



Salvation Stories

SALVATION IS A "BEFORE AND AFTER" EVENT!

My early life

Hi, I am Ismayil. I was born in a Muslim family, as the second child of my parents. Our family is a working-class family, and my parents used to work hard to meet our daily needs. I have four brothers, one elder brother and two younger brothers. Of course, our life was not that much of an easy one. There was family discordance. When I completed my Lower Primary School studies, I had to move to an orphanage because of the problems between my parents. Sending my elder brother and me to the orphanage, my father abandoned my mother and my two younger brothers. Now, when I look back to those days, I do remember they were the days of toils and tears for us, our mother and the children.

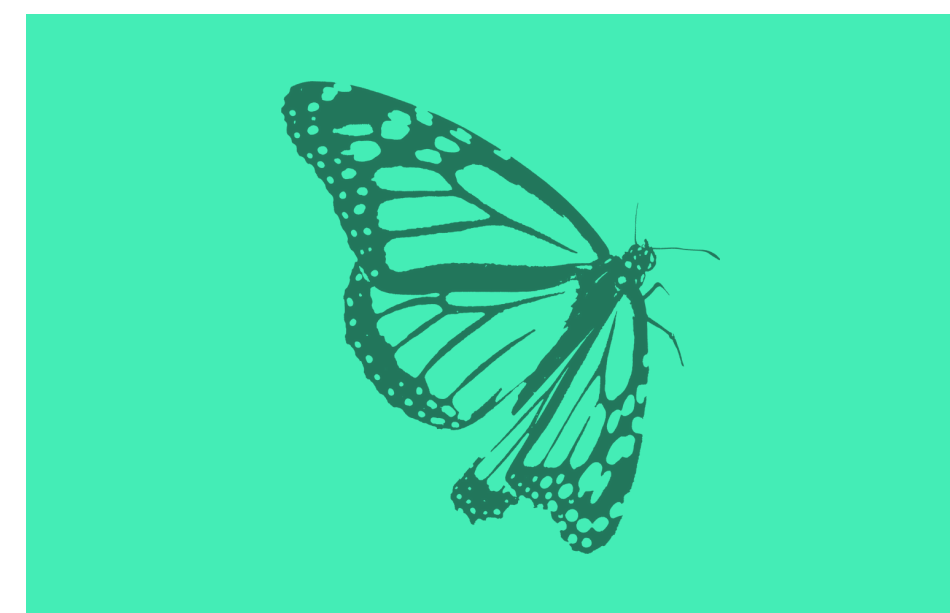
The Muslim Orphanage where I continued my studies is one of the biggest charitable institutions in Kerala. While I was studying there, there were more than six hundred orphaned and destitute children. I am so grateful to the Lord for giving me such a good opportunity to study there.

My short stay (six years) at the orphanage was a turning point in my life. I grew up as an irritated child yearning for care and love from others. Wherever I got a simple touch of love or smile, I used to go after it, which often led me into great trouble. The disciplined life in the orphanage molded my life. I was a dear one to my teachers and, at the same time, an eye-peck for my seniors and friends. Though life there was very strict, what I felt in my life later is that in one way, I became a disciplined man, but on the other hand, I grew up as one who did not know the outer world.

The atmosphere of the family was strange to me. So, I was afraid to talk with anyone thinking that the words I use may offend them. This problem persists in me. Even now, when I am supposed to make important decisions, my mind wavers. This uncertainty was the result of my orphanage life.

After six years in the orphanage, I stepped out not knowing what my future would be. I was an average student. I passed the SSLC (Class 10) by scoring a third class mark. I sought admission for a pre-degree in a private college in Kerala. I had to stay with my mother's elder sister. For the next two years, I stayed with them. There I met some good Christian friends. One of my best friends was Roy, a devout Christian boy. The only Christian community I was accustomed to was the Roman

Salvation



Catholics because my neighbors were Roman Catholics. But my friend Roy was a different one. Once he took me to his home and I stayed there for one night.

