

Personal Testimony

Early Years

I was raised in a Christian home, we went to Sunday School, and service every Sunday morning. We attended Sunday night service/Hymn sings and mid-week services. Like Pastor Jeff Owen, I have my **Sunday School first year Pin**, second year wreath, and **yearly bars but none of that work would get me into Heaven.**

Salvation/Decision

In the Spring of 1987, I was 9 years old. I was at a church service over in Barnstead NH and the Pastor gave a gospel presentation. **During the closing prayer, he ask if anyone, by lifting their hand, wanted to signify accepting Jesus into their heart.** Before the closing hymn He invited those that raised their hand to come forward during the singing as a public witness of our conversion. That night I walked forward.

Distractions and Doubts

That night Jesus cleaned my house. **But I didn't let Jesus take all the rooms.** By now Nintendo has been out and I liked Mario Bros. Duck Hut, Cobra Triangle to name a few. And in 1993 Cable TV and Dial up internet services came to Loudon NH.

At this point in my life I lived for myself. *I couldn't wait until School was out so I could go home and do what I wanted to do.* I would go to Church and all those things sure **but I was already thinking about after we got home,** playing my Super Nintendo or playing with my Lego's as my electric train would run around. I loved me. I worshiped me.

In case you think it is just people like the Apostle Paul, listen to what Paul says to the church in Corinth. Read 1 Cor. 6:9-11 – ***emphasize, “but such were some of you”.***

So many distractions I didn't have time to read my Bible and spend time in Prayer with my Lord and Savior, but I continued to go to Church each Sunday and Wednesday plus Youth Group when I was eligible. From 4th grade to 12th grade **I had fire insurance** and that is how I treated Jesus my **get out of jail free card** with my baptism certificate to prove it.

Looking back I believe that **fear of going to Hell and being separated from God lead me to Christ back in 1987.** I knew what I was being saved from, but I didn't know what I was being saved to.

- Conversion is not completing a ritual.
- Conversion is not just saying a prayer.
- It is the beginning of a relationship.

Assurance and My Faith is My Own

It wasn't until after high school that I really started growing in my faith. Let me share with you 5 gears that had to mesh interlock to get my faith moving forward. First, I found **community**. I found a group of Christians that met on Thursday night at Plymouth State College. At these meetings, I was also challenged to evangelize. **Evangelism** was the second gear that came into place. (Finish story). The third gear was **Bible study**. You need to be armed up when you go out into battle. So, a group of men met off campus...(continue story). Fourth, big gear that moves slow is **perseverance**. To grow, I had to keep at it through trials (finish story). **Discipleship** was my final gear. (Tell story).

Evangelism: (Fishing Illustration)

One night the director Eric brought in a fishing net and paper cut outs of fish. At the end of that night we were to write the name of someone we wanted to see come to Christ and cast that fish into the net as we were praying over the names. **I believe this was the first time I was thinking of someone other than myself.**

I began to follow Christ instead of myself. This is where things really change for me. **The change was not first my behavior, but my worship.** I had to follow Him. Then I was changed to see other people the way God did.

A few months later we teamed up in groups of 2 or 3 and we went out onto the campus asking people if we could share with them what Christ has done in our lives. We were being obedient to Mathew 28:19-20

19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Bible Study

We started a men's Bible Study that met sometimes off campus at one of the guy's apartment and we were a witness to his roommates as we studied the Bible and prayed.

Faith in Trials

During College, I met Kerith and we got married and moved to Tilton. After graduation we were both working and attending Faith Community but that was it. For about 2 years, for you see Robert was born 2 years later and at the age of 10 months old he got sick and doctors discovered a tumor on his right kidney. God was drawing me closer to himself yet again; during this trial I was reminded that things are on loan to us.

James 1:2-4 - ² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,^[a] whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Intentional Discipleship

It wasn't long after this I started attending another men's Bible study we called ourselves THUGs (true hero's under God) and my walk with the Lord continued to strengthen as we shared struggles, and prayed for one another. We even took turns leading the night's study time each week.

Conclusion:

Wrap up Challenge: I never would have thought 17 years ago that I would be an elder at a church. God's grace has been at work in me through some very ordinary commitments. So, I challenge you, "Have you ever considered being an elder?" If not, why not? Start with community, evangelism, bible study, perseverance through trials with intentional discipleship. Nothing fancy, just a long obedience in the same direction. Come with me. Abide with me. Serve with me. I look forward to humbly serving you my Faith Family.