

## **My Testimony on My Receiving Jesus as My Savior.**

I was born and raised in Butte. I was number 5 of nine children of a good Catholic family. I attended a Catholic school through most of my schooling. We always went to church and did all the good things Catholics did. I felt a call of God early in my life and in my junior high years received literature regularly from a Catholic seminary. After high school, I still maintained some of my religiosity (believing **what I did**, saved me, not **God's gift**) but I didn't go to church as regular as I used to. I attempted to read the Bible before but it was long and boring. I always thought that the Catholic Church was the only true church and never believed any other religion was valid except possibly the Jews since Christianity came from the Jews. I believed no one could go to heaven if they did not go to a Catholic Church.

Some time after high school, through another equally long story, my parents started going to a Church of God church. I was quite verbal to let them know that it didn't matter what they did, but they had to still go to the Catholic Church. They eventually ended up in the Assembly of God church in Butte.

After high school I got a job at a pizza parlor. My parents church started to patronize the pizza parlor after church each Sunday. At this point, if you have received Jesus as your savior, this is for YOU! I must say that the world is watching "YOU." I started to know many of the people that attended the Butte Assembly of God and the Pastor. These relationships would be vital later on. I finally accepted that maybe it was ok for my parents to attend this church and the people were really nice.

Although I knew about God, since I grew up as a Catholic, I didn't "KNOW" God, and I didn't know we could know God in such a personal way. My mother has mentioned before how sorry she was that we missed out in all of our believing years as Catholics. I tell her that God was preparing us even back then for the time when we would know Him. My mother took us out of Catholic school when I was in second grade. We always attended Catechism but she felt we were lacking something not being in the school, so she got a children's Bible and read to us during our lunch hours every day when we came home from school for lunch. Even though we didn't know Jesus, a lot of this foundational work was there and we also knew the doctrine. God promises that His word will not return void, and this promise would eventually be fulfilled.

Some time in the late eighties, I started to date a girl. I was now in my thirties, and I have to say that if I have ever left my religious upbringing, it was probably at this time and I was pretty much down in the bottom of the miry mud right about this time. This girl was a Jehovah's Witness. I had no idea what a Jehovah's Witness was except that they were these people who didn't celebrate birthdays or Christmas.

I told my parents that I was dating a Jehovah's Witness and my mother, very kindly explained that the Jehovah's Witnesses were not Christian but a cult. My parents tried to talk about God to me before, but my mind and heart were closed up tight. This time, though, for some reason I listened. My Dad gave me a Bible to read. I wanted to see if what they said about the Jehovah's Witnesses were true. I learned about their religion and I studied the Bible to see what it said about it. God was taking the hard stone of my heart making it pliable. We had Christian radio in

Butte, and finally one day, I had the courage to listen to it. The very first program I ever listened to was discussing Jehovah's Witnesses.

I read and read and God was opening my heart, but I still didn't have any clue that I had to accept Jesus' gift into my life. I knew I had to be born again, but I didn't know what that was.

One night I had a dream. I saw a bright light. God was calling me to Him. I was expecting some big explosive miracle where God would take over my will and I would be born again. I still didn't realize that God was telling me that He was not going to take over my will and force Him self upon me. I know understand that God was telling me in his dream that He wanted ME to make a decision.

I began to go to church with my parents at the Assemble of God. That in itself is a miracle, because of how I felt about other "churches" and I once ended up in a Catholic charismatic mass and thought these were a bunch of weirdos for lifting up their hands and verbally praising God. The Lord kept of working on me and opening my heart.

Finally on July 21, 1991, Pastor Masters gave a talk. His scripture text was 1 John 5:13: which says "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

Pastor asked if there were any that didn't know for sure that they had eternal life. The Holy Spirit lifted my arm, and I came forward and Pastor prayed with me. I know it was the Holy Spirit working in be, because I would be the last person in the world to go to a non Catholic church, have the gall to raise my hand in the middle of the service, and I would never walk to the front of the church in the sight of "everyone".

I didn't now exactly what was going on, but I knew that I knew that this was it. I received Jesus as my Savior that day. I was told that I was in for the adventure of my life. They were right.

