

'THAT IS WHAT I WANT'
By Fritz Klumpp

Although Hank and I spent an hour each Sunday in the same class at a church in New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.A., we had never been formally introduced. Physically he reminded me of a young Clint Eastwood. I had learned that like me, Hank was a pilot and had flown Marine fighter planes in the Pacific during World War II.

Even though he was cordial enough, I got the impression you did not want to get too close because if you crossed him, Hank would just as soon punch you in the nose as tell you the time of day. I later learned he was a boxer, and my initial impressions were accurate. Hank's wife, nicknamed "M-Jo," seemed like the classic example of the California "golden girl," but was extremely quiet and rarely uttered a word.

My wife, Ann, and I eventually moved from New Orleans' south shore to the north shore of Lake Ponchartrain, and looked for a new place to spend our Sunday mornings. At this time I was attending church for several reasons. First of all, I felt I was paying God back for having spared my life while flying numerous combat missions in Vietnam. Secondly, I had two little girls. When our first daughter was born, the thought of raising a little girl scared me to death – because I know how little boys think. I wanted my daughters to have the moral guidance of the church until they were old enough to consider the consequences of any wrong decisions they might make.

Thirdly, going to church simply suited the image I had determined I should have. I was a professional person and felt I needed to look the part of a respectable person and family man. Appearances are important, right? In reality, however, I was spiritually bankrupt, but thought no one who called himself a Christian had anything more than what I did.

One morning we were sitting there as we had done so many Sundays before. Hank and M-Jo had joined the same church we were attending and began talking about an event they had experienced in Dallas, Texas. They seemed to radiate an enthusiasm the likes of which I had never seen before. That was the morning Ann turned to me and said, "I don't know what it is they have, but that's what I want."

We had seen two lives miraculously changed. Having observed and known him previously, the transformation we saw in Hank's life and demeanor led us to seek meaningful answers to life's greatest questions, such as, "Why am I here?" "What is my purpose?" "Is this life all there is – or is there something more?"

Thanks in part to the example we had seen in Hank and M-Jo, my wife and I began a spiritual quest that turned our lives upside-down. We gained new perspectives on marriage, parenting, business and work, even our finances. We discovered a sense of direction and hope we had never imagined. And ultimately, we gained a new life. As it

says in the New Testament of the Bible, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

When Jesus Christ came into our lives, we became, as the verse states, "new creations." Have you ever witnessed a life miraculously transformed? Perhaps you have had such an experience yourself. If not, have you ever desired such a change, to gain a new life?

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever observed the life of someone that was so radically different from other people you have known, you found yourself wondering, as Mr. Klumpp's wife did, "What is it they have? And how can I get it, too?"
2. In your view, are there "big questions" about life everyone needs to answer – or would like to know the answers to, such as "Why am I here?" "What is my purpose?" Or perhaps, "Is there more to life than getting up in the morning, going to work, struggling through the day, going home, and starting the cycle all over the next day?" Explain your answer.
3. If you have considered questions like that, what answers or conclusions have you found?
4. Can you relate to Mr. Klumpp's statement about becoming a "new creation"? What do you think that means?

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions from the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

John 3:3,16-18; Romans 6:4-11; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5