

I grew up in a “Christian” home where my parents took us to church and I understood the idea of God and creation but I had no true understanding of Jesus and Biblical salvation. Growing up I developed my own concept of God with a made up belief that if I did more good than bad, and I felt bad about my sin then that was enough to ‘get into heaven’. Without knowing it, I was living out verses like 2 Corinthians 10:12 - *...but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise*. I was always striving to be ‘good’ from the world’s perspective. Through my teenage and young adult years I was still living by the world’s standard of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and would even refer to myself as a ‘christian’ but still not having any foundation or understanding of what that meant. As I went to college and into my young adult career, I still thought of myself as a “christian” though, I had never responded to any convictions that the Lord had put into my life to help direct me to know Him and I didn’t really even know what a Biblical christian was. (Romans 10:2–3 - *that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*)

The years went on and I got caught up in my career, dating (and the sins involved with those worldly activities). Despite having friends who were likely saved, I never had anyone ask me or tell me more about a relationship with Jesus. The assumption that I was a nice person with good intentions who was trying to do the right thing, was enough for them to think that I was saved. The Lord was really starting to work on my heart as I was living in Florida with some college friends and not content or enjoying my life. Although I wasn’t caught up in anything harmful or sinfully extreme, I was still living for the world with no direction. I would encounter street evangelists and think of them as “extreme christians” but I would side with them and claim that I am also “a Christian”. But other than that, I had no Biblical conversations in my life. On my drive to work I would tune into a Christian radio channel and the Lord used that time to really soften my heart. Specifically, a song by Chris Rice titled “Naive”, The Lord used that song to really begin to reveal to me that He wanted more for me and that He wanted me to know Him more! (John 6:44 *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him*)

In 2000 I had moved back to my hometown and my sister invited me out to a Church history series at her Church and God really started to work on my heart and I began to really want to learn more. I began attending the church regularly and began falling in love with the understanding of the Bible, but still never fully coming to the understanding of Jesus or who He was to me and why He needed to be sacrificed. I felt like “a Christian” because I was striving for doing good more than ever before and I was attending church regularly. Feeling that I was maturing in the Lord, I decided to become a member and join the church and we were asked to write out “our testimony” for membership. Upon reading my testimony, a pastor met with me to talk directly with me about what I had written and how my world-based good intention testimony was not a biblical testimony of salvation! He walked me through scripture like Ephesians 2:8-9 - *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

We went through the Bible and for the first time I truly understood that I was a sinner and needed a personal relationship with Jesus and I needed salvation as Romans 5:12 says: *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* During that one on one conversation, He walked through scripture and I finally understood that I (personally) needed to repent and ask Jesus into my life. Romans 10:9-10 says: *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* That night I did just that, committing my life to the Lord, acknowledging my sin and repenting from my sins in response to these Bible scriptures that I finally understood, like: John 14:6 - *Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

I repented and asked Jesus into my life that evening in 2002 and I was baptized a few weeks later to declare my belief and commitment to Christ as a new creature! (2 Corinthians 5:17: *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*)

Over the years I was discipled and I've had the chance to disciple others. The Lord has allowed me to be involved with Mission trips and outreach ministries locally as well as all over the world. But as the years went on I began to become complacent and stagnant in my faith. I found myself leaning back on the ministry work that I'd already done in years past as proof my "faithfulness" and I lost focus, not pressing forward as Philipians 3:13-14 talks about: *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

During one of my visits to the church, I was introduced to Mel Garber who took the time to meet with me and walk me through scripture, reminding me of God's calling for my life as a born again believer. 1 Corinthians 15:58: *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* And verses like: Hebrews 10:24-25 - *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

In January 17, 2025 I re-dedicated my life to Christ.

I'm thankful to God and to the people who have responded to His calling to share the gospel with me! Because even though I was a 'good' natured person that seemed like a christian, the understanding of God, the life I was living would have sent me to hell. (2 Timothy 3:5 - *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.*) The Lord has allowed me to live out this testimony so I would understand to always share the gospel, only God knows a person's heart. 1 Samuel 16:7 - *...for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*