

Sharing Our Story

One of the most powerful and effective ways to share Jesus with others is to simply tell them your own story. Often Christians call this "sharing our testimony." Sharing our testimony is telling others who we were before we became Christians, how we encountered Christ, and who we are now that we live by faith in Christ. Sharing our own personal journey helps people learn not only of who we are, but also of who God is and how he saves.

All people need to hear and have a basic understanding of the facts of the gospel. These include: God being righteous and holy; that all people are born unrighteous and therefore deserving of God's judgment; that Jesus was judged in mankind's place; and that by faith in Jesus and what He has done for all who believe, we are saved from God's judgment. These facts must be communicated and defended with reasoning from God's Word. Yet, these facts alone rarely move the human heart. God created us to connect with others on a personal level, and a chief way we connect with others is through our stories.

The Apostle Paul shared his story. Paul was burdened for the Christians in Galatia. In his letter to them he said they had been bewitched by false teachers. Those in the Galatian church were in desperate need of theological correction. They needed to return to the truth because salvation is only in the one true gospel of the one true Jesus Christ. Paul was well-equipped for this task. He was highly educated having studied under the renowned Rabbi Gamaliel. In becoming a Christian Paul put all of his

training and brain power to work in preaching and defending the gospel, particularly how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet, in his letter to the Galatians Paul did not begin with a deep-dive into the Old Testament prophecies and types showing that Jesus was the culmination of them all. Paul did not begin by contrasting God's promise to Abraham with His giving of the Law to Moses. No, Paul began with his personal story.

Paul needed the Galatians to trust him. He needed them to know that he was authentic, the real deal, not just another teacher spouting his personal opinion. He needed them to know that the gospel is not simply a matter of ideas, but a matter of life and death, a matter that changed his life. So, Paul shared his own journey.

Paul began with his life before he became a Christian. In Galatians 1:13-14 Paul said, "For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers." Then Paul shared about how he encountered Christ. In Galatians 1:15-16a He said, "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me..." This was Paul briefly describing his radical conversion on the road to Damascus recorded in Acts 9. Notice how Paul gave all the credit to God.

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Testimonies

In this issue we focus on our salvation stories, and how they bring glory to God.



"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." (1 Timothy 1:15)

-Apostle Paul

"One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." (John 9:25)

-The Blind Man who Jesus Healed

"God subdued my heart."

-John Calvin

"I could have risen that moment and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the Precious Blood of Christ."

-Charles Spurgeon

"In his heavy European accent, he explained God's plan for my salvation in a simple way...it set forth simply the facts I needed to know in order to become God's child."

-Billy Graham

"It seems to me, that in some respects, I was a far better Christian, for two or three years after my first conversion, than I am now; and lived in a more constant delight and pleasure; yet of late years, I have had a more full and constant sense of the absolute sovereignty of God, and a delight in that sovereignty"

-Jonathan Edwards

"I was enabled by divine light to see the perfect righteousness of Christ and the freeness and riches of his grace, with such clearness, that my soul was drawn forth to trust Him for salvation."

-Isaac Backus

Sharing our Story

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It was God who set Paul apart before Paul was born. It was God who called Paul in His grace. It was God who was pleased to reveal His Son Jesus to Paul. Paul's conversion was a mighty work of God. Our conversion, and the conversion of every believer in Jesus, is a mighty work of God. This is important. When we share our testimony we don't want our hearers to think much of us, or that somehow we did something for God to save us. No, we want to make much of God because it is God alone who saves. Yes, we believed, we trusted in Jesus and His work on our behalf for our salvation, but even our faith comes by God's grace. Therefore God gets all the credit.

Paul didn't stop sharing his story with his conversion though, and we shouldn't either. It's crucial that we share who we are now that we are saved. We need to share what God has done in us and in our lives as we've lived in a relationship with Him. So, beginning in 1:16b and going all the way to 2:14 Paul shared his journey since becoming a Christian. In part Paul did this to establish his authority as an Apostle. Paul also did this so that the Galatians would know that the one who wrote to them was not only one who knew "of" the gospel, but one who had "experienced the power of God" in the gospel. In Romans 1:16 Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." Paul could say this with great authenticity because he was one who was obviously saved by the power of God in the gospel through his faith. Who could deny that Paul was a changed man? Before Paul was a Christian he was a public figure, a rising star among the Pharisees. In becoming a Christian Paul left behind much, and his life took a different

direction. This gave Paul "street cred." He didn't just talk the talk, he walked the walk. He wasn't a man who merely knew "about" God, but one who had clearly "experienced" God, and continued to do so. Many people were willing to listen to Paul because of how his story spoke to the legitimacy of God's salvation.