I continued to date the Jehovah's Witness until a time came when I was nominated as a Deacon of the church. I defiantly knew that I was unequally yoked, and that God told us in His Word, not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. I also knew that God was calling me to this deacon position. I then had to make the hardest decision of my life and I decided to obey God. I broke my relationship from my fiancé.

Starting at that point of obedience, I can trace the trail of God's blessings on my life. I was deeply in debt and turned over my finances to God. He miraculously brought me out of that bondage. I could go off for another hour just telling of the miracles that He did for me.

I was now working for Perkins in Butte, and I had the opportunity to move to Kalispell for a while to help open a new store. Through encouragement of friends, I decided to make the move. I decided to spend that time up there just to become closed to God. I gave my singleness over to God and decided that if he wants me to be single for the rest of my life, so be it. I will serve Him.

I moved up to Kalispell and wanted to get plugged into the church right away. I went up there on a Wednesday to meet with the singles' pastor. He gave me a tour of the church and invited me to a volley ball game on Saturday.

Meanwhile, at Perkins, the building wasn't even done being built yet, and my boss asked me if I would like to come over Saturday for a bar-b-que. I said that I was invited to a volley ball game. He asked how I was in town for two days, not knowing anyone, and got invited to a volley ball game.

The gym was only across the alley from the apartment I had rented so after driving up and down the street for a half an hour looking for it, I finally found the gym. I went in and played volley ball and met this wonderful woman who would eventually be my wife. I praise God for not going to that bar-b-que.

I started attending the Bible study that was at Carol's house. God placed a burden on my heart for the widows and fatherless. I prayed regularly for Carol and her situation, but had no intention of anything else. We became friends and our friendship grew and we did a lot together and with the singles' group. Our friendship grew until she was my best friend.

We never really dated, and finally on a starlit night in July 1996, on the dock at Ashley Lake, I asked Carol to marry me.

Carol was married before, and her husband died from cancer caused by agent orange he worked with while in Vietnam. Carol has a daughter named Heather from that marriage. I was only supposed to be in Kalispell for about a year. We ended up staying in Kalispell for another year because Heather needed to have the time to get used to me before I packed her mother and her up and took her from everything and everyone she knew. The time came for us to move to Butte in preparation to move to Helena to open a Perkins here. We were in Butte for about six months before moving to Helena.

While in Butte, since we knew that we were going to be in Helena, we promised Heather that she could be in Bible Quiz. She was very active with Bible Quiz in Kalispell and Butte didn't have a team. 1<sup>st</sup> Assembly in Helena had a team; and Carol drove Heather over to Helena from Butte once or twice a week the whole time we were in Butte. Some time after we moved over here, 1st's Senior Bible Quiz disbanded. Bible Quiz was a promise to Heather, so we decided to move to Neighborhood where there was a Bible Quiz team.

We had talked about possibly adopting a child but decided to wait until we were stable in Helena before we did. God had different plans though. I worked with a lady in Butte who had 2 foster children Katie and Ana. She knew that she couldn't take them permanently and knew they had to go into a Christian home. We did some babysitting for her and Carol and Heather discussed the idea possibly adopting them. I also thought of the idea but never said anything to Carol about it. Their foster mom told me one day at work that she believed that these two girls should be adopted by us. We broke every rule in the foster system, and ended up adopting them November 12, 1999.

By this time we were already in Helena and working for Perkins. We stayed in foster care and with no intention of keeping any other children. We ended up with Desire' and Alia in our home about a year and a half ago. Each one was supposed to be a short term placement. Over the past year and a half, our hearts grew together and we are now in the process of adopting them.

Since that time, we agreed to only do foster care and not to adopt any more children. That is when James (J.J.) came into our lives. God, always does things his own way, and we eventually ended up adopting James also. We are now out of the foster care business.

We live together much as any other family. The Lord IS lord of our family and though our humanness often gets in the way, we try to do things the right way.

I hope I have been able to clearly share how Jesus Christ entered my life and had begun to change me from the inside. Life is a journey, and I would love to meet you along the way, or, more importantly, at the end of it.

John McDougall

1 John 5:9-15

9We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. 10Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. 11And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

13I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.