

When I was almost 5 years old, I went to a church meeting at the "Federated Christian Church" located across from Emerson Elementary School in Flagstaff, Arizona where I was attending kindergarten. I tell people that I learned how to pray there in that church by asking God if it was okay if I sat down when I was tired of standing during one of our traditional up-and-down sessions which was part of the "service". By the way, He said it was okay.

One day there was a guest preacher, an evangelist who had arranged to share his message with the congregation. As a background, the general condition of the congregation was that they believed in God and Jesus, but most probably didn't have a close personal walk with Him. Most of the messages were about being kind to one another and practicing the "golden rule". Not much that I know of was ever said about actually receiving Jesus, and the term "born again" was probably never mentioned.

This evangelist started out with a real crowd pleaser... "You are all going to hell". You should have seen the looks on the faces! It seemed to me that most of the ladies were more used to the weekly competition of who has the nicest fishnet-laced hat and were pretty much stunned to their core that a preacher would even talk like that. On my part, I usually didn't pay much attention to what was said in any sermon, but at that opening statement, I was giving my full attention.

The regular pastor (sitting just behind and to the side) was looking stunned also. I look back at that day, and I believe that I was actually reading the minds of some of the people. I remember the words "Oh my!" from some of the ladies, and it seemed as though the regular pastor was thinking, "I've really made a mistake in letting this guy give the message today". Whether I actually was picking up their thoughts or not, the expression on their faces were saying those things.

The evangelist continued... "Really, how many of you keep the Ten Commandments?" Now it seemed as though many people relaxed somewhat. I'm sure they were thinking that they were reasonably okay in that department. The evangelist went on to explain that no one really ever was able to keep all God's commandments and that a holy and just God could not accept us into His presence with our sin. Everyone had been subdued by the truth. I stopped being aware of everyone else around me, and I was thinking about what the evangelist had said. I was going to hell because God couldn't accept me, and no matter how hard I tried I couldn't undo the sins that I had already done.

Then the Good News really began. The evangelist said that God had arranged things this way to help us to see and realize that we needed a savior and that the only one provided was Jesus, God's Son. He went on to say that although many evangelists call everyone forward who would accept Jesus, since Jesus was everywhere and could hear the thoughts of our heart, all we needed to do was to get alone with Him, ask Him to come into our hearts, and our sins would be washed away, and everything that God had done and provided through His Son Jesus would be ours.

I went right away after the meeting and sat on the steps across from my school. I closed my eyes, folded my hands, and asked Jesus to come in to my heart. Thank God the word spoken was so true. Jesus came in. He took all my sins away and gave me a brand-new life. I opened my eyes and the whole world looked different. The trees were new and different; the sky seemed new and different also. Inside, I was really different and new. Jesus had really come in and now I had become alive.

Third Grade:

When I was in grade school, we had read every book about Dick, Jane, Sally, Puff, and Spot that I could really care for. I didn't understand that I could find books that I would actually like. I was a daydreamer and used to spend a lot of my time in class looking out the window. In my mind, I may have been outside walking in the woods or somewhere building a fort. Wherever I was, I sometimes wasn't paying attention to school lessons. The result is that my teacher suggested to my mom I take summer school to improve my reading skills.

I was supposed to be in school learning how to read better and somehow I found myself on a ditch bank swinging on a hose we had tied to a branch, playing Tarzan. Being all alone, I remember talking to God. What was interesting about this is that it was a real two-way conversation. I liked that a lot. God told me one day He wanted me to go to school and learn how to read. He also told me to apologize to my teacher for skipping school.

I went school and walked up to the teacher to say I was sorry and wouldn't skip school any more as the Lord had told me. When I did that, she was a little surprised and said it was very good that I wasn't going to skip school anymore but wanted to know what made me change my mind and come back to school. I told her, "God told me." At that, she laughed out loud. Her response to that was, "Oh kids, they have such an imagination". Well, little did she know that the devil would use those words and that laugh as a weapon to try to mess me up.

When I was young, I thought to be grown up was really great. I thought to myself that when I was thirty years old, I could do whatever I want. I realize now that this is not so, but at the time it was very important to me to be "all grown up". The result is that I started thinking I wasn't "mature" or "grown up" if I imagine that I am hearing and talking to God. This became a wrestling match that would go back and forth for the next 12 years. Many times the effect was that it became very convenient to ascribe the voice of the Lord to being "just my imagination". Sometimes I would respond to the Holy Spirit's speaking, but many times that thinking made it very easy to cast aside the voice of the Lord and do the things that I wanted.

My mom and dad took us to a Lutheran church. Most of the time, they dropped us off and would pick us up when Sunday school and church services were over. I remember that for a while they would go also, then they stopped with my dad saying something about some hypocritical things someone apparently had done to offend him.

