

I Am

I AM A CHILD of God. Christ is in me. With him, I am enough.

It has taken me more than half a century to be able to say these words out loud with unshakable faith, belief, and steadfast conviction, but everything in its right time. After all, it's not my timing at all but his. Had I not been through the life I've lived thus far, had I not endured the pain, heartache, and struggles I've experienced to date, this book would never be. I could never share this story or the wisdom I've gained. I could never admit that it is by his will, his grace, his mercy, and his plan alone that I have been brought to you.

This is my testimony, my confession. This is my story, my personal journey from flesh to faith, from a worldly life to a spiritual one. I feel no need to explain, defend, or justify these words, for they are simply what they are—a telling of one woman's story, mine, from a single perspective, mine. There is no deliberate intention to misrepresent, dramatize, or exaggerate anything contained herein. After all these years, it's just the way I have remembered things. Yet I do feel a sense of urgency to get pen to paper and document the lessons I've learned. Don't get me wrong. I have no sense of impending doom or an expectation of a premature, sudden ending of my life. It's just that I can no longer ignore the calling I've heard to write it all down, get it all out, and confess. For without repentance, there can be no forgiveness nor redemption or salvation, and I am ready to be saved.

So why tell the story at all? I am no one significant. I haven't created the next smartphone or established a worldwide humanitarian association. I am not the wealthiest person in the world, nor do I own vast possessions. I won't consider myself as spiritually evolved as many of the leaders in this world, nor have I influenced millions of people to purchase a book by interviewing them on a television show. My accomplishments are many yet not out-of-this-world miraculous, for anyone could have done the things I have done and lived the not-so-exceptional life I have lived.

I suppose, though, that therein lies the intention behind sharing my story. I am just like you. We are connected. In our humanity and frailty, the temporariness of our existence as flesh, we want to know that we are not alone. We desire to be of some significance in this life, to realize our purpose, to know our time here is not meaningless and that we have done some good. While we may be a ball of electrons, energy, and space, we have a heart and a soul yearning to give and be loved.

Everyone has a story to tell. Some might even say we are compelled to tell it. The favorite subject of anyone I've ever met is usually themselves; I am no different. I love to talk about me. In fact, I'll go so far as to say I am a conversational narcissist—one of those people who always bring the topic of conversation back to themselves, under the guise of empathy and compassion, when listening to the trials and tribulations of another human being. This is just one of my many sins, and there are many. I have been praised and encouraged by some and highly judged and discouraged by others for sharing my story. One of my closet friends even said to me, "Why would you ever want to tell people about any of this? Some things are just better kept to yourself. It will change people's opinion of you. It certainly has mine." And I don't think she meant for the better.

Well, I'm good with that. I can now say that my life is no longer defined by the opinions and expectations of others; hence, whether you accept this story as truth or fiction, whether you give it a positive or negative review, whether you like or don't like the content, or whether you come to love or despise the person I am, have been, or grow into within these pages matters not to me. I know I am loved. What does matter, though, is the message contained within. In fact, only one week before

writing down these words, I emphatically stated to another one of my friends that my purpose has finally and definitively been revealed to me:

My purpose, my sole reason now for living, is to share the essence of who I am with the world through my stories and songs in an effort to bring each soul with whom I come in contact closer to God. I am an apostle of Christ.

That's a powerful mission statement for someone who, forty years ago, was a self-professed atheist and hater of the word God. God? What or who is that? I can't feel him, touch him, see him, or hear him, so how can he be, and what could he ever want with me? I am not the first person to have these thoughts and certainly will not be the last. But even through all the years of not knowing who he is, it seems he has always known who I am.

From the day I wrote my first song, he has been speaking to me and through me in the lyrics and music I have created. And I do say "I have created" because I now know the Creator is within me, and I am of him. I have always said I don't write my songs; they come to me, usually in the middle of the night, fully written as if it were a download from above. And by above, I mean from God. I then find myself frantically trying to get the words written down, sometimes in an indecipherable manner, hardly able to read them the following morning. Then it's usually a rush to my guitar or piano to painstakingly attempt to transfer the symphony being heard in my head into rudimentary chords and rhythms with accompanying hieroglyphics on a piece of paper—nothing any real composer could ever read. Such is the songwriting process of Shari Hall.

On June 25, 2013, I released my first studio album, Perfect Love. While it was not the original intention, I realized that each song I wrote told part of the story of my life from my marriage through the six years after my divorce and my journey into a spiritual life. Because songwriting has always been deeply personal for me, this musical memoir is my way of communicating to you the emotions and feelings coming from inside my heart and soul with all its complexity; simple words alone just aren't enough. The songs are my truth—a truth I now feel compelled to share with you, a divine truth delivered to me with a message as old as time itself.

To enhance your understanding of the message, I ask that you read each song-titled section while simultaneously listening to the music and lyrics it inspired. There is a significant amount of overlap in the timing of some of the events described herein; however, these are the stories of the songs, not necessarily a chronological biography. It is my genuine hope and desire that by reading my personal journey from flesh to faith while listening to the songs, you will connect deeper with your own personal truth and experience the revelation that I have come to know, the source of Perfect Love.

My Perfect Love story begins long before the first song on the album was ever written.

Excerpt From

PERFECT LOVE - One Woman's Journey From Flesh to Faith: A Musical Memoir
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