

Chapter One: The Beginnings of Wisdom

The fear of Adonai is the beginning of wisdom. All who follow His precepts have good understanding.

- Psalms 111:10

I was born April 30, 1989, to a nineteen-year-old, single mother. When I was three, my mother married. We had a comfortable life, a home, two cars, family meals, and baseball practice at night.

It was not until second grade that fear engrained itself into my heart. After experiencing the death of a classmate, I was haunted each night by terror of the unknown. The thought of death gripped me and destroyed any hopes of peaceful sleep; I became an insomniac. There was so little of the world I knew, and all the unknown kept me anxiously awaiting my demise. *What is death? What is life?*

Along with Chase, my great, great grandmother also passed away. Death was like darkness to me; I feared the unknown. In deep contemplation of the dead's whereabouts, I would find myself trapped in a dark, empty void of loneliness, wondering if life had any meaning at all. Moreover, this God figure I heard of in the equivalent of fairy tales seemed to make less and less sense. *Why is there so much pain in the world?*

After experiencing the heartache of divorce and the pain of an unloving stepfather, the world changed on 9-11-2001. My biological father tried reaching out to me, but my stepfather suppressed our contact. Many nights I spent filling pages of journals, speaking to an empty book

because there was no one to answer the questions my heart echoed relentlessly. *Who is God? Why are we here? How did we get here? Am I important? Who am I? Why am I? Am I?* These are the most fundamental questions of the most fundamental part of the human, the part that has its beginning with YHWH and has an end, unless it meets the grace of YHWH's Savior Yahushua.

At the beginning of eighth grade, my mother and that man divorced, a relief I cannot express with words. The emptiness I attained while living under his household, the bad habits, dirtied my soul; truly, they flooded my heart with guilt and left me feeling hopeless to finding purpose in my life. I learned to avoid my heart's beckoning and fulfill my time here with dissatisfying pleasures.

My mother and I moved into a two-bedroom apartment. There it was that I learned of spiritual powers, magic. As a thirteen-year-old boy, I delved into the abominations of Wicca after hearing testimony of a friend who had found *something* there, seeking any type of god to provide purpose, to prove there was any purpose at all. Christianity had failed to offer any sanctuary during my childhood sorrows, because all I knew of its ways were a cross, an Easter bunny, trees with toys, and this abstract place of torment called hell. Therefore, I searched in darkness. The powers of manipulation and deception replaced the innocence of my youth. Having no moral boundaries, I began letting my soul seek satisfaction in carnal desires, under the delusion that I could find happiness there.

There was never a teacher for me, only my 'self' on a search for meaning. Yet, I offered up prayers to gods I never knew, beckoned them to possess me if only to find a

hint of reality lying beyond this illusionary realm of material. Darkness is real. I embraced it only to know that. Then, it horrified me to near death.

I became suicidal, forgetful that I could have any good purpose in this world, and convinced everything was founded on lies. *Without embracing dishonesty I'll never be successful.* Although I had, for a time, allowed myself to practice deceit, the shame it piled upon me manifested with very real weight. At night, if I could sleep at all, I would often awake with the feeling of cold hands holding me or to the whispers of shadows in the corners of my room. I had nowhere to hide but under my blanket, knowing that it was just a matter of time before my death came.

My death did not come, only more questions and emptiness, sleeplessness and depression. *My heart hurts. My chest aches. My soul longs for love. Why is this world so unfair?*

In my eighth grade year, my mom married a special man. He was very well off, financially, and later I would find out, spiritually. Behind his house was a mother-in-law suite where I found my place of stay. To many it would be a dream to have a home all to their self at that age, but every time I closed my eyes, no matter how many artificial lights I kept on, darkness was creeping toward me.