Most of our stories are probably not as dramatic as Paul's, but some may be. Either way, we have an opportunity to share Jesus with others by sharing how Jesus has changed our lives, and continues to do so. We don't have to worry about saying all the right words. By God's grace we've been born again. We've gone from death to life. We've experienced and live in the salvation of God. As we share our journey with others, we're sharing the living God with them. We're sharing the good news of the gospel, that they too can be saved by believing and trusting in the same Jesus who saved us.

-Matt Peery

Young Man, Look to Jesus!

I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair now, had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning, when I was going to a place of worship. When I could go no further, I turned down a court and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there might be a dozen or fifteen people. The minister did not come that morning: snowed up, I suppose. A poor man, a shoemaker, a tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had nothing else to say. The text was, 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth' [Isa 45:22]. He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter.

There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in the text. He began thus: 'My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, "Look." Now that does not take a deal of effort. It ain't lifting your foot or your finger; it is just "look." Well, a man need not go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man need not be worth a thousand a year to look. Anyone can look; a child can look. But this is what the text says.

Then it says, "Look unto Me." 'Ay,' said he, in broad Essex, 'many of ye are looking to yourselves. No use looking there. You'll never find comfort in yourselves.' Then the good man followed up his text in this way: 'Look unto Me: I am sweating great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hanging on the Cross. Look: I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend; I am sitting at the Father's right hand. O, look to Me! Look to Me!'

When he had got about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes, he was at the length of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. He then said, 'Young man, you look very miserable.' Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit before.

However, it was a good blow struck. He continued: 'And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you do not obey my text. But if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.' Then he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist can, 'Young man, look to Jesus Christ.' There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that moment and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the Precious Blood of Christ.

-Charles Spurgeon

Influencers

When God called me to Himself, into a relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior, I was forced to evaluate my whole life, including relationships with other people. I am not by nature a very relational person, so this was, and still is, a struggle for me. At that time early in my Christian walk, it was to me as if, "...I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues...'" (Rev 18:4a) I needed to come out of the life I led up until that point, including avoiding negative influences.

A big part of my life up until then was hanging out with my friends, drinking, going to the honkey-tonk bars, and hunting & fishing with them. When God called me, I found that I had little in common with those friends since a large part of my time with them involved drinking, smoking, and partying. For a while I tried to straddle the line, telling them what had changed in me, and why I could no longer spend so much time with them drinking and partying, but maybe a little time in the fishing and hunting part of it. I soon found that the temptation for me to fall back into the old ways (which happened several times) was too much. They couldn't understand nor accept the change in me, and took my refusal to drink and party, and even avoiding the fishing & hunting, as personal rejections, so they basically quit calling me. God allowed me to be cut off from my former life, even to the point of finding it necessary to change my employment.

So much change was very uncomfortable, and even hurtful, but God soon gave me a replacement: He gave me another, better family in the Church. This was a family who didn't drag me down like the old friends did, but lifted me up and encouraged me. It was as the apostle Paul said to the church, "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (1Th 5:11) Now I had friends who helped me as I struggled to submit my whole life into compliance with what the Holy Spirit changed in my heart. My brothers

and sisters in Christ were used by God to lead me to a different way of thinking: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Php 4:8) It was much easier for me to ponder the lovely when I was surrounded by others who themselves pondered the lovely! As a weak new Christian, being in the embrace of the Church family was a critical time for me to, "...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2Pe 3:18a)

Yes, during this time I struggled with desires to return to the old ways. In fact, I still struggle with this (nostalgia is a real disease!). However, when I find myself in the presence of brothers and sisters in Christ at Spring Creek who love to ponder the lovely Lord and Savior Jesus, and share their struggles with me, I am strengthened. Praise God that He has given us each other so that we can live out the relational reality of His Holy Spirit at work in us. This sharing of life together is critical, influencing me stay true to the Gospel of Salvation in Jesus, and His calling for me to serve His purposes. Thank you my brothers and sisters for staying faithful to the Gospel: In doing so, you are lifting me up; you are my social & spiritual influencers!

-Joe Council

He Took My Place

I shouldn't be writing this. I'm nothing but a sinner, saved by God's amazing grace through faith. Galatians 2:20 says, "I've been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." I was recently reading a Bible study by Sinclair Ferguson that pointed out how God can use any situation and any person to work for His good. I believe that statement is the best way to describe how God worked in my life to

bring me to His glorious salvation. My experience wasn't a one-time event. I cannot say that on a specific day my life looked different and I was complete. That wasn't and isn't how my experience with God has been.

