

PROJECT PILOT SCREENPLAY

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CHAPTER ONE

A GOD I KNEW, A CHRIST I HADN'T MET

I knew God before I knew myself.

Before I understood money. Before I understood manhood. Before I understood why grown people cried when the choir hit certain notes that made the walls tremble.

I knew God.

Not in a mystical way. Not in a burning-bush kind of revelation. I knew Him the way children know gravity — as something constant, unseen, and never questioned.

Church wasn't something we attended.

Church was where life happened.

Sunday mornings began before the sun had fully stretched across the sky. The house would already be alive. Pots clinking in the kitchen. The smell of starch and hot irons pressing clothes into submission. Shoes lined by the door like obedient soldiers waiting for inspection.

There was no discussion about going.

We went.

My grandmother moved through the house with purpose. Not rushed. Not frantic. Steady. As if she were preparing for something sacred — because to her, she was.

Her Bible sat on the kitchen table, worn at the edges. Not decorative. Used. Marked. Lived in. She didn't read it for show. She read it like someone rereading letters from a trusted friend.

I watched her.

I always watched her.

In church, she sat near the front. Not because she needed to be seen — but because she expected to see something. The sanctuary carried its own rhythm: fans fluttering in elderly hands, perfume thick in the air, wood pews polished by decades of devotion.

When the choir sang, something shifted.

It wasn't performance. It was release.

Voices rose not just in harmony but in history — pain braided into praise. The organ would swell. The tambourines would begin to shake like rain hitting tin roofs. And somewhere between the second verse and the final chorus, my grandmother would stand.

Slowly at first.

Then fully.

Her hands lifted — not dramatic, not forced. Natural. Like stretching after being seated too long. Her eyes would close, and her face would change. Not into excitement — into recognition.

Like she saw Someone.

And sometimes... she would run.

Down the aisle.

Shoes tapping against the sanctuary floor. Dress flowing behind her. Other saints rising as if pulled by invisible strings. Tears streaming. Voices breaking. The room erupting in something I didn't have language for.

And I would sit there.

Still.

Watching.

Even as a child, a quiet question lived in my chest:

What are they feeling that I'm not?

No one ever said it out loud, but everyone knew — if you were really saved, you felt something. The Spirit moved you. You cried. You shouted. You trembled. You ran.
I didn't.

I believed in God. I feared Him. I respected Him. I knew He was real.
But whatever fire burned in that room never quite reached me.

So I learned something early:

If you don't feel it — perform it.

I learned when to say "Amen." I learned when to stand. I learned how to bow my head just long enough to look prayerful. I learned how to close my eyes and appear moved.

I learned behavior before encounter.

No one questioned me.

I was the good church boy. The respectful one. The scripture-quoting one. The one teachers liked. The one adults trusted.

But inside, something felt distant.

God was information. Christ was story. The Spirit was spectacle.

But intimacy?

That felt reserved for other people.

As I got older, the day came when I walked down the aisle.

I remember the carpet beneath my shoes. The way the congregation leaned forward. The hush in the room.

I said the prayer. I meant the words. I believed what I confessed.

People clapped. Someone hugged me. My name was written down.

They said heaven was rejoicing.

I waited to feel it.

Joy. Fire. Relief. Something unmistakable.

What I felt instead... was responsibility.

Now I was accountable. Now I had to live right. Now I had to represent.

So I did.

When the church organized soul-winning, I volunteered. When they knocked doors, I knocked. When they preached about evangelism, I went.

I stood on porches and spoke confidently about salvation. I led strangers through the sinner's prayer. I quoted scripture with clarity and conviction.

And when doors closed, I walked away feeling...

Empty.

Not doubting. Not rebelling. Just empty.

I was serving faithfully. But I was not being filled.

Life didn't pause to let me sit with that truth.

We moved.

And then we moved again.

New neighborhoods. New schools. New churches. New expectations.

Each relocation required adaptation.

I learned how to blend. How to read people. How to survive environments quickly. How not to attach too deeply — because attachment meant loss when the next move came.

Faith became something I carried like luggage.

Present. But never unpacked.

By the time Mississippi entered my life, I was already tired.

Mississippi didn't rush you.

It made you sit with yourself.

And that's when the questions grew louder.