My first encounter with the Christian faith...

In the evening they were having their family prayer. Something made me kneel to pray with them. Roy's father shared the gospel with me, which I could not understand. But the tearful prayer of his father touched my heart so deeply. He was saying my name and crying. Why does a stranger whom I never knew before cry for me? Nobody had cried for me before... This love touched my heart. Yes, those tears were worthwhile, three years later I was born again... It helped me to understand that our prayers never go in vain.

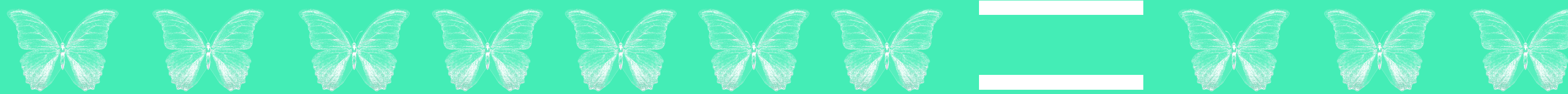
My Saviour in my heart

After pre-degree, I joined a Co-Operative College. It was my earnest desire to learn English. So, I chose English literature. I had many friends in college.

Seeing my enthusiasm to learn English, one of my seniors, Sister Blessy, gave me an English "New Testament" which I began to read. Even though I could understand nothing, I kept on reading.

Once, my classmate Lincy took me and my friend to a special prayer group where I met with an Uncle and aunt who were taking personality development classes for college students. After their class, I remained there to talk with them. When I began to talk with them, I felt so relieved. They prayed for me. The tears again... They were crying for me. After the prayer, she began to prophesy everything that happened in my life. I was astonished. Later, I learned that they were the staff workers of a youth ministry. I thank my Jesus for them. (They are Jacob Kuruvilla and Annamma Jacob.) I thank them for the patience they had with me. I used to visit them so often. I used to spend nights with them. It was difficult for them to sustain me because I had given them much trouble in many ways. Still, they were so patient with me. I introduced them to my friends and many of my friends came there. Many of them are the children of God now! Praise the Lord. Even before I accepted Jesus as my personal Saviour, I could lead many for the Lord!

Many of my friends warned me that they were trying to convert me to Christianity. With this in mind, I expected them to talk with me about Jesus. Nothing happened for a few months. At last, I asked them about Jesus. They were waiting for that question. They had been praying for me since they met me. They tried to teach me the difference between Isa in the Quran and Jesus in the Bible. It was really difficult for me to accept what they told me. It was against what I have been taught in Madrasa, for seven years. I began to read the English translation of the Quran. While studying in Madrasa in the orphanage, I do remember the usthad (Muslim religious teacher) teaching me that reading the translation of the Quran is not permitted. But the situation compelled me to read the translation of the Quran. I approached one of the ustads of our Mosque, who had a good knowledge of the Quran, he gave me the Quran translation, which I began to read.



Those days were so difficult for me. Because deep in my heart I was not satisfied with my life because I was leading a miserable life. At the outset, I appeared to be a nice guy. But I knew I was heading to eternal doom.



Reading the translation of the Quran I used to shout at them (the uncle and aunt) and argue with them with full of my strength. While I yelled at them they remained so calm.

They took us to participate in some youth camps. I was in constant fear of whether I would be converted to Christianity. I do remember one night I had a vision which I rejected saying I don't want to see. How deeply I regret now that I could have seen that vision. After this camp, I attended many more camps with them.

After a few months, some of my close friends accepted Jesus as their Savior. Still, I was not ready to give in. Once my brother came to their house, and Aunty later told me that in a meeting he dedicated himself to the Lord in that meeting. But now he is not in the faith. Then my friends wanted to take water baptism. I do remember going with them to the river to see what was going to happen. They were baptized. In the Holy Communion that was followed, everyone participated except me. I noticed the joy on their faces. I stood alone in the corner of the room. Tears welled up in my eyes. There was a knot in my throat. The pastor was saying... "This is your last chance. Give your heart to Jesus." Those words reverberated in my ears. Without saying a word, I stepped out of the house.

