**HE CHANGED ME!**

**By Kris Swiatocho**

Hi, my name is Kris, and I have a story to tell you. I grew up with a birth father who was absent for most of my life. When he was around, he was very abusive. I didn't know why my father was the way he was until I met his mother, my polish grandmother, at the age of 6. Throughout my childhood into my young adulthood, she was also very abusive to me. You have heard the saying, "hurt people hurt people"? She definitely hurt my siblings and me. She would tell me I was worthless, ugly, and that no one would ever want to me. She loved to say that my mother was a prostitute, a piece of garbage that had entrapped my father into marriage. My grandmother was ruthless in her pursuit to destroy me. But why? What had my family or I done to deserve this? I often asked my grandfather, a very kind person, who, unlike my grandmother, why doesn't he leave her. But he would say, "where would I go"? He asks me, for his sake, to put up with her. When I was 26, my grandfather passed away. This was now my opportunity to exit her life. I could escape the continuous abuse. She couldn't hurt me anymore. Over the next eight years, I had nothing to do with her.

In the meantime, I had my own struggles. I had spent many years making bad choices. I was drinking too much, doing drugs, living with a man, and in horrible debt.  I was a mess. I knew I needed some help. After years of my family pray for me, I got down on my knees and asked Jesus into my heart to heal and help me. From that point, my life began to change. I started going to church, attended a Bible study, and got involved with a young singles ministry, where I made some better friends. Over the next few years, the Lord started working on my heart. He told me it was time to reconcile with my grandmother and that I needed to forgive her as Christ had forgiven me. But what if she had not changed? What if she continued to abuse me? I was so scared. What would the Lord want me to do?

My first step was sending a card on her birthday. I remember just signing my name. Then I sent another card at Easter and signed it sincerely, Krysia (my name in polish). Then I sent her a Mother's Day card in which God gave me the courage to say, love, Krysia. Wow, how could I sign it with that word? How could I possibly love such a person? A person who has abused me my entire life. But that is how God works and how he can help you.

Two months past and I got a phone call from a lawyer that my grandmother had gone crazy and was in a mental hospital. He told me that I needed to come to Connecticut to sort out things and make provisions for her. I wasn't sure I could do this. I took one of my brothers along for support. I remember walking into the facility and seeing her sitting on the side of her bed. The first thing she said was, "I forgive you." Forgive me? Forgive me for what? What have I done? The following weeks would be very stressful. Between traveling back and forth to Connecticut weekly, trying to figure out what was best for her, sorting through her possessions, and dealing with her personally, which by the way, had not changed, I was at my wit's end. A judge then told me that I would be given custody of her. She would never be in the right mind to take of herself again. I now started the stressful task of selling her home and its contents. Of all the people in the world that she would want to have custody of her, it wouldn't have been me. She hated me. And I had no idea why.  Why God would you put me back in her life. And why would He give me custody of her? God would have a great sense of humor in the middle of His plan.

A few more weeks went by, and eventually, she would be transferred to a nursing home. I continued to travel back and forth to Connecticut, sorting through her things and getting her house ready to sell. I remember praying to God to release me from her so that I could move on with my life. I would call my mom and cry, telling her how my grandmother is still so mean to me. Why would God ask me to do this? What had I done to God that was so bad that I deserved this punishment? I thought I could just sign over my responsibilities of the house to the lawyer. Although I knew I had a legal requirement to take care of her, I didn't feel I had a family requirement. But as the weeks turned into months, something started to change inside of me. What was going on?

By now, to some degree, my grandmother's verbal abuse had lessened, primarily because her illness affected her memory. Then on one particular visit, as I was listening to her ramble on about her opinion of me, what she was saying meant nothing. No matter what she said to me, God would only let me hear what He was saying. When she would say, you are "ugly." God would say, "You are beautiful." When she would say, "no man will ever want you," I would hear God say, "I want you, and I died for you." When she would say, "you are so fat," I would hear God say, "Kris, you could lose a few pounds to get healthier." Haha! Oh my goodness, her words had no power anymore because my identity wasn't in what she thought of me but what God had thought of me. It was from that moment, my whole attitude changed.

It was now around the end of the third year, and I had traveled to see her again. However, instead of calling my mom this time to complain about wanting to leave her here, I asked my mom for help. I told her that I couldn't leave my grandmother in this place any longer. This place was a place of death, not life. I needed to figure out a way to bring her to my home in North Carolina. And in that conversation, I realized I loved her." What…I love her?"  Then I remembered Jesus, as he stretched out his arms in what He did on the cross for me, dying for my sins, taking my place---it was for love. I had finally learned to love my grandmother due to Christ's love for me. And His love had changed me. I could finally love her in His power. Only through my relationship with Christ could this had happened.

Well, shortly after my last visit with her, she would pass away. I cried tears of joy at her funeral, knowing that although she never changed, I had. And that is what accepting and following Jesus can do for your life. It changes you for the better. You can forgive those who have hurt you. You can even learn to forgive yourself. Why not accept the Lord today as your Savior.

**The Bible, God's word, teaches us that:**

1. "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23)
2. And that the result of this sin, there is death *"For the wages of sin is death…"* (Romans 6:23a). This is a death eternally separated from God.
3. But there is hope as we can have eternal life with God through Jesus Christ. *"…but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*."  (Romans 6:23b)
4. Jesus loved us by dying on the cross for our sins. "*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*." (Romans 5:8)
5. Once we understand our need for a savior and recognize that Jesus Christ is that savior, we can respond by calling out to Jesus. "*If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved." (Romans 10:9-10)*  and "*For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*.'" (Romans 10:13)
6. Once you saved, you can now enjoy the peace of knowing you are no longer separated from God by your sin.  *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand."
(Romans 5:1-2)*

You can start with a simple prayer: *Dear God, I know I have sinned against you. I understand that the penalty for this sin is death and eternal separation from you. Thank you for sending your only son, Jesus, to die for me on the cross for my sins. I believe that he died for me and rose again to be forgiven and live forever with Him. Here and now, I surrender my life, my plans, my ways, my goals to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In Jesus name, Amen*

If you have gone through these steps and have asked Jesus into your heart, congratulations. Let me encourage you to join a Bible-believing church and start your journey of personal growth. Please let others know you have accepted the Lord into your heart so that they can help you continue to grow.

Do you have other questions or would like to watch a video with further explanation, go to my website at [www.KrisSwiatochoMinisties.org](http://www.krisswiatochoministies.org/) and click on "How to Ask Jesus Into Your Life."

Thank you for reading, and know, Jesus does love you and has not given up on you.

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