



# MY STORY

LIVING THE UNTANGLED LIFE



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# INTRODUCTION TO LIFE UNTANGLED

**D**id you know God cares about all the big stuff and the little stuff in your life, because He cares about YOU? He knows your struggles. Your hurts. Your wounds.

He wants to show you the source of your mess (because we ALL have mess). And then, He wants you to trust Him to lead you to a place of healing and hope. He is eager to help you learn to depend on Him for ALL things!

Welcome to Life Untangled, where God's love meets our chaos!

We know that most people, even Christians, can feel bogged down and tangled up with the circumstances of life. The writer of Hebrews talks about how sin and emotional wounds have tangled us up so much that we're not able to run this race we call life:

*“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).*

That first verse says to lay aside, or let go. You might be thinking, **“I tried to let go, and I can't!”**

**LETTING GO  
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Letting go happens when we more fully understand the amazing gifts God gave us in Jesus, and the wonderful changes He made in us when we got saved.

In this new e-book series, you will see how we were not only designed to become His children through salvation, but to depend on Him as our actual source of life. We will discover our true selves, and we will see how doing life God's way is the best way!

No matter where you are, He loves you, mess and all, and He's on your side.

# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM THIS E-BOOK?

My name is Pam, and God has been untangling my life for many years now. In this e-book, the sixth in our “Life Untangled” series, I will share my personal journey of discovering God’s destiny for my life.

One night about 6 years ago, one of the students in my discipleship class asked, “Pam, how did we get to be someone who God chose to show us these life-changing truths about our identity in Christ?”

I replied, “I do not know. But I am eternally grateful that He has revealed to me, and enabled me to really believe what He says about me. I can live my life differently because of what happened on the cross – to Him and to me! I know I will never, never, go back to the way I used to think about God, myself, and what the Christian life is all about. I will not go back to my old way of living.”

This is the story of my destiny.

# HOW DID I GET THIS LIFE?

My life looked good on the outside. But in reality it was a tangled up mess.

I think for the most part I have had the outward image of an *untangled* person. I was a good little girl and even a good teenager. I had a strong fear of my parents, and I always tried to do the right thing – the kind thing, the pleasing thing. I dressed conservatively (well, except for that short season of mini-skirts and go-go boots). I went to church every time the doors opened and was active in the community there. I did what I thought was expected of me, as a member of my family and as a Christian.

I got married at a young age and jumped in trying to be the best wife I could be. I saw to the needs of my husband and didn't make waves. Meals were cooked, laundry was done, the house was clean, and the bills were paid. I was a stay at home mom and went to Bible study once a week in addition to the regular church stuff. I was Ms. Responsible.

## **On the outside, it looked like I had it all together.**

I'm not exactly sure when I bought into the lie that I was not smart enough, good enough, or pretty enough. Or what made me believe that if I worked hard enough that people would like me, or need me. Neither am I clear on why I believed that I was unlovable or unimportant. I just knew I had to help people, be responsible, do the right thing, and keep the peace in order to be okay.

Like every other family in the world, mine was not perfect – it was “normal.”

Yes, my life looked smooth.

But inside I was miserable.

My husband once told me that I was a different person when I went to my parent's house. Of course, I vehemently denied such an accusation, as I looked through my box of masks to wear!

Don't you just hate it when someone else is right about you? Looking back I see that I always carried my masks around with me – so I could be whatever others wanted me to be. All so that I would feel “okay.”

When my marriage fell apart, I finally had to look at myself in the mirror – stripped of all my masks. I did not like what I saw.

Oh, I was still responsible and did all the “right” things, I was just dead on the inside.

Somewhere along the way, I lost myself.

My husband and I went to a counselor a few times, but he wasn't getting anything from it, so I went alone after we separated. One of the most powerful questions the counselor asked me was, “what is your favorite color?” I fell apart. I didn't have a clue! I knew everyone else's favorite color and food, but I didn't know mine.

I did not know me.

