

Story of a Soul, Lost and Found

Hello, friends.

Listening to both Britan's and Micah's testimonies, I'm reminded that our stories encourage one another to seek, find, and encounter Jesus. Britan discovered that faith is more than rules—it's a personal relationship with Jesus. Micah learned that God empowers ordinary people when they respond to His call, showing us that He doesn't call only the qualified; He qualifies the called.

Each testimony we share weaves into a greater story of hope and redemption.

I'm excited to share my story with you today: the story of a soul lost and then found.

I wasn't a believer all my life. Growing up in a Muslim family in Iran, facing the harsh realities of revolution and war pushed God to the edges of my thoughts. In my teens, I was like any other teenager, in search for identity and acceptance. I was ambitious and wanted to make my mark on the world.

In 1979, the Islamic Revolution swept through our country. I watched friends, family, and neighbors jailed, tortured, even killed by revolutionary guards. I was seventeen, and the world I knew fell apart.

A year later, war with Iraq broke out and I was drafted. On the front lines, I learned my mother was dying of cancer at forty-two. I never said goodbye before she passed. Soon after, my grandmother died as well. Those losses, mixed with conflict all around me, drove faith so far from my mind that I believed God had nothing to do with my life.

When I finished serving, the political climate forced my family to flee Iran. Norway felt like a fresh start. Juggling for multiple jobs and full-time school wasn't easy, but it gave my life new purpose. By the late '80s, I'd earned my degree in aeronautics while helping my siblings through college. As my dreams took root, my belief in God and faith drifted even further. I was the overcomer, the architect of my own destiny, I did not need God, *or so I thought.*

After graduation, I moved to the US in 1991. By the mid-'90s, I'd started a business, met my wife, Maria, and married her in 1997 and later blessed with two intelligent and beautiful daughters who make us proud every day.

In 2007, a trip to India and Nepal opened my eyes to deep poverty and hardship in hard-to-reach communities Benares and Kathmandu. Shortly after that visit, Maria and I founded Impact A Life Foundation to promote local leadership, community engagement, and self-dependence

Fast forward to 2013, I was still a nonbeliever, but our daughters attended a local Christian school here in Seattle. In spring of that year, I joined a seven-day hiking trip to Catalina Island—a rugged, windswept isle off Southern California—led by their Bible teacher, Pastor Dan Edmondson (whom many of our team in Africa may still remember). Spending time with those high-schoolers, I saw that no matter our background, race, nation, or era—we share the same dreams, ambitions, and struggles.

By the end of that hike, everyone sensed God at work. They knew I wasn't a believer and quietly prayed for my salvation every night. On our last day, walking with another pastor, Zack from Mission Church (who joined me to visit Sierra Leone in 2019 and now is a major ILF supporter), he asked me:

"When will you drop your guard and let Jesus in, Cyrus? Saving the world isn't your job—it is God's and He is already on it."

A week before Easter, As Pastor Zack asked me that life changing question, daffodils along the sidewalk shone like neon lights. That was my cue. I didn't just meet Jesus that day—I laid down my pride, my pain, and my plans, and He met me with grace. In a split second, I received Jesus, and the Lord claimed my life forever.

In 2016, I visited Sierra Leone with Pastor Dan and met Dr. Roland. In communities where centuries of hardship had taken lasting toll, the beautiful gospel of love and grace started to take root. By that summer, with God's grace, a holistic ministry took shape in Mankneh village through Impact A Life Foundation. This time, it was led by God, not by my ambition—bridging evangelism and social action through local leadership and community participation.

I met Britan, Anthony, Micah, and many others whom I serve alongside through ILF today.

In 2023, God connected ILF with Raju Babu in India where Jesus is encountered by the lost every day.

Sometimes we wonder why God allows hardship or why He opens our eyes while others continue to suffer in darkness. Perhaps it's so His works can be displayed in and through us—just as Jesus explained when He healed the blind man (John 9:1–3). It is in our darkest seasons, where we experience Jesus and his brightest work.

One of my favorite pastors and writers Rick Warren calls the Bible “God stories of calling.” From Noah to Mary, each life weaves divine purpose through human frailty. I'm sure many of you carry equally powerful stories.

Jesus calls us to share the good news hidden in our testimonies—the stories of souls lost and found. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope (Ephesians 4:4).

So I urge you, brothers and sisters: your stories of salvation matter more than you can imagine. Share them! In the same way that we hope the stories we share here, may your testimony be the light someone else needs to find their way home.