

My Testimony

Strange that after 40 years of believing, I have never written my Testimony.

Yet for most of us, how we came to believe is probably the greatest miracle of our lives.

...and so powerful.

Not only is it more interesting to unbelievers than all the Word that we know, but it humanises the Gospel and in many instances, may be the very thing that encourages the lost, our estranged family members, to seek the Truth.

It also strengthens our Faith, so much so, that together with what Jesus has done, defeats our enemy.

Rev 12:11 "And they overcame him (the accuser) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of **the word of their testimony**, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

But where do you start?

Sorry, I suppose way back at the beginning.

Mum and Dad were living in a caravan on their vacant block when I was born. The first of my 2 sisters was born 10 months later.

My parents then had a shed built so that they could move into it for more space, whilst we remained in the van. They built a house later.

My Dad was not a faithful man, a drinker and a gambler and he came home hours after the pubs shut.

My Mum was forced to work and basically brought the 3 of us up on her own.

We saw Dad Saturday mornings before he showered and went to the pub, and Sundays, until Sunday trading saw him go off to the club.

His Dad finished up in Changi prison in Singapore in WWII, at a time my Dad, with 5 sisters, needed him.

My grandfather wasn't the same when he got back, and insecurities set in for my Dad in his teens because of this lack of relationship and affirmation.

So, even tho I was a good lad who did the gardening, did well at school, earnt pocket money from a local shop, and lawn mowing during my high school years, I too grew up without the affirmation of a Dad, and so developed my own fears and insecurities as a young man.

Mum sent us, with a penny, down to the local Methodist church each Sunday.

Not horrible, but not that beneficial. No paid preacher, and in the youth area, not much more than kid's bible stories. Played some tennis at the courts there, but when I reached 14, Dad said I didn't have to do church if I didn't want to, so I jumped at that.

At the time, I was aware of my Auntie who had got mixed up with a church that believed in miracles. She had bad feet and was losing her toes. She received a healing that stopped this problem. I had not heard of the Church, AOG pentecostal, new for the time. The family were not fans, and she copped flak for it.

Also at the time, in the late 60's, there was Vietnam, a growing resentment of non-British immigrants, the sexual revolution, flower power, ban the bomb, the promotion of evolution and there was the **"chariots of the gods"**.

As a teen fearing conscription, I wanted to grow up quickly, get a driver's licence and of course, enjoy the fairer sex. My mind was filled with these desires but thru lack of opportunity, had to be satisfied with the "normal?" activity of a teen boy. This over time became a problem that was out of control, past my single years.

Anyway, when you are young you can be stupid. Thinking that because of education you know more than your parents, and being part of the "next" generation that saw an explosion of new knowledge of the sciences, computers, the universe, scifi shows on tv and a man on the moon, it was much easier to believe that Jesus was a visitor from "outer space", treated with awe as a god but not God.

You know, I picture him with a cigarette lighter, and everyone genuflects in awe.

Yes, I think anyone who doesn't believe that Jesus was here, forgets the amount of written history, and the fact that even our year reflects his presence. Not a figment of our imagination.

But again, I assumed an uncivilised ignorant society, when the world had done wonders for hundreds of years and without electricity!

I took my ignorant attitude and beliefs into adulthood. I was very happy to pigeon hole the whole God thing.

I not only believed these things but was quick to poo-poo anybody who questioned this or had spiritual leadings quoting the “factual” evidence of other beings from “the chariots of the gods”.
Anti God, not a great place to be.

I had an ability to run very successful functions. I became the president of a Red Cross single group, that ran discos and social fundraisers just for their own fun, with the financial by-product going to the charity.
I was involved from 17 to 24. The fun also involved the obvious.

I met a girl at work and married her at Church of England when I was 21.

We didn't have any money so, we bought a caravan and lived in my grandmother's driveway, hoping to save money and put our expense into an asset. We still had the dinner parties but the bathroom was inside the house. My grandmother had 2 Mormons as boarders.