On my way back home, I was deeply distressed. I began to ask Allah. What is the truth? They say that Jesus is the only way to heaven and He is God. Is Jesus the real God? Speak to my heart. It was nearly 5.45 pm. The bus was packed with people. I was sitting on a seat with a bowed head and asked those questions again and again. Tears flowed through my cheek. Suddenly I had an impulse to read the Bible. I opened the Bible and read the Gospel of John. The twelfth verse began to speak to my

heart. **"Yet to all who received him, (Jesus) to those who believed in his name, (Jesus' name) he gave the right to become children of God"**. I asked God can I also become Your child? I simply told him to make me His child too. It was 9th February 2000. I was unaware of what I was doing. But He did come into my heart. **I became a child of God.**

The following Sunday I went to a church and testified about what the Lord has done in my life. The pastor gave a salvation message and I openly accepted Jesus as the Lord who died for my sins and rose again on the third day and He lives. I kept everything secret for a few days. After a few weeks, I was obedient to the Word and was water-baptism.

Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death...



Though I was baptized in secret, the rumour that I embraced Christianity reached my home. My elder brother did not ask me anything about my faith at first. But when the news of my baptism reached his ears he was infuriated. Just after I accepted Jesus as my savior I tried to keep away from all the Muslim rituals. The mosque was near to my home. So, at the time of Namaz I used to go to the Mosque whenever I was at home. I tried to trick my mother by making lame excuses. I came from college very late. When all else slept I would stealthily enter home. Mother used to wait for me. She asked questions about my faith. To some extent, she believed my words.

One day I reached home as usual very late. Nothing unusual happened. The very next morning as I was getting ready to go to College, several people gathered in front of my house. My aunties were there. The committee members of the mosque were there. All of them loved me once.

But what they wanted was to question me about my faith. My mother stepped out and asked me "Have you become a Christian?" Seeing the crowd, I could not say no. Because the saying of my Lord **"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters- yes even his own life- he cannot be my disciple"** Luke 14: 26 made me say that I do. A sudden thrash on my back made me numb with pain. It was one of my aunties who hit me with a piece of log. But the crowd stopped them from beating me.

Another aunty had a knife in her hand and all of them were shouting at me angrily. But the people gathered told me to go out. How great our God is! He made the people who came to judge me themselves free me from further persecution. They dispersed. But before dispersing the leader told my mother "He is a citizen of India. He has the right to believe in what he likes. But now he is an infidel. He has become a shame for our community. You have to make him recite the Shahada (Islamic faith creed) and reconvert him to Islam".

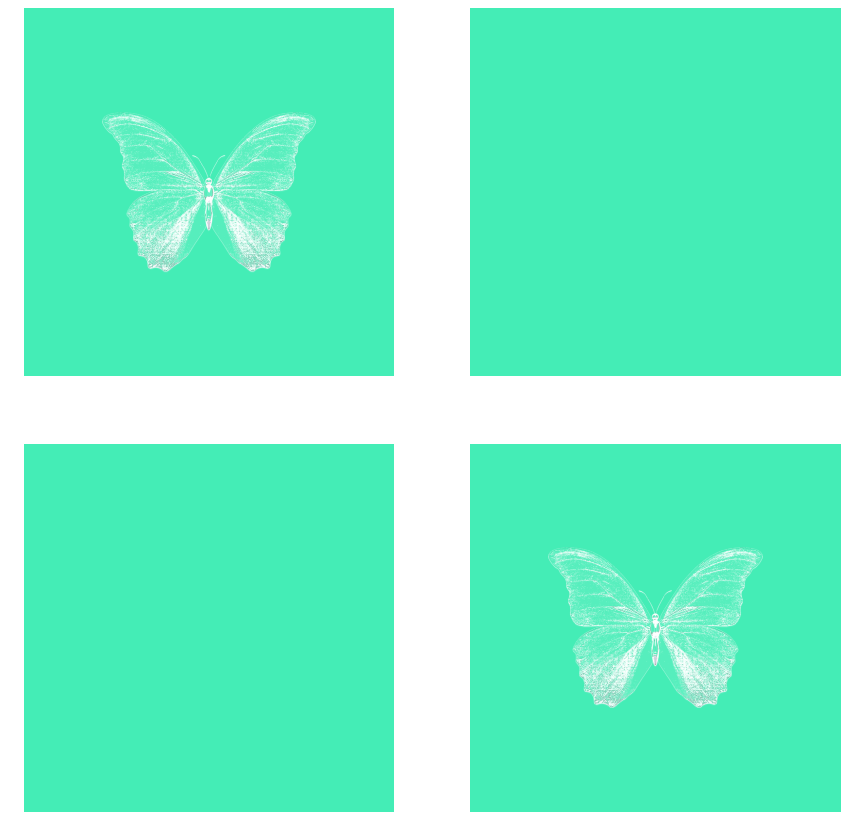
My mother took me in and told me to pack everything and she gave me a loaf of bread and told me to get out of the house. I ran away from the house. On the way, I saw my little brother and told him bye. On the bus, I was crying. I went to my Uncle and aunt and told them everything that had happened. They hid me.

