

When God Covered Me. One of my favorite things to do on Sunday afternoons is take a nap. Since I am extremely cold-natured, I like to cover up when I sleep; therefore, I always go hunting for a blanket before I lay down. Several years ago, my sister Donna gave each member of my family a personalized blanket—each blanket is a different color and has a different person’s name on it. Consequently, in my bedroom there are two blankets available to choose from. One says “Kim,” the other says “Doug.” My favorite blanket to take a nap under is the one that says “Doug.” I absolutely love to snuggle up under it and enjoy its warmth because it reminds me of the covering of love and protection that my husband bestows on me every day. But this covering, whether the cozy blanket itself or the precious love that it represents, cannot compare to the covering of righteousness that God lovingly bestowed on me when I was fourteen years old.

My parents filed for divorce when I was about seven years old. When the legal papers were finalized, the judge awarded my mom custody; as a result, my sister Donna and I moved with my mom back to the small town in southern Iowa where I was born. Living in a single-parent home can be difficult and stressful at times. This was certainly true for our family. My mom did her very best to provide for us and take care of us; however, after three years, Donna chose to live with my dad and stepmother in Missouri. That left just Mom and me. I must say, my mom was faithful to take me to church every week; but honestly, I do not remember hearing the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ ever preached from the pulpit. This may seem strange, but you must understand that I was living in a small town and attending a church that was not really “on fire for God.” It was an old mainline church that focused on “religion” rather than a personal “relationship” with Jesus Christ. Needless to say, I did not get much out of the sermons, and my lifestyle was anything but godly. In fact, I cussed like a sailor.

But all that changed in 1978. I’ll never forget it. It was a Sunday afternoon and my mom was back in her bedroom taking a nap. Like a typical teenager, I was bored; so I decided to flip through the channels on the television. Nothing caught my attention until I stumbled across a Christian pastor out of Des Moines preaching a “hell, fire, and brimstone” type message on salvation. He told me that if I did not repent and ask Jesus to be my Savior, then I would spend eternity in hell. This powerful message tore me to the heart! I did not want to go to hell! So I knelt down by one of our olive-green toadstool footstools (crazy pieces of furniture popular in the 1970s) and begged God to forgive me and save me. Through my many tears, I told God that I was a sinner and that I wanted Him to rescue me from my sin, so I can go to heaven when I die. A few minutes later, I heard my mom stirring from her nap. Since I did not want her to see me crying, I ran outside and walked around the block. As I continued to plead with God for mercy, tears of joy replaced my tears of sorrow. An overwhelming peace swept over my heart. I **knew** that God loved me and had answered my prayer!

From that day forward, I have never been the same. I began witnessing to my friends about what God had done in my life. My stepmother Dorothy gave me a Bible to read in a version that was easy to understand, so I made a vow to God that I would endeavor to read it every day. A few years later, I followed the Lord’s example and was baptized. Despite the fact that I was saved thirty years ago, I still have a sincere desire to know Him and obey Him. Granted, my life has been far from perfect. My stubborn pride and foolishness have often caused me to fall into sin; but, thanks be to God, I know that my sins are covered. When He looks at me, He sees the robe of righteousness that He wrapped around me, not because of anything I have done or can ever do, but because of the work of Jesus, my Savior, on the cross!

If you have not yet given your life to Jesus, “We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (*2 Corinthians 5:20b-21*, NIV). As it says in *John 3:16*: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever **believes** in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (NIV, emphasis mine). This soul saving belief, however, is more than just an awareness that God exists. *James 2:19* says, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (NIV). True belief involves the heart: “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe in your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; **for with the heart a person believes**, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (*Romans 10:9-10*, NASB, emphasis mine). “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, . . .” (*Acts 3:19*, NIV). If you do this, God guarantees: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (*2 Corinthians 5:17*, NIV).

If you believe in Jesus, you are now one of God’s beloved children (*1 John 3:1*). Consequently, one question should remain at the forefront of your mind: “How can a young man (**or anyone else for that matter**) keep his way pure? By living according to your word” (*Psalms 119:9*, NIV, insert mine). Give God’s Word a place of prominence in your life. Read it, study it, and obey it because, as David declares in *Psalms 119:105*, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (NIV). As you go about your daily activities, whether in tough times or good, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (*Proverbs 3:5-6*, NIV). “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (*Colossians 4:2*, NIV), “and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (*Luke 21:28b*, NIV). In Christ, you no longer have to worry about where you will spend eternity. Jesus proclaims in *John 14:2-3*: “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and **take you to be with me** that you also may be where I am” (NIV, emphasis mine). Rejoice, for this glorious promise is now yours!