My less than godly desires and behaviour had a control over me, that continued on.

Considering my beliefs, I was strangely drawn, at the time, to the Minister who performed our marriage.

About the same time, I remember my sister and my Mum getting baptised at the local Church of Christ, that my grandmother attended.

A retired preacher from there, Rev Housten, new my grandmother and thru her, I accompanied him to visit men who were paralysed diving from jetties, I played my piano accordion to entertain them.

I remember doing this when I was younger, about 12.

Friday nights was pub night with friends from work.

We hung out with our own separate groups. It was summer.

I remember getting home first. It was warm and still sunny.

I laid on the bed looking at the ceiling.

Then a voice. Not in my ear, but it was as if audible.

“Do you think it is wise to hear one side of a story and run with it?” Prov 18:17

No, I thought.

Funny, although I had no thought of God or the Bible, I “knew” what the question was about.

So I went to a drawer (remember I am in a caravan with very little storage) and pulled out my Auntie's (another) Living Bible, I can still see it, soft cover, tan with mustard writing. She had given her bible to me only recently but I just filed it.

I opened it and...well there is a lot of books and writing in it and I thought “where do I start?”.

Someone??? in the past had said “ if you don't know where to start, start at John”.

So I opened it to John and started to read....

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was with God in the beginning. 3Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has 1 been made. 4In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome ^a it.

6There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—13children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Well, I was bawling by verse 10.

Because I understood? You kidding? “In the beginning was the Word....and the Word became flesh”?

No, because I believed it was the Truth.

This was the end of “the chariots of the gods”. The end of mocking believers.
I believed from that day.
But I wasn't a Christian.
This was just the start of my search.
My question then “why are we here”, for what purpose?

I had a meeting with the Minister who ran our marriage ceremony, and was now high diocese.
I wanted to know. The conversation didn't seem right, until I just asked him “Do you believe in Heaven?”
He said “No. “. Basically he went on to say that in Christ, your life is really a warm fuzzy feeling (my interpretation).
It didn't dissuade me. I left.
What is the next thing to do?
I rang the Church of Christ and asked if I could be baptised.
They said to come to meetings and eventually there will be a baptism service to be part of.
But I didn't want to go to church, just be baptised by a Minister.
I then started going to all the churches I knew of.
My prayer... to sense his presence and find out the 'meaning of life' “why are we here?”.
Church of England, Anglican, Catholic, Uniting, Greek etc
No, I didnt find him or get an answer.
I even was influenced into going along with the Mormons for a few weeks.
At least they had an answer, but what a load of “three worlds” rubbish.

My life continued.
Dramas in the marriage. Separated for 18 months, reconciled, bought a townhouse.
Now I was the, non-paid, fundraiser and social organiser at the local sporting club my wife played tennis at.
I still had my issues and this place was not without its temptations.
I believed but had stopped looking.
I became a Director of the club.
I was aware that the wife of a fellow Director and the President's wife were both searching too.
Our marriage broke down (my idea) and I was seeing someone 10 years my junior at the club.
(lust but you can't see the wood for the trees).
I was 30.
Well everything seemed to culminate then and get messy and is a blur now.
I was engaged, and found out that my ex-wife was pregnant with a daughter by me.
Well I decided to do the right thing and go back singeing my return bridge back in the process as “there were conditions” which I was happy to run from and back to my fiance.
I then left my great position of Systems Analyst at the Brewery because I was bored and frustrated by a lack of staff, having given over to an opportunity to become a partner at an entertainment agency.
I got married shortly after, at the Uniting Church, and again I felt the tug of the Lord thru the Minister.
Then the club director's wife rang and said that they had found the Lord at AOG.
I had forgotten about the Pentecostal churches when searching.
The main church “Paradise” was, funny enough? about a mile away.