Who am I? What am I becoming? Why does faith feel like effort instead of encounter?
I didn't know then that heartbreak would be the catalyst. That loss would become the doorway. That betrayal would crack open the surface I had carefully maintained for years.
I didn't know that one day I would stand in a pulpit — not because I had always felt God, but because I had once felt nothing at all.
All I knew then was this:
I had known God my entire life.
I just hadn't met Christ.
And this is where the real story begins.
CHAPTER TWO

GRANDMOTHER'S FAITH

My grandmother never argued about God.
She didn't debate theology. She didn't correct people mid-sentence. She didn't need to prove anything.
Her faith didn't talk loud.
It stood firm.
Before I understood sermons, I understood her consistency. Before I understood scripture, I understood her posture. She didn't just believe in God — she leaned on Him the way a tired woman leans against a doorframe at the end of a long day.
And somehow, the doorframe always held.
She woke before dawn.
Not occasionally. Not when something was wrong. Every day.
I would wake to the faint sound of her slippers against the hallway floor. The house would still be dark, the air heavy with the quiet that only exists before sunrise. She would move to the kitchen, pour coffee into a chipped mug, and sit at the small wooden table beneath the dim yellow light.

Her Bible would already be there.
Open.
Marked.
Worn at the corners like it had survived battles.
She didn't read it quickly. She traced lines with her finger sometimes, nodding gently as if remembering conversations she'd had before. Occasionally she would whisper — not loudly, not dramatically — just enough that you knew she wasn't talking to herself.
She was talking to Someone.
As a child, that fascinated me.
She spoke to God like He was in the room.
Not distant. Not symbolic. Present.
There were mornings I would stand in the hallway and watch her without announcing myself. I wanted to see if she ever looked uncertain. If she ever paused and questioned. If she ever seemed unsure whether anyone was listening.

She never did.
Her faith wasn't emotional first — it was anchored.
And I think that's what confused me most.
In church, faith looked explosive. People shouted. They cried. They fell. They trembled. It felt like fire.
But at home, faith looked like stillness. Like repetition. Like discipline.
She prayed over bills.
I watched her do it once.
The envelope was red — stamped with FINAL NOTICE in bold letters that looked angrier than necessary. She placed her hand on it, closed her eyes, and said, "Lord, You see this."
Not frantic. Not desperate. Just honest.
She didn't say how it would get paid.
She didn't demand a miracle.

She simply acknowledged that God saw.
And then she got up and made breakfast.
That was her theology.
God sees. God knows. God provides.
Not because we panic — but because He is faithful.
I wanted that kind of certainty.
But I didn't know how to build it.
In church, when the Spirit would move and my grandmother would stand, something transformed in her. It wasn't chaos. It was release. Her face would soften, her hands would lift, and sometimes tears would fall without drama.
She didn't cry loudly.
She cried like someone remembering something sacred.

Once, I leaned over and asked her quietly, "Why do you run?"
She looked down at me, smiling gently.
"Because sometimes," she said, "you don't walk when you've been set free."
I didn't understand what she meant.
Set free from what?
Our house wasn't locked. We weren't starving. We weren't visibly suffering.
But she carried a history I didn't yet know.
Years later, she would tell me about nights I never saw — about praying when money didn't stretch far enough, about asking God to keep her children safe when streets weren't safe at all, about leaning on faith when everything else felt unreliable.
Her running wasn't performance.
It was gratitude.

And that realization didn't come until much later.
As a boy, I mostly felt left out.
Left out of whatever invisible current seemed to sweep everyone else away. Left out of whatever warmth filled the room when worship intensified. I would watch people speak in tongues and wonder if it was rehearsed or real.
I wondered if I was missing something.
Or if something was missing in me.
But my grandmother never pressured me.
She never asked, "Why aren't you shouting?" She never said, "You should feel more." She never implied that I lacked something spiritual.
She simply lived.
And her life became the sermon.
When someone in the family fell sick, she didn't spiral. She prayed and then showed up. When someone made a bad decision, she didn't shame them. She corrected them and then covered them.
When money ran thin, she tightened her belt and trusted anyway.

There was no panic in her faith.
There was memory.
She used to say, "God brought me through worse."
Not as hope — as evidence.
That distinction matters.
She wasn't hoping God would show up.
She remembered that He already had.
That's the difference between borrowed faith and owned faith.
Mine was borrowed.
Hers was earned.

I lived inside her belief system, benefiting from it, protected by it, but never fully experiencing it as my own. I could quote scripture. I could explain salvation. I could defend doctrine if asked.

But I could not say, "God brought me through."

Not yet.

I hadn't been through enough to know Him like that.

Or maybe I had — and I just hadn't recognized it.

Looking back, I see now that her faith planted something in me that I didn't appreciate at the time.

Seeds.

Seeds that didn't sprout when I expected them to. Seeds that waited beneath pride, beneath confusion, beneath rebellion and pain. Seeds that refused to die even when I stopped watering them.

There were nights I would hear her praying from her bedroom.

Softly.

Calling names.

My name.

My siblings' names.

Family members who weren't even present.

She prayed like someone building something invisible.

Covering ground she couldn't see.

I didn't understand then that she was interceding for versions of us we hadn't yet become.