**I had become what I thought people (and God) wanted me to be. How did I get here?**

Let's go back to the beginning...

Third born in a Christian family, I knew what was expected of me. Doing what I was told meant no one would yell at me or laugh at me. Being compliant kept me from getting in trouble like my older brothers. If I helped people, they would like me. If I was responsible, I would be pleasing. This is how my family rolled and this is what I thought God wanted me to do.

I always tried to do the *right* thing.

When I became a Christian I knew that my sins were forgiven, but the message I got loud and clear was, “make sure you don’t sin anymore!” I knew I was going to heaven when I died. But when I did sin, I was ashamed because I was a Christian now and I should not sin.

I felt like a horrible person. Christians were supposed to always be good and want to read their Bible, right?

Well, that is how I lived my life for a long time. Inside I looked down on “Christians” who weren’t good – or at least as good as me. I became righteous in my own eyes...self-righteous. I believed that all of my goodness came from my behavior. Of course, God was letting me go to heaven so I thought this was a good deal. I knew I could not earn my salvation nor could I lose my salvation, but I still had to be obedient and good to not feel bad.

Being this self-righteous was exhausting and disappointing. I often wondered where the abundant life was that I read about in John 10. I knew I was not experiencing it.

After 17 years of marriage my husband wanted a divorce, and my world fell apart. He thought I did not love him. I thought to myself, *I have built my whole world around you. What do you mean I don’t love you?* As soon as that thought came to a close, I crumbled in sorrow. Even I knew that centering your life around another person is not

what God intended, and doomed to fail.

My worst nightmare was happening. Good Christians don't get divorced. What had I done wrong? I was devastated. I was embarrassed and ashamed. This could not be happening. I did not believe in divorce!

### **All my efforts at life crashed and burned.**

My constant prayer was, *God, what is wrong with me. I can't do anything right.* I had been trying so hard for so many years that I had stuffed down my feelings and beliefs of inferiority, but there was no denying them now. They were out there for the world to see: I am ugly. I am stupid. No one could ever love me. I am weird. I don't belong, and on and on the list went.

### **But God...**

I had been studying the Bible, reading devotions and other Christian books for a long time. Of course, I was trying to live out that knowledge within my own understanding. One day I realized that I did not understand John 15:5: "...*apart from Me you can do nothing.*" I did not want to argue with God, but I did not get it. I believed that I could get up every morning, get dressed, drive my car, go to work, raise my boys – without God. Oh, I needed Him for the hard stuff, but the daily things? I could do those things, right?

I picked up my Bible and I flipped from book to book thinking of all the words and stories I believed about God – until I got to John 15:5. I pleaded with God to show me where I was wrong.

Then He showed me this in 1 Corinthians 4:7: "...*what do you have that you were not given?*"



What?

Nothing.

It brought me to my knees.

**I have nothing apart from what God has given me...not one thing.**

He showed me that I need Him for my very breath.

At first I felt so ashamed. How could I be so arrogant?

How could I not see that everything is from Him?

How could I not see that He gave me everything I need for the living of *this* life – not just the afterlife?

How could I not see it was because He loves me so much?

When I started seeing His amazing love for me, I fell to my knees again. I lay down on the floor and I asked God to let all of the bad things about me just fall through the floor. I asked Him to just cover me and bring into my heart and mind Himself, and just take over my thinking. I knew I was already His child, I just didn't understand what that meant.

**I always believed I had a ticket to heaven, but I did not really know that I could experience His presence now.**

But now I know. ***I know.***

He did not mess up when He made me.

He created me to be in relationship with Him and to need Him.

I was born separated from Him with the need to be loved, accepted, valued, and to be secure.

I can try with everything I have to get those needs met from others and my own behavior, but I will surely fall short.

God does not hold expectations over my head nor is He disappointed in me.

He loves me just the way I am – after all He made me the way I am.

It grieves His heart when I settle for my own wisdom and go against His, but it is because He loves me and wants the very best for me.

He gave His life on the cross and took my old man with Him so that we could both be resurrected into a new life.

