

Does God Exist? Yes!

By Dianne D. McDonnell

When you are five years old your mind isn't full of debate about the existence of God. If your parents have told you there is a God that hears your prayers you believe it. So at age five I had heard about Jesus and heard stories about the miracles he did. I loved the stories and I believed in him—it was that simple. I said my prayers every night. But on the day I turned six I faced a crisis that would determine whether I lived or died. On my birthday I faced death. I would live or die according to whether or not Jesus was real.

My family lived in the small town of Nome, Alaska, and my birthday picnic in the spring required heavy coats and determination. We spread out our picnic beside a sheltered bay on the Bering Sea. It was a cold rocky patch of land still partially covered with snow banks. The sea was teeming with icebergs taller than I was, all floating around keeping close company. As we ate Mom's fried chicken the adults talked casually about how cold the water was. "If you fall into the water, even if you can swim, it is so cold that in only three minutes you get too cold to swim." I couldn't swim so I thought it didn't really matter to me, except that the adults couldn't rescue me if I fell in.

After we ate lunch, the four adults sang happy birthday to me over my birthday cake. My little brother tried to sing but he was only three and didn't yet know all the words. So mother watched him when we decided to explore our little patch of seacoast beside the sheltered bay. My father discovered an odd little boat pulled up on the rocks near the water with two paddles inside it. It was handmade of carved pieces of wood lashed together with some kind of hide stretched over the outside of it. It was an Eskimo boat just big enough for one person. My father thought it would be great fun to paddle it out for a little bit of exercise. "It isn't ours, Daddy." I stated with my new six year old wisdom.

"We are only going to borrow it," he said as he called to the other couple that were celebrating with us. As they came he gave a quick command, "Jump in, Dianne." I didn't think it was a very good idea but I obeyed immediately. My father and his friend pushed it away from the bank as I sat on the curved bottom of the tiny boat. Then Dad grabbed the rope tied to the boat, and they both jumped in just as it launched into the cold sea. Mother and the other woman stayed behind with my little brother, waving cheerfully at us as both men paddled carefully between the towering icebergs, laughing at our adventure. The boat was made for one man so the three of us made it ride so low that we were only about six inches above the smooth icy water. First I couldn't see my little brother, and then the waving women got smaller and smaller. We still weren't too far from shore out in the little bay when I was startled by a loud splash in the water

beside me. I turned to come face to face with a huge creature rising up out of the water, dripping cold salt water on me and looking down at me. Its head was much larger than my own with two long dagger-like teeth on both sides of its mouth. Our eyes met in mutual surprise! The creature was amazed by me, and I was terrified by this strange thing in the water with the great long white teeth. I drew back just as it disappeared down into the sea. Both men laughed. "That's a walrus!" my Dad explained. "Those are his tusks. I bet he'd never seen a child before."

"I hope it doesn't decide to rip the bottom of our boat." My father's friend stated candidly. "I've heard they can do that with their long tusks." The thought of that huge creature swimming beneath us eyeing the hide bottom of our little boat introduced a new quiet mood. My Dad shot him a look to watch what he said around me. Without a word I prayed silently, "Jesus, don't let that walrus tear the boat and sink us into the cold water."

We were not aware of the walrus again and we were relieved. Yet we were getting further out in the bay so both men stopped paddling. Still we continued to drift towards the edge of the bay fronting the Bering Sea. "We must be in a current," my Dad said. I didn't know for sure what a "current" was but it seemed to be something that pulled the boat forward even when no one paddled. As we saw the Bering Sea loom closer and closer, suddenly, at the same time, both men reached for the paddles and furiously paddled to turn the boat around and head for the shore. They were using all their strength, but despite their best efforts, the boat continued to drift towards the open sea. They could not fight the strong pull out to sea. Now we could see the choppy white-capped waves ahead of us, so unlike the calm water in the bay. With only six inches between us and the sea it was obvious, even to a six year old, that the waves would quickly swamp our boat and sink it once we drifted just a little further. Again the men paddled even harder but this "current" was stronger than they were. Finally they were exhausted and pulled in the paddles to rest and catch their breath. They had managed to turn the boat around but weren't able to stop it from drifting steadily backwards towards the roar of the sea. No one said a word. I knew the cold sea water would not give even the adults a chance to survive. And me? Well, I knew I couldn't swim and the adults could not even save themselves as far out as we were, much less save me. No one said a word, not wanting to alarm me thinking I was unaware of our situation. The silence was tense and ominous. We all knew we were about to die.

My thoughts came back to my prayer after the walrus. Again I prayed silently, "Jesus, I don't want to die. I'm only six years old. Today is my birthday. I don't want to die on my birthday. Please help us get back to the land. Jesus, please save us."

Minutes later the two exhausted men were still resting, paddles out of the water with the back of our boat still drifting backwards towards the waves. Suddenly,

incredibly, the boat began to move slowly forward in the direction of the land yet neither of the men were paddling! My Father yelled, "Paddle!" and both men paddled furiously, but the boat did not move any faster when they started to paddle. Nor did it stop moving when they again tired out and stopped paddling! Steadily it moved nearer the land. We were all cheering when the front of the boat finally bumped against the bank. My Father jumped out before his friend and then both of them held the boat steady as I climbed out. As soon as my feet touched the rocky shore my Dad let go of the rope tied to the boat. The boat lunged backwards in the water and the current started pulling it out to sea! Springing quickly forward, my Dad grabbed the trailing rope and by using all his strength, he was able to pull the Eskimo boat onto the shore high enough to be out of the water and free of the current still trying to viciously tug it out to sea. He looked puzzled. He thought the current had changed, but it hadn't! He barely saved the borrowed boat from drifting out to sea! How did the boat start coming back to land if the current had not changed? And once we were out of the boat he could feel the current again pulling the boat back out towards the sea! It didn't make sense. It defied all logic!

I didn't tell him about my prayer. I think, in hind sight I should have so my Dad could understand it was God's miracle. I only said, again silently, "Thank you, Jesus!" And so since I was only newly six years old I have KNOWN that God Exists, and Jesus Exists and can do miracles if you ask with a child-like faith. He can intervene for you and He can save you from whatever situation you are in! I learned that day that God the Father and Jesus hear prayers and care about what is happening. They really actually care about us! I've never forgotten that day. It has shaped my entire life.

I learned that you really don't have to understand the "how" and "why". Don't make things complicated. Keep it simple. Prayer isn't complex with rules, thee's and thou's, or choirs singing in the background. It is direct, amazing and simple. I believe that is what Jesus meant when he answered his disciples about who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven in this way:

"... He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, 'Truly I say to you, **unless you are converted and become like children**, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.'" Matthew 18: 2-6, New American Standard Updated Bible.

God is looking for those with simple humility, a child-like attitude, and a willingness to obey Him to be a part of His Kingdom.

Mark adds this account: "People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was

indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, **anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.**’ And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.” Mark 10:13-16, New International Version Bible.

Since then I have witnessed many other miracles. Some were big and some were small, but they all have shown me His might, His great power and His unfailing love for his children-- both small and large. Yes, God does exist!