I had accepted Christ at a young age. I realized that He was the almighty. I was baptized and continued living life. I lived as a sinner. I attended church on occasions and prayed, but truthfully I lived however I wanted and did whatever I wanted. It wasn't until much later in my life that things started to change. It was a series of horrible choices, followed by consequences that were far reaching. I finally hit a wall. A wall so big that I couldn't avoid it. I knew down in my soul that God was the only way. He was truly the King and I wanted more than just an occasional visit with Him. I wanted all God had for me. I wanted a changed life. I wanted a life of following Christ. He was loving and gracious and kind. He met me in my sinful state and I rededicated my life to Him. I desire to know Him and love Him more and more every single day that He blesses me to live.

Salvation comes at a tremendous price. I didn't pay the cost of my sins. Jesus paid for all that I did - and here is the crazy thing - all that I continue to do. What an incredible realization! He didn't just go to the cross for a few sins, he went through the most horrific of deaths for a woman who hadn't been born yet. He died for me and took my place! He took your place too. If you will allow yourself to think about Jesus, think about the fact that Jesus took what you and I did, and kept on taking it, until he died. Why? So we can LIVE FOR HIM! Why? So our lives will have eternal meaning and effect. No one knows their expiration date. Only God knows. He took my place so I can use whatever talents He has bestowed on me to tell others about His goodness until He calls me home.

I shouldn't be writing this article. I'm writing this to tell you, precious eternal soul, you matter to God. If you don't know Him, seek Him! He died for you too. He took our place, so praise and follow Him!

-Mary Malone

He is Still Working on Me And I am Thankful!

*But now, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
(Isaiah 64:8)*

Thinking back to many years ago, I remember sitting in children's church at First Baptist Church in Bourbon, MO. A very kind, energetic lady by the name of Micky Sanders often led worship time before our Bible lesson. She would hold up a rather large, colorful, cardboard songbook (no projector screen at that time), so we could follow along and sing praises together. I remember the enthusiasm she had when she shared these songs with us. I remember one of the songs titled, "He's Still Working on Me." I find myself still singing this from time to time. My parents took us to church every Sunday. If we had to miss a Sunday for any reason, Dad and Mom would call us into the living room and we would pray and read scripture together. They would set aside time for us to spend with God, and I noticed. Many of our relatives lived on the same gravel road as we did. We would often get together and no matter which house we were gathering at, we prayed before meals, and I noticed. I also remember spending time with several foster kids that my aunt and uncle lovingly brought into their home. I remember my Grandpa Reiner reaching out with a smile and open arms seeking opportunities wherever he was to share Jesus. In fact, Mom and I were in the car with him when he picked up a needy man who was walking on the outer road on our way back from Sullivan. Mom and I exchanged glances and Mom quickly moved to the back seat with me, but I noticed how Grandpa lovingly greeted this man, talked with him, and helped him get back on his way. I was blessed to have family members who demonstrated a great respect for God and for others (1 John 4:11).

I noticed these character traits in my family and they still resonate with me to this day. People around me showed me that life is not about us; it is about God and others. They

were not perfect people, of course, but as a child I was noticing their behaviors and how they handled their time. Having a relationship with Jesus, praying to Him, trusting in Him, worshiping Him, and serving Him was important! I was beginning to think about my own relationship with Christ.

At the age of nine, my parents told us that Dad's job might require us to move to Rolla. WHOA!! STOP!! At the time, that sounded awful. My family was in Bourbon and my very close cousin, Rachel, lived right down the road from me! Rolla seemed way too big and scary, not to mention it had three elementary schools! However, God had a plan for us (Proverbs 16:9). In 1986 we moved to Rolla, which meant a new neighborhood, a new school, and the search for a new church. During this time period, I was having more and more thoughts about my own salvation. I knew that I was a sinner and needed Jesus. Even though I was brought up in a Christian family, I knew that I was my own person and I needed Jesus' saving grace. We were visiting different churches at that time, but I was ready to have conversations. I was very shy, but knew my parents were always available to talk to, so I went to them at the age of 10 and was saved at home on October 4, 1987. Dad and Mom read scripture with me, prayed with me, hugged me, and celebrated with me. That, of course, was a very special day when I received the gift of salvation. (Eph. 2:8-9)

After visiting and spending time at several churches, my parents felt God leading them to make Spring Creek Baptist Church their church home. It was at Spring Creek that I made my salvation public and was baptized. At the time, the church didn't have a baptistry, so I was baptized by Leroy Nixon in Mabel Carney's swimming pool along with a few others. It was a special time with both grandparents in attendance.