Christ lives *in* me and I live in Him.

I have been reborn *into* His family. I have a new spiritual DNA.

I have been set free from sin and no longer have to sin in order to get my needs met.

I do not have to have answers for everyone or everything.

I can depend on God to show me what I need to know and what I need to say and where I need to go.

## **I am forgiven...a new creation...I trust God.**

I want to talk about those last three things. Those three truths coincide with three new realities for me.

### **First, I am forgiven.**

As a child I knew *my sins* were forgiven, but now I know that I am forgiven. To me there is a big difference. Having something I owe paid for and forgotten is great, but I still felt like a rotten person. Sunday after Sunday the preacher still called me a sinner. I never really understood that. I was going to heaven when I died. I knew I sinned, but I also knew there had to be something in me that was “okay” or I could not go to heaven.

One day I realized that ALL my sins were forgiven – even the ones I had not yet committed. God no longer had a relationship with me based on my sins or being a sinner. His relationship with me had nothing to do with sin! This is because on the cross over 2000 years ago, Jesus paid the penalty for all sin for all time for everyone – including me!

Please HEAR this. Not everyone will receive that gift, but the work, death, and penalty needed to take away the “sin of the world” has been done. “It is finished,” said Jesus. What great news!!! Yes, there are consequences to my sin and that is not pleasant, BUT I am not a bad, shameful, rotten person because I sin. God still loves me. I am still His child. He is with me in the consequences. He is not shaking His head in disappointment. He is holding my hand through the consequences. That is great news and it changed my life. I no longer walk around with guilt hanging all over me when I don’t have a quiet time or don’t do the “right” thing.

## **Second, I am a new creation.**

This was another powerful realization. I finally understood what it meant. It means that my old beliefs: *I am a bad person, something is wrong with me, I can't measure up, I have no value apart from what I can do for others* are NOT true! It means that the old man that was sinful, tainted, not good or not smart enough died. I am a new person— although residing in my same body and personality— that has a new heart, spirit, and mind! I am new on the inside with a life source that is God. All of the character, wisdom, truth, love, peace, joy, patience, and goodness of God are mine. Mine – for the receiving and trusting in!

All of the goodness of God is at my disposal to live through my personality and my body. I no longer have to rely on what I know or what I do! I do not have to have answers because God has them. I do not have to make sure my kids are okay because that is God's job. I no longer have to figure things out because that is God's job – which is great because I am so very limited in my understanding!

I do not have a crystal ball. God knows the future. I do not have all the facts, but God does! I can ask Him and He will show me what I need to know. Who knew?

## **I can trust God.**

This was the third key realization. He is so much more trustworthy than I am. This trust thing is really about control. By the way, the opposite of trust is control. Just sayin'...

All of us try to control. **When we realize that control is an illusion, we can become hopeless or hopeful.** Of course it is our desire and God's desire for us to be hopeful. We talk about God's sovereignty and we "know" He is sovereign, but we still try to snatch it away from Him. Yes, we do have free will and sometimes

we think we have chosen something that brings us our happiness and well-being. As you recall, that is how my story started. I tried to control how others would respond to me by helping and being a responsible people-pleaser.

We attempt to control because we try to orchestrate things so that we will feel good about ourselves and avoid pain. We want and need to feel loved, accepted, valuable and secure; and we will do whatever it takes to *feel* that way. I think many of us are clueless in regards to our own attempts to control. We usually think of a controller as one who is a bully, aggressive, or minimally “helping.”

We may not realize that our attempt to control can be passive or aggressive. Control is everything we try to do to get others or our circumstances aligned so that we will be okay.

We may be successful at controlling for a season, but it is not sustainable. As our concept of God and our concept of self becomes healthier (in line with truth), trust becomes easier and much less stressful than our attempt to control.

For many years I thought the Christian life was “knowing” what Jesus said to do and then to just do it. So, I read my Bible, I participated in Bible study, learned the Greek and Hebrew words and definitions and tried to do what the Bible told me to do. I did a pretty good job and learned a lot! I was still miserable and did not have the intimacy with God that I so longed for.