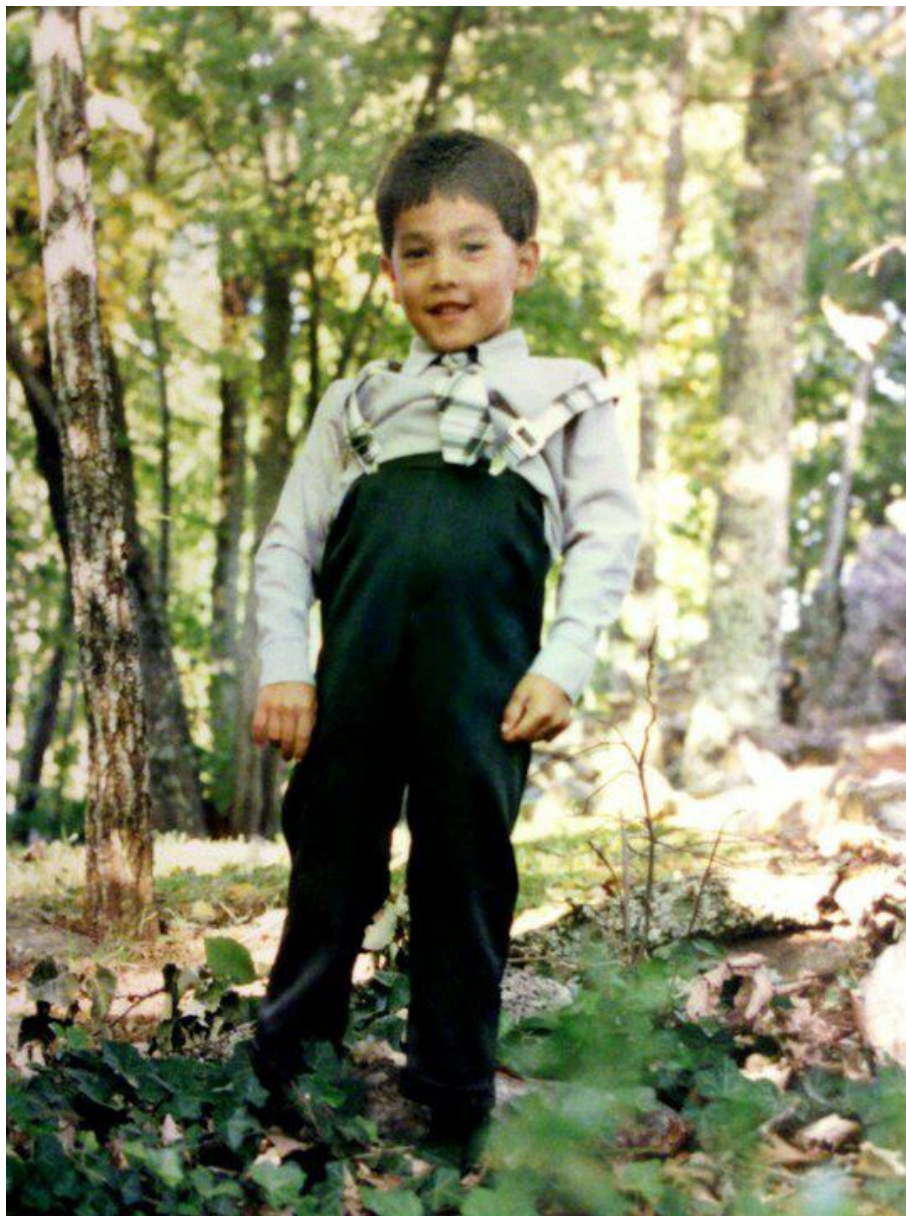
I had contemplated ending my life just to bring a stop to the game of horror. There was, however, an intervener, which kept me from doing such a thing: the longing for love. My best friend, Tyler, my loving grandparents, my hard-working mother, the new family I had found, the Yates, all enticed me to endure; they revealed to me parts of

the character of love. I never found out the type of delusive psyche required to pull the trigger, but I did think that if I stayed in that direction that it would lead me to only more darkness... and I was scared of darkness.

Fear was a foundation of my childhood, alongside uncertainty and confusion, and I share it to give a glimpse into experiences that encouraged me to seek Truth. Although I had found darkness, it was never my intention to stay. My only desire was to know if there was Light, and in my childish mind, I concluded: *if there is darkness, there must be Light*. Fear kept me searching for the Truth and purpose in my existence on this earth; it kept me pursuing knowledge, and kept me seeking Love. What can truly satisfy the emptiness we are born with? Love. Love was the only true thing I sought as a child, to know it, to spread it with every person I met.

... Out of gloom and darkness the
eyes of the blind will see. The meek
will add to their joy in Adonai, and
the needy of humanity will rejoice in
the Holy One of Israel.

- Isaiah 29:18-19



Still Happy 1994

Today

Fall 2000

Today,
Falling feels like flying.
Today,
Smiling feels just like crying.
Today,
Pain feels like pleasure.
Today,
Death feels like a treasure.
I have no control;
I've lost myself.
My instincts feel like they're dying.
When I try to talk,
All I hear is wind.
All my goals are defying.
I'm trying so hard.
But the pieces don't fit.
Everyone's around me,
But no one gives a shit.
My guiding star in the sky,
Is slowly going dead.
Now I am lost,
And my star is infrared.

Sonnet 117 (Rearranged)

Winter 2000

Although temptation will rise, my truth be down,
For now, all of everyone's beliefs are still not found.
And beliefs will still be frozen away.
My vagrant sentiments slowly fade to gray.
All I believe I've seen, I've smelt, I've heard;
Hopes, to me, are dead, uncomely, nonadjacent, blurred.
Everyone's canvas of dripping paint is harshly smearing,
I don't want your pathos; don't start your pity tearing.
Public allows you to believe in an unknown celestial body.
All it will do is dehydrate your haggard body.
Every sticker on every seat next to me
point forthwith at my head.
Can we possibly get ahead
if we don't acknowledge that we are ahead?
Until the single tired sunlight comes of proof,
yours will not be mine.
However, for now, there is nothing, nothing for me to find.