

<https://youtu.be/HL5PrBrgru4>

My name is Lisa K.

I am 47 years old and on a Tuesday morning, while I was loading the dishwasher, a guide came to me. There was no warning, no big dramatic moment. One second.



I was rinsing a coffee cup thinking about the parent-teacher conferences I had that afternoon. The next, a strange little pop happened behind my eyes. It wasn't loud. It was soft like a light bulb giving out. The world just tilted. The sound of the running water faded away like someone was slowly turning down the volume on my life and then everything went black before that moment.

My life was completely wonderfully. Boringly normal. I live in a small town in North Carolina. My husband Brandon and I have been married for 23 years. We have two kids. Our son, Tyler is in his first year of college and our daughter Katie is in middle school.

I worked as a teacher's aide at the local elementary school. I loved it. I loved the smell of crayons and the sound of kids laughing in the hallway. My life was a simple list of things to do, get the oil changed in the van, figure out what to do about the leaky faucet under the sink. Help Katie with her history project, pray before dinner and pray before bed.

My faith was a quiet thing, like a comfortable old blanket. I kept in a chest. I believed in God. I believed in Jesus, but he felt distant like a historical figure. You respect not someone you talk to while you're doing the dishes. I was just a regular person trying to be good, pay the bills and raise decent kids.

I never thought something like this could happen to me. I thought that was for other people, for stories you see on the internet, but it did happen.

One moment, I was standing in my kitchen and the next I wasn't. There was no pain. All the pressure I felt in my head was just gone. I felt light. I was floating. I looked down and what I saw didn't make any sense. I saw my kitchen. I saw the yellow curtains on the window and the half eaten piece of toast on the counter, and I saw myself. I was on the floor lying by the dishwasher, my hands still holding a blue coffee mug.

It was so strange. There was no fear. It was like watching a movie about someone else. I heard a sound, a muffled scream. My husband Brandon ran into the room. He knelt down and started shaking me, yelling my name. "Lisa. Lisa. Wake up. Oh God, Lisa!" I could see the terror in his face.

I wanted to tell him, it's okay, honey. I'm right here, but I had no voice. I had no body. I was just there watching.

Then I felt a pull, a gentle, loving tug, not from my body on the floor, but from somewhere else. The kitchen started to fade away like a photograph losing its color. The sound of my husband's voice grew distant. I wasn't scared. It felt like I was being called home. I found myself in a place with no walls, no ceiling, no floor. It wasn't dark, but it wasn't bright either. It was just peaceful, a deep silent peace that I have never felt on earth.

It was a silence that was full of love. I felt like I could finally rest. Like every worry I'd ever had about money, about my kids, about whether I was a good enough wife or mother. It all just washed away. It didn't matter anymore. Then ahead of me, I saw a light. It started small, like a single star in the distance, but it grew and as it grew, it got warmer. The warmth wrapped around me like a hug from my own mother. It was the feeling of being completely safe, completely understood.

I started to move toward it, or maybe it was moving toward me. I don't know. All I knew was that I wanted to be in that light more than I had ever wanted anything in my life. As the light got closer, I could see that it wasn't just light. It was a person, a man. He was made of a light that was alive. It swirled and moved with colors I've never seen. It was brighter than the sun, but it didn't hurt my eyes. I could look right at him.

He wasn't wearing a white robe or sandals like in the paintings. He was just light and love in the shape of a man.

His face, I can't describe it perfectly. It was ancient and young all at once. His eyes held every star in the universe and they were looking right at me and in that look, I was known.

Every secret I had ever kept, every shameful thought, every time I had been unkind, every single mistake I had ever made. He saw it all and he didn't just see it. He understood it and he didn't judge me. He just loved me. The love coming from him was a physical force. It hit me like a wave and I just started to weep. Not tears of sadness, but tears of relief.

The relief of being home. I didn't have to ask who he was. I knew my soul knew it was Jesus. Its voice wasn't something I heard with ears. It was a feeling that bloomed inside my chest. A thought that was clearer than any spoken word.

"Welcome, Lisa." He said his voice was the sound of a thousand waterfalls and a quiet whisper all at the same time. "You are home, be at peace."

