

Decisions and Miracles: And Now I See

By Irina V. Kratzer

This series highlights the lives of devoted women and their messages, excerpted from the book *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (2017). The complete book, along with seven bonus chapters, is available in the Gospel Library app and online at churchhistorianspress.org/at-the-pulpit.

There was a time in my life when I was touched by love and the Light of Christ. My life has since changed forever.

I know how it is to live without the gospel. I lived that way for 30 years. I was born in Russia of goodly parents. . . . When I grew up, I got married and gave birth to a lovely baby girl. Soon I successfully graduated from the university and got a job I really liked. And yet, . . . I was far from being happy.

. . . My marriage . . . gradually fell apart. . . . I was hardly able to provide simple food for my daughter and me. I sinned. I made one wrong choice after another. Hunger, depression, and poor decisions made my life miserable. I [blamed] bad fortune, not realizing that in many ways I was suffering the natural consequences of my sins. But how could I know that? Sin did not exist according to what I had been taught. . . .

Religion in [the Soviet Union] was prohibited after the Communist

Revolution in 1917. I was taught from kindergarten that there is no such thing as God and that only the Communist Party and Grandpa Lenin could bring happiness to the Russian people.

Religious people were badly persecuted in our society. Believers lost their jobs, were not allowed to go to school, and were labeled “crazy.” Everybody was required to take atheism classes at the university, where we proved that God does not exist. . . . I just did not think of God. Yet I felt pain in my heart about my poor choices. Later I would learn that the pain I felt was the Light of Christ giving me a sense of conscience to tell right from wrong. . . .

. . . Life seemed to me like a dark tunnel with only the grave at the end. I felt I was slowly dying. . . . I did not know how to pray, so I dreamed. . . . I dreamed that one day I would run away from everything miserable in my life and would start again from the beginning—happy and bright. I wanted so much



ABOUT SISTER KRATZER

Irina Valentinovna Kratzer (b. 1965) lived in Barnaul,

Siberia, where she went to

medical school and became a cardiologist. Medicine was not a lucrative field; months would go by when the hospital did not distribute paychecks. After divorcing her abusive husband in 1996, Irina felt exhausted and hopeless as she worked extra night shifts to support her mother and daughter on low wages.

Irina was raised in an atheist environment and did not believe in God. Nevertheless, one night she ventured a request: “All right, God, if you’re there, just let me know, because you probably don’t even care about me. Who am I to you, a little thing here trying to survive?”

A few weeks later, in August 1996, Irina met a man who would introduce her to the Church and help her travel to the United States to study English. Eight months after her arrival in Utah, USA, in April 1998, Irina married Tay Kratzer.

Sister Kratzer was a teacher in an Orem, Utah, Relief Society when she was invited to speak at the Brigham Young University Women’s Conference. Punctuation and capitalization standardized.

for my daughter to have a better life than I did. . . .

[Then] the Book of Mormon came into my life. I read one chapter every morning before I went to work. Reading this book, I learned that God lives, that Jesus is His Son, [who] came to this earth to help sinners like me. The more I read this book, the more I saw the gap between the teachings of Christ and the way I lived. I learned that was why my life was so miserable. . . .

. . . I was ready for a dramatic change. I will always remember the night . . . when I cried the whole night through, realizing that my life was not

good, that my poor decisions had hurt people I loved the most. It was the most painful experience of my life. I sobbed and pled the whole night. . . . By the end of the night I was exhausted and had no more tears. When the first morning light broke through, peace and relief came to me. I heard the words: “Here is my hand. I will lead you and guide you. But you have to promise me that you will change.” And I did; I promised. I wanted this guidance and help more than anything else. . . .

I did not know, on that painful and joyous night in Russia, how great Christ’s promises are. I did not know then that

in just a little while I would travel to America where I would learn more about the gospel, and I would soon be baptized. . . . I did not know that my daughter would come to America to join us in happiness. . . .

. . . He gave me so many miracles that I did not have even a little chance to doubt His divine hand in my life. . . .

Walk with Christ! Hold onto His hand! Feast upon His word. Drink in His light with your every pore, with all your soul. In times of hardships, you won’t be left in a dark tunnel but in the light of His love with brighter light always ahead of you. ■