After this, my mother asked me to come home once again. I did go there. She was waiting for me at the bus stand. Because all my aunties and uncles were infuriated and they didn't want me to come home again. I do remember the last visit to my home. All my niece and relatives- whom I loved so deeply now looked at me disgustfully. Their loathsome faces pained me so deeply.

My mother tried to persuade me in all the ways she could. She told me to say "Shahadath Kalima" and become a Muslim again. She said that she would give all the family property (which we had very little) and she would take care of everything else. As determined as I was, I said no.



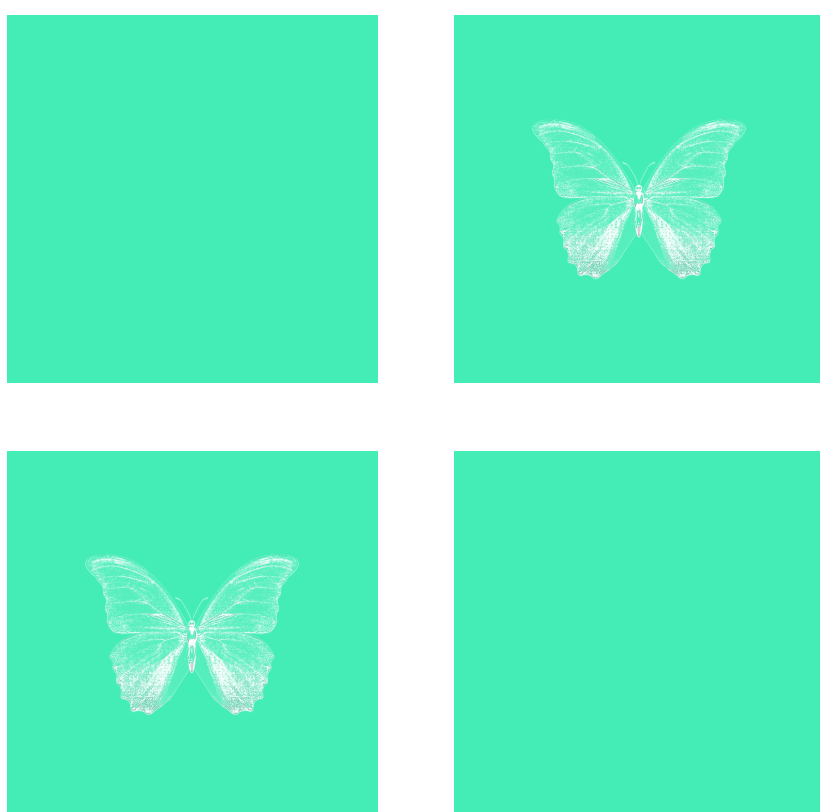
On the same day, she told me to go with her to see a Mullah. I went with her. But did not get into the mosque. She went inside and I came back. She even tried to do some 'mantras' on me in which she was an expert. But the spirits told her that there was no way to get me back. At last, becoming all her attempts futile to hold me back, she cursed me and said to get out of the house forever. The last words she spoke are still in my heart. **"You are not my son. You are dead forever. Don't even come to see my dead body when I die. From today onwards I have only three sons."** These words echoed in my ears for a long time... I left home with a heavy heart. But felt the "peace that surpasseth all understanding" in my bosom.