I felt like every broken piece of me was being put back together. We just stood there for a long time and he let me soak in his peace. It felt like an eternity and a second all at once. Then he looked at me with so much tenderness and I knew we were about to talk about my life. I felt a flash of my old earthly fear, a test, a judgment. I braced myself, but it wasn't what I expected. He didn't pull out a scroll or a big book with a list of my sins. He just looked into my heart.

He said, "I have three questions for you, little one. They're the questions I ask of everyone." I remember thinking, terrifying. Not because he was scary. He was the opposite of scary, but because I knew the answers would come from the deepest part of my soul and I wouldn't be able to hide anything.

He leaned in and the light grew warmer. The first question he said gently is this, "did you let me love you?"

I paused. The question confused me. I thought it was going to be, did you love me? I started to answer the way I would on earth. I tried to, Lord. I went to church. I prayed. I read my Bible.

Sometimes he held up a hand and the light from it silenced me. "That is how you tried to love me. I am asking, did you let me love you?", and then he showed me. It wasn't like watching a movie. It was like reliving the feelings. I saw myself on my knees praying, but my heart was closed off. I was telling God what I needed, what I was worried about, what I was sorry for, but I never just stopped to let his love in.

He showed me a moment from just a few weeks before. I had made a mistake at work, a small one, but I felt so stupid. I spent the whole night beating myself up, feeling this heavy weight of shame, and he showed me that he was right there with me, his love pouring out toward me like a warm golden river. But I was so busy feeling ashamed, so focused on my own failure that I had built a little dam inside my heart. I wouldn't let his love in to heal that broken place. I didn't feel worthy of it.

I saw so many moments like that, moments where I was too busy, too distracted, too guilty or too proud to just be still and receive the love that was always, always being offered to me. I was trying to earn a love that was already mine for free. Tears filled my eyes. I looked at him and I finally understood it wasn't about being good enough. It was about being open enough. "No, I whispered. I didn't, not really. I didn't know how." His smile was pure grace. It is the hardest and simplest thing to do. He said, just to be loved. Then he looked at me again.

His gaze going even deeper. The second question, he said, his voice a little more serious now. "Did you see me and the people I sent to you again?" I wanted to give the church answer. "I tried to be kind. Lord. I volunteered at the food drive. I was nice to my neighbors."

He didn't stop me this time, but he showed me the truth behind my words. He showed me a day last winter. I was at the grocery store and there was a man outside asking for money. He was dirty and he smelled bad. I remember feeling a mix of pity and annoyance. I dropped a dollar in his cup but avoided looking him in the eye. I just wanted to get away.

But then Jesus showed me that man again. This time he let me see what he saw. He showed me the little spark of light inside that man's chest, a tiny flickering flame of divinity that was inside him, just like it was inside me. He showed me the man's pain, his loneliness. He showed me that behind the dirt and the smell was a child of God

hurting, and in that moment I saw Jesus's own face in the man's face. I had walked right past him.

He showed me my coworker who gossiped all the time. I saw how I would politely smile but secretly judge her. He showed me that her gossip came from a deep aching loneliness. He was in her too asking for compassion.

He showed me my own Brandon. On a night he was trying to tell me about a problem at his job. I was only half listening, scrolling on my phone, thinking about my own to-do list. I saw the look on his face when he realized I wasn't really there with him. Jesus was in my husband's plea for connection and I had missed him. I saw scene after scene, the rude cashier at the store, the difficult parent at school. Even my own daughter, Katie, when she was having a teenage meltdown.

In every single person I found difficult or inconvenient or invisible, he was there looking back at me, asking to be seen. I began to sob this time. It was a deep sorrowful cry. "I didn't see you." I said, "I saw their flaws. I saw my own judgment. I didn't look for you. I'm so sorry."

His love washed over my sorrow. It didn't erase the truth, but it covered it in mercy, my tile. He said, "the entire world is filled with me hiding in plain sight. Your only job is to look with the eyes of your heart." I took a moment. I felt the weight of that truth. It changed everything.

Finally, I looked up at him ready for the last question. His eyes were filled with a profound sadness and an even more profound love. "And the third question, Lisa," he said, his voice now a soft whisper. "What did you do with the wounds?"

I allowed, I didn't understand at first, my wounds. I thought about the scars on my knee from when I fell off my bike as a kid, but I knew that wasn't what he meant. He showed me the deepest wound of my life. When I was 19, my father died of a heart attack. It was sudden just like my own death. It broke me for years. I carried that pain like a sharp, heavy stone in my pocket. I never talked about it. I built a wall around that part of my heart so no one could touch it. I thought that was being strong.