At the Lutheran church there was a youth group called “Luther League”. I used to go to some of the meetings and activities of that group. I think that group was intended to be a generally healthy environment to learn social skills by easygoing teaching aimed at teens and worded so as not to offend us. I participated in various chaperoned outings also intended to be a safe environment for learning.

In one of these outings that involved hiking in the woods and chatting about the Lord around a camp fire, one of the chaperones was teaching about the Bible. He was saying something about the disciples of the Lord being common, normal people just like us. Even though they were fishermen, tax collectors etc., the Lord called them and entrusted them with the task of spreading the gospel and for some, writing their portion of scriptures that we know as the Bible today.

At this, I became excited and asked, “You mean that God spoke to ordinary people and He can speak to us today”? He responded, “Well I don’t know about that”. I stopped going to the Luther League. I somehow felt something was wrong. Here I was all excited to think that it was okay to have God speak to you, that He could and would. What I think now is that this poor fellow was sincere and really in a position to help us come to know God better, but the opinions of a watered-down organization of man got in the way of the message of God.

The Lord was with me and helped me many times, in spite of my state of being. I eventually became an “emergency only” prayer. I would pray when it seemed my whole world was falling apart, but the rest of the time I pretty much avoided God. God heard my prayers and would answer them. I, however, somehow picked up the idea that making promises like “I’ll serve You” when I prayed would make it easier for Him to answer my prayers. Even though He would consistently help me, I would soon forget about my promises and be back soon to living for myself.

Just in case you can’t see what this does, I’ll tell you. It makes you a target for one traumatic event after another. The Lord wants us to talk with Him so much that many times He will arrange circumstances, events, relationships etc. all so that He can help us see how much He loves us and that He wants us to spend time with Him talking with Him. He wants us to become lovingly dependent upon Him for everything.

By age twenty, I had been married for two years and was stupidly living so selfishly that our marriage was in danger of collapse. I was drinking alcohol and using various drugs on a regular basis and was getting worse. The more messed up my life, the more I would use these things to deaden the pain that I was inflicting on myself. The ironic thing is that all my love and attention was directed to myself. I was doing whatever I wanted, and I was becoming more miserable every day. I thought I was happy, but I kept trying to hide from the terrible mess that I making of my life. My favorite hiding place was getting high. In my numbed state of “altered consciousness” I was trying to convince myself that I was happy and that everything would be just fine.

Rescued:

My wife didn't completely realize how bad I was becoming because I kept much of it hidden from her. My mom and sisters were praying for me and would gently try to coax and encourage me back to the Lord. It was in this setting I ran into a mutual friend of my wife's and mine. Her boyfriend used to be a friend of mine. She told him if he took heroin any more that she would leave him. He did and she did. This had all happened shortly before my wife and I were married, and we hadn't seen her for about two years when I ran into her. She asked me if my mom still lived where she had and I said yes. She told me that she was living with her parents around the corner from my mom's house. She was staying with her parents (who were deaf) and was helping them out. She said the next time I go to my mom's to stop by because they were just around the corner and that she had something she needed to talk with me about.

I didn't think much about this or what she said although I wondered a little about what it might be that she wanted to "talk with me about". A week or so later, I was visiting my mom for something and when I left I remembered the friend's invitation. Before I got out of the car, my mind started going wild with thoughts like "you know what you are after, you are a married man, you shouldn't be going here". The thoughts were so overwhelming that even though I had gotten out of the car and walked to the door, I actually turned around and started to leave. At the same time, I thought to myself that these thoughts were crazy; I told myself "I was just stopping by to see a friend".

About the time I was turning to walk back to the car, she answered the door and said, "Please come in". I said hello to her parents and was directed to sit down on the couch in the living room. I remember this strange feeling that came over me the minute I entered the house. I felt the love of God. It was so strong and so real, but it was bewildering. I had become so estranged from God that even though His presence was saturating the entire house all I could do was sit and wonder.

"What do think about Jesus?" my friend started. "Well, I believe in Him but I don't understand. If He is the only way, what is going to happen to all those people from different cultures and religions in the world that don't know about Him or believe in Him?" Her answer was "Let's just pray". Her prayer was, "Father, please reveal your Son Jesus to Bruce just as He is."

I don't know why I was so ignorant, but somehow I thought of "Amen" more or less as the period at the end of a sentence when you are praying. Anyway, I said "Amen" at the end of the prayer. Later I realized that I had entered her prayer and that by saying "Amen" I was saying, "So be it, Lord".

When I left the house, all I knew was relief. I had felt so good when my friend was talking to me. All I felt was the love of God all around me and though I was somewhat bewildered, I was relieved also that my crazy imaginations of wrong motives for my visit were not a concern. I think now that the devil had guessed that my friend would be helping me get back into a relationship with the Lord and was doing his best to keep me from being exposed to the message of the gospel.

