

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

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by

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## PERSONAL TESTIMONY

God brought me into being under unique circumstances. My mother was diagnosed with endometriosis after the birth of my older sister and doctors told her she was unable to bear any more children. She prayed for a son earnestly, promising to dedicate him to God, and miraculously God's answer was me. My parents named me Samuel, because my mom prayed Hannah's prayer. They raised my sister and I in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They said and demonstrated that God loved me, created me special, and that my life is to be His. I do not write this in pride, but in humility, exalting the heavenly Father for answering prayer. My parents promised to raise me in a godly home, and I believe they fulfilled that promise.

I saw God my whole life. My parents especially lived out Christ in front of my young eyes. My mother gave me tender loving care and my father specialized in being a reflection of my Heavenly Father. I was truly blessed and, in hindsight, I see where God used them to bring me into knowledge and especially in a relationship with Himself. God created me different and I finally began to realize that at seven years old, when classmates acted different. For instance, they did not respect the teacher, did not want to go home, or did not go to church. Why was I different and why did I do these things? I only did these things for my parents' approval or so I would not be punished. I cannot give a precise time when I realized the significance of Romans 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." I could impress people at church and school, hiding the bad things I did. However, I could not hide them from my parents, and since God knows everything, I could not hide it from Him. I began to ask questions about "walking up the aisle" and why could I not have any bread or juice at the Lord's Supper. Not to the same extent as today, but I knew I needed Jesus, the Christ, to take the place for my punishment because I hurt God by sinning and God cannot be around sin. On a September

Sunday morning at Community Baptist Church in Louisiana, I publicly confessed that I believed Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead. (Romans 10:9-10) The story was familiar, as the pastor, Cliff Walker, and my mother discussed my decision in his office after church, but my life has been different from there on. I no longer did the right things to gain my parents' approval, but to show God to the world because I wanted to be like Christ. I now have a real peace and security, because I soon realized that God would love me no matter what. I looked beyond my parents to Christ whom they tried so hard to imitate. I was indeed a "new creature", a different person (2 Corinthians 5:17).

From that beginning, God continued to work in my life. Throughout my schooling years, there was time I did not put God first or trust in His strength. As a good athlete, I became arrogant and proud. However, God is faithful to remind me that I am His. I was adopted into His family (Romans 8:15) and He reminds me through reading the Bible or tough situations I need to rely on Him. My first year of college, I doubted God's significance to life. I took a world religions class in college that taught Christianity was just one way to heaven. However, Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). During this crisis of belief, I struggled with whether Jesus or my teacher was right. God brought a man into my life named Jason who, through his church, disciplined me to know the reason for the hope within me. Likewise, in difficult times I have an extended family of brothers and sisters in the church who love and care for me.

Marriage is wonderful when Jesus is the focus and my relationship with my wife is one example of this. God brought us together and because of the relationship's centeredness on Jesus, we live an abundant marriage. We do have struggles at times because of our imperfections, but I do not want to live any other way. I found the woman I can lavish the love God has shown me, fulfilling one of the deepest needs God put in every man's life. As I grow older, I continue to realize how sinful I really am and that I must trust daily in His power through the Spirit. I do not know what is ahead of me. I do know He is with me, and He will be with me to the end where we can be with Jesus forever in heaven without sin (Mat 28:20, John 10:10).