But the psalmist says... **"Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me"** (Ps 27: 10) And the verses Mark 8:34-38 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, **"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."** These verses became real in my life. Even though I had to leave my mother, there were so many mothers, brothers, and sisters for me who really cared and loved me so deeply in Christ.

I went to Uncle and Aunty and they hid me. Sadness had stricken deep in my heart. I

do remember staying in a lodge for two or three weeks. They used to send food for me. My friends protected me. I was not able to write my final year exam because I had to flee for my life. I even stayed in the attic of my Uncle's house for two weeks. I was not allowed to come down at the time. I had to urinate in a bottle and empty the bottle at night after all had left. Once or twice my mother and brother came there seeking me.



But Uncle and Aunty told me that they did not know where I was. Many times, I have felt the dark powers trying to overpower me at night but when I called out Jesus, they left me. It was a time of real trials. The comforting words of the Lord sustained me through. I later came to know that people were searching around to kill me. How grateful I am to my Saviour who "saves us from death". (**"Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death" (Ps. 68: 20)**)

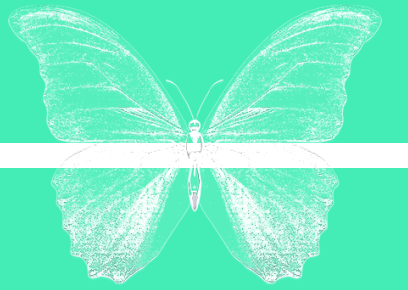
Tribal Mission

On April 3rd 2000 along with Uncle and Aunty I reached Coimbatore. I never knew that the next eleven years I would spend there because it was my desire to spend one year with the Tribal Mission, and go for higher studies and for a safe place to hide. I wrote my final exam and passed. After that I could not continue my higher studies because my certificates were at home. I had no contacts with my home for nearly eight years. I never saw my mother or brothers. Those years were so painful in my life.

When I look back on those years God was preparing me for His ministry. I had an earnest desire to read the Word and used to spend time alone with Him. I also was the English teacher. And when the first batch of SSLC were given in 2010, all my students passed with good grades in English for which I thank Jesus. He alone helped me to teach my children. I got opportunities to pastor a few local churches too.

On December 29, 2010, I married Jasmin, who also hails from a Muslim family. The wedding was solemnized by Dr. K Muralidhar, the word says "**God sets the lonely in families and he leads forth the prisoners with singing" (Ps. 68:6)**. I thank Jesus for my wonderful life partner Jasmin. When she came into my life things began to change. Her prayer life and care helped me to grow in my ministry. We are blessed with our son Joshua Jeshrun Ismayil. He was born on 6th October 2011.





For the full-time ministry...

We left Tribal Mission in August 2011 and decided to enter into full-time ministry. We moved to Ayoor, a nearby place in the year 2013 August and still we are staying here. For the last ten years, we shared gospel with a lot of people and could win a few to Christ. We started to pioneer a small house church in 2015 and the church is going on well by the grace of God. There was a time when I felt that everything was lost and we were all alone. While waiting upon the Lord, He taught me how to forgive others sincerely.

We minister among the Muslim people and share our faith with them and we pray with them. Our Lord helps me to disciple a few secret Muslim believers.

Along with my wife Jasmin, my son Joshua and our little daughter, Janet, we would like to serve the Lord. All glory to God! **"How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me? I will lift the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people" (Ps. 116: 12-14)**

- Ismayil