Years later, when I would stand at crossroads she could never have imagined, I would remember those mornings. Those whispered prayers. That steady posture.

And I would realize:

Before I ever sought God again, someone had been seeking Him for me.

That changes a person.

Even if they don't realize it immediately.

Even if they wander.

Even if they forget.

Even if they harden.

Somewhere deep inside me — beneath all the questions and distance and disappointment — lived the imprint of a woman who believed without spectacle.

Who trusted without noise.

Who ran because she had already been delivered.

I didn't know Christ yet.

But I knew what faith looked like.

And one day, that memory would call me back.

CHAPTER THREE

SAVED, BUT STILL SEARCHING

The night I walked down the aisle, the sanctuary felt smaller than usual.

Not physically smaller — spiritually compressed. The air was thick with anticipation. The preacher's voice had softened into that familiar invitation tone, the one that stretched syllables and slowed time.

"If there's anyone here tonight..."

There always was.

I had heard this call dozens of times. I had watched others respond — some trembling, some crying, some almost running as if afraid the opportunity might close before they reached it.

This time, something in me shifted.

Not dramatically.

Not emotionally.

Just a quiet awareness that it was my turn.

I wasn't pressured. No one nudged me. No one grabbed my shoulder. I simply stood. My legs felt steady. My heart wasn't racing. I remember noticing how the carpet felt beneath my shoes as I stepped into the aisle.

It was red.

Deep red.

I don't know why I remember that detail, but I do.

The congregation leaned forward slightly — the way people do when they know something important is happening but don't want to interrupt it. The choir played softly behind the preacher's words. An organ hummed low, like a steady breath holding the room together.

When I reached the front, someone met me with a smile. Not overwhelming. Not dramatic. Just approving.

They asked if I believed Jesus was the Son of God.

"Yes."

If I believed He died and rose again.

"Yes."

If I wanted to accept Him as my Savior.

"Yes."

I meant every word.

There was no rebellion in me. No resistance. No secret doubt hiding beneath the surface. I believed what I was saying. I understood the weight of it as much as a young man could.

I bowed my head and repeated the prayer.

Each sentence carefully spoken. Each word clear. I didn't rush it. I wasn't confused.

When it ended, the congregation erupted in applause.

Not thunderous — joyful.

Someone hugged me. Another person patted my back. I was told heaven was rejoicing. That angels were celebrating. That my name had been written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

And I waited.

I waited for warmth.

For electricity.

For that fire I had seen so many others carry.

I waited for something unmistakable to rise in my chest.

It didn't.

What I felt instead was responsibility.

A weight.

Not heavy in a bad way — just serious.

Now I belonged.

Now I represented.

Now I had to live right.

I went back to my seat and sat down. The service continued. The preacher moved on. The music swelled again. But I kept scanning myself internally.

Is this it?

Maybe it would come later.

Maybe it was subtle.

Maybe the emotional explosion I expected wasn't the real evidence.

I told myself faith wasn't about feeling.

It was about belief.

And I believed.

So I leaned into obedience.

If salvation meant action, then I would act. If commitment meant discipline, then I would discipline myself. When the church organized soul-winning, I volunteered without hesitation.

Saturday mornings became structured.

We would gather in small groups, pray briefly, and then scatter into neighborhoods with pamphlets in our hands and scripture memorized in our minds. I learned how to knock confidently — not aggressively, but firmly enough to be heard.

Doors opened in all kinds of ways.

Some people smiled politely. Some listened carefully. Some closed the door mid-sentence. Some argued.

I grew good at navigating conversation.

“Do you know where you’d spend eternity?” “Can I share something encouraging with you?” “Have you ever accepted Christ personally?”

I knew the flow.

I knew which verses to quote: Romans. John. Ephesians.

I knew how to guide someone gently toward the sinner’s prayer. I knew how to speak calmly when they hesitated. I knew how to celebrate when they agreed.

And sometimes — they did.

Sometimes I watched strangers bow their heads on porches and repeat the same prayer I had repeated. Sometimes I walked away feeling accomplished.

But not filled.

After one particular afternoon, I remember sitting alone in my room, staring at the ceiling. We had led three people to Christ that day. The church would call it a victory.

And maybe it was.

But inside, I felt hollow.

Not rebellious.

Not resentful.

Just... unfinished.

I had done what was right. I had said what was correct. I had followed the steps faithfully.

But something inside me remained untouched.

I didn’t dare say that out loud.

In church culture, doubt wasn’t something you explored — it was something you suppressed.

Questions weren’t invitations to grow; they were signals to pray harder.

So I prayed harder.

Not emotionally — strategically.

“God, fill me.” “God, help me feel You.” “God, show me what I’m missing.”

But I didn’t know how to stop performing long enough to be honest.

I began to notice something.

