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JEN BREITENWISCHER

Before Alpha, I went to church on and off throughout my life. I didn't know really why except that I 'should' to try to be right with God. I also didn't know how, based on poor modeling and a very broken past, to have healthy relationships. This affected our marriage, as I had so much pain harbored in my heart, with no real place to process it, so the sadness, loneliness, anger, frustration and huge anxiety landed on my amazing and patient husband, Fred. So poor Fred was where I went to fill my void that was meant for God alone....I learned a few years later...and humans can and will never be able to measure up...which meant more disappointment and strife.

I was searching for peace, and a way to be a better and less stressed wife and mom. After moving back to St. Louis, God put people in my path to intrigue me to Him through what I was hearing in the midwest as 'bible study' (brand new term for me!) Then, I was invited to MOMs (by Heidi George), and when she mentioned that one of the things we would do there (she had some tough convincing with me not willing to put our second child in childcare) was bible study once a month, I was sold! Soon after attending and loving what I was learning in the book of James with other moms, one very excited Bonhomme member (Chrissy Morgan) got up at a MOMs meeting and spoke about this awesome Alpha program and how it "changed her life!" I had been wooed by God to a deeper understanding of Him through attending the monthly James bible study and witnessed first hand the difference of the people who went to Bonhomme, as opposed to the church we were attending that felt like we were 'checking the box'. We had no clear understanding of our faith, why we were even going to church, if we would ever 'earn our way' to heaven, and why people opened the decorative book we also had in our home called the Bible.

Based on the excitement generated when Alpha was discussed that day in our MOMs meeting, I knew I had to check this out. It is there, at Bill Reddy's Alpha table, and through lots of love from all the folks that serve through Alpha, including Cindy Lewin (who gave me, a stranger, my first study bible, which I devoured late into each night thereafter), Paul Douthit, and his warm and genuine smile and hugs, and Bill, who was willing to be so transparent, loving and accepting of me and all my questions, that I learned that God actually loves me (I still hear Nicky Gumbel's voice in my head saying that!) I learned about Jesus' ultimate sacrifice that was even for me, and I could right now: accept Him, be forgiven, and stop trying to "earn" heaven (it cannot happen—He did it!) And finally, and this ROCKED my world, I learned about the Holy Spirit! I was undone... absolutely undone and in love with Jesus! I would wake Fred up with all I was learning in the Gospel of John. I was changed from the inside by the love of the Lord, and it showed on the outside as Fred starting noticing and our marriage was being absolutely transformed.

After enrolling Noelle in Bonhomme's preschool, attending various classes (as Alpha left me wanting MORE and I indulged in all Bonhomme was ever so willing to offer me) Fred wanted 'in'. We started attending Bonhomme soon after Fred took the Alpha course, the session after mine, which we went to together. With Don as our Sunday School teacher (Sunday School for adults—sign us up!) and as a pastor, and Tom (a former Catholic, which helped our hearts in an awkward transition), we were not only believing in and learning about Jesus, we were being taught and equipped by the Holy Spirit and Bonhomme to follow Him! The rest is history!

I could go on and on! Couldn't we all though? God is so amazing and as I look back and reminisce...I am overwhelmed at the miracles He worked and people He used to reach just two people....that we actually matter to Him! ABBA, FATHER!