I went that next Sunday.
A large church.
I went thru one of the many glass entrance doors.
As soon as I entered I sensed His presence, I was excited but even vulnerable.
I sat right at the back.
Great meeting. Great message. Great worship. Great atmosphere.
There was, with eyes closed, a time to put your hand up if you wanted to “give your life to Jesus”.
I did.
Then the altar call if you raised your hand.
No way. That is a long walk to the front. Everyone will be looking at me.
As soon as I left the building, I was angry with myself. I should have gone to the front.

I went again next week.

I sat 2 rows closer but still way back.

Put up my hand again.

And again, I refused to go to the front.

But there was a visitor from interstate sitting next to me.

He said "didn't you put your hand up" and I said "yes".

"If it is ok, I will walk down with you".

So a 31 year old man needing someone to virtually hold his hand to walk a few rows to the front of the church.

God, Bless that Man!

I got right with my God, asking forgiveness and Jesus into my life, and asked for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

I left 2 feet off the ground.

Now, I wasn't just a believer, but changed, a Christian, "born again".

Romans 8:28

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God"

When you find the Lord, there is a honeymoon period where you get settled in.

Depending on how much you have mucked up your life and what track you are on there will be some changes.

There is some undoing.

There is some breaking of life foundations so new ones can be laid. Then a solid life can be built.

I will make this more brief.

Directed to Youth Aflame book by Winkie Pratney.

During reading of this I was delivered of my juvenile activity and many sexual thoughts.

We moved into the substantial home which our booking agency office was being rented in.

My son was born within the year.

The marriage was not good. (and she was not a believer)

This plus the pressure of the business (my biz partner was not a believer) resulted in me drinking too much scotch (plenty of arguments in a bottle of scotch)

Attended locally, the founding home fellowship group of the pentecostal Reach out for Christ in Adelaide.

(Evangelists should not run churches)

Pastors were sent and the Church opened.

I was heavily involved serving the Pastor and Admin.

I remember trying to remember all my sins and asking forgiveness for each.

I thought what else?

The 10 commandments! So I started reading them. Got to "Honor your Father....."

I had this excruciating inner wrench, a cry from deep within me...no tears.

I had dishonoured God Our Father all those years, preaching the Jesus was an astronaut thing.

I felt so free.

Moved from the office house to try and save the marriage.

Ever since salvation, I had problems getting my head around praying in tongues and I would go to the Pastor's house, walking distance away, each morning at 4am and pray with him.

Took nearly a year to breakthrough (my head)

The marriage failed, then got back together, and then finished.

Sold my share of the business.

Didn't know what to do, confused by spiritual purpose.

Finished up with nothing.

Went back and lived with Mum, on the dole and having access to my kids each weekend.

I remember sitting on a public transport bus, seeing a front door of a house, and saying to God,

"I can't even afford a front door", and a car and saying "I can't even afford the hubcaps".

I was going to give up on God.

You know what kept me in?

I knew I wasn't making up speaking in tongues. Go figure.

So, agot a job back in programming.

The Church moved south. Borrowed a car from a lady at church for a season, bless you Pam.

The sister of the Pastor's wife felt an unexplainable tug as I moved away from her during a social meeting, when she visited from Sydney.

She visited again when it was my birthday. We both knew we were to be married.

Asked her that same night and within 6 months, she had moved to Adelaide and we were married.

We moved to Southside (now Edge) when we heard Danny Guglielmucci was coming south to Pastor it.

He said that he believed that God had told him that we were his catering team. An answer to prayer.

I knew nothing about food so we took it on.

Before going to Southside, I had said to God that I didn't need to be a Christian to do something I could do.

Well Southside is now known by, apart from pastor Danny, their Catering and Hospitality.

We had a great time and a great team of over 40 servers.

Funny how you can be involved in the world, with the very thing God planned to use you in, for Himself.

Your gift makes room for itself.

We built a house, have sold and moved a couple of times, built again, sold and bought a house with 180 deg views of the sea.

We have 5 children between us, who are all in the Lord and 7 grandchildren.

I run a software business from home.

I feel that I haven't even touched on my Godly purpose yet.

Looking forward to it!.

Hope there is something in this that you can relate to and be encouraged by.

Kevin Cramp