

Rescued from Counterfeit: A Restoration in Christ



BEGINNINGS

My father was Catholic; my mother an astrologer. Born in Las Vegas at the end of the 1960s, my upbringing unsurprisingly reflected a mix of Catholicism and New Age beliefs. When I was three, my father left my mother with a brief handwritten note on the kitchen table. Growing up in a broken family was a common experience for Generation X—a time of tremendous societal shifts, when the New Age Movement was gaining widespread popularity. The 1983 release of Shirley MacLaine's bestselling *Out On a Limb* marked a cultural turning point when the New Age Movement was catapulted into the mainstream. This engaging bestseller from the well-known actress repackaged Eastern mysticism with an appealing and sunny outlook, boldly covering channeling, reincarnation, astrology, UFOs, and astral projection. The conversational narrative introduced an entire generation to these concepts.

After my parents' divorce, we moved frequently. As I emerged from a chaotic childhood, metaphysics and mysticism seemed to provide answers to life's challenging questions. I eagerly read *Out on a Limb* and purchased my first deck of tarot cards at sixteen. The study of astrology soon followed, opening what seemed like an endless inquiry into "hidden wisdom"—reincarnation, quantum physics, UFOs, astral projection.

I attended Mass with deep reverence for the sacraments, rituals, and traditions of the Catholic Church. I grew up with faith in Christ, but it was faith held alongside a myriad of doctrines from the New Age. Within the Catholic tradition, holding its own set of mystical practices and parabiblical beliefs, there seemed to be no evident conflict. The transubstantiation of the Eucharist and veneration of Mary and the saints served as examples that invited a blended worldview.

I doubted claims of Scripture's inerrancy, convinced the Bible had surely been corrupted through multiple translations over the centuries. I dismissed Bible-believing Christians as narrow-minded and judgmental. If God is love, how could He condemn anyone to Hell? The rosary was recited, but the Bible remained unread. I interpreted Jesus' teachings largely through a metaphysical lens and scoffed at Bible-believing Christians for being "judgmental" and "narrow-minded." Drawing from New Age mysticism, I naturally concluded we were here to learn and evolve over lifetimes until reaching final "enlightenment" or "oneness with God."

COLLEGE AND DEEPER DECEPTION

Setting off for college, I fully embraced New Age mysticism. Like my mother, I became adept at reading astrology charts. After completing an undergraduate degree in Political Science, I served a year as a faith-based volunteer with a Catholic religious order in San Francisco, seeking to learn more about the Catholic faith while serving the community.

During that year (1995-1996), I lived in a volunteer house, worked at a local non-profit, and attended Sunday Mass. Rather than challenge my New Age beliefs, the experience reinforced them. We studied "creation spirituality" and liberation theology, discussing mystics like Henry Nouwen, Matthew Fox, and Dorothy Day, along with post-modern and deconstructionist views of the Catholic Church. We learned the contemplative practice of *Lectio Divina*.

After the volunteer year ended, I moved to the Pacific Northwest, continuing my study of tarot, astrology, reincarnation, yoga, and Eastern mysticism. These practices formed my spiritual toolbox—tools for self-development and personal growth, for "achieving a higher state of consciousness." I worked in telecommunications and attended art school, accepting special projects and earning a promotion to management that took me to Phoenix. By my mid-thirties, I had achieved career success but felt I hadn't found my "true purpose."

BLISSCATION

In early spring 2007, I discovered a small yoga center offering various classes. Working extensive hours as a call center supervisor, I believed yoga would bring healthy balance to my stressful schedule. The studio owner had just returned from India and enthusiastically described her profound experiences with an "Enlightened Master." She was organizing yoga and meditation workshops in Phoenix.

I attended a workshop and was impressed by both the instructor—a medical doctor from Houston—and the intensive meditation techniques taught. As a long-time spiritual seeker, I took the bait like fresh peanut butter on a mousetrap.

Soon I found myself traveling to Los Angeles with a group from the studio to attend a weekend meditation retreat at the Swami's spiritual community (*ashram*). Stories abounded of his "signs and wonders" that were joined with a perceptible aura of holiness, whether experienced in person or through video. Many devotees—affluent, highly educated professionals—added credibility to his claims.

The similarities between Catholicism and Hinduism seemed to validate Hinduism as a "universal religion"—religious chanting, ash, candles, incense, prayer beads. Hindu texts described numerous "divine incarnations"—Rama, Krishna, Adi Shankara—sent to help humanity. It satisfied my spiritual curiosity.