I didn’t understand the trust God thing or how to rely on the Holy Spirit. I didn’t understand what “take it to the cross” meant. I did not know how to not depend on my own strength or die to self. What did it mean to “take up my cross and follow Jesus?” How do you really rest and still be productive? And of course my favorite: *“apart from Me you can do nothing.”*

I *knew* God loved me. I did not know ***I am lovable.***

I *knew* I was accepted at the point of salvation. I did not know ***I am acceptable.***

I *knew* God thought a lot of me since He died for me. I did not know ***I am valuable.***

I *knew* I would go to heaven when I died. I did not know ***I am secure now.***

I believe that we would like to think that after becoming a child of God that our thought life and behavior would change in a flash, but that is not the case.

I imagine that my story is similar in some ways to your story. Of course our details are different, but feeling lost, miserable, insecure and clueless about HOW to change can feel overwhelming.

Most people, at least Christians, know that we are *supposed* to be able to experience God and rely on Him for salvation, peace, joy and wisdom. We may not know that we can also depend on Him (instead of other people and circumstances) to have a sense of adequacy, safety, lovability, acceptance – or just being comfortable in our own skin! He can handle it all! Of course, He puts people in our lives to encourage and support us as well, but that's the whipped cream on top!

# SO PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, “HOW” DO WE GET TO THIS DESTINY?

Defining the problem is essential. As I said in my story, realizing that we need God is first and foremost. Many of us know about the solution: God is the answer for everything. **But when you do not realize the problem it is hard to lean into the solution.**

First, we ask God to show us our need for Him. Years ago, I had a small kitchen fire (I'll never cook tater tots again). I called in a few professionals to fix everything. When the painter came and painted my kitchen I was impressed. I had recently painted my dining room and it looked awful compared to the kitchen. I asked the painter if he could repaint my dining room and do a better job. He very politely replied, “Yes ma'am, I believe I can.” You see, I thought I had done a pretty good job painting, but when I looked at the job done by the professional, I realized my lack. Oh there was paint on the walls (with bonus paint on the ceiling and the trim) but it wasn't done well.

I don't know about you, but I want to have the best life I can. I need THE professional that is in me to guide me and work through me. Yes, I want this life for me, but there's more to it. If I am living my best life, the people around me will be impacted because the real me fully alive in Christ is loving, kind, a good friend, a supportive parent, a forgiver, and an acceptor of others. The real me fully alive in Christ living out my Ephesians 2:10 purpose is compassionate, joyful, and manifesting the character of God as I live my life. Saint

Irenaeus has been credited with this saying: **The glory of God is man fully alive.**

We were created for God's glory. The writer of Hebrews said,

*“And He Jesus is the radiance of His God’s glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”  
(Hebrews 1:3).*

Only Jesus can fully represent the character of God, but Jesus resides in us, His children, and it is possible for Jesus in us to manifest the glory of God as we live our best life in dependence on Him! When we walk according to the spirit we will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

*“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law... If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another”  
(Galatians 5:16-25).*

When God shows us our false beliefs and how we cope to get our needs met and avoid pain, we are getting in touch with THE problem. God wants us to see that striving in the flesh and coping by using our inadequate “skills” we will gain nothing of value.

*“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (John 6:63).*



**As a child of God, our destiny is to live in harmony with who we are as we depend on God for every aspect of our life.** We need to know we are lovable, acceptable, have worth, and are secure. At the cross, our old man who wasn't acceptable or secure died and then was born again, acceptable and a member of the family of God. Just for the record, we have always, since before the foundation of the world, been lovable and valuable (Psalm 139:13-16).

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).*

# OKAY...MORE “HOW-TOS”

Our life journey will be messy, but God wants to lavish His love on us as He untangles our thoughts and feelings so we can experience His love, truth, power, peace, direction, acceptance, value, freedom, and security in the middle of our problems.

