

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Testimony

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Contemporary Evangelism

by

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## Table of Contents

<b>Conversion Story</b> .....	1
<b>Recovery Story</b> .....	3

## Conversion Story

### **1. I have not always been a Christian.**

I grew up in a Christian home, the oldest son of a Baptist preacher. While I may have had a perfect church attendance record from birth, and was familiar with many of the stories in the Bible, it was more like something I was along for the ride – ultimately, I went to church and learned the right answers because it was important to my parents, not because it was important to me.

### **2. I realized I needed Jesus and received Him into my life when...**

When I was in high school, my parents moved our family to Bolivia, South America, to be missionaries in an English speaking boarding school for missionary kids. During my junior year I was taking a public speaking class at my high school – it still ranks as one of my favorite classes of all time. The teacher was amazing, and besides, I love to talk.

Part way through the semester we had an assignment; we were supposed to come up with a five minute speech on a passage from the Bible. I was overly confident and thought it would be a piece of cake – how hard could it be to talk about some verses for five minutes? Turns out it was harder than I anticipated. The night before I was frantically flipping through my Bible trying to find something I could use when I stumbled across a verse I had not read before. Proverbs 16:9, “A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”

I was immediately distracted, daydreaming about all of my plans. I thought, this verse describes me – I had always had a plan for my life from as far back as I could remember. I thought about the jobs I wanted to have, the money I would earn, the home I would own, the trips I would make, the things I would accumulate. Somewhere in those moments of dreaming, though, I had a realization. I would never be satisfied. I would never get enough. It would never

be good enough. I would always want more. And more significantly, for the first time I really began to consider just how meaningless all my goals were. My life would serve no real purpose or value whatsoever. So there I was, sixteen years old, and terrified that I was going to lead a wasted, meaningless life.

And that's when it hit me. Something I had always heard growing up, but had never really made sense to me until that moment. Whatever job I had, if I was following God, if I was serving Him, if I was allowing Him to direct my steps like Proverbs 16:9 says, then my life would be complete, I would have an incredibly important purpose. For the first time I truly understood that when God created us, He designed us to need a relationship with Him, and without that in place there is something missing, we are incomplete. I knew in that moment that my life going forward would truly belong to God.

### **3. The biggest change I have noticed in my life is . . .**

For me there was not some dramatic change or massive emotional experience. But there was a newfound sense of peace, joy and contentment that began to be how I described myself. I was for the first time a complete, whole person, and it felt good – especially when there were difficult times. My life means something because it is dedicated to God and His purposes. There is a strength I can draw on that I had never anticipated.

### **4. May I share how something like this can happen to you?**

What do you believe about God? What is your story?

## **Recovery Story**

### **1. My life seemed normal until . . .**

My life seemed normal until my college years. I went through a series of difficult times; the child of a family I had lived with for a while fell out of a second story window into the pavement and was fighting for his life. A close friend and mentor died a painful death. And my own health had taken a strange turn; I had always been vain about my hair, and at the age of twenty it started falling out. Dramatically. It turned out I suffered from a condition called alopecia areata. My hair stayed in place on top and fell out from the ears down. It was embarrassing to say the least, and I was furious with God about it.

I remember thinking my hair was the third strike, I was done with God. I hiked up to the top of a nearby mountain and just screamed at Him. I raged about the scarred child, my dead friend, and what was happening with me. And I told God I was out. No more.

I faked faith when I needed to fit the part, but in my heart I had nothing to do with God. I was miserable. I struggled with eating disorders. I became brutally sarcastic. I was unhappy with everyone, least of all myself. I did not like who I was, what I was doing, or where I was headed. I was terrified that if people found out what was really in my heart they would all reject me.

### **2. I discovered hope and help in Jesus when . . .**

My breaking point came during a chapel time at my college. Some of the students were doing a drama; basically, this girl had arrived at God's office and was talking with the secretary. The girl was refusing to see God because she needed to fix her life first so that she could be worthy of God's presence. I remember sitting there thinking it was ridiculous, no one can fix themselves – that's why we need God to begin with! And then I realized that was me.

I had been mad at God, but in the months and years since, my anger had cooled off and been replaced with a constant sense of shame. I felt like I needed to get my life in order before I could start praying again, and when I saw that exact scenario played out in front of me, I realized just how wrong I was. I broke down, apologized to God and found an older Christian I could confide everything to. I spilled it all. Every dark thought, every bad attitude, every wrong action I had been doing. They did something so unexpected. They loved me, they accepted me, thanked me for the courage to reach out and share my story. In a very real, tangible way, they showed me the forgiveness God had already given me and for the first time I truly believed it.

The next morning, when I was brushing the shaggy mess of hair I still had – I had grown the top out because it hid the baldness below, my eye caught something. I lifted the hair up and saw a quarter inch of growth everywhere I had once been bald. The doctors had told me it would probably never come back, so to say I was stunned would be an understatement. My knees got weak, I thought I would collapse. And I was overwhelmed with the thought that God knew I would come back to Him the day before, so He had started my hair growing back weeks before to confirm His presence to me that morning.

### **3. I am glad I have a personal relationship with Jesus today because . . .**

I am glad I have a personal relationship with Jesus today because I get to see Him answering other people's prayers in the same way He answered mine. I get to see people's lives transformed in ways that can only be explained by the divine. We were literally designed to have a relationship with God, and with that in place we are complete, all that we are meant to be.

### **4. May I share how something like this can happen to you?**

What do you think about God? What is going on in your life where He could help you the way He helped me?