When the Swami began expanding his mission in Los Angeles and inviting people to join, I occasionally wondered if it was a cult but quickly dismissed those thoughts, telling myself I was "too smart" to get caught up in one. Even if it was, I thought, it seemed like a good one! Convinced this was meaningful work that would help humanity, I trusted and followed. I received a "spiritual name" and became a formal initiate.

I submitted my resignation from my employer of six years, packed what I could, and gave away the rest. Every decision became an act of faith. Soon after arriving in L.A., we learned a temple was being established and we would all work under its auspices.

Over the following three years, I worked from early morning to late night alongside other members, sharing shifts and responsibilities. I lived across the street with three other women who also worked at the temple. Days, weeks, and years blurred together, marked by festivals, celebrations, anniversaries, and birthdays. We shared laughter and stories over communal meals. Wearing traditional Indian attire, I staffed the reception desk, gave tours, developed literature, assisted with religious services, and handled event photography. Known exclusively by my spiritual name, my prior life was virtually erased.

BROKEN

On a sunny Monday morning in March 2010, a storm formed that would change everything. A scandal began unfolding about the Swami and the organization's true character. During those early days, much secrecy and deception prevailed. Hush-hush meetings occurred among senior administrators, with guarded conversations in Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu sporadically interspersed with English. Real information was scarce. The temple was largely closed to public events.

Uncomfortable with the persistent secrecy—echoing painful memories from my childhood—I finally challenged the head administrator privately, demanding to know what was really happening. We had worked closely together on projects over the years, and he had mentored

me. Our relationship was built on friendship and trust. As the Swami's main U.S. representative, he could be relied upon to know about activities both in America and India.

During this conversation, he told me about the "vicious and cruel" coverup being conducted by the Swami and his top advisors. I was shattered. The whole terrible, ugly reality lay before me in plain view. From that moment, I knew with certainty I could no longer serve the Swami and his organization. Like a house built on sand, the foundations collapsed suddenly and completely. The spiritual leader I had entrusted my faith and future to was exposed as a fraud. In the wake of this realization, I faced a terrifyingly uncertain future. My temple life had left me isolated from the outside world, with few resources and no clear path forward.

In the following days, I struggled to pray, realizing my belief in God had become unraveled. I sent an open letter of resignation to the organization and, with great trepidation, left for Northern California where former devotees resided. Of the available choices, I reasoned San Francisco would provide a solid place to rebuild, since I had worked there years before and was familiar with the city and its services.

Soon after arriving in the Bay Area, I applied for placement at a homeless shelter, which gave me access to San Francisco services, including healthcare. By God's grace, I also found work at a deli. I stayed at the women's shelter for a month until I was fortunately able to locate a room to rent, where I remained for the rest of my time in San Francisco.

During my San Francisco years, I faced many challenges. Deep loneliness and isolation replaced the laughter, affection, and community of shared meals and work, security and belonging. Now I was alone—profoundly lonely. I had to adjust to new routines and responsibilities, wearing Western clothes and introducing myself as "Rhonda" again. Years of immersion in yoga and meditation practices left me disoriented in this strange new world. Where I had once chanted guru puja, recited mantras on rudraksha beads, prepared temple offerings, and handled various responsibilities, I was now working at a deli, asking "Would you like cream cheese on your bagel?" and counting back change as I adapted to the strangeness of this "outside world."

I lived in San Francisco for three years, maintaining contact with former devotees in Texas. In 2013, I accepted a job offer in Austin and moved across the country without ever having visited the state. My friends in Austin gave glowing reports of the booming city and hearty encouragement to move—and so I did.

BORN AGAIN

In spring 2015, beginning my second year in Texas, I unexpectedly found a place to rent on a ranch—quiet and peaceful, providing both time and space for reflection. After moving into

the cabin, I felt I should "get a Bible for the house," even though I hadn't owned one in many years.

I read through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. One verse particularly stood out: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). This passage grabbed hold of me. I slowly pondered each word. Who is this Jesus who gives rest, and what is His yoke? What does this mean?

I attended various local churches during fall 2015. In April 2016, while attending a charismatic church, I prayed the "sinner's prayer" at an altar call. This prayer began a season of sincere prayer and repentance. I recognized I could not fully perceive Jesus as the only Son of God and Lord. Holy—yes. Miracles—yes. Master Teacher—yes. Having pursued many supernatural experiences, I still clung to notions about a "New Age" Jesus. Through many prayers, I pleaded with Him to show me and help me understand who He truly was.

