Paula Lohnes grew up in a small Ohio town as a “cultural” Christian who received salvation at age 14 during an evangelist’s visit to town. From that point until age 54, she describes her life as 40 years “wondering” in the desert. An honors student and gifted athlete, Paula developed questions about her faith in college as she was exposed to many good people whose beliefs ranged from Judaism to atheism. While her own belief in God never wavered, she drifted to a philosophy of relativism, concluding that truth was not absolute, but rather relative to frame of reference.

After a college knee injury sidelined her athletic pursuits, Paula graduated and became a wife and mother of two. Although she stayed involved in sports as a high school coach, even an active life could not keep her from suffering with mild depression as her husband, Bill, became highly successful in his career. A reconnection with another passion, tennis, provided some fulfillment as she officiated professional matches over the next 13 years.

As life continued, Paula continued to ponder its purpose. She explored Shirley’s MacLaine’s book about reincarnation and interviewed a female minister she admired, but no answers were revealed. She began to challenge her own perceptions of relative truth, wondering, “How can everything be true?”

In 1992, the Lohnes family moved from the Midwest to Atlanta, and 13-year-old daughter, Holly, began attending church as well as a youth discipleship program. One Sunday evening, Holly broke into tears at the edge of her mother’s bed. “Mom and Dad,” Holly said, “I’m afraid I’m not going to see you in heaven.” At that moment, Paula became a seeker of God’s truth. Four years later, after a series of intensive Bible studies, Paula surrendered her heart to Christ 40 years after her original date of salvation, but only a month after her husband had taken the same leap of faith.

In 2003, Paula and Bill joined Mount Pisgah UMC, where Bill was led to introduce a group of men to the discipleship study he had just completed. Witnessing the positive changes in her husband gave Paula the desire to follow suit in women’s ministry.