

The idea of God had always been funny to me.

A big man in the sky watching our every move. Woah, weird.

But my parents had basically hammered the knowledge of His presence into my head and for all my life, I had known Him just to be two things; Fair and nice.

I never really spoke to Him much when things started kicking off for me at school.

I had a lot going for me.

I was one of the popular girls and had everyone surrounding me wanting us to be friends.

I was awkward looking at that point but still I had a lot of guys who were attracted to me, one specifically caught my attention but how about I save the juicy details for later?

I was changing from a British based school to a Nigerian one, and have you know they have totally different teaching systems.

Coming to school on the first day, I was determined to fit in. For the first few terms I didn't. I wasn't only bullied for my accent (which they thought was fake) but also for my glasses (which at that time were square framed and had lenses that usually fell off if one pushed too hard), so from a school where everything was 'honky – dory' to one where the reality of life starts to hit you a little harder.

I expected this new school to be just like the old one with loving people, a welcoming spirit and basically just a rosy-everything is perfect-atmosphere, but it wasn't. Far from it I'd say.

Finally, I got a break when I was asked out by a senior. I was on cloud nine! It seemed like the best thing ever and from that moment, my popularity as well as my confidence sky rocketed because now I was conversing with seniors. Seniors! The seniors who people said were

mean were actually the same ones coming to meet me regarding this guy. Through this, I made friends with a lot of them and I don't think I could've described just how loved my little self felt to be surrounded by people older than me who actually wanted to talk to me.

Yes, I was actually a prayerful Christian, the type that would whisper a few prayers before bed or say 'Thank God' whenever the need arose. But at that point, I let all cares go, I was swearing (even though till now, I no longer swear or say any curse words), speaking in vulgar terms and basically doing whatever I felt was necessary for people to see me as cool and down to earth.

My confidence was on a whole other level and I jumped from relationship to relationship because they made me feel something. I thought they were enough to fill the emptiness, I thought it would cover up every thing I was missing, but it didn't. And at one point, it got worse.

I had loved God from a distance, I felt like to be truly loved by Him I needed to be perfect. I thought I had to strip myself of every human emotion to be good enough for God.

Yes, I was taught that God is ever present, ever faithful, ever forgiving but these words would just hover around my head not really taking any deep root in my soul. I felt like pastors were people who were perfect in every way, I thought only they could read bibles and understand, I thought only they had the responsibility to teach and share the gospel.

But on the 15th of May, 2021, I felt like I everything I ever knew was gone. I had made a lot of mistakes in the name of trying to fit in. Mistakes that affected friendships but I didn't care at that time because I thought I had everything I needed. On this faithful day however, God revealed to me the intentions of the boy I liked, and after confronting him not only did I find myself in a raging battle of comparison with his new girlfriend, things in itself, blew out of proportion.

I had never felt more hurt before than I did at that time, I don't know why it hurt so much but I owed it to the fact that my previous school shielded me from the world. It made me think that there was nothing to be scared of, that I could put my heart on the line for anyone and they would guard it as their most prized possession.

I entered into a false state of depression at first. I needed an excuse for pity. I would walk around with 'nobody loves me' written across my face (not literally) and a victim mentality talking about how my crush had ditched me for a prettier, model looking replacement, but another thing that my former school didn't teach me was that, sometimes, people weren't always going to take time out to ask you how you were doing or render their services.

I felt alone, everyone withdrew from me to the point where I decided to cook up a plan to force people's attention by claiming that I wanted to attempt suicide.

Yes, stupid. I was actually willing to take my own life for people who didn't create it.

That just made everything a 100 times worse. Looking back now, I do realize I wasn't in the right state of mind and I see how telling someone this would've been the right thing to do, but nobody was there to listen. It was like the world was moving without me.

After that time, students, teachers and even my crush tormented me with the memories of my suicide attempt even long after I had tried it.

Mocking me.

I wondered where God was and why He had allowed this to happen, I prayed that He would punish those that hurt me and for a period of time, I even took Christianity seriously hoping I could gain God's trust and love so He would repay them for what they did to me.

Of course, coming to God with false intentions isn't right. He knows our heart and discern our thoughts, so obviously He saw right through my act. He saw that I hadn't quite learnt from my experience so He made sure that I had completely nothing so I would remember that in Him I have everything.

2022 was a defining year of my life.

I remember praying to God to help me win the democratically conducted school elections that take place every 2 years. I told Him that I want to know that He's still by my side. And yes, I won as the Head Girl thanks to Him, but one mistake I made was thinking that the position would make me feel accomplished. I thought it would cover up for everything and that with that title, I wouldn't need anything else. But I still needed Christ and I didn't know that until that year came to a close.

By November, I had already started walking closely with God, getting to know Him better for the right reasons and all. I still wasn't really sure what to think about Him, but I knew that He was all I had. I might as well give it a shot.

So for the last few months of 2022, I committed my ways to the Lord and for the first time gained my tongues (that is, speaking in tongues), now THAT made me feel accomplished. I also felt like this heavy weight and burden had been lifted off of me and that I could finally breathe.

I felt like I got myself back. I got my smile back but most importantly, I got God back. Now, just brushing the surface of my experiences to some people it may seem like they are insignificant or not that serious, but you really have to see things from someone's perspective before judging what they're facing.

Yes, God taught me that too. How to not be a hypocritical Christian and how not to judge others.

On December 31st, 2022, I sat down to do a reflection with God, thinking back to everything that has happened and how far He has brought me. He kept me alive. He kept me going. He kept me safe. So, that day, I promised God that I would serve Him with everything I have. I promised not to take His love for granted and I prayed, I prayed more seriously than I ever had and I know He heard me because as I entered into the new year, I felt like a whole new person. I could love again.

Till now, I'm following God and walking in the path that he paved for me, I am happy to say that I am 16 and serving the Lord with my heart. He is taking me by the hand and leading me all the way.

Now, I face even deeper challenges because people don't understand what has brought me here. They don't understand what God is doing in my life. They see me as weird now because I read the Bible, because I trust in Him, because I can no longer follow my fleshly desires. But I don't need their approval, currently, I am trusting God to get me through a very serious situation involving my friends at school and I. Because I am representing Christ, obviously, I am facing a lot of backlash and sometimes I get lonely. I get confused. Frustrated. Sometimes the things they say hurt me, but now I have someone who cares, who I can tell and talk to and cry to.

Now I know God as more than just 2 words. He is my Father, my best friend, my lover, my Saviour, my vindicator, my Creator and so much more, I am still learning more about Him but as at today, I have a new name to add to the list 'My Refuge.'

So I am happy, as Paul said in the Bible, sad yet rejoicing, poor yet rich. I would never regret a thing that has happened just because it brought me to Christ. And now I trust Him, He is still all I have and I no longer see the need for love or things of this world, for I focus my eyes on God, seeking first His kingdom...I think you can finish the rest of that verse.