The following month, on Pentecost Sunday, the pastor preached about an Indian man haunted by foreboding caused by a troublesome spirit from Hinduism. This spirit left him when he converted to Christianity and received Jesus as Lord and Savior. The pastor's words spoke deeply to my soul, as if the sermon was addressed directly to me. I knew that sense of foreboding and doom well—I had awakened with feelings of foreboding and impending doom nearly every morning while living in San Francisco and much of the time after moving to Texas. While the sermon continued, I prayed silently that Lord Jesus would heal me from that terrible foreboding.

Immediately, the complete love, mercy, and compassion of Jesus drew me near, showing me He knew everything about me—there was nothing from any of my experiences He did not know. He was Lord and God. There was no other. This experience was profound and all-encompassing. Along with abounding love, mercy, and compassion, I clearly recognized the wrath and judgment I had been saved from because of Jesus—judgment He held in His hand. I knew the depth of my sin, blasphemy, and total reliance on Christ alone for forgiveness and redemption. It was an astonishing experience.

With humility, I became painfully aware of the many mistaken beliefs and naïve ideas I had held and the stony cliff of destruction I had traveled. In that moment of truth, Jesus made it known that I was known to Him. Even in the darkest hours, even when I felt hidden from God, I saw that He had always been watching over me.

BELIEVER

Upon my conversion, I began reading the Bible with fervor and zeal. I realized I was now a Bible-believing Christian but had little knowledge about historic Christian faith or denominational differences. Like a Berean, I searched the Scriptures to learn and conducted what I now know is "testing of the spirits" (1 John 4:1). This served to strengthen and deepen my faith.

I also realized the Bible had taken on new depth and clarity. I recognized the whole Bible—both Old and New Testaments—was mine. While I had previously perceived the God of the Old Testament as unapproachable, I now opened the Old Testament and found stories of the loving shepherd in Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Zechariah, and the Psalms. I read numerous dire warnings about idol worship and sorcery in Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Hosea, Leviticus, Daniel, and Revelation.

All "New Age" books were removed from the house, and I renounced all "New Age" beliefs. I forsook yoga, mantras, and all Eastern meditation, recognizing the demonic and deceptive character behind these practices.

By God's grace and mercy, I took refuge in Scripture. I continued reading and studying while removing any remaining New Age remnants from my house and mind. As a born-again believer, I studied the Bible, joined Facebook groups, and found sermons on YouTube, becoming acquainted with biblical Christianity and learning about creeds and confessions. This became an important time of learning about Jesus and establishing—and re-establishing—my relationship with Him.

Discovery of the "Prince of Preachers" Charles Spurgeon and his commitment to Puritan teachings opened new understanding about Scripture and the riches of Christian faith. I enrolled in graduate programs at Liberty University and became a member of a large local church where I assisted with jail ministry.

As I matured in faith, I began seeking a Reformed church upholding traditional Christian faith tenets without compromise. I searched online for "1689 Baptist Confession of Faith" along with "New Braunfels" and was surprised to find a listing for a nearby confessional Presbyterian church. I attended my first service at this small church plant in March 2018. That September, I became a communicant member, affirming the Westminster Confession of Faith tenets and becoming an active congregation participant.

I continued studies at Liberty University, earning a Master of Arts in Strategic Communication in Spring, 2018. Seeking to deepen my faith and receive formal theological training, I continued and earned a Master of Religious Education (MRE) in Spring, 2022.

CONCLUSION

Many events have not been included, and many topics remain to be explored that, for now, have been set aside for further writing. In June 2025, slight revisions were made to the original testimony written in 2018. This year marks fifteen years since I left Southern California and almost ten years since I was brought to saving faith in Christ.

Looking back over these events, I recognize with overwhelming gratitude how many miracles, large and small, have occurred to bring me through darkness and adversities, finally bringing me, through grace alone, to saving faith in Christ—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It is my prayer that readers of this account may be reminded that Jesus saves sinners. By turning to Jesus, mercy and forgiveness can be received—regardless of circumstances. I currently reside in Central Texas and continue as a faithful member of Christ's church.

“But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deut. 4:29, ESV)

Soli Deo gloria!

Rhonda Rose

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