God does not waste any of our struggles. Our struggles are the way God gets rid of the harmful things in us! David said:

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way” (Psalm 139:23,24).*

God allows our circumstances to surface up our false beliefs of superior thinking or inferior thinking and then show us how to rely on Him instead of our own inadequate way. He wants the lies to surface so they can be replaced with truth.

He wants to use our struggles for our good:

*“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (Genesis 50:20).*

*“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).*

Of course, we think we could come up with an idea better than God's or our idea of good may be different from God's. But when we think like that we have forgotten the problem: apart from God we can't do anything of value.

**Our destiny is a trust adventure with Jesus - our Redeemer, Shepherd, and Friend.** It is not being a lone wolf or a wolf in a pack – with everyone locked into the same mentality.

In our new destiny we always ask God to show us our problem and by faith we trust that God is who He says He is and that I am who He says I am. When trouble comes, we take the thoughts captive and decide if we want to live by the flesh or receive wisdom and guidance from the Spirit in us. We are in our Garden of Eden with a choice before us.

One more thing: flesh and spirit do not play well together. God absolutely loves us and is with us when we choose our fleshly coping mechanisms. He will also allow our free will to take over. Flesh and Spirit are enemies, but God is not our enemy and He is not mad at us. He will stay with us during our flesh experience and open His arms to guide us in His way as soon as we recognize our problem and trust Him with His way – knowing He is good and for us.

### **The Untangled Experience comes only from God**

Here are some things I've learned that really draw me into experiencing intimacy with God. Maybe it will help you as well.

Ask God to show you how you react when trouble or pain is approaching. This helps us see the problem.

- Do you start feeling anxious or scared?
- Do you want to avoid people and situations?
- Do you want to lash out?
- Do you go into I've-got-to-figure-out-why-this-happened-and-how-I-can-fix-it mode?
- Do you feel like a victim?
- Do you reach out for things and ways to numb your pain?
- Do you shove down the thoughts and get busy with something?

- As soon as you recognize these warning signs, ask God to show you what you are feeling and thinking. When we realize that we are tangled up, confused, angry or hurt, we can stop, acknowledge that God is with us and for us and wants to guide us to peace, rest, freedom and okay.

- Examples of feelings: scared, abandoned, pressure, anger, hurt, unloved, unacceptable, worthless, lost, guilty, shame.

- Examples of beliefs: I am alone. I am not important. I am not good, pretty, strong, smart, etc. enough. I am stupid. I should be able to handle this.

Ask God to show you truth.

- I am forgiven

- I am a new creation

- I am a child of God - not a child of wrath

- I am lovable, acceptable, secure and I have worth.

- God is for me and wants good things for me.

- God is my adequacy, my protector, my defender

Remember

- Bad things happen. Hurt people hurt people. Things are not always going to go our way. We will have relationship issues. We will experience poor health and loss. Life will disappoint us and things will not always turn out like we want them.

- We still live in a fallen world and pain and suffering will take place

- God does not promise us pain-free life, but He does promise us peace in the middle of our pain (John 14:26-27; 16:13, 33).

- He does not promise we will have everything we think we need WHEN we think we need it, but He does promise that He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 1:3) and rest in our soul (Matthew 11:28-30)

**God may not untangle our circumstances, but He does untangle our thoughts so that our feelings and choices**

**come in line with the truth that sets us free.** We can begin to act like true children of God, because that's who we are. So God has called us in our destiny to go on this journey and this journey involves obstacles. But those obstacles are always opportunities. It's a chance for healing and growth within us. It is the power of God within us. **When we begin to embrace the reality of what God says, the reality of who we are – crucified, buried, raised again, righteous and holy– obstacles become opportunities for us to grow and experience God on an emotional level.**

Friends, we have this amazing opportunity to grow into the person we were destined to be and that we already are on the inside. **You are destined to live a resurrected life – your best life. You were destined to live as children of The Most High.** What or Who will you trust?

Living In Him,  
Pam