

One Child Forever His

I grew up with well-educated parents and enjoyed a wealthy lifestyle of weekend pleasure and fun on the waters of the Pacific. My father and mother owned two houses and a sailing yacht. My father graduated from Caltech in Pasadena California with a PHD in physics. He worked in the famous Lockheed Skunk Works. All was great on the outside but the emptiness and loneliness that existed on the inside was unbearable. All of that changed on January 1, 1967, when I received Christ as my savior at the altar of a Methodist Church in Sierra Madre California.

My journey to Christ was a long and arduous one. I was born in Oxnard California on July 28, 1950. All the time during my childhood the Lord Jesus Christ was drawing me to Himself. (John 6:44) I was the second of four children. The America of the early 1950s was highly Christianized. However, my family did not fit the cultural norm. My mother was a nominal Christian, and my father was a devout atheist. The mix led to conflicts within the family. Bullies made my life miserable at school. I was a terrible student because I was severely dyslexic. In the early 1950s there was little understanding about learning disabilities.

In the friendless environment of the elementary school, I was in constant fights with other children. The teachers did not know what to do with me because I could not read or spell. My older sister was a star student. Her achievements in school earned her high praise at school and at home. The hostile school environment led to a sense of deep and constant sadness. Once a girl named Debbie stabbed my hand with a pencil. The pencil shattered and the lead broke off inside my hand. When my mother confronted Debbie's mother, she denied that Debbie had stabbed me. The constant state of conflict at school made learning impossible. In the second grade after a playground fight a little boy asked me "Who is your best friend?" I answered him, "I have no friends." He responded, "Isn't God your best friend?" The rhetorical question stunned and puzzled me. This was the first prick of the Holy Spirit.

I did not have to wait long for the second prick of the Holy Spirit. In the third grade a substitute Sunday school teacher at the Methodist church led the class using the wordless book. Because I could not read, the simple teaching of Child Evangelism Fellowship communicated because it came orally and visually. However, it did not connect with my spirit because I did not understand the black page. My world was dark with bullies. In my child reasoning, my heart could not be dark with sin. The bullies had the dark hearts.

My brother had friends who lived on the street we lived on. At school I had no friends until the fourth grade. It was in that year that I found my first friend Richard. My mother got me involved with Cub Scouts that same year. I found my second friend at Cub Scouts. His name was Andy. However, the bullying continued. My reading and spelling were still a severe problem. I flunked fifth grade with four Ds on my report card. I was getting mixed messages from my parents. My mother would say practice the golden rule and the bullies will go away. One day my father said concerning bullies, "All you have to do is to get meaner than they are. Pull their ears off if you

need to.” As time continued my father’s way won out. I became a fighter, and I could be cruel. In middle school, someone shot my friend Andy in the back through the door in his home paralyzing him from the waist down. The police never solved the drive-by shooting. I could not manage the situation. Consequently, I never saw Andy again.

In middle school I noticed that the girls were very self-conscious because their bodies were changing. I and a friend named Ed would engage in constant harassment of the young girls about their looks. We would ask embarrassing questions like, “How come your legs are so skinny? They look like toothpicks.” A girl named Regina had an unusually large nose. We called her the beak. We knew the crude comments tormented her, but we kept it up. It was just sport for us. The crude talk and fights that I was now winning were having a toxic effect on my mind. I knew the direction I was heading was not good.

In the ninth grade I had an English teacher who took an interest in me and was willing to help me learn to write. Because she was willing to help, my writing improved. I could read haltingly and could struggle through my assignments. That year, I made an A in metals class and an A in geometry class. When my grades were no longer hopeless, I began to consider my future. I did not like what I saw. My association with Ed was beginning to corrupt my thinking. The girls wanted nothing to do with me. If I wanted to get married and have a family, I knew I had to change. I was painfully aware of the darkness deep within me. However, sin had a grip on me. I felt like it was a monster about to eat me.

In the fall of 1966 when I was in high school, the middle school sponsored a pizza party. I met up with Ed and he proceeded to tell me that Regina had plastic surgery to decrease the size of her nose. The revelation of the surgery sent me into a deep despair. I never spoke with Ed again. The guilt of those cruel words I spoke to Regina haunted me.

I was getting to church about one out of every four Sundays. Pastor Mark Trotter asked for sermon topics. I turned in a suggestion. I simply wrote, “Why is it so hard to be good?” He preached on it. He went to Romans 7 to explain the inner struggle that the Apostle Paul described. However, I was still missing the primary point of Paul’s exhortation because it came in Romans chapter 8 and Pastor Mark did not continue to chapter 8 with his message.

I was still trying to correct my sinful behavior and control my vile thoughts by sheer will power. I was becoming increasingly convinced that the battle was hopeless. I was a sad and lonely boy with few friends. I enjoyed the boating and time on the water but there was little encouragement for me once the weekend was over. My older sister was still a star student and received all the accolades at home because of her outstanding scholastic achievement. She was on track to graduate with honors from high school in the spring of 1967. When I compared my future to my sister’s it depressed me.

On January 1, 1967, I was in church again after about a month or more of absence. The Rose Parade was delayed to January 2, 1967, because January 1 was a Sunday. We planned to attend the parade, so I was not out of town on that weekend. Pastor Mark preached on communion

because it was communion Sunday. He started by reading the Methodist discipline concerning communion. Then he read a 200-year-old sermon by John Wesley. Hearing the Methodist discipline convinced me that I was not a Christian. The Wesley sermon was so powerful that I felt like a black tooth in a row of white ones. Pastor Mark folded up the documents and said, "That was years ago. Now we are not that strict. Anyone who wants to take communion can come forward."

I came forward and felt more under the weight of my sinfulness than I had ever felt in my life. Pastor Mark passed the bread. Then a few minutes later he passed the wine. When he passed me the communion cup, He personalized from Mark 14:24 and said, "Take, drink, this is the blood of the new covenant shed for you." As soon as I heard those words the Child Evangelism wordless book flashed into view. It had been eight years. However, it was as vivid as if I was told it a minute ago. This is the Blood of Christ covering your sins. I instantly understood. Then what that second-grade boy said opened the door to God's love and for the first time I knew God loved me in a way that overlooked all my sinfulness. My sins were white as snow. The power of the Holy Spirit descended on me and instantly I was changed. Suddenly I could no longer be cruel. I did not have to defend myself. The Lord Jesus Christ was my friend, and he would be my defender. I did not have to fight any more. I suddenly believed in heaven. The power of that moment was so incredible because I knew that with Jesus Christ, I could break the power of sin in my life and enter heaven. That was the promise of the gold page.

The way the Holy Spirit fell on me that Sunday morning was so powerful and so exhilarating I could never consider going back to my past life. I could never be cruel again. Suddenly the Bible was holy and a book to be revered and lived by. Before my experience at the alter the Bible was an old book full of myths and old fables. No one told me to do it, but I began reading the Bible right away.

In the summer of 1969, I changed churches and began attending Lake Avenue Congregational Church in Pasadena California. I grew fast under the strong spiritual discipleship training. I met my wife in the summer of 1971, at that church. She came to Christ as a little girl on November 18, 1952, after seeing the simple gospel message of the wordless book. A child can understand the message of salvation. We married on May 24, 1975. We have six children and eleven grandchildren. All are following the Lord. We are also the American family for a man from India who studied at Mississippi State. He married an American wife, and he has three children. There are 29 of us. All but the three littlest are serving the Lord. It is all because some servants of Christ cared to share with us the salvation message of Christ when we were children.

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