About a week to ten days later, my wife had gone to do laundry, and I was there on our couch in the living room and started to have a conversation with myself. I said, "I believe Jesus is the Son of God, but I just wish I understood". When I said that, suddenly, I heard God's voice. It was loud. It thundered. It sounded like a giant horn speaker and like waves of the ocean. He said, "Bruce Archer, you are a founder of religion in that you believe in yourself, but I want you to believe in God and Jesus and then as a minister, spread the word of the gospel".

When I heard this, I had to make a decision; was that the voice of God or my imagination? I decided correctly and chose to believe it was He. When I decided this, I heard Him continue to speak to me. He said, "Please believe the Bible, you must believe the Bible, it is true from beginning to end; we are living the life that the Bible is talking about." This was repeated four times. I realized my sins that had been piling up were cleansed and gone. I was crying and saying, "Thank you, Lord, You are so simple. You are just who You said You are. I was looking too hard and not seeing You. Thank You for forgiving me and revealing Yourself to me. Thank You, thank You, thank You!"

I moved from the living room to a music room we had made out of a spare bedroom. I was on my knees just thanking the Lord and praising Him. Then Jesus spoke to me saying, "In the days to come, all those who are one with Me by My spirit will be drawn unto Me in like manner". When He said this, I breathed in God. My whole body was filled with God and I went up. I saw light which seemed much brighter than the sun. I couldn't look directly into the light (I believe was the glory of the Lord), I wanted to look at Him, but had the sense that I wasn't allowed to at this time. I felt extremely low and unworthy and that my whole life was appearing and being examined.

The next thing I think I realized was that of being on the right-hand side. I'm not sure of this because I entered into this whole scene from the left. What I am clear about is that I was in the presence of the Lord with many people in white robes. I also was in a white robe with a new body. All of us were saying words you couldn't say in English, but if you could, were words like "MARVELOUS", "WONDERFUL", "GLORIOUS". Many of us had palm branches in our hands. At that time, I didn't know any particular significance, but I remember it and think now that it is in celebration of King Jesus and our being welcomed and included in Him.

I remember thinking about many of the faces, "I've seen you somewhere before". Then the thought came to me that we had come from earth, and that seemed so far away in both time and space. I realized that I could communicate with any and every one simply by thinking. There was no confusion, but you could clearly hear all, the thoughts of a small group, or an individual. The thoughts were all magnifying the Lord and marveling at ourselves in the condition of being one with Him. There was a permeating atmosphere of LOVE and TRUTH. You could not even think of a lie and all you felt for any and all was pure LOVE. I guess you could say we were all HOLY as well, since the meaning of holy is "separated unto God and substantially saturated with Him". We indeed were filled with God and any part of us that wasn't ONE with him, no longer existed.

I am telling these things past tense, because I saw and experienced them when I was 20, I realize these things all are future for the faithful in Christ.

After this, I found myself in my music room. I remember being on my knees, but in a different location in the room. As the Lord spoke to me, He would also show me what He was talking about. When He enters the atmosphere, His power is so astoundingly great that those who are ready will breathe in God and go up as I had. He showed me that many people are not ready and were what He referred to as 'fence straddlers'. I saw an image of someone's legs on both sides of a fence. Many of these who were not ready for Him died at the exhilaration, shock, and surprise of what was happening. Their feeling was that of a heart attack, and they dropped dead right where they were. Many others realizing what had happened, killed themselves by jumping off bridges etc. I considered this and it fit the scripture, "where the body is, birds of prey will gather". The Lord specifically said that the "EVIL ONE" will take control of the earth. I could see it and feel it. It is extremely frightening and horrible!

I was back near the place in the room where this all started and was still on my knees but was facing the east end of the room. I could hear the Lord as if He was right in the room with me, though I didn't see Him. Jesus told me four times over, "Take them My gospel in love". Each time, He said this, I felt a wave of an ocean of love overwhelming me. I just kept saying "Thank you, Jesus" and crying tears of joy.

I told my wife what happened when she got home, and she basically thought I had gone crazy. I admitted that it all was very strange, but never said that it wasn't real and always insisted that this miracle is what turned me around. I didn't know much about patience and faith in dealing with my sweet wife, but was pushy and insistent that she needed to be right with the Lord to be ready for Him at His coming.

In spite of my lack of maturity, my wife, by God's love and mercy, did rededicate her life to the Lord. She also had believed in Him as a child, but same as I, drifted out of recognizable faith in Him. She now declared that Jesus is Lord and asked Him to come into her and live in her because we both realized this is the crucial issue. "Does God live in me"? "Am I born again"?

Thank God for all this! I must say this testimony is just a beginning. There have been, and will continue to be, many miracles from God every day. Praise Him for this! The Lord willing, I'll share more as I am able. For now, I'll finish with some final words from the Bible.

Amen. Come Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus' be with all the saints. Amen.