When others testified about hearing God’s voice, they spoke with certainty. They described being “led.”

They described feeling conviction, comfort, correction.

I felt... quiet.

And I interpreted that quiet as distance.

Looking back, I see now that silence doesn’t mean absence.

But back then, I equated noise with proof.

The louder the reaction, the deeper the faith — or so I thought.

So I watched others carefully.

When someone shouted, I studied them. When someone wept, I observed. When someone spoke in tongues, I wondered if I was broken.

What if I don’t have what they have?

That question terrified me.

Not because I doubted God — but because I doubted myself.
Was I too analytical? Too controlled? Too guarded?
Or was I simply not chosen for that kind of experience?
I learned to hide that insecurity behind discipline.
I read scripture daily. I memorized passages. I attended every service. I avoided obvious sin. I stayed respectful.
Externally, I looked strong.
Internally, I was still searching.
And then life began moving again.
Another relocation.
Another adjustment.

New church. New expectations. New cultural tone.
Each place defined salvation differently.
Some emphasized holiness — strict rules about behavior and appearance. Others emphasized grace — freedom and joy. Some churches shouted constantly. Others moved quietly and reverently.
I adapted every time.
That became my strength.
And my weakness.
Because adapting is not the same as belonging.
Every new environment required a version of me. And I learned how to become whatever that environment affirmed. But deep down, I still didn't know who I was when no one was watching.
That's when a quiet thought began forming — not rebellion, just awareness.
What if salvation is a beginning, not a finish line?

What if belief is the doorway, not the encounter?
I didn't yet have language for what I was missing.
But I knew this much:
I knew about God.
I respected Him. I obeyed Him. I represented Him.
But I did not yet know Him intimately.
And that difference would eventually shape everything.
Because faith that is borrowed cannot sustain pressure.
And pressure was coming.
CHAPTER FOUR

ALWAYS MOVING

Movement became normal before I understood what stability was.
I don't remember the first move clearly. I remember the feeling of it.
Boxes.
The smell of tape stretched tight across cardboard. The sound of drawers sliding out of dressers.
Closets emptied too quickly. The quiet tension adults try to hide from children but never fully succeed in disguising.
We were leaving.
Again.
As a child, you don't always get explanations. You get instructions.
Pack this. Carry that. Say goodbye.
And so I did.

Each new place required a new version of me. New streets meant new rules. Some neighborhoods required silence — head down, eyes forward, don't ask too many questions. Other neighborhoods required posture — shoulders back, speak clearly, don't look afraid.
I learned quickly.

Adaptation became instinct.

New schools were the hardest. Walking into a classroom where everyone already knew each other felt like entering a story mid-sentence. Desks creaked. Eyes glanced up. Teachers paused just long enough to acknowledge you without disrupting the rhythm of the day.

“This is Allan. He’ll be joining us.”

Joining.

But never fully belonging.

You learn to scan the room fast. Who’s respected. Who’s avoided. Who laughs loud. Who watches quietly. You choose where to sit carefully, because seating arrangements determine social survival.

I became observant.

Not shy — strategic.

When you move enough, you realize attachment can become liability. Friends are temporary. Familiar streets are temporary. Even churches — the supposed anchors — can be temporary.

Church moved with us.

But it didn’t remain the same.

Different sanctuaries. Different pastors. Different interpretations of holiness. One church preached strict discipline. Another preached grace and freedom. Some services were loud and electric. Others were reserved and structured.

I absorbed them all.

But I never unpacked.

Faith became something portable — carried like luggage from one address to the next. Present, but never settled. I believed in God everywhere we went. But belief without roots feels different than belief planted deep.

I didn’t realize it then, but constant movement was shaping me.

It taught me resilience. It taught me awareness. It taught me how to survive environments quickly.

But it also taught me not to trust permanence.

Why plant roots when the ground keeps shifting?

Why open fully when departure feels inevitable?

I learned how to function without belonging.

Teachers would occasionally pull me aside.

“You’re smart.” “You have potential.” “You could really go somewhere.”

Those words felt distant.

Go somewhere?

I was always going somewhere.

Just not by choice.

Excellence felt risky when you didn’t know how long you’d be allowed to stay. Why invest deeply when you might be gone before the return shows up?

So I performed at a steady level — enough to stay out of trouble, enough to earn approval, but not so much that I felt attached to outcome.

Survival, not thriving.

As adolescence approached, movement stopped feeling neutral.

It began to feel disruptive.

Every relocation restarted the process of proving myself. Every reset meant new expectations. I could feel identity stretching thin — adapting so often that I wasn’t sure which version of me was real.

Who am I when the environment changes?

Am I the quiet one? The church one? The smart one? The tough one?

The truth was — I could be all of them.

And that flexibility made me strong.