

My Salvation Testimony

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My life before accepting Christ:

I was seeking satisfaction in all the wrong places including:

- Pornography
- Promiscuity
- Getting drunk
- Getting high on pot
- Taking trips on acid (LSD)
- Lifeless church services
- Eastern religions
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Tarot
- Various other New Age practices

Each of these promised much but delivered very little. None of these provided real peace, love, joy, contentment, serenity, comfort or meaning.

I wasted my time, money, energy and hope going down these dead end paths. There were always plenty of other people doing the same activity. Most of us were seeking for:

- Illusive happiness
- Comfort to the discomfort of their daily life
- An escape from boredom, drudgery, disappointment
- A way to connect with spiritual truth
- A substance, activity, relationship that would medicate the deep soul wounds

These unbiblical alternatives never worked. So we just tried harder, ingested more, tried the newest stuff, did things in different combinations, got more busy making money, read yet another book, blamed someone, etc.

THE NARRATIVE OF MY LIFE BEFORE CHRIST

As a small child my family had attended church regularly. Before 7 years old I learned some Bible stories about some major Bible characters.

My family attended less often until it was zero. During junior high and high school asked my playmates and classmates who attended church, to prove God to me. All they had was weak platitudes. They did not have a personal testimony of their rebirth

have evidence of a changed life
have a testimony of answered prayers
know any apologetics (the order and design in creation demands a Creator)
know what books to recommend

I graduated from high school in 1971 and then attended Georgia Tech. I sought but did not find God at three large campus ministries. I never heard the gospel message in my dozens of visits.

I joined and became a leader in a Greek Fraternity. I got drunk often. Promiscuity like pornography promised much, but after a short while left the same emptiness.

From my middle teens to my early twenties, I was an agnostic. I was not sure if God existed but I did not think so. The dominant question in my soul was – “Does God exist?” If He does not exist then 1) the coffin is the end of the road, 2) indulging my flesh is just as good a purpose as any and 3) church is just a meaningless religious club.

However, if God does exist, then who is God and what does He have to say about how I am to live my life? I intuitively felt that idolizing pleasure was not the noblest way to honor God.

While at home during my junior summer I met a man that was a multimillionaire. He was rumored to be playboy with girlfriends all over the place. He invited college students to come clean up his yacht during the afternoon. Then he would pay us by providing all the beer and burgers we could consume that night. When I met him I was impressed with his misery. He was using heavy drinking to escape the pain of life. That behavior was just like me. God used this encounter to destroy my deep-seated motivation to become a rich playboy myself. After all, why invest the next decades of my life to climb that mountain of material success -- if in the end, all it offers is to use more expensive booze to escape the same emptiness of a purposeless life?

During those same months I grew very close to my grandmother. She was weak from the cancer treatments. She moved in with my family. I tended to her needs for many weeks. At the end of the summer she slipped into a coma and suddenly died. Her death confronted me with my mortality. This shock led me to consider eternal and spiritual matters much more carefully.

When I returned to school that fall I got big news from my girl friend. We had planned to marry after graduation. (This was the first of three engagements. However I have never been married; and I do not have any children.) She had decided to become a surgeon that summer. She no longer had time for me. (She had worked that summer as the receptionist at the office of her aunt, who was a surgeon.)

That fall was very painful for me. For the first time I skipped classes. I lacked motivation or support to study. My grades were horrible that term. The next term I choose to not

return in order to get some direction for my life. Into this vacuum came a cult named Arica.

I took the training to become a teacher in the cult. I was qualified to teach the basics of meditation, yoga and their eclectic brand of eastern philosophy.

Many of the members of the cult were habitual drug users. I got hooked on pot. I dropped acid several times. I had a near-death experience when my body was full of illegal chemicals. Later while high on drugs, I called my mother. My speech was slurred. She was concerned and asked if I was using drugs. I admitted that I was. She asked all her friends to ask all their friends to pray for me.

After several months there were people all over the country praying for me. God supernaturally removed the desire for drugs. Then God dried up the relationships with the cult members. I returned to my hometown to rest and seek new direction.

I got a dead end job. My life was stuck in a rut. I cried out to God. He led me to attend charismatic worship services. As the people worshiped God with all their hearts the Holy Spirit moved mightily among the people. God dwells in the praises of His people. At long last, it was the Holy Spirit of God that convinced me that God exists.

God gradually drew me to join that community. I moved into one of the many households. In the context of loving relationships, the Holy Spirit performed my drug rehabilitation. My mind had been scrambled on drugs. Gradually He gave me back my right mind.

The circumstances surrounding inviting Christ into my life:

After going through drug rehab in a loving Christian community (18 months), I moved into an apartment. I missed the Christian music. So I tuned in my clock radio to get the music. And then as a bonus I heard the true gospel message for the first time.