My life was forever changed when I accepted Jesus and made Him a part of my life (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Holy Spirit had provided a peace like none other (John 14:27). I know now

that the move to Rolla was part of God's plan even though it was extremely tough at the time. I am thankful for all of the people that God put in my path both in Bourbon and in Rolla to point me toward Christ.

Moving forward many years to the present time, I see that God is still molding me. I pray that I won't get so caught up in life that I don't stop and notice the ways in which He is strengthening me and guiding me. As an art teacher I see many students who come from different backgrounds. It is eye-opening, overwhelming and extremely stressful at times. Many of these children are not experiencing the same childhood that I did. They are not noticing the same respect for God and others that I did, and that is not their fault! Sadly, many of them are not seeing this in their homes, yet God has helped me extend grace and understanding to them as I teach them and deal with their behaviors. I pray each day that as I am working with them, I show them God's love, and remember that they are taking notice of what I do and how I act. Not only do I hope that my students notice Christ at work in me, but I also hope that I am setting an example for my own children. I was blessed to have many people who pointed me toward Christ. May I never take that for granted, but continually strive to use it for God's glory. Earlier I mentioned the song that I learned so many years ago, "He's Still Working on Me." Here is a verse from it:

*In the mirror of His Word
Reflections that I see
Makes me wonder why He never gave
up on me
But He loves me as I am and helps me
when I pray
Remember He's the potter, I'm the clay
How loving and patient he must be
'Cause He's still workin' on me*

No matter what chapter of life I am in, I pray that I will continue to grow and trust in Him as Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

-Trish Robinson

A Father Found by Christ

My childhood was relatively peaceful, being fun and family centered. I played games with my aunts and cousins. My uncles were not much older than me and we would wrestle, race and play basketball several times a week. My brother and sister were my best friends, which was a good thing since we hung out together every summer day. My mom and dad were loving and engaged with us. For me growing up, I enjoyed each year more than the one before.

However, as I reached my earliest teen years, I started to see something was off. I had memories that I couldn't process, such as a harsh word or a slammed door. I don't know how old I was when I finally realized that the bottle under the driver's seat was not in fact my dad's medicine as he described. My father's drinking problem had gotten fairly severe. It seemed he never missed a chance to partake. And so, my seemingly stable home was showing cracks.

As a young teen I was invited to an Easter egg hunt at a small Baptist church. My mom said, "I think churches do Mass on Easter Sunday. Don't take it because it's wine." It turned out just to be grape juice, but it is an indicator of how little we knew of church culture. We kids started attending church regularly, so someone picked us up and dropped us off every Sunday, which was a nice break for my parents (three hours of free daycare!). When we came home we talked about the people and the activities. Soon Mom started attending and every so often Dad would go.

One day the pastor stopped by and invited my dad to church. The pastor must have seen some hesitancy, so he tried a different approach. He explained there was a church workday coming up and it would be good to have an extra

hand. My dad, who was a skilled carpenter, jumped at the chance.

He proudly took his own tools and enjoyed the fellowship with the other men. After a short time, he cut a piece of plywood, along with the church's table it was laying on. With a group of men he didn't really know, he expected an angry mob. He figured, "If one of these yahoos cut my table, I know how I would react!" But instead, everybody laughed, which completely shocked my dad. He double-checked every face in the room and finding no condemnation he started to laugh also.

He listened as they gave him a good ribbing. But then the laughs turned toward one of the men who had asked that new items be purchased for the fellowship hall, but was given a thumbs down at the last business meeting. The pastor said, Well Earl, it looks like you might get new tables after all. My dad was in awe. These two minutes are still mentioned from time to time though 40 years has come and gone.

One day Dad said he was going to church, but when the time came he stayed home. The rest of us went to church as usual but when we got home my dad was on the kitchen floor apologizing and weeping. Now today he can hardly say the name of a grandchild without tearing up, but this was the first time we had ever seen him cry. He got up and said, "Things are going to be different now." I was hooked. I believed him immediately, but others had to be convinced. It was a slow process of rebuilding relationships, but he never missed church again. It stopped being a question. We knew we were going. Also, he never took another drink. It was probably a struggle, but he never went back to it.

A month later we opened Christmas presents. What was our

first present? We all received leather Bibles with our name inscribed. To me this was an outward sign of an inward change. It was the day we knew my dad's promise that things would be different would be kept. And then before any other gifts were opened, we read the Christmas story. This tradition has continued every year since.