Jesus showed me that wound, that dark, heavy stone in my soul. But then he showed me something else. He showed me, a young woman I worked with last year. Her own father had just been diagnosed with cancer. I remember her telling me about it. Her eyes filled with fear. I said, "I'm sorry," and I patted her on the arm, but I didn't say more. I didn't tell her that I understood. I didn't share my own story. I didn't offer her the wisdom my own pain had taught me. Jesus showed me my stone, my wound.

Then he showed me that my pain was meant to be a bridge. It was a gift I could have used to cross over into her heart and comfort her in a way no one else could, but I kept it for myself. I guarded my wound instead of giving it away, he showed me that our deepest pains are not punishments. They are assignments. They are the tools he gives us to heal others.

The loneliness you feel is meant to help you comfort someone else who feels alone. The failure you experienced is meant to give you the humility to lift up someone else who has failed. The grief that broke your heart is the very thing that can make your heart big enough to hold someone else's grief.

I saw it so clearly my whole life. I had been trying to hide my wounds. I thought they made me weak. Jesus showed me they were meant to be my greatest strength. I had no words for a second. I just cried. I had failed on all three questions. I didn't let him love me. I didn't see him in others, and I wasted the power of my own pain. I felt like a complete failure.

I looked at him expecting to see disappointment, but there was none. There was only love, a love so deep and so wide that it could hold all of my failures and still call me 'beautiful Lisa'. He said, pulling me into a hug of pure light. "This is not a judgment. It is an awakening. This is the lesson of life. It is not about being perfect. It is about learning to love."

"Now, you know I wanted to stay there forever." I begged him, please. I cried into his light. "Don't make me go back. I wanna stay with you. I'm so tired." He held me and it felt like the first real rest I'd ever had. "I know little one, but your work is not done. Your family needs you. They need to learn what love looks like. You have seen it. Now go and show them. Go and live the answers to these questions."

I felt the heartbreak of leaving him. It was the deepest sadness I have ever felt. It felt too good to leave, but I knew I had to. He smiled at me one last time, his eyes saying, "I will be with you."

And then I felt that pull again. But this time it was backward away from the light. The peace began to fade and the noises of the world started to rush back in. I gasped. The first thing I felt was a terrible pain in my head and my chest. The light was blinding. It was the fluorescent light of a hospital room. A machine next to me was beeping frantically. A woman in scrubs was shouting, "we've got a pulse. She's back. She's back."

My husband was there. His face buried in his hands sobbing. He looked up when he heard the nurse, his eyes wide with disbelief. He rushed over and grabbed my hand. "Lisa, can you hear me?" I tried to speak, but my throat was raw. I just nodded. I was so confused. One second. I was with Jesus. The next. I was in this cold, loud room. I just started to weep. But this time the tears were different. They were tears of loss for the place I had just left and tears of overwhelming gratitude for a second chance. The doctors couldn't explain it. They told Brandon I had a massive brain aneurysm. They said I had been clinically dead for at least 11 minutes.

They were preparing to tell my family that I was gone. They said there was no medical reason why I should be alive, let alone have zero brain damage. They kept using the word miracle, but I knew what it was. It was a gift. It's been a year since that day. My life looks mostly the same on the outside. I still live in the same house. I still work at the same school, but on the inside, everything is different.

I came back with a message. It's a message for you. It's the three questions he asked me.

1. He wants me to ask you first, are you letting him love you right now in this moment, no matter what you've done, no matter how unwell you feel his love is a river pouring out for you. Are you going to keep building dams or are you going to let it in?

2. Second. Where is he hiding in your life? In the face of the person who annoys you the most in the cry for help from a friend, you're too busy for in the eyes of a stranger on the street. Are you willing to look for him? He's there. I promise you he's there.

3. And last, what about your deepest wound? The pain you hide from everyone else, the thing that broke you? Are you going to keep guarding it like a treasure or are you going to let God turn it into medicine for a hurting world?

These questions, they seem terrifying at first, but I realize now they are a roadmap. A roadmap back to the heart of God. Heaven is real and the love waiting for you there is more beautiful than you can possibly imagine, but you don't have to wait until you die to experience it. He is asking you to live in that love today. He's not waiting to judge you. He's waiting to love you. Please just let him in.