

# My Story - How El Roi Found Me

It looked like something out of “Country Woman” magazine—the small, white church with its bell-towered steeple reaching to the sky, and the white parsonage next to it. It was even called Pleasant Valley—in Wann, Oklahoma, a part of South Coffeyville, Kansas. You guessed it. I was the preacher’s kid (PK), along with my two brothers and one sister.

Having heard every sermon my father preached and in attendance at every summer Vacation Bible School he and my mother led, I knew I didn’t know Jesus personally. At the age of eight, I wanted Him in my heart with assurance I was going to heaven when I died, yet I didn’t know how to ask Him. Our church, or denomination, has an “invitation” at the end of every service when anyone can go forward to make a decision for Christ, or to be “saved.” I was so shy and timid; I could not put myself in front of anyone. Knowing the Bible said if I was willing to acknowledge Jesus before people, He would acknowledge me before the angels of God, and those angels would rejoice at my coming into the kingdom of heaven, made no difference (see Luke 12:8-10). Fear had its hold on me.

One Sunday morning, during the invitation, I wanted to go forward so badly, but my fingers just gripped the wooden bench in front of me. My knuckles grew white; I found it impossible to step into that isle. Gratefully, my father saw my anguish. Later that afternoon, he called to me, “Annie, why don’t you come with me to my office.”

I followed him to his office in the church. “You know John 3:16, don’t you?” He asked me right away.

“Yes, Dad. I’ve known it all my life.”

“Then, why don’t you pray it to your heavenly Father by putting your name in the blanks where it says the whole ‘world’? Make it personal to Him, and then ask him to come into your heart.”

“You mean like this?” I bowed my head.

“For God so loved Ann that He gave His only begotten Son, that if Ann believes in Him, Ann shall not perish but shall have everlasting life. Please, come into my heart.”

“Yes, that’s right. Do you feel any different now?”

I did NOT *feel* any different, but I was afraid to tell my father so. I didn’t want to disappoint him, so I meekly replied, “Yes.”

Immediately, I jolted out the door, so Dad couldn’t see I was lying.

As I ran toward the house . . . the sky startled me; I stopped. It was bluer than any blue I’d seen; and then, I looked at the grass; it was greener than any green I knew. Joy filled my soul. God was so close. Jesus was in my heart without a doubt, and He had made all things new. From that time on, I *knew* heaven was my home—that Jesus saw me and loved me and died for me even if I was the only person in the whole wide world.

Fourteen years later, although I still had the assurance of going to heaven, the joy had slowly vanished. My husband and I had a son and a baby on the way. Not having known what to do with what I’d received, I felt dead. Life was dry, and I absolutely had no idea how to get the joy of Jesus back in my heart.