and I went to Brentwood Baptist Church a few times. I started to build up my faith again in the church, and in people generally.



In September 2000 I had a brain haemorrhage. I was unconscious for a few days. Dan had a difficult decision to make about my surgery, between two options that could both have been fatal, and I came round long enough for us to make the decision together. Having made the decision I prayed to God, 'if this is my time then I am in your hands.' A wonderful feeling of peace came over me, like I have never experienced before or since. I knew there was nothing to fear in death, because the Lord is there.

There were other answers to prayer. Once we were desperate for money for food. I prayed and then found a £10 in my record collection. I am sure that I did not put it there.

After the operation I started searching. I wanted to know why I was spared. I did an Alpha course at Brentwood Baptist Church, and in the autumn of 2006 I did the same course at Pilgrims Hatch. Joyce was helping on the course and I raised the issue of why I had been spared. Joyce said, 'You've been spared because you are you. God loves you for you. Your purpose is to be you.'

Gradually I started coming back to church. After Alpha I started a First Steps course with Joyce. We came to the chapter on baptism and thinking 'this is what I should be doing.' It had never been an issue before, but I read the Bible passage and saw it was the right thing to do. I prayed about it and I saw that I had all the reasons to go ahead.

My family has been widened. I now feel I have a church family, as opposed to just 'going to church.' I feel a lot calmer now. We have a lot of 'stuff' in our lives but I pray every day that God will lead me through. It feels as if God has taken the weight upon his shoulders and I'm not coping alone. I hope people will see the peace I have and say, 'I'd like some of that.' I'm a lot more open: I have no problem now saying, 'I'm a Christian' or saying something without wondering whether people will laugh at me.

Today I'm saying, 'I'm a Christian.' It's time to stand up and be counted and this is day one. Everything beforehand is gone. I'm forgiven with a clean slate. Everything between me and God is out in the open and this is the fresh start.

I have a fear of water because of something that happened when I was young, but if Jesus died for me it is no big deal for me to put my head under water with someone near me.

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