The next night we all sat down to read scripture together. My brother, sister and I only knew a few verses. We looked at my mom and dad and said, "Where do we start?" They talked it over and decided we should begin in the New Testament. My sister Jennifer was up first: Matthew Chapter 1 was read or at least attempted. Aminadab, Perez, Hezron, Jeconiah, Uzziah, Jehoshaphat... Mom said, "Wait, this one has a lot of names." So, we went to another passage. I was glad because I found that chapter to be boring and complicated.

We had family devotions and Bible studies throughout my High School years. It would take a while before we began to really understand the gospel. And of course, years before understanding that all of God's word pointed to Christ. But now that genealogy of Jesus recorded in Matthew is far from boring. It is beautiful and I read it in awe. Jacob, Rahab, Ruth, David, Josiah - those names leading to the name above all other names. And at His name, every knee will bow.

It's easy to see that lists like these are filled with sinners. You can add my father's name to that list, along with mine. But when my father realized that there wasn't anything more he could do, he reached out to Christ on a cold kitchen floor. God changed his heart of stone into a heart of flesh, showing again that this is impossible with man, but with God all things are possible.

-Toby Parker

Is MY Goodness Enough?

God said through the prophet Ezekiel, "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you." (Ezekiel 36: 26-27a) When God truly saves a person, He is the only one who does it: turning a heart of stone into a heart of flesh.

I was blessed to live in a Christian home. I knew my parents were not perfect. They had their flaws, but they raised me to attend church regularly. My dad was a deacon and Sunday school teacher and my mom was the church pianist and children's teacher. We were in church every time the doors were open, so I heard from the Word of God since birth - "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11)

The first time I went "forward" at church was during a revival when I was young. I don't remember my age, maybe 7 or 8. My friend went before me, and I thought it would be a good idea to follow along. It sure made my parents proud and I knew I did a "good" thing.

I always tried to be a "good" girl, a "good" student, a "good" child. During high school, I made some hard decisions not to follow my past friends but to go on my own. I joined the local high school Christian clubs and with the help of some fellow vocal students started a Christian singing group called "Xaltation". We would go around singing at various churches and even got to open for a popular Christian artist. During that time, I noticed something was not right. Yes, I was being a "good" girl, but something was missing in all MY goodness.

My senior year in high school came and went. It was by far my favorite year in all my school years. I was the one known to be the person to go to for help and care,

but something was lacking in my life.

I made the decision during that time to attend Southwest Baptist University and was excited to be around like-minded individuals. It was one evening in the Fall of 1991 when we had a special speaker at SBU that I became extremely uncomfortable. I thought in my mind and heart that night, "How could I not be a true believer; who/what do I truly believe?" For the next few months, I wrestled with my thoughts. I wrestled with scripture. Could I truly not believe? I felt like a big hypocrite, but I was not truly ready to give up my hypocritical ways. My pride had too strong a grip on me. As the apostle John wrote in I John 2:15-17, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

I found myself back at home from college on holiday break. The pastor of my hometown church asked me to help with a New-Year's Youth-Group event. During that event, the testimonies and the pastor's sermon gripped my heart. I went home that night, December 31, 1991, knowing I did not truly believe in Jesus Christ. I was doing "good" things, being a "good" person, but did not believe. I got very little sleep that night. The next morning my mother was concerned about me, she thought I was coming down with a sickness. I told her no and that I needed a good walk in the woods, so I left with a Bible in my hands. When I got to a valley, engulfed by cedar trees and a small stream, I saw a log. I knelt at that log and cried out

to God, "I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to do this to myself." You see, I was thinking I was working for my own salvation. I was not trusting that Christ was doing the work. I had not given up my prideful ways to be clothed in Christ's righteousness. There, in the quietness of the woods in Maries County, reading the truth of scripture, I truly gave all to Christ. I went in as an unbeliever and came out as an adopted child of the King. Now I knew, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

My story did not stop there. I ran home excited to tell Mom and Dad, called my pastor, called my boyfriend Toby, and went before the church the next Sunday to proclaim what God had done in my life. I remember how deeply I hurt before that day, uncomfortable in my seat at SBU services, and services at church, but now I was and am free.

I give all the glory to the Lord Jesus Christ for what He did that day in my life. I never once questioned my faith in the Lord Jesus since that day. He completely cleansed me from all unrighteousness. All the praise and honor and glory are given to HIM.

To sum up my story, as the apostle Paul wrote in Titus 3:3-7, "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

-Joy Parker