The preachers, teachers and singers mentioned having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is a one-on-one matter. It was not acceptance with God due to church attendance or moral lifestyle. It took months for the simple gospel message to penetrate my soul. I needed to unlearn much religious thinking. Like Nicodemus, I did not quickly understand what it meant to be born again.

I knew the historical facts about Easter. What I had not understood was that when Jesus Christ hung on the Cross, He bore ALL the sins of ALL humanity in His Body. There the just judgment for the sins were poured out on the Lamb of God. The sacrifice was perfect. The forgiveness was complete.

I felt that something was missing in my spiritual life. The invitations to receive Christ as my Savior over the radio and at some of the churches I was visiting, did not reach me.

I attended a church that the radio station advertised. At the first service (during the worship and before the preaching) there was an open altar call. People could come forward to pray with the altar workers for any need. I was starting a new job the next day. I came forward to ask for prayer for the new job.

The altar worker asked if I had ever publicly confessed Christ as my Savior. I indicated that I had not and he led me in a sinner's prayer. Immediately after that prayer and for the next three days I felt like a brand new person on the inside. I became a new creature in Christ on January 16, 1977.

How my life has changed as a result of becoming a new creature in Christ:

Minutes after I was born again, the pastor invited those who had not been water baptized to do so at the next opportunity, which was in two weeks. I called the church office to learn more. At 23 years old and having been around all kinds of liberal churches -- I had never heard of adult baptism. I had been sprinkled as an infant.

God used a Sunday school teacher to guide me to the appropriate verses. He answered my questions and prayed with me over the phone. Thankfully when I went down into the waters it was very meaningful to me. I identified with the death, burial and resurrection of my Lord Jesus Christ. I left my allegiance to the old man in that watery grave. I was fully committed to live unto God for the rest of my days.

God gave me a massive hunger for the Word of God. The Bible came alive for me. It had been a book of boring biographies and a confusing tangle of tales. After the Holy Spirit came to dwell in me, then gospel stories came alive. Many verses spoke directly to my heart. I was eager to read and reread the New Testament. As I did this, the Person of Jesus Christ became very real and personal to me.

I wanted to know and do the will of God. I gained an obsession to seek God's will for my life. The Holy Spirit and the words of Scripture made me aware that I was one that had been forgiven much; so I loved God much. Like the prodigal son I had made a mess of my life. But my loving Heavenly Father accepted me just as I was. The way to respond to His great love was to keep His commandments. As Christ said, I have come to do your will o God.

Before my rebirth it was very difficult to relate with people. It took great effort to engage in meaningful conversations. I had to work up the willingness to care about someone beyond my family and closest friends. After Jesus came to live His life in me -- love for others has been much more spontaneous. His commandment to love one another guides me to stretch my Comfort Zones. Over the years God has used me to express His loving kindness to all sorts of people. It has gotten easier to care and show concern in words and deeds.

During the last 25 years I have witnessed hundreds of answers to my prayers and the prayers of others. God is alive and real to me. I have oriented my life to the fact that someday I will give an account to Him for the stewardship of my time, talents and treasures.

My life has meaning and purpose. I am glad to abide in the Vine and as a branch bear His fruit for His glory. Repeatedly that fruit is in the form of encouragement and exhortation. I seek to serve the saints. I enjoy equipping those who are involved in ministry. I am passionate about clearly and boldly presenting the pure gospel message. I want new believers to understand the basics of the faith.

There have been many bumps along this pilgrim path. There have been many disappointments and frustrations. I have learned to look to Jesus and the precious promises of His Word. The grace and mercy of God are real to me. I know the comfort of the Holy Spirit. I can comfort others as I have been comforted.

I have assurance that if I were to die today, I would go to Heaven. I have an abiding hope that Jesus has prepared a home for me. Surely I shall live with God forever. I have a resurrection body waiting for me. This eternal security is based on what Christ accomplished on my behalf while on the Cross. His shed blood is the perfect payment for all my sins past, present and future. My salvation is based on what He has DONE and never on what I can DO.

When I was born again (1/16/77) ALL my unrighteousness was imputed to Him and ALL His righteous was imputed to me. I was sealed by the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ. The divinely inspired and holy Word of God promises me that:

- NOTHING can separate me from the love of God
- NOTHING can take me out of the Hand of God
- NOTHING that the Bible says will fail to be fulfilled in due season
- NOTHING can prevent God from keeping His new covenant with me
- NOTHING is greater than God and His Word

The gift of eternal life was freely offered. Even the tiny faith needed to appropriate His grace came from God. The truth is that it was the Holy Spirit drawing me to God over those many years before I accepted His gracious gift of eternal life. Therefore ALL the glory goes to God for such a great salvation!